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**MR. PRESIDENT, WHAT OF THE MARINES?
THE POLITICS OF CONTESTED INTEGRATION AND THE DOMESTIC
LEGACY OF THE MODERN BLACK LEATHERNECK IN COLD WAR
AMERICA**

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Dissertation

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Mr. President, What of the Marines?
The Politics of Contested Integration and the Domestic Legacy of the Modern Black
Leatherneck in Cold War America

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During the fall of 1944 in the bitterest battle of World War II for U.S. Marines, a platoon of African American Marines fought their way to capture an airstrip and save a company of embattled Marines, who happened to be white. After the Battle of Peleliu, no one heard about the unit's heroic deeds. These black heroes, like so many others in wars past, received no medals; no front-page news story covered the events that occurred on the small coral island, nor were there any rumors of their actions. Nevertheless, at the conclusion of World War II, these men returned to the United States only to have the merits of their wartime achievements questioned.

This project is an examination of the utilization and status of black Marines in combat during the Cold War era. It is about moments like the Battle of Peleliu and how these men endured contested military integration, multiple forms of institutional and social opposition, which called their humanity, manhood, and rights to full citizenship into question. Efforts to delegitimize their service compromised their right to be counted among the elite and sidelined their story to the fringes of Marine Corps and American

history. It explores the creation of these organizational policies designed to minimize their footprint as U.S. Marines until the *social experiment* of military integration faded, and illustrates the discriminatory practices that further delegitimize their wartime reputation.

This project describes the factors and pressures leading to the racial turbulence that surfaced in the Marine Corps from the end of World War II through Vietnam, and the measures taken by civilian and Marine officials to maintain and restore organizational integrity. It further examines the psychological effects of institutionalized racism on African American Marines during the Vietnam era and the emergence of a new generation of blacks unwilling to submit to the traditions of a Jim Crow Marine Corps. Furthermore, by exploring the realities American society created about black Marines, this project investigates the various ways in which these men coped within a strict prejudiced organization and found greater purpose as U.S. Marines despite an embattled image.

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Chapter 1

The Cultural Dynamics of African American Marines in the Common Defense

I was an OGRE to some of you that met me on the drill fields and in the huts of Montford Point more than a quarter century ago. I was a stern instructor, but I was fair; I was an exacting instructor, but with some understanding of many problems involved, I kept before me, always, that nearly impossible goal to qualify in a few weeks, and at the most, in a few months, a type of Marine fully qualified in every respect to wear that much cherished Globe and Anchor. You were untried. The objection was to qualify you with loyalty, with a devotion to duty, and with loyalty, with a devotion to duty, and with a determination EQUAL TO ALL; TRANSCENDED BY NONE. ... I had a job to do—I brainwashed you. But, I remember something you did. YOU MEASURED UP, BY A SLIM MARGIN, PERHAPS, BUT MEASURED UP YOU DID.

—**Sergeant Major Gilbert “Hashmark” Johnson**,
U.S. Marine Corps’s first African American Drill Instructor,
Camp Montford Point, N.C.

The Negro Marines are no longer on trial; they are Marines—period.

—**General Alexander A. Vandegrift**,
18th Commandant of the Marine Corps
(commenting on the [combat] record compiled by black Marines, 1944)

During the summer of 1863, Union leaders were determined to retake Fort Sumter and occupy nearby Charleston, the heart of the secession. Previous Union successes made it clear in 1863 that the Union commanders’ combined land and sea offensives would be the primary means to overthrowing Confederate forces. Fort Wagner, also known as Battery Wagner, a heavily fortified installation on the northern tip of Morris Island, guarded the harbor’s entrance. Originally Union commanders, frustrated by Confederate counterattacks in the initial efforts to enter the harbor, decided on a full-scale assault using white troops only. Nevertheless, Colonel Robert Gould Shaw, commander of the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment, and son of a prominent abolitionist, volunteered to lead the Union assault with his all-black regiment. In addition, if African American soldiers stormed the fort and opened the door to the birthplace of the rebellion,

the symbolism would be monumental. Colonel Shaw's chief goal was to not only lead, but also witness the sons of slavery fight for and vindicate their role as part of the Union.¹

Under Shaw's charge, the 54th Massachusetts Infantry displayed an unrelenting fighting spirit with unbelievable courage and commitment. Of the 600 United States Colored Troops (USCT), nearly half the men were killed or captured during the assault on Fort Wagner. Although not citizens of the very nation they fought for, their bravery signaled new meanings of citizenship for emancipated blacks. The 54th's military actions at Fort Wagner inspired the collective African American community during the Civil War. As a result, white Americans began to question their previous assumptions of blacks. African American soldiers had provided a strong record of military service, which proved essential to ending slavery but not racial discrimination.²

During this particular engagement, the inspiring story of the first black (northern) regiment to fight for the Union was popularized by Denzel Washington and Morgan Freeman's respective roles as Private Trip and Sergeant Major John Rawlins in the 1989 movie *Glory*. Most Americans are very familiar with romanticized scenes such as the ones depicted in *Glory*. Moreover, generations of African Americans have used military accounts such as *Glory* to exaggerate the intrepid exploits of their predecessors in efforts

¹ Susan-Mary Grant, "Fighting for Freedom: African American Soldiers in the Civil War," in *Themes of the American Civil War: The War Between the States*, edited by Susan-Mary Grant and Brian Holden Reid (New York: Routledge, 2010), 193–194; Russell Duncan, *Where Death and Glory Meet: Colonel Robert Gould Shaw and the 54th Massachusetts Infantry* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999); Russell Duncan, ed., *Blue-Eyed Child of Fortune: The Civil War Letters of Colonel Robert Gould Shaw* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 51.

² Philip S. Foner, ed., *Frederick Douglass: Selected Speeches and Writings* (Chicago, IL: Lawrence Hill Books, 1999), 515–615; Robert V. Morris, *Black Faces of War: A Legacy of Honor from the American Revolution to Today* (Minneapolis, MN: Zenith Press, 2011), 22–25.

to engender greater cultural pride, purpose, and progress. Considering this, popular notions among African Americans persist that the induction of black Union troops was the most critical piece to winning the war for the North. Despite these notions, the story of the 54th resonates with American society as a symbol of bravery and achievement.

Much of what we know—or think we know—about the modern military contributions of black service members is informed by a limited sample of literature, primarily shaped by white scholars who conduct research on the American Civil War. Furthermore, these scholars have uncovered sources that have assisted in providing eloquent and powerful accounts that are richly textured, and capture the high drama of the horrors and terrors of war. “Let no one talk ill to me of the courage of the African race. The 2d U.S. Colored Infantry [USCI] have been tried, ... and I have not been disappointed; for in this late battle, very many of them have bitten the dust. Truly the 2d U.S. Colored Infantry deserve great praise. They are faithful soldiers to a man,” averred Isaac L. Dennet, member of the 2d USCI. Historian Noah Andre Trudeau’s *Like Men of War* is one such work that recounts the complete battle-by-battle history of black troops during the Civil War. In addition to the famed 54th, Trudeau introduces the first unofficial ex-slave regiments and the urgency to organize all-black federal regiments, while stressing that blacks were more than mere footnotes in the larger picture of modern warfare.³ Conversely, the story of America’s first black Marines falls grossly short in its narrative of compelling heroic tales of black gallantry during America’s modern wars.

³ Noah Andre Trudeau, *Like Men of War: Black Troops in the Civil War, 1862–1865* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Co., 1998), 366–367, 371.

The mention of black Marines is almost an aside in Marine Corps and modern American military history publications. The pioneering USCT, the Buffalo Soldiers of the old frontier cavalry, the Harlem Hellfighters (i.e., 369th Infantry Regiment), and the Tuskegee Airmen (i.e., the 332nd Fighter Group and the 477th Bombardment Group of the U.S. Army Air Forces) have attracted great interest, receiving considerable scholarly attention and exposure in the popular media, yet America's first black Marines remain virtually unknown.⁴ The dearth of information concerning black Marines in combat is not only a byproduct of a large gap in military historiography, but also in the history of modern warfare. In reality, African American Marines would not spearhead a combat charge until the 1960s, more than 20 years after officially entering the ranks of the United States Marine Corps for the first time in 1942.

This project is about the military and social advancement of the African American Marine over the course of three major wars. It explores his evolution as a fighting man in the armed forces of the United States, and his mental and physical endurance in bearing the weight of a racially intolerant organization determined to discredit his combat achievements. This project is distinctive because it examines the limitations of military integration and the critical failure of leadership on the part of Washington and Marine officials during the Cold War era, which led to distinct forms and practices of systemic racism. Historians rarely focus on the psychological effects of institutionalized racism when discussing the Vietnam era and the emergent Black Power and Civil Rights movements, which served as a significant catalyst for cultural diversity programs in the

⁴ Neal Thompson, "Montford Point Marines," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* 131 (November 2005): 33.

Marine Corps during the Vietnam War and beyond. Furthermore, this project investigates how African American Marines managed the organization's racial strictures and policies, which called into question their humanity and combat legitimacy.

The Tradition Begins

Faced with this prospect of officially enlisting blacks for the first time during the summer of 1942, white Marine Corps officers such as Colonel Ray A. Robinson, a staff officer at Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC), met with the director of the Selective Service, Brigadier General Lewis Blaine Hershey, to discuss the Marine Corps's concerns.

Colonel Robinson also met with Lieutenant Colonel Campbell C. Johnson, an African American Army officer, expressing, "Eleanor [Roosevelt] says we gotta take in Negroes, and we are just scared to death; we've never had any in; we don't know how to handle them; we are afraid of them." Lieutenant Colonel Johnson replied, 'I'll do my best to help you get good ones. I'll get the word around that if you want to die young, join the Marines. So anybody that joins has got to be pretty good!' And it was the truth. We got some awfully good Negroes," according to Robinson.⁵ Until 1942, the sacredness and sanctity of the Marine Corps was established on a white familial base of service to Corps

⁵ General Ray A. Robinson, USMC (Ret.), interview dated March 18–19, 1968 (Washington, D.C.: Oral History Collection, Marine Corps History Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1968), 136; see also Record Group 127: Records of the United States Marine Corps, History and Museums Division, PUBLICATION BACKGROUND FILES, "Brief History of Blacks in USMC, 1942–73," Draft Text & Source Documents, Box 134 (College Park, MD: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration) [hereafter cited as RG 127: Box 134 NARA]. Robinson quoted in Henry I. Shaw, Jr. and Ralph W. Donnelly, *Blacks in the Marine Corps* (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps, 1975), 1–2; Robinson also quoted in Ronald K. Culp, *The First Black United States Marines: The Men of Montford Point, 1942–1946* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2007), 30. See also George Q. Flynn, *Lewis B. Hershey, Mr. Selective Service* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 94, 118–126; George Q. Flynn, *The Draft, 1940–1973* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1993), 42–44.

and country. The advent of the African American Marine fractured the path of traditional military service, which at the time was colossal; it disrupted the harmony of Marine Corps tradition(s), threatening not only the entire culture of the Marine Corps but also the American South.

This new adjustment was not easy for the Marine Corps or its new black leathernecks, most of whom did their best to avoid trouble in the public sphere. “I don’t think the white Marines were accustomed to blacks being in their uniform and [there were] some scuffles there. However, I never got into one, fortunately, but I know there was resentment,” remarked Maryland native, William Foreman. “I hate to say this, but some of them were resentful of us being in their uniform because it was something that they hadn’t experienced. And you can’t really blame them for that because if there’s something that you hold onto dearly and then there’s somebody that’s going to infiltrate that, you have to get used to those people before you come around on board there.”⁶

Drafted in 1943, Foreman was among a rare group of men who ushered in a new line of tradition in the United States Marine Corps. Between August 1942 and September 1949, Camp Montford Point, a segregated recruit depot located in Jacksonville, North Carolina,

⁶ Private William Irvin Foreman was a member of the Special Weapons Group of the 51st Defense Battalion. He was stationed in Hawaii for the duration of World War II and discharged after the war. See Series 4: Military, Sub-Series 4.2: Montford Point, Item 24: Interview with Lee Douglas, August 11, 2005, Melton McLaurin Papers, MS323, William M. Randall Library Special Collections, University of North Carolina Wilmington, Oral History Collection, 1990–Present, UNCW Archives and Special Collections Online Database. See also, *Marines of Montford Point Documentary, 2006–2007* in the Office of Marketing and Communications records: *Montford Point Marines*, ARCH2011.09, UNCW Archives, W. M. Randall Library, University of North Carolina, Wilmington, Folder 1 (hereafter cited as Series 4: Military, Sub-Series 4.2: Montford Point, Melton McLaurin Papers, MS323, Folder 1) [hereafter cited as Foreman interview].

was the training ground for more than 20,000 of America's first black Marines. The men who entered the Corps during this period are popularly known as Montford Pointers.

The national and black presses quickly spread the news of the Marine Corps's new enlistment policy but it took time for the message to take effect among readers. What was expected to produce a flood of black enlistees soon became a slow trickle during the early years of the war. From May through August of 1942, a prominent black newspaper, the *Pittsburgh Courier*, ran an article a month announcing that the Marine Corps was accepting African Americans for service. On August 20, 1942, three months to the day after the Navy Department's press release that the Marines opened its doors to African Americans, the *Courier* ran "Marines Have 542 Enlistees." According to the article, these numbers indicated a Marine Corps enlistment average of 180 blacks a month. "These volunteers have been placed in an inactive duty status until the first battalion of Negroes, numbering about 900, has been recruited." This was far below the organization's goal of enlisting 1,000 African Americans per month. In addition, this low enlistment rate speaks to the recruiting climate during the era for blacks, which was a direct result of an absence of extensive traditional military service and lack of substantive recruiting efforts in black communities.⁷

Lee Douglas, Jr., an 18 year old, native of Columbia, South Carolina, graduated from Lakeview High School in 1943. Douglas volunteered to enter the United States Marine Corps in December of the same year, though he was ready to go in October. The

⁷ "Marines Have 542 Enlistees," *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 22, 1942. By 1943, the *Pittsburgh Courier* had a circulation mark of nearly 300,000 nationwide; making it one of the most widely distributed black newspapers of its era. See also Bernard C. Nalty, *The Right to Fight: African-American Marines in World War II* (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1994), 2.

two-month wait resulted from his enrollment in the National Youth Administration (NYA), a federal agency formed under President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Works Progress Administration (WPA) that created programs designed to promote relief and employment for the youth of America. His enrollment in the NYA provided a solid education in heavy equipment, which would later serve him well in the Marines. Furthermore, he had the opportunity to take courses under the tutelage of Dr. Mary McCloud Bethune.⁸

Dr. Bethune, a civil rights activist and educator, believed that education provided the key to racial advancement. In 1935, President Roosevelt selected Bethune to serve as a special advisor on minority affairs in an effort to better reach minority groups and address vital issues that plagued black communities. She also founded and served as the president of her own civil rights organization, the National Council of Negro Women. Bethune created this organization to represent numerous groups working on critical issues for African American women during the era. During Douglas's enrollment, Bethune served as the director of the Division of Negro Affairs of the NYA. Her chief concern in this position was to assist the youth of America find job opportunities. In addition to her official role in the Roosevelt Administration, Bethune became a trusted friend and adviser to both the president and his wife Eleanor. For Douglas, Dr. Bethune's influence and his time in the NYA sharpened his racial consciousness, mental focus, and his political awareness of the plight of black Americans. Moreover, for Douglas, the plight of blacks was concomitant with limited opportunities for social mobility in a

⁸ Corporal Lee Douglas, Jr., a native of Columbia, S.C., joined the Marine Corps in 1943. He participated in the invasion of Peleliu and discharged from the Marines after World War II. See Series 4: Military, Sub-Series 4.2: Montford Point, Item 19: Interview with Lee Douglas, August 11, 2005, Melton McLaurin Papers, MS323, Folder 1 [hereafter cited as Douglas interview].

country that promulgated the virtues of democracy, all of which proved inconsistent for his educated mind.

A product of a strong family nucleus with supportive parents and an involved aunt, Douglas received their blessing to enter the military. He volunteered for the Marines “to be a part of the best.” Despite knowing that the Marine Corps had never opened its doors to blacks until August of 1942, Douglas’s choice was clear: “I went in believing that, there would be a standard barrier, believe in doing the right thing, and a strong will. And that’s what I had. I had a strong will, and wanted to join a force that would be strong.”⁹ Although members of his race had been denied their proper rights in the *land of the free*, Douglas acted in a manner that would embody the true spirit of the *home of the brave*. Like so many others who served in uniform, Douglas believed the responsibility to prove the military worthiness of blacks rested on his shoulders.

Douglas carried this attitude to Fort Jackson, South Carolina, and then to Jacksonville, North Carolina. When he arrived at the gates of Camp Montford Point, where he became part of the 7th Ammunition Company, “discipline” was the first and last order of business. For Douglas, like most black Marine recruits who entered

⁹ Douglas Interview. Given the language during this era, various race and ethnic terms are used when racial references are made. Terms such as “black,” “colored,” “Negro,” “African American,” capture the relationship between time and racial references. All variants will be used interchangeably throughout this dissertation; furthermore, the term “minority” throughout. This term is used to refer to an individual or group of individuals who are non-white, given that the root meaning of the word connotes a value judgment of less than or not equal to a superior group. When it is imperative to make racial references, the specific race, ethnic, and group terms are used accordingly. Furthermore, the wording and quotations of primary materials are unaltered from the original documents with the exception of minor grammatical changes for clarity and readability. The term “enlisted/enlistees” in this dissertation includes all men who were drafted and/or enrolled in the United States Marine Corps; additionally, “U.S. Marine Corps,” “U.S. Marines,” “Marines,” “USMC,” “Corps,” and all variants will be used interchangeably throughout this dissertation.

Montford Point after 1942, the introduction to black drill instructors limited the initial sting of discrimination in a Jim Crow military. “I didn’t encounter racism,” Douglas shared, “I encountered brutality.” The pressure of World War II made it necessarily aggressive and brutal for all who prepared to fight in the European and Pacific theaters. The brutality Douglas described was emblematic of basic training during the 1940s; “You wake [up] the next morning, somebody snatching you out of bed. Because you, you’re not accustomed to waking up under the circumstance there as a Marine. So, when [drill instructors] come and holler.... Look out, or they’ll snatch you out, out of the bed on the floor.” One could argue that Douglas’s heightened sensitivity to Marine Corps brutality was simply an additive to an already prejudiced environment, “You really don’t know what’s happening, you see, because nobody warned you that, this was going to happen.”¹⁰ Notwithstanding, Douglas would have to quickly adapt and grow thick skin; the racial discrimination and maltreatment he would encounter during the war would eclipse the minor experience of Marine Corps boot camp.

While Douglas received limited and rudimentary combat training, the Marine Corps immediately trained him to serve as a *labor* Marine in the 7th Ammunition Company—the Marine Corps capitalized on Douglas’s heavy equipment training from the NYA’s curriculum. Upon completing basic training in 1944, he received orders to train as a heavy equipment motor transportation truck driver. Despite receiving a very basic introduction to combat training, Douglas’s fortunes would change when his unit, the 7th Ammunition Company, attached to the First Marine Division and participated in

¹⁰ Douglas interview.

the invasion of Peleliu in 1944, “The 1st Marine Division did not have any Blacks within its structure.”¹¹ During the Pacific campaign, the First Marine Division’s added resource of the 7th Ammunition Company meant that African Americans would serve on the frontlines. Given this shift in manpower employment and the urgency of combat in the Pacific, the role and function of African American Marines evolved beyond the confines of the garrison.

Before the Battle of Peleliu, black Marines performed *race-specific duties*, as outlined in a 1942 memorandum from HQMC (e.g., fatigue/labor duties). During the invasion of Peleliu, the enemy made no distinction between an infantry Marine and a support Marine. For the Japanese, Peleliu would serve as the burial ground for American troops, both white and black. The Japanese made no suicidal charges to hasten the outcome. Instead, Japanese soldiers concealed their plans and positions, demonstrating that they had profited from bitter lessons in previous campaigns. Furthermore, in order to extract the maximum amount of Allied casualties, Japanese soldiers acted with greater intelligence by nursing the last ounces of resistance and delay from their inferior manpower. In this respect, the invasion of Peleliu significantly differed from previous operations. For members of the First Marine Division—the most highly decorated combat unit in the U.S. Marine Corps, with much of its distinction achieved during battles in the Pacific—this enemy maneuver established a tactical pattern of warfare for subsequent engagements such as Iwo Jima and Okinawa.¹²

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² African American Marines deemed less capable or intelligent were assigned to duties that “could be best performed by colored personnel and at the same time disturb the Marine Corps as little as possible,” which

Although Jim Crow segregation came to define many of the experiences of African American Marines, such as relegating them to shouldering shovels instead of rifles, detractors within and outside of the Marine Corps argued that black Marines would fail to measure up under fire in combat. Notwithstanding, they would soon realize what combat revealed about these black leathernecks. Adamant to prove skeptics wrong, Douglas, the 7th Ammunition Company, and other Montford Pointers used their position during this particular battle to set the record straight. Douglas proudly recalled his experience when the seventh received the call to storm the shores of Peleliu. “My company, when we went in, we went with our rifles blazing. There is no second hand nothing. We had looked forward to taking the airfield in a day or two.... The [Japanese] were dug in, the enemy was dug in so strong, until everybody was held up on the beach.”¹³ As all-white Marine infantry units experienced acute combat fatigue, Montford Pointers were able to resupply these units and provide a measure of relief in place as indefatigable Japanese forces pressed the limits of Marine infantry units. Despite their contributions in securing strategic airfields for B-52s to refuel and refit for Allied Forces, which strengthened the coalition’s foothold in the Pacific, African American Marines received no credit from the press or their peers for their gallantry and valor under fire.

included almost all non-combat duties (e.g., clerks, janitors, and stevedores). See Morris J. MacGregor and Bernard C. Nalty, eds. *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces: Basic Documents VI, Blacks in the World War II Naval Establishment* (Wilmington, NC: Scholarly Resources, 1977), 421–422; David J. Ulbrich, *Preparing For Victory: Thomas Holcomb and the Making of the Modern Marine Corps, 1936–1943* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2011), 167; Frank O. Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu* (Washington, D.C.: Historical Division, Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps, 1950), iii, 1–58, 94–103.

¹³ Douglas interview.

With African American Marines fighting to make democracy at home and abroad a reality for millions of oppressed citizens, blacks had to forget this temporary oversight and look past the social impediments limiting their military progress. For Douglas, discrimination and segregation were perplexing, “I could not fit in my mind that the Marine Corps would advance a person of color beyond Master Sergeant [three stripes up, three stripes down].” Douglas, who served in the Corps long enough to witness the advent of black Marine officers, described what it meant to be one of the first black Marines who paved the way for others: “There were no Lieutenants in my day. Lieutenants [started] coming in [the Marines] when I [returned from] overseas. And it was a proud thing. It made me feel that the suffering that I had went through was [worth it]. When I [started] seeing officers of color being made....”¹⁴ Many African Americans, including a significant number who donned the Marine Corps green uniform, refused to accept such a bargain as their role as warfighters expanded in subsequent armed conflicts.

Racial discrimination and mistreatment would persist, nevertheless, throughout the Korean and Vietnam wars. The status of blacks in the United States made it difficult to abruptly abandon their citizenship due to group frustrations, a social position ubiquitous with both contradiction and democratic possibilities. Douglas reflected on this tension and asserted the following, which many African American Marines grappled with while serving in the modern era: “I give thanks for the knowledge that I obtained and the experience I obtained by going into the Marine Corps. I never have regretted volunteering in the Marine Corps.” Douglas, like the majority of Montford Pointers, expressed

¹⁴ Ibid.

tremendous pride in being Marines, but lamented, “I did not like [the] mistreatment. I thought that the brutality went further than it should had, and I take that stand today. I believe in justice, and I believe in equality. I believe in the right thing. Doing the right thing. The Marine Corps has made a man of me.”¹⁵ This pattern of thought that the Marine Corps “made a man” of so many Montford Pointers, and subsequent young black men, established a discourse that shaped how they came to define manhood, their rights of citizenship, and their place in American society through military service.

“Mr. President, What of the Marines?” is also about this moment. The Cold War era was pivotal in African American history when, during World War II and its immediate aftermath, black Marines had to contend with retaining relevancy and earning military recognition while warding off extinction. This contest for legitimacy was one that fell into the collective lap of black Marines, a trial that had been passed on from decades of black struggles, and with it, the obligation to inject professional meaning into the ideals and concepts of first class citizenship and democracy.

During the World War II era, this theme was all too familiar for African Americans who armed themselves against all enemies, foreign and domestic. For example, the military service of African Americans seemed unlikely at the beginning of the American Civil War, white Northerners and Southerners alike were of the opinion that the conflict would be a war for white men only. In part, the resistance to black manpower was the result of racist beliefs that African Americans were mentally and temperamentally unsuited for military service; furthermore, this resistance to black

¹⁵ Ibid.

military service also stemmed from conceptions of citizenship in the nineteenth century. At the time, Americans tended to see citizenship as not only bestowing inalienable rights, but also entailing duties, the foremost of which was military service. If black men were allowed to serve, they would have a strong argument for claiming citizenship rights, having borne the most onerous obligation of American citizenship.¹⁶

Once permitted to join the Federal military, African American soldiers freely volunteered their services in defense of their country. These men first offered their employment to disparate colonies seeking independence and unity from tyranny and oppression, which then formed into a nation that approached the brink of a permanent fracture by a determined Confederate force. Subsequently, African American soldiers again volunteered to assist in driving the “savage foe” out of the West. Many suffered wounds and even death, but remained fearless in pursuit to pacify the West and die to save the flag that gave them freedom, but not protection. Between the U.S. Civil War and the Spanish-American War, more than 200,000 enlisted African American soldiers served in the United States Army. The story of black soldiers who served on the Great Plains and in the Southwest during the years following the American Civil War is a pivotal era in the history of the settlement of the West—much like the impact of World War II. From 1866 to 1890, the 9th and 10th Negro Cavalry regiments (Buffalo Soldiers) served with particular distinction. Seventeen black soldiers received the highly prized Congressional Medal of Honor between 1870 and 1890. During this same period, six black soldiers assigned to the famed 24th Infantry Regiment received the Medal of Honor. The story of

¹⁶ *Harper's Weekly*, “Negro Troops,” Vol. VII, No. 338, June 20, 1863.

these men is truly one of shared hardship, pride, resolve, and significant achievement under extraordinary conditions.¹⁷

Although these men served with bravery, courage, distinction, and respect for the nation's uniform, the Negro cavalry and infantry regiments were not *first-rate* or *elite* fighting regiments—this is a common misinterpretation made by scholars in an effort to lend greater credence, and romanticize, the military contributions of African American service members. Notwithstanding, these men, along with their white counterparts, were civilizing agents for American democracy and capitalism in the American West. Under demanding circumstances, black and white soldiers alike were, however, *major forces* in the pacification of the West. As a result, African American soldiers have received due justice concerning recognition for what they were: *major forces* in promoting peace and advancing civilization in the West. The character of their service is beyond reproach. These black regiments, albeit led by white commanders, campaigned along the Rio Grande, the Great Plains, Arizona, Colorado, the Dakotas, New Mexico, and Texas during a time when it was unpopular to serve in the military.¹⁸

Did black soldiers endure constant discrimination similar to that of their predecessors during the American Civil War? Absolutely, but during this period of

¹⁷ Monroe Lee Billington and Roger D. Hardaway, *African Americans on the Western Frontier* (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 1998), 54; Charles L. Kenner, *Buffalo Soldiers and Officers of the Ninth Cavalry, 1867–1898: Black and White Together* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 30–31, 50; Marcos E. Kinevan, *Frontier Cavalryman: Lieutenant John Bigelow with the Buffalo Soldiers in Texas* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1998), 70; Frank N. Schubert, ed., *Voices of the Buffalo Soldier: Records, Reports, and Recollections of Military Life and Service in the West* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003), 139.

¹⁸ William A. Dobak and Thomas D. Phillips, *The Black Regulars, 1866–1898* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), xi–xviii; Billington and Hardaway, *African Americans on the Western Frontier*, 56–57.

western settlement, the U.S. Army did not systematically discriminate against black soldiers. *All* U.S. soldiers, without regard to race, endured the same hardships during their service on the frontier. *All* soldiers labored with inferior equipment and horses, suffered arduous and lengthy assignments in the most grueling climates, and received little praise or recognition. From 1866 to 1898, the U.S. Army needed the services of African Americans and could not afford to discriminate in matters of clothing, food, gear, and accommodations (however subpar these matters, the army equally and impartially issued supplies to troops). What is commendable and noteworthy is that the morale of African American soldiers remained high, partly indicated by low desertion rates and a comparatively small number of military judicial punishments—which will be important in later chapters.¹⁹

Desertion rate statistics serve as a suitable standard by which to measure troop discipline and loyalty, and the record of black soldiers' desertion rates measured well below that of white soldiers. However, the obstacles black soldiers encountered in daily life might have provided a strong incentive to remain in the military; most blacks joined the military to escape the much more hostile environment presented to them in civilian life, and found greater opportunities for literacy in the army. The question of equal pay was resolved during the Civil War, and the army courts-martial system remained ahead of the civilian judicial system, which admitted the testimonies of African Americans.

¹⁹ Kevin Adams, *Class and Race in the Army: Military life in the West, 1870–1890* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 2009), 9, 60, 72, 118, 130, 137–138, 142, 156–158, 171–177, 196, 240n32, 246n29; Bruce A. Glasrud and Michael N. Searles, eds., *Buffalo Soldiers in the West: A Black Soldiers Anthology* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2007), 86, 93–95, 162–163; Dobak and Phillips, *Black Regulars*, xi–xviii, 62–64, 186–187, 191, 194, 286n12, 299n43, 300n49, 320–321n21, 326n14.

During this era, the U.S. Army was arguably the foremost leader of impartial institutions that opened a new chapter in American military history and afforded blacks the opportunity to play a major role in the development of the West. The African American soldiers who served in the army possessed the ability and endurance to assure their units' survival and place in history. The most important result of their fighting was the advancement of the idea of their freedom and steps toward social advancement and greater equality. The U.S. Army served as an honorable stepladder for disadvantaged black soldiers, which allowed their sacrifices and hardships to open a great frontier to civilization.²⁰

Regardless of this advancement in society on the part of African Americans, it would not immediately open up greater opportunities until well into the twentieth century. Moreover, military service on the part of the black soldier through this period is best described as loyal, able, and willing; all which has been demonstrated by the black soldier's eagerness to participate in the American Revolution, join the Union forces, and assist in civilizing the American West. For all the concentrated efforts of the African American service member to gain greater freedom, equality, and opportunities akin to his white counterpart, his service was still marginalized and lacked the proper recognition and security afforded to his Anglo brothers-in-arms. In addition, his military service was constantly underlined with repudiation and discrimination, which would persist for multiple decades. This theme would continue to permeate throughout every era of American military history.

²⁰ Adams, *Class and Race in the Army*, 157, 167, 170–171, 179, 225n87; Dobak and Phillips, *Black Regulars*, 188–202.

To describe and measure the overall military performance of African American soldiers as equal to their white counterparts is a fallacy. For example, blacks were frequently thrown into battle without basic weapons training. Even with social inequities and injustices stacked at their doorstep, African American soldiers forged an enduring path that led to the development and settlement of the United States. Their contribution to American history is unquestioned and can never be overstated, it was their struggle to preserve, protect, and promote freedom from fear and want that have formed a crucial element in the foundation of the U.S. military. Over time, these self-evident contributions ultimately placed enough pressure on war planners to break the proverbial color barrier in the most exclusive branch of the United States Armed Forces.

“Mr. President, What of the Marines?” briefly explores the significance of President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Executive Order 8802 and the Department of the Navy’s 1942 announcement to accept black recruits. It also excavates the ways in which African American Marines welcomed President Harry S. Truman’s Executive Order 9981 and examines the interwar periods and wartime service of African American Marines from the closing years of World War II through the Vietnam War. The purpose of this dissertation is to illuminate the centrality of the concept of democracy and institutional racism during this period, and demonstrate the complicated struggle to achieve equity and legitimacy that African American Marines waged through the arena of military service. In addition, it explores their struggles, the nuanced mechanisms that prevented these men from shedding reinforced racial stereotypes, and moving beyond Camp Montford Point in order to establish a lasting tradition of military service.

“Mr. President, What of the Marines?” also investigates the complex status and significance of African American Marines during the Cold War, and all of its associated paradoxes. For white Marine commanders, black troops represented a distinct threat to science, a prevailing social pecking order, and white supremacist notions of democracy in the United States. Through their service in the Marine Corps, African Americans struggled with the multiple definitions and improper practices of democracy based on skin color and, increasingly, how it would either expand or contract in Cold War America. This project centers on the Cold War era as a crucial epoch in the contest for legitimacy, citizenship, freedom, manhood, and self-determination for black Marines. Furthermore, it highlights the anticipation of a better day African American Marines held to as it pertained to the fulfillment of the democracy they contended for while in uniform.²¹

“Mr. President, What of the Marines?” brings together the major themes and experiences of many of the first black Marines during their military service within the United States and abroad. From the early 1940s to the early 1970s, each major war the United States participated in played a significant role in determining the social access and

²¹ Major General Thomas Holcomb’s testimony during the hearings of the General Board of the United States Navy, dated January 23, 1942. Subject: “Enlistment of Men of Colored Race,” see RG 127: Box 134 NARA. To a certain extent, this prevailing sentiment was based on an ill-conceived 1925 Army War College study, which concluded that African Americans were genetically inferior to whites, unfit to fight, unintelligent, and submissive; suffered from low self-esteem; were easily manipulated; and were likely to crumble under fire. See “Memorandum for the Chief of Staff regarding Employment of Negro Man Power in War, November 10, 1925,” President’s Official Files, Box 3, Folder 4245-G: Office of Production Management: Commission on Fair Employment Practices: War Department, 1943 (Hyde Park, N.Y.: Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum); U.S. Army War College, *The Use of Negro Manpower in War*, AWC 127–25, October 30, 1925 (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army Military History Institute) [hereafter cited as AWC 127–25].

equity of African American Marines within the Corps and American society. Using the characteristics of postwar junctures as major strategic moments in advancing society, this work will examine that at the conclusion of each major conflict, military and civilian officials frequently reduced the wartime contributions of black Marines to footnotes or failed to even recognize their existence as warring participants. In contrast to their Army, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard counterparts, the service record of black Marines in the modern era of warfare is thin at best.

U.S. Marines Samuel Nicholas, Presley O'Bannon, Archibald Henderson, Smedley Butler and Daniel Daly (the only two Marines to be twice awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor), Lewis "Chesty" Puller (the only Marine awarded the Navy Cross five times), and John Basilone are synonymous with military achievement and heroism in Marine Corps lore. Their reputations and legacies are defined by the battles in which they participated, their positions of command and leadership, and by their military decorations. Every member of the U.S. Marine Corps knows the wartime achievements and contributions of each of these figures. Tun Tavern (i.e., the birthplace of the Continental Marines), the Mameluke Sword, the Blood stripe, the Marines' Hymn, and the campaigns of Guadalcanal, Peleliu, and Iwo Jima are not only symbolic in the distinguished record of the Marine Corps, but are related to the actions of each of these white Marine icons.²² When enlisted Marine recruits and officer candidates enter the

²² Major Samuel Nicholas, the first Commandant of the Marine Corps, served in the Corps from 1775–1783. See Charles R. Smith, *Marines in the Revolution: A History of the Continental Marines in the American Revolution, 1775–1783* (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1975), 12–14; Allan R. Millett and Jack Shulimson, eds., *Commandants of the Marine Corps* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2004), 17–26, 54–73; Marc Cerasini, *Heroes: U.S. Marine*

Corps, their first lessons in Marine Corps history are spearheaded with tales of these legendary giants. These heroic narratives have profoundly added to the richness and steep traditions of the Marine Corps, serving as the foundation for the organization's ethos, which defines all its members.

Notwithstanding, U.S. Marines Alfred Masters, George O. Thompson, Howard Perry, Edgar R. Huff, Gilbert H. Johnson, Frederick C. Branch, and Herbert L. Brewer are almost nonexistent in Marine Corps literature. Why have these trailblazing icons been minimized and overlooked in Marine Corps literature and history? There are potentially two reasons. The first is a lack of primary sources about each of these men. The second

Corps Medal of Honor Winners (New York: Berkley Books, 2002), 4–7. O'Bannon's years of service in the Corps were 1801–1807. His heroic service on the “the shores of Tripoli” is commemorated in the Mameluke sword worn by U.S. Marine Corps officers, a sword patterned after the famed blade of Damascus presented to O'Bannon by Hamet Karamanli (1804, rightful heir to the throne of Tripoli) in appreciation for services rendered on “the shores of Tripoli.” See Cerasini, *Heroes*, 17–20, 25; Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps* (New York: Free Press, 1980), 44–45. Henderson's years of service in the Corps were 1806–1859. On 17 October 1820, at the age of 37, Lieutenant Colonel Henderson was appointed as the Commandant of the Marine Corps. He served in this position for a little over 38 years—the longest of any officer to hold that position. He is also known as the “Grand old man of the Marine Corps.” See Joseph G. Dawson III, “With Fidelity and Effectiveness: Archibald Henderson's Lasting Legacy to the U.S. Marine Corps,” *Journal of Military History* 62 (October 1998): 727–753; Cerasini, *Heroes*, 27–31, 43. For Smedley Butler, Dan Daly, and Lewis “Chesty” Puller see George Forty, *US Marine Corps Handbook, 1941–1945* (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2006), 252, 258; James E. Wise and Scott Baron, *The Navy Cross: Extraordinary Heroism in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Conflicts* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2007), 128–150, 232–235. Basilone's years of service in the Corps were from 1940–1945. Gunnery Sergeant John Basilone was awarded the Medal of Honor in recognition of his outstanding heroism at Guadalcanal. Later, during the Iwo Jima campaign, he was killed in action on D-Day, February 19, 1945. At Iwo Jima, Basilone again distinguished himself, single-handedly destroying a Japanese blockhouse while braving a heavy bombardment of enemy fire. For his gallantry, he was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross. See James Brady, *Hero of the Pacific: The Life of Marine Legend John Basilone* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2010), 2, 8–9, 18–20, 24–28, 29–36, 41–45, 46–55, 57, 69, 71–72, 132–133, 152, 180, 181–191, 194–197, 198–205, 206–216, 221, 230–233. Cerasini, *Heroes*, 17–20, 25; Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 44–45. The efforts of the U.S. Marines in this battle and subsequent occupation of Mexico City are memorialized by the opening lines of the Marines' Hymn, “From the Halls of Montezuma...” Marine tradition maintains that the red stripe worn on the trousers of the Dress Blues uniform, commonly known as the “blood stripe,” symbolizes the blood shed by the Marines who stormed the castle of Chapultepec in 1847.

reason, which also explains the scarcity of research about these Marine icons, is that each of them is African American. In addition, their significance over the course of three wars is overshadowed by the military organization in which they chose to serve and by the limitations and strictures placed on them by American society during their era. Until approximately 1965, a notable characteristic of the study of American history has been the lack of attention given to the experiences of neglected groups. The study of African Americans in the Marine Corps from 1945 to the early 1970s is a period that has not been widely recognized.²³

For example, military historian Allan R. Millett's *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps* is a 626-page book that chronicles 205 years of the organization's peacetime preparedness and wartime success. It is a thoughtful examination of the accomplishments and character of the U.S. Marine Corps, yet it describes the history of African American Marines in just seven pages. In *The United*

²³ Reserve Officers of Public Affairs Unit 4-1, *The Marine Corps Reserve: A History* (Washington, D.C.: Division of Reserve, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1966), 74-75; Henry I. Shaw, Jr. and Ralph W. Donnelly, *Blacks in the Marine Corps* (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1975), 2-3, 10-13; Neal Thompson, "Montford Point Marines," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* 131 (November 2005): 32; "Oklahoman First Negro in Marines," *Daily Oklahoman*, June 1, 1942. In January 1943, Huff became the Marine Corps's first African American non-commissioned officer. See Bernard C. Nalty, *The Right to Fight: African-American Marines in World War II* (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1994), 4-5, 8-9. In February 1943, Johnson became the Marine Corps's first African American Drill Instructor; Camp Gilbert H. Johnson is a satellite camp of Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune and home to the Marine Corps Combat Service Support Schools (MCCSSS)—located on what is formerly known as *Montford Point*, the site of recruit training for the first African Americans to serve in the Marine Corps. See Shaw and Donnelly, *Blacks in the Marine Corps*, 10-13; Nalty, *Right to Fight*, 4-5, 8-9. Branch was commissioned on November 10, 1945. See Judson L. Jeffries, "The Marine Corps' First Black Commissioned Officer: The Life and Legacy of Frederick C. Branch," *North Carolina Historical Review* 87 (October 2010): 379-402; Matt Schudel, "Frederick C. Branch; Was 1st Black Officer in the U.S. Marine Corps," *Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.), April 13, 2005, B06. Judson L. Jeffries, "Col. Herbert L. Brewer and the United States Marine Corps: A Man of Many Firsts," *Spectrum: A Journal on Black Men* 1 (Autumn 2012): 179-195.

States Marines, 1775–1975 and *The United States Marines: A History*, which also cover more than 200 years of the organization’s history, General Edwin Howard Simmons devotes fewer than eight pages to the service of blacks in the Marine Corps. Nonetheless, Simmons briefly highlights that even though the Corps accepted blacks there was no great rush of volunteers to join the Marines since it was commonly known for its racial exclusivity. Of the 19,168 African Americans to first serve as official U.S. Marines during World War II, 16,039 were drafted, 3,129 volunteered, and 12,738 served overseas.²⁴

The experiences of black U.S. Marines constitutes an important part of the broader story of American participation during World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. Notwithstanding, only a few studies have recognized their military contributions and participation in these wars. The most notable work is Melton A. McLaurin’s *The Marines of Montford Point: America’s First Black Marines*, an important collection of interviews with sixty-one veterans. McLaurin documents the experiences of the first black Marines from their induction through their training and combat experiences, clearly describing their struggles against racism, segregation, and discrimination—both in the military and civilian domain. McLaurin concludes that these men laid the foundation for the long-term integration of the Marine Corps.²⁵

²⁴ Millett, *Semper Fidelis*; Edwin H. Simmons, *The United States Marines, 1775–1975* (New York: Viking Press, 1976), 221–223; Ron Field and Alexander Bielakowski, *Buffalo Soldiers: African American Troops in the US Forces, 1866–1945* (New York: Osprey Publishing, 2008), 208–212.

²⁵ Melton A. McLaurin, *Marines of Montford Point: America’s First Black Marines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

Ronald K. Culp's *The First Black United States Marines: The Men of Montford Point, 1942–1946* is a suitable complement to McLaurin's work. In a straightforward narrative, Culp chronicles the social obstacles Montford Pointers encountered and their military achievements. He argues that black Marines in the Solomon and Marianas Islands and in Okinawa, Japan, faced pervasive racial harassment, which remained constant throughout each phase of the war. He describes the creation of the defense battalions (i.e., the 51st and 52nd Defense Battalions) and ammunition and depot companies, emphasizing their significance in creating opportunities for blacks to fight and prove themselves alongside their white peers.²⁶

Culp and McLaurin both stress the role of Montford Point, the daily confrontations African American Marines experienced, their legacy, and their contributions to a country that would not accept them as equals. These authors provide the most thorough explanations, thus far, on how the first black Marines broke the color barrier and paved the way for permanent military integration. Culp and McLaurin both emphasize how Montford Pointers served in three wars during a time when racial discrimination and segregation remained legal throughout the United States and overseas.²⁷

Culp and McLaurin call attention to aspects of African American Marines' military service that are less known. For example, African American Marines did not *officially* hold combat arms military occupational specialties (i.e., infantry and artillery)

²⁶ Ronald K. Culp, *First Black United States Marines: The Men of Montford Point, 1942–1946* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, 2007).

²⁷ McLaurin, *Marines of Montford Point*; Culp, *First Black United States Marines*.

until the Vietnam War, illustrating that black Marines had not received the appropriate public attention or recognition for serving as members attached to combat units during the previous two wars. Despite their commendable service during World War II, black Marines combatted with societal forces that vehemently resisted all measures taken toward racial integration. Furthermore, steeped in segregationist policies and practices, the Marine Corps reduced the percentage of blacks in its service after World War II. It took the Korean War to finally persuade intransigent Marine Corps officials to integrate their ranks and combat units. Once accepted, African American Marines quickly demonstrated their ability to fight proficiently side-by-side with fellow Marines of every ethnic and racial background.²⁸

Culp and McLaurin provide firsthand accounts of poignant testimonies of America's first black Marines, describing a picture of an African American viewpoint of not only a struggle but also achievement. Together the authors capture the nuances of military and civilian life, and the cultures black troops encountered in the Pacific theater. Using information gleaned from black Marines stationed in Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Guam and the Mariana and Palau Islands, Culp and McLaurin focus attention on America's deeply rooted traditions and social climate that remained constant throughout each war. Despite the contribution of their works, these authors simply introduce the men

²⁸ Edward Andrusko, *Love and War Beneath the Southern Cross: A World War II Memoir from the South Pacific Islands and Australia* (N.P.: Andrusko, 2003), 193–200. See also Series 4: Military, Sub-Series 4.2: Montford Point, Item 18: Interview with Gene Doughty, June 29, 2005, Melton McLaurin Papers, MS323, Folder 1 [hereafter cited as Doughty interview]; Doughty also quoted in Clarence E. Willie, *African American Voices From Iwo Jima: Personal Accounts of the Battle* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, 2010), 87; Doughty also quoted in Gail Buckley, *American Patriots: The Story of Blacks in the Military from the Revolution to Desert Storm* (New York: Random House, 2001), 320–321; McLaurin, *Marines of Montford Point*, 10; Culp, *First Black United States Marines*, 226–228.

of Montford Point to the public through their voices, highlighting the forms of persuasion used to influence the armed forces and the Marine Corps to open its ranks to African Americans.

In addition to Culp and McLaurin's accounts, several works provide greater context. These works include Gerald Astor's *The Right to Fight: A History of African Americans in the Military*, Bernard C. Nalty's *Strength for the Fight: A History of Black Americans in the Military* and *The Right to Fight: African-American Marines in World War II*, and Henry I. Shaw and Ralph W. Donnelly's *Blacks in the Marine Corps*. All four scholars emphasize the basic racial policy of the Marine Corps, the beginnings of Camp Montford Point, the camp's first graduates, overseas assignments, combat and occupational duties, returning home, and the heritage of the Marines of Montford Point.²⁹

The legacy of Camp Montford Point, and the men who trained at the installation, extended far beyond the parameters of the segregated facility. For instance, when Montford Point closed in 1949, the Marine Corps began sending black recruits to its previously established all-white training depots at Parris Island, South Carolina, and Camp Pendleton, California. Few Montford Pointers were serving in the Corps by the time of the Vietnam War. Nevertheless, due to the efforts of these pioneers, African American Marines that did serve were now serving in a military organization that had profoundly changed since the initial days of Camp Montford Point. A fully integrated

²⁹ Gerald Astor, *The Right to Fight: A History of African Americans in the Military* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2001); Bernard C. Nalty, *The Right to Fight: African-American Marines in World War II* (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1994); Bernard C. Nalty, *Strength for the Fight: A History of Black Americans in the Military* (New York: Free Press, 1986); Henry I. Shaw, Jr. and Ralph W. Donnelly, *Blacks in the Marine Corps* (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1975; reprint 2002).

Marine Corps was now in existence, which included black officers. Despite the fact that historians and scholars have paid little attention to the wartime achievements and significance of America's first black Marines, even less has been written about Camp Montford Point and the exploits of the first black Marines when compared to the more popular Buffalo Soldiers and Tuskegee Airmen. Although brief, these works are invaluable contributions to not only the literature on blacks in the Marines, but provide foundational insights and understanding of the black military experience from World War II through Vietnam.³⁰

“Mr. President, What of the Marines?” is less concerned with the relative introduction of these men and a chronology of their service than it is with the organs of government (i.e., The War Department/Department of Defense) and the pivotal figures involved in shaping the narrative of the first African American Marines and beyond. Moreover, this project will explore the processes behind, not only physically, but also mentally moving beyond Camp Montford Point, which began in 1949. It will also examine the deeper historical connections to the past that have echoed for more than a century, such as the effects of the American Civil War, war imagery and propaganda on society during the Second World War, the influences of an emerging Civil Rights and Black Power movement era, and the eventual institutional guilt Marine Corps officials would feel for failing to recognize these trailblazers for nearly seven decades. Lastly, this project will also attempt to widen the historical footprint involving the evolution of African American Marines throughout each of these eras.

³⁰ Astor, *Right to Fight*; Nalty, *Right to Fight*; Nalty, *Strength for the Fight*; Shaw and Donnelly, *Blacks in the Marine Corps*.

“Mr. President, What of the Marines?” is organized thematically, beginning with the latter stages of the Second World War. Chapter 2 investigates the effects and conditions of World War II on the consciousness of African American Marines and briefly introduces President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s landmark Executive Order 8802, the Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC), and the Department of the Navy’s 1942 announcement to accept black recruits. It also highlights the significance of the initial steps taken by Marine officials to establish clear policies regarding the employment and management of black Marines.

Chapter 3 describes how African American Marines attempted to make sense of their conflicted status not only as Marines, but also as American citizens during the World War II era. In addition, it explores the significance of General Thomas Holcomb’s confidential Letter of Instruction No. 421, which formalized and endorsed the exercise of Jim Crow laws in uniform. In addition, it describes how war planners used black token leadership towards the end of World War II, and the ways in which white commanders used Camp Montford Point to psychologically position African Americans in a state of enduring paternalism.

Chapter 4 discusses how World War II was a war of imagery and how inaccurate representations of black service members handicapped their military and societal progress (i.e., the use of the local and national medias, the black press, movies, and how various propaganda tools influenced the image of the face of combat among America’s youth and beyond). Furthermore, this chapter contends that the Marine Corps could have commissioned blacks by following three salient examples. U.S. Army historical models

of task organization and combat employment of black soldiers in the United States Colored Troops (USCT); the 93rd Infantry Division, which also deployed to the Pacific; and the 99th Pursuit Squadron and the 332nd Fighter Group, America's first all-black flying units (the Tuskegee Airmen). In addition, it will highlight the significance of the 1925 U.S. Army War College study of the use of Negro manpower, following the First World War.

Apart from fighting endless bouts of racism within their service communities, these all-black units serve as examples of the Army's steps toward affording African Americans greater opportunities to contribute in technical and frontline combat occupational specialties and assignments. Moreover, these types of opportunities offered blacks an escape from being limited *solely* to noncombat assignments (i.e., restricting blacks to *only* auxiliary/service and support units), which were all in accordance with World War II Marine Corps directives. This chapter will further emphasize the meaning of military service for black Marines and how it connected to imperative organs of citizenship, and briefly explore the multifaceted aspects of Montford Point. After the war, African American Marines had to adjust to peacetime measures within the military and the challenges of finding greater purpose until President Harry S. Truman mandated the integration of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Chapter 5 examines how the other service branches made relatively greater strides toward racial assimilation by following its pre-World War II framework of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) program. Based on the framework of the CCC program, this alternative approach to utilizing blacks, albeit in segregated units, served as model for the

armed forces to commission blacks as officers, whereas the Marine Corps instituted no comparable reform throughout World War II. This chapter will also investigate the creation, evolution, and significance of President Harry S. Truman's landmark Executive Orders 9808 and 9981, and how the Marine Corps integrated its ranks in comparison to the other service branches. Finally, this chapter will briefly explore black military participation during the Korean War and contend that this war assisted in carving out substantial space for African American Marines to earn greater military legitimacy, specifically through an emerging civil rights era in arguably the last major battle of the Cold War—Vietnam.

Chapter 6 asserts that between 1965 and 1970, the local, national, and black media outlets highlighted the methodological deficiencies of military commanders to maintain a united and cohesive Marine Corps during the Vietnam War. It explores Marine officials' dearth of education regarding black history, and the measures taken to gain greater knowledge of how to better lead and engage with blacks (i.e., high ranking Marine officers attended classes at local colleges to learn about the history of blacks in America). This chapter will also illuminate the racial turmoil of the era and how African American Marines came to define Vietnam as the "White Man's War," and their methods of protest, power, and solidarity (i.e., black power saluting, "dapping," and the significance of base riots). Furthermore, this chapter will briefly discuss the dynamic relationship between the Black Power Movement, the Civil Rights Movement, and the results of the Vietnam War on black and white Marines.

Chapter 7 evaluates the outcomes of the alternative approaches and educational reform measures used by Marine officials to address systemic racial discrimination and turbulence throughout the 1960s. A new generation of African Americans had arrived in the Marine Corps, more vocal and less tolerant of traditional military practices. In contrast to their predecessors, these men were imbued with a greater sense of purpose, pride, and self-respect, which caused the Marine Corps to reevaluate race relations. However, what led the organization to the brink of a quasi-race war? This chapter addresses this question by investigating the social dynamics of the psychological adjustments made by both black and white Marines, and how these adjustments, specifically in black identity, created a battleground ripe for social conflict.

This chapter will further investigate the major shifts in African American Marine attitudes toward military service, institutional strategies for greater diversity, Marine Corps institutional guilt, and the eventual awarding of the Congressional Gold Medal to the men of Montford Point. This chapter will conclude by discussing the subsequent legacy of African American Marines, the significance of their military service from the early 1940s to the early 1970s, and how during this period, their names failed to reach the iconic status of highly decorated combat veterans.

Chapter 2

The Black Leatherneck Experience in Modern Warfare

... There would be a definite loss of efficiency in the Marine Corps if we have to take Negroes ... the Negro race has every opportunity now to satisfy its aspirations for combat, in the Army—a very much larger organization than the Navy or Marine Corps—and their desire to enter the naval service is largely, I think, to break into a club that doesn't want them.

—Major General Thomas Holcomb,
17th Commandant of the Marine Corps
(testimony given before the General Board of the United States Navy on January 23, 1942)

The right to serve was much more difficult for African Americans during the World War II era than most might realize today. White America had participated in World War II as a remarkably unified nation. In black America, however, a strong current of apathy remained evident. The draft did not inspire much confidence for African Americans either, but they fought nonetheless, some with less apathy, while others embraced the struggle. For blacks, the realities of war brought into sharp relief their duality in American society.¹

As World War II took shape, Adolf Hitler promised to bring to the world a “new order” at the barrel tip of a gun, while President Roosevelt offered an alternative vision of a new order. He identified Allied war aims predicated upon “hope, rather than fear,” “opportunity rather than enslavement,” “free expression rather than repression,” and “cooperation rather than domination.” According to Roosevelt, these fundamental *Four Freedoms* were guaranteed to the average American and embodied by the New Deal. He presented these freedoms to the world as “the foundations of a healthy and strong

¹ Michael C. C. Adams, *The Best War Ever: America and World War II* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), xi–xv, 69; Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, “Blacks, Loyalty, and Motion-Picture Propaganda in World War II,” *Journal of American History* 73 (September 1986): 383.

democracy.” In closing, Roosevelt offered the following to a distressed and stratified citizenry: “To that new order we oppose the greater conception—the moral order. A good society is able to face schemes of world domination and foreign revolutions alike without fear.... This nation has placed its destiny in the hands and heads and hearts of its millions of free men and women; and its faith in freedom under the guidance of God.” For blacks, the freedom illustrated by Roosevelt was suffocated by enslavement, not *opportunity*, repression, and not *expression*, and *domination* rather than *cooperation*. Roosevelt would continue, “Freedom means the supremacy of human rights everywhere. Our support goes to those who struggle to gain those rights or keep them. Our strength is our unity of purpose. To that high concept there can be no end save victory.”² However, these words rang hollow, falling on the deaf ears of millions of African Americans. Eleven months later this would only change slightly as the United States entered the Second World War.

On December 7, 1941, when the Japanese attacked the United States, *all* Americans reacted with anger and shock; however, at the time, the level of national cohesion and support for Allied efforts was modest. With the majority of the United States committed to the war effort, those in charge of the conduct of war quickly recognized that the fabric of the nation needed to be mended and strengthened; that is, that *every* American, including blacks, needed to be persuaded to understand and clearly see the righteousness of the nation’s cause. Furthermore, average Americans had to

² Franklin Delano Roosevelt, “Message to Congress – The State of the Union, January 6, 1941,” Box 58, File 1353 (Hyde Park, N.Y.: Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum) [hereafter cited as Roosevelt, “Four Freedoms Speech”]; Mary A. Morton, “The Federal Government and Negro Morale,” *Journal of Negro Education* 12 (Summer 1943): 452–463. See also David M. Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 469–470, 760.

accept the Allied cause as their own personal mission and devote their energies to the war effort at home and abroad. Accepting the Allied cause was feasible for blacks, but the ability to clearly understand the righteousness of America's war efforts would take greater persuasion, especially concerning the rights to equal shares in a model democracy, and the privileges of first-class citizenship. The United States could not achieve world leadership while maintaining a second-class citizenry and tolerating the evil spectacle of racial segregation and discrimination.³

The title, "Mr. President, What of the Marines?" originated from an editorial cartoon, posted as a suggestion by William A. Brower of the *Baltimore Afro-American* to President Roosevelt for a national fireside chat. Brower, the newspaper's editor from Richmond, Virginia, discovered that by the close of 1944, the Marine Corps had an enlisted strength of 18,000 blacks, with half serving overseas, and not one had been afforded the chance to earn the right to lead his peers as commissioned officer. Membership into this exclusive club, to serve at the pleasure of the president, was not even a discussion item among Marine Corps war planners; therefore, it held no significance to the president.

What Brower feared most was that the likelihood of an African American receiving a commission in the Marine Corps was a fait accompli. For this reason, Brower expressed the following in a short column,

³ George H. Gallup, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1935–1971*, Vol. 1, 1935–1938 (New York: Random House, 1972), 257–313; Hadley Cantril, *Gauging Public Opinion* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1944), 23–65; Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear*, 163–170, 218–248, 287, 319–322, 337–362, 363–381, 399–409, 434, 465–480; Percival L. Prattis, "The Morale of the Negro in the Armed Services of the United States," *Journal of Negro Education* 12 (Summer 1943): 356.

If the Navy Department seeks to make us believe that out of 18,000 men none, after a year's training and service, merits promotion, then we know the Navy speaks falsely and that race prejudice is operating full blast. It's time we take the matter out of the Navy's hands and place the responsibility for this crime on the lap of the President of the United States, who is commander-in-chief.⁴

While blacks had become officers in the U.S. Army, Navy, and Coast Guard before the close of World War II, not one black Marine had achieved commissioned status. By 1944, twelve African Americans among a group of thirteen, including one warrant officer, earned commissions in the U.S. Navy, a group known as the *Golden Thirteen*. In this same year, two African Americans earned commissions in the U.S. Coast Guard. In the Army, blacks had earned commissions since the late nineteenth century, and many officers (fighter pilots) received commissions in the U.S. Army Air Force during the 1940s.⁵ Notable U.S. Army officers include Henry Ossian Flipper, the first African American graduate of the United States Military Academy; Benjamin O. Davis, Sr., America's first black general, U.S. Army; and his son, Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., the first commander of the first all-black Army Air Corps unit, and the first African American

⁴ "Suggestion for the Next Broadcast," *Baltimore Afro-American*, August 19, 1944; "Mr. President, What of the Marines?" (18,000 Colored Marines, Not One Colored Officer) *Baltimore Afro-American*, August 19, 1944; "Not One Colored Officer in Marines," *Philadelphia Afro-American*, August 19, 1944; Chas H. Thompson, "The Basis of Negro Morale in World War II," *Journal of Negro Education* 11 (October 1942): 454–464; Campbell C. Johnson, "The Mobilization of Negro Manpower for the Armed Forces," *Journal of Negro Education* 12 (Summer 1943): 298–306. See also Dwight MacDonald and Nancy MacDonald, "The War's Greatest Scandal! The Story of Jim Crow in Uniform," *The March on Washington Movement*, June/July 1943, James Leonard, Jr. and Lula Peterson Farmer Papers, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Box: 2R637, Folder: "Printed Materials": Reports, etc. 1930s–1940s [hereafter cited as Leonard and Farmer Papers].

⁵ Judson L. Jeffries, "The Marine Corps' First Black Commissioned Officer: The Life and Legacy of Frederick C. Branch," *North Carolina Historical Review* 87 (October 2010): 388. For information pertaining to success in addressing and dealing with the sensitive "Negro Problem" in the U.S. Navy, see Julius A. Furer, *Administration of the Navy Department in World War II* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1959), 307–309.

general in the United States Air Force.⁶

These men are representative of the strides the U.S. Army had made in commissioning blacks for more than 80 years. Several Army units only had token representation of African Americans, and though the Army was reluctant, it demonstrated that changes in racial policies did take effect. Between 1941 and 1943, the “race question” was one of the chief policy issues of the War Department; this was to ensure that African Americans represented approximately 10 percent of the Army, a figure to be maintained throughout the Korean War. The trend moved toward achieving the same percentage that blacks composed among the U.S. population, a goal that was never reached.⁷

The “Race Question” and the Army Way of Segregation

As with the Marine Corps, the Army’s organizational structure and racial policies were based on historical models of segregation. Since racial segregation was part of civilian

⁶ Lieutenant Henry O. Flipper, *The Colored Cadet at West Point: Autobiography of Lieut. Henry Ossian Flipper, U.S.A., First Graduate of Color from the U.S. Military Academy* (New York: Homer Lee & Co., 1878); Marvin E. Fletcher, *America’s First Black General: Benjamin O. Davis, Sr., 1880–1970* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1989); Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. was also a graduate of the United States Military Academy (West Point), see Paul Silberman, *Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. Collection* (Washington, D.C.: National Air And Space Museum, Archive Division, 2003); Gerald W. Patton, *War and Race: The Black Officer in the American Military, 1915–1941* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), 3–13.

⁷ By 1945, African Americans represented less than five percent of the U.S. Armed Forces. See Martin Binkin, Mark J. Eitelberg, Alvin J. Schexnider, and Marvin M. Smith, *Blacks and the Military: Studies in Defense Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1982), 19, 24–25; Ulysses G. Lee, Jr., *The Employment of Negro Troops* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966; reprint, Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 2000), 36–39, 703–704. “The persistent legacy” as it came before the War Department in 1940 was a complex mixture of facts and attitudes. In fact, most white Americans would not sanction the intermixture of whites and blacks in the intimate association of military life, and it was equally a fact that segregation was repellent among most educated blacks and the rank and file. It was a final fact that segregation was the tradition of the Army, and, in one form or another, of most of civilian America. Segregation was the nation’s *modus vivendi*, and the Army followed it, except in its Officer Candidate Schools. See Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947), 461–464.

life in the United States before the inception of its military, the Army believed that it should mirror this fixed element within the military establishment as well. Not willing to step beyond the significant fact of having African Americans in fighting units, the Army and the Marine Corps took the position that their respective organizations should not be a laboratory for social experimentation. Senior military officials believed that integration would limit unit efficiency and create unnecessary racial friction.⁸ “... There would be a definite loss of efficiency in the Marine Corps if we have to take Negroes ... the Negro race has every opportunity now to satisfy its aspirations for combat, in the Army—a very much larger organization than the Navy or Marine Corps—and their desire to enter the naval service is largely, I think, to break into a club that doesn’t want them.” According to Major General Thomas Holcomb, the 17th Commandant of the Marine Corps, this statement to the General Board of the United States Navy in 1942 set a standard for what it would mean to enter the Marines as an African American recruit.⁹

Army and Marine Corps senior officials based their notions of combat efficiency on the Civil War performance of black troops, which by its very nature was complicated. Bear in mind that during this period, black wartime performance was recorded by senior white commanders. It is also important to note that the U.S. Army had not only

⁸ Alan M. Osur, *Blacks in the Army Air Forces During World War II: The Problems of Race Relations* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Air Force History, United States Air Force, 1986), 2–8; Binkin, Eitelberg, Schexnider, and Smith, *Blacks and the Military*, 19; Lee, *Employment of Negro Troops*, 36–39; see also Russell F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1967), 262.

⁹ Major General Thomas Holcomb’s testimony during the hearings of the General Board of the United States Navy, dated January 23, 1942. Subject: “Enlistment of Men of Colored Race,” Record Group 127: Records of the United States Marine Corps, History and Museums Division, PUBLICATION BACKGROUND FILES, “Brief History of Blacks in USMC, 1942–73,” Draft Text & Source Documents, Box 135 (College Park, MD: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration) [hereafter cited as RG 127: Box 135, NARA].

established, but also pushed to form all-black units during the American Civil War (1861–1865). The Civil War serves as the bedrock for the origins of the modern African American military experience given the limited resources on America's first black Marines. African American participation during the Civil War also became the ultimate litmus test for white military commanders to reference, not only the war itself, but also for the future use of black manpower in World War I and beyond. Understanding this aspect of modern military history provides greater insights into the organizational approaches senior Marine officials used to justify and rationalize the military status and utilization of African Americans in modern warfare.

Despite organizational structures, formalized racial policies and practices drove the narrative of African American combat performance. The “Negro Question” of the 1940s American military witnessed its origins in the summer of 1863. Prevailing attitudes and the discourse surrounding black military participation during the Civil War era seamlessly merged into the discourse of the World War II era. Historian Keith Wilson argues that Colonel Robert Gould Shaw, commander of the 54th Massachusetts, believed the assault on Fort Wagner, SC, served as the proper occasion to show the nation the capabilities of African American soldiers. Ironically, and similar to the majority of white Americans, Colonel Shaw did not always regard black troops with such optimism. Shaw's attitude drastically changed after taking command of the 54th. Wilson asserts that in June of 1863, Shaw was enthusiastic in thinking his unit might strike a severe blow against slavery and indignant racial attitudes. Nonetheless, Shaw remained uncertain

about the performance of black troops in battle. Shaw's own racial prejudice significantly shaped his perception of his own soldiers' abilities.¹⁰

During the early stages of the war Shaw wrote in letters to friends, referring to blacks he encountered as "darkeys" and "niggers." Wilson concludes that these references became less common as Shaw became more familiar with African American soldiers; nevertheless, his attitude remained condescending. Still, Shaw was motivated by a strong desire to "prove that a Negro can be made a good soldier," exercising great faith in the discipline and training routines of the army. The alleged malleable nature of the Negro appealed to him because he considered blacks more easily disciplined than white troops, believing that blacks would make a "fine army after a little drill and could certainly be kept under better discipline" than "independent Yankees."¹¹

Historian Susan-Mary Grant concludes that the assault on Fort Wagner (one of the most heavily defended and impregnable of the Confederate forts) was militarily doomed to failure. Grant further concludes that following the Fort Wagner fiasco, the 54th and its sister regiment, the 55th, did achieve military victories against the Confederacy, but in the more general struggle against racism. Fort Wagner was significant, regardless of

¹⁰ Keith Wilson, "In the Shadow of John Brown," in *Black Soldiers in Blue*, John David Smith, ed., *Black Soldiers in Blue: African American Troops in the Civil War Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2002), 321.

¹¹ Russell Duncan, ed., *Blue-Eyed Child of Fortune: The Civil War Letters of Colonel Robert Gould Shaw* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 51; William A. Gladstone, *Men of Color* (Gettysburg, PA: Thomas Publishing, 1993), 34; Wilson, "In the Shadow of John Brown," in *Black Soldiers in Blue*, Smith, ed., 321; Susan-Mary Grant, "Fighting for Freedom: African American Soldiers in the Civil War," in *Themes of the American Civil War: The War Between the States*, edited by Susan-Mary Grant and Brian Holden Reid (New York: Routledge, 2010), 193–194; Colonel Robert Gould Shaw's February 8, 1863 letter, to his wife, Annie in Duncan, ed., *Blue-Eyed Child of Fortune*, 285–286; Colonel Robert Gould Shaw quoted in Smith, *Black Soldiers in Blue*, 322.

complete success. One white Union soldier, who expressed extreme hostility toward African Americans before the 54th's assault on Battery Wagner, felt compelled to declare afterwards that in his opinion the "54th Mass Infantry 'colored' is as good a fighting regiment as there is in the 10th Army Corps Department of the South." Notwithstanding, his objections to fighting alongside black troops remained.¹²

Civil War historian William A. Gladstone argues that although African Americans performed honorably in previous battles, it was the death of Colonel Shaw that changed the feelings of many whites who doubted the fighting capabilities and contributions of blacks in Union blue. Shaw's death communicated to Union officers that spilling blood alongside blacks in battle was no less worthy than it was among whites, which increased the visibility of the courage and bravery displayed by black units in pivotal battles.¹³

Dudley Taylor Cornish provides a full complement of revealing and valuable statistics on the Union's total figures for enlisting African Americans, their recruitment, deaths, and desertions. In evaluating African Americans' performance in battle, Cornish relies on the words of commanding officers that observed them in action such as Charles Francis Adams, Jr., who also experienced a change of heart during the latter stages of the war; moreover, while these comments are mainly commendatory, objections to fighting side-by-side African Americans remained prevalent. Cornish concludes that despite the discriminations against them in pay, promotions, and duty assignments, Negro soldiers continually fought well; further concluding that they fought not only for the flag and the

¹² Grant, "Fighting for Freedom," 194.

¹³ Smith, *Black Soldiers in Blue*, 321–322.

Union, but for their personal freedom and the refute contentions that they lacked soldierly qualities.¹⁴

The military service of black soldiers in the Union army during the American Civil War represents one of the most dramatic episodes in modern African American history, which significantly influenced senior military commanders for the next century. Over a short period of time, black men went from being powerless chattel to being part of a liberating army, helping to free nearly four million slaves from bondage. Yet, their experience was not entirely positive. Their service as soldiers was initially refused, and they had to fight for the right to fight. Even when the Union army did accept them, black men served in segregated units under the command of white officers. Initially, the federal government paid African Americans less than white soldiers, and subjected them to other humiliating forms of racial discrimination and ill treatment. Nonetheless, black soldiers served loyally and proved their worth in battle, winning the grudging admiration of even their Confederate enemies and a permanent place in the post-war U.S. Army.¹⁵

Although the military service of African Americans seemed unlikely at the beginning of the Civil War, white northerners and southerners alike were of the opinion

¹⁴ A Civil War Union Brevet Brigadier General and member of the prominent Adams family (father: Charles F. Adams, grandfather: John Quincy Adams), at age 26 he volunteered for the Union Army, and was commissioned a first Lieutenant in Company H, First Massachusetts Volunteer Cavalry. He served with his company as it fought in South Carolina and in the September 1862 Antietam Campaign. Promoted to Captain and commander of Company H on October 30, 1862, he directed the unit during its participation in the June–July 1863 Gettysburg Campaign, and fought in the heavy cavalry clash at Aldie, Virginia, on June 17, 1863. Commissioned a Lieutenant Colonel on 15 July 1864, Adams then received orders to be second in command of the Fifth Massachusetts (Colored) Volunteer Cavalry. The regiment fought in the Siege of Petersburg, Virginia. See Dudley Taylor Cornish, *The Sable Arm: Negro Troops in the Union Army, 1861–1865* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1956), 132.

¹⁵ Howard C. Westwood, *Black Troops, White Commanders and Freedmen during the Civil War* (Carbondale, Ill: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008), 25–29, 32, 86–89, 92, 103n27.

that the conflict would be a war for *white men only*. In part, the resistance to black soldiers was the result of racist beliefs that African Americans were mentally and temperamentally unsuited for military service. Whites accepted this myth in spite of the participation of black men in the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. Moreover, resistance to black military service also stemmed from conceptions of citizenship in the nineteenth-century. At the time, Americans tended to conflate military service with first-class citizenship with all its accompanying rights. If black men were allowed to serve, they would have a strong argument for claiming citizenship rights, having borne the most onerous obligation of citizenship.¹⁶

Civil War era-African American leaders were keenly aware of the connection between citizenship and military service, as were their successors during the twentieth century. The ringing words of Frederick Douglass's famous quote highlight this very idea: "Once let the black man get upon his person the brass letters 'US,' let him get an eagle on his button, and a musket on his shoulder, and bullets in his pocket, and there is no power on earth or under the earth which can deny that he has earned the right of citizenship in the United States."¹⁷ This belief helps explain the later presence of Frederick Douglass and other African American leaders at the forefront of Union recruitment efforts in free black communities. In addition to Douglass, prominent leaders such as Henry Highland Garnet, William Wells Brown, Martin R. Delany, and George T. Downing recruited thousands of young blacks for service in the Union army with the

¹⁶ Westwood, *Black Troops, White Commanders*, 25–29, 32, 86–89, 92, 103n27.

¹⁷ Frederick Douglass quoted in Gladstone, *Men of Color*, 1–5.

hope that their service would help transform the struggle into one that would free slaves and bring African Americans equal rights in a transformed and redeemed republic.¹⁸

The success of black soldiers during previous battles, but specifically Fort Wagner, and the insatiable need of the Union army for fresh soldiers, encouraged the large-scale enlistment of African Americans. These soldiers also discovered their might in the execution of military duties. When African American soldiers witnessed their own baptism in blood in the late spring and summer of 1863, their achievements in battle disproved racist myths and ideas that African Americans were cowardly by nature and lacked either the discipline or intelligence to succeed in combat. However, such notions died hard. Moreover, the use of black soldiers in battle was largely limited to units from states that pressed for them to be used in combat, or in places where white military commanders were willing to employ them, or could not dispense with their services. Nevertheless, as a practical matter, the significant use of black soldiers in battle during the Civil War is indicated by the fact that these men took part in 39 significant battles and 419 skirmishes, even though they did indeed have disproportionate fatigue, picket, and garrison duties.¹⁹

That African American soldiers fought bravely speaks to their resilience that even when they fought in a failing effort, they demonstrated manly fortitude and could win a moral victory. This courage and determination won them the admiration of their white officers and soldiers, and of members of the northern public who read about their exploits in newspapers. By the end of the war, the army recognized their valor by awarding black

¹⁸ Joyce Hansen, *Between Two Fires: Black Soldiers in the Civil War* (New York: F. Watts, 1993), 67–78.

¹⁹ Westwood, *Black Troops, White Commanders*, 25–29, 32, 86–89, 92, 103n27.

soldiers several combat decorations, including sixteen Congressional Medals of Honor. Despite the federal government's awarding of sixteen Medals of Honor to black Union troops, official military after action reports conveniently dismissed such actions and events. Rather, these reports advance white views of a degenerate minority by focusing on "instances of incompetence and even of mutiny ... where an entire regiment [of black troops] participated in a riot, attempting to shoot one of the officers...."²⁰

Historian Richard Dalfiume argues that the U.S. Army had since 1863 functioned with a *separate but equal* policy, asserting that it had made a major concession to African American opinion in 1940 when it promised that blacks would serve in all its branches. Furthermore, the U.S. Army was of the opinion that segregation did not lead to racial discrimination against black soldiers. However, as African American Marines and soldiers continued to participate in World War II, "they became more convinced that segregation inevitably led to racial discrimination," which confirmed much of their thinking throughout the war.²¹

During the World War II era, neither the War Department nor the Navy Department could legally exercise jurisdiction over the other. Even working closely together in the defense organization, the Navy Department consistently followed its own structural standard and usually took issue with War Department plans regarding World War II force structure. Nevertheless, the War Department's examples in dealing with racial policies and practices, and its task organization of African Americans,

²⁰ U.S. Army War College, *The Use of Negro Manpower in War*, AWC 127–25, October 30, 1925 (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army Military History Institute) [hereafter cited as AWC 127–25].

²¹ Richard M. Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces: Fighting on Two Fronts, 1939–1953* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1969), 45.

demonstrated that the military services could create programs to better educate its members on the social and military significance of assimilating minorities. Conversely, to the Navy Department, the War Department offered minorities greater opportunities for advancement and representation within the U.S. Army.²²

In November 1940, during the Hampton Conference on National Defense, Colonel West A. Hamilton, an African American Army infantry reservist, gave a speech entitled “The Negroes’ Historical and Contemporary Role in National Defense.” In his speech, Hamilton addressed the fine heritage and wartime participation of blacks in military campaigns (i.e., the French and Indian War, the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the U.S. Civil War, the Spanish-American War, and World War I), asserting,

We do have a small but fine representation in the armed forces, particularly the army. We have a fine upstanding reservoir of manpower in the form of Negro youth, willing and anxious to serve. It is my considered judgment that we should join hands in exploiting and utilizing to the utmost limit what we have in the way of army personnel and leadership, trained and potential; that we should hasten in every way possible the development of military-minded intelligent young men ready to accept such training as will enable them to accept the responsibilities when offered and to discharge them with honor and credit.²³

²² Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces*, 8–9, 11, 13, 22–24, 28–30, 35–41, 45–51, 58–59, 69, 74–79, 82–88, 90–103, 124, 143, 148–153.

²³ West A. Hamilton, Colonel, USA Infantry Reserve, “The Negroes’ Historical and Contemporary Role in National Defense,” Hampton Conference on National Defense, Section on Military and Naval Defense, November 25–26, 1940. Miscellaneous, Record Group 220: Records of the President’s Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Forces, Box 11, Folder 9 (Independence, MO: The Harry S. Truman Library and Museum). See also Chas H. Thompson, “Editorial Note: The American Negro in World War I and World War II,” *Journal of Negro Education* 12 (Summer 1943): 263–267; Charles H. Houston, “Critical Summary: The Negro in the U.S. Armed Forces in World Wars I and II,” *Journal of Negro Education* 12 (Summer 1943): 364–366; Andrew D. Amron, “Reinforcing Manliness: Black State Militias, the Spanish-American War, and the Image of the African American Soldier, 1891–1900,” *Journal of African American History* 97 (Fall 2012): 401–426; Gerard T. Altoff, “War of 1812: Leathernecks on Lake Erie,” *Leatherneck* 71 (November 1988): 36–43.

In 1940, an African American representative such as Hamilton was unknown in the Navy Department and the Marines. Further, Hamilton's rhetoric and advocacy never appeared in any official Marine Corps publications after the admission of black Marines. During this period, African American soldiers had a voice among the officer ranks to push and fight for their cause. This type of African American representation gave the Army a considerable head start in addressing ways to better assimilate blacks to fully participate in the war effort.

Despite the Army's example of relative progress, as late as April 1944, Headquarters Marine Corps was still recommending against "colored" officers. In spite of that, a year later, the first three black officer candidates reported to Quantico, Virginia for Officer Candidates School (OCS), but this would be short lived and not realized until after the close of the war. "All had clean service records and had proven themselves to be qualified and capable Marines," according to Montford Pointer Gene Doughty. "One was a sergeant major, two were first sergeants; all three were college graduates, and all three failed out of OCS—one physically, the other two academically."²⁴ The first African American second lieutenant in the Marine Corps Reserve, Frederick C. Branch, did not receive his commission until November 10, 1945. It would not be until May 28, 1948 that

²⁴ According to Gene Doughty, a Montford Point Marine, it was later discovered that the black Marines who failed to complete OCS had legitimate health issues. Moreover, he revealed that the Marine Corps used "minor health issues" as a way to keep blacks from becoming officers. Montford Pointer Sam Saxton, who served during World War II, Korea, and Vietnam, stated: "the Marine Corps was pretty racist at that time.... they simply didn't want us to become officers, that's all there is to it." See Jeffries, "The Marine Corps' First Black Commissioned Officer," 388; Henry I. Shaw, Jr. and Ralph W. Donnelly, *Blacks in the Marine Corps* (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1975; reprint 2002), 47–49; Bernard C. Nalty, *The Right to Fight: African-American Marines in World War II* (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1994), 27; Ulbrich, *Preparing for Victory*, 73.

another African American would receive a regular commission in the Marines. In 1944, the highest-ranking African American officer in the U.S. Army, Benjamin O. Davis, Sr., was a brigadier general. This example elucidates the depth and longevity of the Marine Corps's discriminatory practices and efforts to avoid admitting blacks into its most elite spheres.²⁵

Democracy in Words, Jim Crow in Deeds

Although World War II represented a watershed moment for the status of African Americans in the armed forces, during the 1940s, blacks witnessed their opportunities in the U.S. and abroad, trend in distinct ways. Most of the time, white America set these trends in reaction to the perceived progress of African Americans, which would be dictated by Jim Crow laws. Recently, accounts concerning the military service of African American Marines in World War II have increased. The principle conversations and investigations surrounding the wartime participation of black Marines center on several major topics that have been thoroughly addressed in previous works, such as their enthusiasm and hesitation to join the Marine Corps. These works further highlight their knowledge of the Marine Corps during the 1940s, their field and garrison assignments, prevailing attitudes of the time, and their character of service. This project briefly examines how these topics shaped the attitudes of black Marines and white American society. It also uses these topics of discussion to provide greater context to better

²⁵ Regarding the prohibition on black officers, see Shaw and Donnelly, *Blacks in the Marine Corps*, 47–49; Nalty, *Right to Fight*, 2, 4; Edwin Howard Simmons, *The United States Marines: A History* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2003), 7, 186–189; Letter from the Commandant, U.S. Marine Corps, to All Commanding Officers, dated May 14, 1943, Subject: Colored Personnel (formerly classified CONFIDENTIAL), RG 127: Box 134 NARA.

understanding the salient features of the era. Moreover, these epochal features were instrumental in carving out social space for black Marines to contest forces that would attempt to delegitimize their military service throughout the Cold War era.²⁶

One of the most prominent and entrenched forces would be the “Negro Question.” In 1940, the Roosevelt Administration had much to contend with, but the “Negro Question” pressed the hardest. In order to better understand the subject of how African Americans reacted to World War II, it is necessary to have some idea of the racial discrimination they faced. African Americans welcomed the U.S. defense build up in 1940, despite their disproportionate representation among the unemployed population. Furthermore, racial discrimination among the stimulated industries remained widespread. For example, aircraft factory employers pleaded for workers, yet African Americans discovered that they would *only* be considered for janitorial duties within the industry. In addition, as government financed training programs sought to overcome the shortages of skilled laborers, black trainees continued to experience discrimination. Even when federal agencies issued orders against such business practices, industry leaders ignored them.²⁷

Nevertheless, African Americans had made significant strides in the years following the depression in education, self-respect, independence, and their political consciousness regarding democratic rights. Despite white America’s efforts to turn back

²⁶ Ronald K. Culp, *First Black United States Marines: The Men of Montford Point, 1942–1946* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, 2007); Melton A. McLaurin, *Marines of Montford Point: America’s First Black Marines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Bernard C. Nalty, *Strength for the Fight: A History of Black Americans in the Military* (New York: Free Press, 1986); Shaw and Donnelly, *Blacks in the Marine Corps*; Nalty, *Right to Fight*.

²⁷ Richard M. Dalfiume, “The ‘Forgotten Years’ of the Negro Revolution,” *Journal of American History* 55 (June 1968): 91.

the clock, these gains, and a relative rise in social status, communicated that blacks would no longer remain silent on matters involving domestic injustices. African Americans had forced several important concessions since World War I. Specifically, the anti-discrimination clause of the 1940 Draft Act, which military officials violated with impunity, although Roosevelt signed the draft act into law. Few people were even aware of the existence of the anti-discrimination clause, and even fewer attempted to enforce it in an effort to protect the spirit of the clause. Once again, the democratic rights of African American service members would fall victim to the whims of Jim Crow laws. Neither Congress, which passed the law, nor the president who signed it, raised the slightest protest.²⁸

Even with this gratuitous oversight by the commander-in-chief, on June 25, 1941, President Roosevelt (a man well known for his progressive social attitudes) issued Executive Order 8802, establishing the Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC). This executive order opened the door for blacks to serve in all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces and federal industries. Roosevelt's order *officially* permitted African Americans, for the first time since 1798, to join the Marine Corps—the only branch of the military that, then, excluded blacks from entering its ranks.²⁹

²⁸ 1940 Draft Act, Section 4 (a): “In the selection and training of men under this Act, and in the interpretation and execution of the provisions of this Act, there shall be no discrimination against any person on account of race or color.” See Leonard and Farmer Papers.

²⁹ In early July 1941, millions of jobs were being created, primarily in urban areas, as the United States prepared for war. When large numbers of African Americans moved to cities in the north and west to work in defense industries, they were often met with violence and discrimination. In response, A. Philip Randolph, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, and other black leaders, met with Eleanor Roosevelt and members of the President's cabinet. During these meetings, Randolph presented a list of grievances regarding the civil rights of African Americans, demanding that an executive order be issued to

The Marine Corps's response was to admit blacks but train them in an isolated and separate camp, and then assign them to remote duty stations. In addition, the creation of Camp Montford Point enabled racial discrimination and segregation to remain prevalent in the lives of black and white Marines, which will be discussed in further detail in later chapters. Despite that, Camp Montford Point brought about a change that allowed black Marines to make significant military contributions when the United States needed its citizenry to think beyond its own ethnic groups and racial stereotypes.

For African Americans, the most significant bread-and-butter issue during this period was employment discrimination; therefore, their position in the armed forces proved critical, and served as an important symbol to the black community. For that reason, on the eve of World War II, one of the top priorities for many African Americans was to ensure that they could *fully* and *equally* participate in the armed forces. If blacks could not fully participate in the defense of the country, they would fail to lay claim to the rights of full-fledged citizenship. African Americans demanded equal opportunities, but also an increasing number called for ending racial segregation and explicit discrimination involved in the separation of the races in civilian society. Historian Neil

stop job discrimination in the defense industry. Randolph, with others, threatened that they were prepared to bring "ten, twenty, fifty thousand Negroes on the White House lawn" if their demands were not met. After consultation with his advisers, Roosevelt responded to the black leaders and issued Executive Order 8802, which declared, "There shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries and in Government, because of race, creed, color, or national origin." It was the first Presidential directive on race since the Reconstruction. The order also established the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) to investigate incidents of discrimination. See "Memorandum for the Chief of Staff regarding Employment of Negro Man Power in War, November 10, 1925," President's Official Files, Box 3, Folder 4245-G: Office of Production Management: Commission on Fair Employment Practices: War Department, 1943 (Hyde Park, N.Y.: Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum). See also RG 127: Box 134, NARA.

A. Wynn asserts that reformers opposed racial restrictions on military service because such limitations weakened “claims to the same rights and privileges as other American citizens: If blacks could fight as equals, then blacks could expect to be recognized and rewarded as equals.” Similar arguments had been made during World War I, and once again, military service during World War II thus became central to the civil rights campaign. Furthermore, “the logic of the black argument was further strengthened by American and Allied propaganda, which emphasized democratic principles and practices.”³⁰ The demand for unrestricted military participation was not merely a competition to simply wear a uniform, but a struggle for equal status, and a fight to take democracy off the “parchment and give it life.” In several respects, the discriminatory practices that characterized the armed forces penetrated deeper in the feelings of African Americans than did employment discrimination.³¹

During World War II, the employment of African Americans “generally resulted from a combination of four factors.” In order of importance these can be ranked as a “demand for increased production, a shortage in the labor supply, the intervention of federal government agencies, notably the Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC), and the pressure applied by African Americans and others interested in ending racial discrimination.” The first two factors soon became decisive; the second two were less effective. Despite the president’s executive order, knowledge of the admission of

³⁰ Neil A. Wynn, *The Afro-American and the Second World War* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1975), 21. For more on African American responses to World War I and during the interwar period, see Adriane Lentz-Smith, *Freedom Struggles: African Americans and World War I* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009) and Chad L. Williams, *Torchbearers of Democracy: African American Soldiers in the World War I Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

³¹ Dalfiume, “The ‘Forgotten Years’ of the Negro Revolution,” 92.

blacks in the Marine Corps faced geographical constraints, which further divided the North and the South. In the North, for example, Corporal Archibald Mosley, who joined the Marines in 1943, claimed that “In 1942, Franklin Delano Roosevelt offered a decree that entitled blacks to be anywhere in any of the armed forces.”³² Records indicate that Corporal Mosley’s reference to the Navy Department’s May 20, 1942 press release reached the ears of more northern African Americans at a faster rate than it had for southerners.

This example could account for the lack of knowledge so many black southern recruits demonstrated regarding the status of blacks in the Marine Corps; moreover, the Navy Department’s press release for plans to recruit African Americans in the Corps went out to newspapers and radio stations for *immediate release* nation-wide. Information concerning Executive Order 8802 suggests that news only reached those who lived in New York, at this time, or was garnered through associates of family members that had subsequently returned home on military leave. The *Baltimore Afro-American* and the *Chicago Defender*, both released news that the Marine Corps opened its ranks for the admission of blacks on May 30, 1942, ten days after the Navy Department’s press release. Delays such as this would persist for decades, which resulted in the minimal number of African Americans in the Corps. Nevertheless, the majority of blacks entered the armed forces with a high degree of morale, generated by a belief that democratic

³² A. Russell Buchanan, *Blacks in World War II* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 1977), 39. See also “Marines Had Race Barrier, Board Told,” *The Washington Post*, January 9, 1949. Corporal Mosley was born in Carbondale, Illinois; he served in Guam and participated in the invasion of Iwo Jima, Japan, and the occupation of Japan. Mosley left the Corps after the war. See Series 4: Military, Sub-Series 4.2: Montford Point, Item 40: Interview with Archibald Mosley, December 17, 2004, Melton McLaurin Papers, MS323, Folder 1 [hereafter cited as Mosley interview]. See also McLaurin, *Marines of Montford Point*, 188.

slogans literally meant what they proclaimed. Most African Americans submitted to the “close ranks” strategy broadcasted by civil rights champion, W. E. B. Du Bois, who urged members of the black community to subdue racial grievances in an effort to provide complete support in winning the war. However, in the minds of African Americans, this inspiring image of a new democratic order was shattered by lynchings, race riots, and unyielding racial discrimination.³³

Elements from this shattered vision of newfangled democracy settled neatly into World War II-era Marine Corps directives. On March 20, 1943, “Approximately ten (10) per cent of all enlisted men inducted in the Marine Corps subsequent to 1 February 1943 will be Negroes. The assimilation of this number of Negroes will in time result in a wide dispersion of this personnel throughout the Marine Corps.” Notwithstanding the sincere intent of this Marine Corps directive’s preamble to assimilate Negroes, it is important to note that black Marine recruits would only receive *enlistments*, not commissions during the early 1940s. Furthermore, this directive “... [assisted] commanding officers in formulating plans and providing facilities for the reception and employment of colored personnel.” This opening paragraph from General Harry Schmidt’s letter to all commanding generals in the Marine Corps created the first layer of subsequent racial barriers associated with black enlisted promotions and professional advancement. This letter issued by the assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, summarized the

³³ Department of the Navy, “Marines Announce Plans for Recruiting African-Americans,” Department of the Navy, May 20, 1942, RG 127: Box 135, NARA. See also Record Group 24: Bureau of Naval Personnel General Correspondence, 1941–1945, Box 611, NARA [hereafter cited as RG 24: Box 611, NARA]; Culp, *First Black United States Marines*, 29; “Navy, Marines Begin Recruiting June 1,” *Chicago Defender*, May 30, 1942; “Sailors and Marines to Enlist June 1,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, May 30, 1942; Dalfiume, “The ‘Forgotten Years’ of the Negro Revolution,” 92. See also Appendix B.

directives and plans regarding the employment and training of all *Colored Personnel* entering the Marine Corps during the early stages of World War II.³⁴

Since the Marine Corps established its own racial policies concerning African Americans, it was not obligated to follow the commissioning practices of the Army and the Navy. According to Marine Corps officials, the “Race Question” was a national and controversial issue that had to be evaded. Moreover, Marine commanders justified their embedded segregationist policies by accusing politicians of appeasing the black press at the expense of military service needs, and declared that until someone at a “higher level” resolved the issue, the services were not required to go any further in solving the race question. According to General Schmidt, the Negro press needed to take every step to prevent the publication of inflammatory articles. He asserted,

Such control is largely outside the province of the Marine Corps, but the Marine Corps can, by supplying the Negro press with suitable materials for publication and offering them the cooperation of our Public Relations Division, properly encourage a better standard of articles on the Negro in the military service.³⁵

This was simply lip service on the part of Schmidt. In other words, the Marine Corps’s stance to activists and reformers concerned with racial advancement elicited a turn inward: the responsibility of social experiments remains outside the scope of the organization’s primary military duties.³⁶

The military has historically functioned as a microcosm of American society, and

³⁴ RG 127: Box 134, NARA. See also James L. Hicks (National Newspaper Publishers Association Staff Writer), “Bare Secret Marine Order on Race,” *Chicago Defender*, February 16, 1946; “Marines Had Race Barrier, Board Told,” *Washington Post*, January 9, 1949. See also Appendix C and Appendix D.

³⁵ RG 127: Box 134, NARA; Appendix C.

³⁶ Shaw and Donnelly, *Blacks in the Marine Corps*, 49; Culp, *First Black United States Marines*, 227.

has maintained the political status of African Americans in particular. Furthermore, this manufactured social formation remained in place during World War II and would proceed in subsequent wars. The “Negro problem” characterized the thinking of white politicians and war planners, which dictated their actions and policies concerning blacks. Marine Corps officials deemed racial segregation as the most logical and efficient manner for dealing with the admittance of African Americans. Understanding the potential significance of black military service, war planners made every attempt to limit any transformation to the expressions or language regarding the rights of full citizenship among black Marines, “Mixing of white and colored enlisted personnel within the same unit will be avoided, except as may be temporarily necessary in providing white noncommissioned officers. Plans should contemplate relief of these white noncommissioned officers as rapidly as colored noncommissioned officers can be qualified.” Schmidt took this opportunity to attempt to replicate, as closely as possible, the domestic customs and practices of racial segregation.³⁷

The Marine Corps went to great lengths, as much as political officials would allow, to marginalize the role of African American Marines by using a combination of biological racism and historical references associated with the fears of armed rebellious black men. Taking into account his own practical knowledge and given the long experience of the U.S. Army and Negro organization, General Schmidt believed:

Successful units were commanded by excellent to superior white officers who were firm but sympathetic with their men, and who thoroughly knew their individual and racial characteristics and temperaments. These officers once assigned were not changed. The

³⁷ RG 127: Box 134, NARA. See also Leonard and Farmer Papers.

success of a Negro organization has depended largely on the personality of its commanders. It has taken this commander many months to gain their loyalty but once it is gained, they follow his leadership without question. Where one commander has been replaced by another officer of equal ability, it has taken the latter many months to gain their loyalty. In view of this characteristic, great care should be exercised in the initial choice of officers assigned to colored units, and, once assigned, every effort should be made to retain them in that organization.³⁸

For black and white troops, directives such as this elevated and hardened the social hierarchies of white supremacy, and served as a constant reminder of the Marine Corps's ingrained racial prejudice. Furthermore, Schmidt contended that equal discipline among Marines would lead to fewer racial incidents on military establishments, if adhered to by both black and white troops and leaders. However, the definition of discipline would take on different forms when applied to blacks and whites.³⁹ During the 1940s, military justice and discipline should never have been governed by skin color, yet it was, and would continue to be a prominent feature throughout the Vietnam era. A military judicial system for punitive measures and enforcing discipline within the collective body of the armed forces had been in place long before 1942. To assume black Marines needed a greater measure of definitive oversight outside of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) spoke more to the insecurities and explanations of Marine Corps officials' attempts to justify fears that an integrated service would lose combat effectiveness and elite status.

Far from being the definitive guide for leading black Marines, documents such as the one authored by General Schmidt would continue to guide Marine commanders in

³⁸ RG 127: Box 134, NARA. See also Patricia W. Romero, eds., *In Black America: 1968: The Year of Awakening* (New York: Publishers Company, 1969), 288–297.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

shaping the military experiences and history of African Americans. Schmidt's letter would only serve as a precursor to a much more egregious and Jim Crow-centric document his boss, the top Marine, would author in setting forth the "proper place" of black Marines. Service to *Corps* and *Country* remarkably captured the connections between manhood, race, and the rights and privileges of citizenship for African American Marines. For the men of Montford Point and subsequent generations of black Marines, the exigencies of war forced them to call into question their patriotic duties and obligations to serve those who branded them as menaces, never equals, and failed to recognize their wartime performance.

Chapter 3

You People: Things Must be Rough for Uncle Sam

When I returned from overseas and found Women Marines at Camp Lejeune and you people here at Montford Point, wearing our Globe and Anchor, it was then I realized that a grave state of war existed.

—**Brigadier General Henry L. Larsen**,
Commander of Camp Lejeune, North Carolina
(addressing Montford Point recruits, 1943)

Alvin J. Banker, a native of New Orleans, Louisiana, volunteered to serve in the United States Marine Corps believing "... that this was history in the making," of which he wanted to take part. Banker, who enlisted on July 16, 1942, was fully aware that the Marines had previously never admitted African Americans. Banker learned that the Marine Corps was recruiting blacks from reading the *Pittsburgh Courier*: "I was reading a newspaper, ... [the] *Pittsburgh Courier*, and I read in the paper where some men had joined the Marine Corps. One of them happened to be my scoutmaster [Raymond Floyd], also a member of my church." After this discovery, Banker informed his father of his decision, "You can't join the Marine Corps, they don't have any Colored boys in the Marine Corps," Banker's father replied. Emphatic in his response, Banker told his father, "Well they do now." "Well how do you know?" his father questioned. "Well, here it is in the paper. Mr. Floyd just joined," Banker answered.¹ Banker's father, like most Americans, had never heard of or seen a black Marine.

¹ Master Sergeant Alvin J. Banker, a career Marine, served with the occupation forces on Saipan during World War II. See Series 4: Military, Sub-Series 4.2: Montford Point, Item 2: Interview with Alvin J. Banker, June 29, 2005, Melton McLaurin Papers, MS323, William M. Randall Library Special Collections, University of North Carolina Wilmington, Oral History Collection, 1990–Present, UNCW Archives and Special Collections Online Database. See also, Marines of Montford Point Documentary, 2006–2007 in the Office of Marketing and Communications records: Montford Point Marines, ARCH2011.09, UNCW

Banker's father continued in his sermon tone, "You know you can't make it in the Marine Corps. Look at you, you're skinny and everything, you know the Marines fight on land, sea and in the air?"² Similarly convinced like much of the American public, Banker's father believed the Marines to be the roughest and toughest service in the military. Moreover, this storybook image of the Marines, which continues into the twenty-first century, gained particular prominence after the 1918 German defeat at Belleau Wood, where legend has it (only among U.S. Marines) that Marines fought so ferociously during this battle that the Germans nicknamed the amphibious warriors, *Teufelhunden* or "hounds from hell," popularly known today as *Devil Dogs*.³ Furthermore, the fighting character and bellicose nature of U.S. Marines during World

Archives, W. M. Randall Library, University of North Carolina, Wilmington, Folder 1 (hereafter cited as Series 4: Military, Sub-Series 4.2: Montford Point, Melton McLaurin Papers, MS323, Folder 1) [hereafter cited as Banker interview].

² Banker Interview. In this chapter, the wording and quotations of the men of Montford Point are unaltered from the original with the exception of a few grammatical changes for clarity. Each of these men entered the Marine Corps from 1941 through 1945 respectively. This sample of published interviews used throughout this dissertation are small, however, it is representative of the African Americans who entered the Marine Corps as volunteers and draftees during this era.

³ General Böhm, commander of the German 28th Division, was so impressed by the Marines' bellicosity and tactics that twenty-four years later, on Guadalcanal, a Japanese general would almost echo the exact same sentiments: "It is a question of the possession or nonpossession of this or that village or woods, insignificant in itself; it is a question whether the Anglo American claim that the American Army is equal or even the superior of the German Army is to be made good." The notion of battle as a test of cultural mettle and institutional reputations figured prominently and self-consciously in Marine Corps thinking from that time forward. This was a not a new idea in the annals of military organizations, but it marked for the USMC a rite of passage to maturity. A respected foe, allegedly, granted recognition of the Marines' institutional distinctiveness that performance made them a representative of the United States, separate from the Army. See Craig M. Cameron, *American Samurai: Myth, Imagination, and the Conduct of Battle in the First Marine Division, 1941–1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Eugene B. Sledge, *With the Old Breed: At Peleliu and Okinawa* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1981), 12–14; Robert H. Leckie, *Helmet For My Pillow: From Parris Island to the Pacific* (New York: Bantam Books, 1957), 6. For more on the cultural and social history of the modern Marine Corps see Aaron B. O'Connell, *Underdogs: The Making of the Modern Marine Corps* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 10, 10n24–10n25, 11.

War I quickly lifted the patriotic spirits of Washington, D.C. native Herman Darden. Much like Banker's father, this 1943 draftee also knew of the Marines's wartime prestige: "The reputation of the Marines was known to be rough and ready, and my mother asked me 'why?' I said, well, they're supposed to be first in battle, and first back home, so I don't want to stay out too long."⁴ Despite Darden's knowledge of the Marines's wartime standing, the image of white soldiers storming Normandy beach and white Marines conducting battle on the beachheads and islands of the South Pacific would remain at the forefront of the white collective mind.

This chapter describes how blacks attempted to make sense of their conflicted status not only as Marines, but also as American citizens during the World War II era. In addition, it explores the significance of General Thomas Holcomb's confidential Letter of Instruction No. 421, which formalized and endorsed the exercise of Jim Crow laws in uniform. It also investigates how senior Marine Corps officials employed black token leadership towards the end of war, and the ways in which these same officials used Camp Montford Point to psychologically position blacks in a state of enduring paternalism.

To white American society, the image of an African American donning Marine Corps green and the sacred Dress Blue uniform was unfathomable. As blacks continued to join the Allied effort, the myopic social view of many whites retarded the democratic campaign for domestic egalitarianism. After war broke out in Europe, and well before the United States's entrance into the Second World War, the *Pittsburgh Courier* made every

⁴ Corporal Herman Darden, Jr., served with the 51st Defense Battalion in the Ellice Islands and was discharged at the end of the war. See Series 4: Military, Sub-Series 4.2: Montford Point, Item 14: Interview with Herman Darden, July 23, 2004, Melton McLaurin Papers, MS323, Folder 1 [hereafter cited as Darden interview].

effort to publicize the federal government's lack of fair play for blacks in the armed forces. On September 23, 1939, the *Pittsburgh Courier* exclaimed,

Before any of our people get unduly excited about SAVING DEMOCRACY in Europe, it should be called to their attention that we have NOT YET ACHIEVED DEMOCRACY HERE. We cannot save what DOES NOT EXIST. Despite REPEATED REPEALS, the government has made no move to LOWER the COLOR BAR in the Army or Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard or the Merchant Marines, yet it moves Heaven and Earth to help preserve democracy ABROAD.⁵

From the onset of the war, the *Pittsburgh Courier* had called for an *equal and fully democratic* nation to abandon its discriminatory and segregationist practices; furthermore, on May 16, 1942 the *Pittsburgh Courier* challenged the federal government and the country by asking a simple question: "Why Not Now?"⁶

Even with the black press's best efforts, which included the "Double V" Campaign, the news announcing the admission of African Americans to join the rank and file of the Marine Corps failed to reach local communities as quickly as anticipated. For

⁵ "Democracy At Home," *Pittsburgh Courier*, September 23, 1939; "Why Not Now?" *Pittsburgh Courier*, May 16, 1942.

⁶ Ibid. See also "Why Our Slogan Is 'Double V,'" *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 8, 1942; "Courier's 'Double VV' Sweeps America from Coast To Coast ... Thousands Sanction War Slogan!" *Pittsburgh Courier*, February 28, 1942. The Double Victory Campaign was not so much an event, but rather used more as a motivational tool by African Americans during the World War II period. In response to the United States entering war in 1941, James G. Thompson wrote a letter to the *Pittsburgh Courier*, expressing his concerns about discrimination in the military and in general towards African Americans in the United States. The idea he proposed in this article was to start a movement for two causes. Not just so blacks could fight and participate in the war, but also in everyday society, as equal citizens. He proposed that providing freedom for blacks was not such a high price to pay if they were sacrificing their lives every day in support of the Allied effort. The Double Victory Campaign became another marker in American history in which blacks took another step toward complete emancipation. See "Readers Want Double 'V' Made Into Pins, Emblems," *Pittsburgh Courier*, February 21, 1942. For more on the Double V Campaign, see Michael L. Cooper, *The Double V Campaign: African Americans and World War II* (New York: Lodestar Books, 1998); Ronald T. Takaki, *Double Victory: A Multicultural History of America in World War II* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2000).

many Americans, black and white, learning of the existence of black Marines came when they saw them in uniform for the first time on the streets of North Carolina and/or in the Pacific theater. Others discovered that blacks were serving in the Marine Corps after arriving at induction centers with the expectation of entering the Army or the Navy.⁷

Banker recalled an incident while traveling from Louisiana to North Carolina in which even his authorized government orders had no leverage over the deep-seated discrimination of the South: “We had Pullman service and dining car service. [The] first thing that really aggravated us on our trip to boot camp was we had government [orders]; we were traveling with government orders, assigned Pullman service and dining car service. We did not get Pullman service, although the government had authorized it.” Banker, accustomed to the South’s treatment of blacks, nonetheless, was unsettled by the lack of respect shown to black members of the U.S. Armed Forces. It amazed Banker how he and other black Marines were treated compared to their white counterparts, “We wore the same uniform.” However, they could not sit in the same theaters or go on liberty with them. Despite the charm of 1940s southern hospitality and the challenges of military service, “Overall it was a good experience and it was a hard thing to do.”⁸ Banker still held that the benefits of serving in World War II outweighed domestic racial divisions. For African American Marines, the difficulties of persevering would only strengthen as the war placed greater demands on the American public.

⁷ Ronald K. Culp, *The First Black United States Marines: The Men of Montford Point, 1942–1946* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2007), 30. In 1943, the *Pittsburgh Courier* had a circulation mark of nearly 300,000 and the *Baltimore Afro-American* neared the mark of approximately 200,000. See also Claude A. Barnett, “The Role of the Press, Radio, and Motion Picture and Negro Morale,” *Journal of Negro Education* 12 (Summer 1943): 478.

⁸ Banker interview.

Joseph Carpenter, another native of Washington D.C., and member of the draftee class of 1943, described how he dealt with constant racial prejudice as he traveled by train to Jacksonville, North Carolina: “We were forced to sit behind the coal car. We wanted to eat while we were traveling on the train, so I asked the conductor, where could we eat? And he says, ‘well, I’m sorry we don’t have nothing for you.’ So I said, well don’t you have a meal car around here? And he says, ‘yes, but you all can’t go there because that’s back in the white section.’”⁹ Although common engagements such as this, which occurred frequently between black Marines and white civilians, the nature and origin of future insults would become more difficult to withstand during the military careers of African Americans.

For example, by the summer of 1943, blacks had been officially serving in the United States Marine Corps for a full year. Nevertheless, for white Marines, the uniform carried with it a 167-year tradition of exclusivity that many found difficult to share with their newly adopted dark green brothers. Not only had African American Marines broken this long-standing uniform custom, they had also established a new line of tradition of military service. A black man in uniform was such a major departure from a standard Marine Corps praxis that it revealed the significant and far-reaching effects of World War II.

⁹ Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Carpenter served stateside as a clerk until 1946, when he was discharged. After receiving a college degree, he re-entered the Corps in 1956, obtained a commission and achieved the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. See Series 4: Military, Sub-Series 4.2: Montford Point, Item 8: Interview with Joseph Carpenter, July 23, 2004, Melton McLaurin Papers, MS323, Folder 1 [hereafter cited as Carpenter interview].

Well embedded within a Jim Crow society, one particular incident painfully reminded African American Marines of their second-class status. Banker described an incident that took place during a speech that Brigadier General Henry L. Larsen gave at Camp Montford Point in the summer of 1943,

In spite of the discrimination. We were insulted. Even the highest-ranking general in the Marine Corps insulted us right to our face. And after he made his speech we applauded him. In his remarks he said, 'I did not realize that a war was going on until I returned to the States. When I saw you people wearing our uniform. The globe and anchor. I seen dog Marines, women Marines, and you people.' He [was referring] to [us] as, 'you people.' And, of course, the general, we had to respect him, we applauded him. That was a tough pill to swallow.¹⁰

Even with the stinging residual affects of Larsen's message, Montford Pointers would feel the strength of the comment "you people" in greater degrees within their immediate command. Ruben Hines, who grew up in Alabama, struggled to cope with overt racism more than his southern peers. Hines recounted the racist and demeaning behavior of two Marine officers, Lieutenant Russell S. La Pointe and Warrant Officer Augustine, with particular passion: "[La Pointe] was very vicious in his reaction to us, and in his demeanor and his language. I thought that was really inhumane. He also used the word nigger." At the time, *nigger* was as common as seeing a *colored only* sign above a water fountain, however, serving and dying with one's fellow brothers-in-arms added special

¹⁰ General Larsen assumed command of Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina after serving in the South Pacific. See Banker interview. The phrase "you people" was frequently used by officers when addressing their white units, but in almost all instances, when addressing blacks, the choice to use "you" instead of "we" caused a mental and ideological division among black and white Marines. See Bernard C. Nalty, *The Right to Fight: African-American Marines in World War II* (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1994), 6, 14; Colonel Herbert L. Brewer quoted in Culp, *First Black United States Marines*, 88–89.

anguish to the racial epithet. “When [Augustine] used the term ‘you people,’ and he used [it] so derogatorily it made you want to vomit,” according to Hines. General Larsen’s comedic moment had given white commanders complete sovereignty to abuse their authority as leaders and delegitimize the accomplishments black Marines would secure throughout the war. Hines further described, “[Augustine] would say, ‘you people are no people. And when I saw you people [come into] the Marine Corps only then did I realize there was a war going on.’ And it made us feel pretty bad. Made me feel bad.”¹¹

Hines understood the Marine Corps was racist and the perception was that the majority of Marines, black and white, were from the South; nonetheless, it bothered him more as an American than as a Marine that he would be so disrespected. For Hines, and so many others, the United States was at war, fighting for democracy abroad, and called for unity from *all* its citizens. He not only believed, but also knew, that national “unity” started and ended with whites. Percival L. Prattis, who was a media member for the *Pittsburgh Courier* and the former city editor of the *Chicago Defender* and the Associated Negro Press, argued that the average white, “free, white and twenty-one, thinks, feels, and does whatever he desires; he is indifferent to what others think because

¹¹ Gunnery Sergeant Ruben Hines, born in Chicago, returned to Alabama with his parents as a youth, where he received a grade school education. A career Marine, Hines served in the Pacific with the 52nd Defense Battalion during World War II. He also served in Korea, where he participated in the Chosin Reservoir campaign, and in Vietnam, where he served as a helicopter crew chief. After retiring from the Marine Corps, Hines attended the University of North Carolina, completing all the requirements for a doctorate in history except for the dissertation. He taught history at Fayetteville State College in Fayetteville, North Carolina, and Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina. See Series 4: Military, Sub-Series 4.2: Montford Point, Interview with Ruben Hines, May 17, 2004, Melton McLaurin Papers, MS323, Folder 1 [hereafter cited as Hines interview]. See also David J. Ulbrich, *Preparing for Victory: Thomas Holcomb and the Making of the Modern Marine Corps, 1936–1943* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2011), 164–168; Chas H. Thompson, “The Basis of Negro Morale in World War II,” *Journal of Negro Education* 11 (October 1942): 454–464.

he is the people.”¹² As a result, the majority of African Americans subscribed to this idea, yielding to this independence of mind, willing, if not eager, to join in any undertaking that white leadership deemed expedient for national unity.

In contrast to Banker and Hines, Fred Ash, a Mississippi native who was drafted in 1945, recalled that the segregation and racial discrimination he experienced had little effect on him. Ash believed the Marine Corps provided him with greater opportunities than life as a civilian—it is important to note that Ash served during the final year of the war, well after the most turbulent years for black Marines. He expressed, “I was so rejoiced over being a Marine [that segregation and discrimination] didn’t matter too much.” Ash understood the legal system of discrimination in the South, describing his feelings concerning the limited access afforded to black Marines on mainside, “I would rather [eat at Montford Point], ‘cause, when you would go over [to mainside], they’d look at you like you were something from outer space.” For African American Marines, this conspicuous feeling of alienation was not imagined, Ash further highlighted, “And then there’d be times that we’d go in certain areas. You probably wouldn’t see the guy, but you could hear him, and [white Marines] gave us the name, not us, but Camp Montford

¹² Percival L. Prattis, “The Morale of the Negro in the Armed Forces of the United States,” *Journal of Negro Education* 12 (1943): 357. Prattis served as a battalion sergeant major in the U.S. Army during World War I, he was honorably discharged on July 23, 1919. Prattis then began his journalism career as the editor of the newly formed Michigan State News in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In 1921, he moved to Chicago, Illinois, to become the city editor of the *Chicago Defender*, which was the most influential African American weekly newspaper in the country at the beginning of World War I. In 1923, Prattis was then hired as the city editor of the Associated Negro Press (Chicago, Illinois), a position for which he travelled internationally on assignment and interviewed prominent world figures. In 1936, he then moved to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to take a media position with the *Pittsburgh Courier*. See Patrick S. Washburn, *The African American Newspaper: Voice of Freedom* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2006), 1, 9, 138, 140, 167, 186, 191–193, 203, 205.

Point, Monkey Point.”¹³ White Marines routinely used terms such as “monkey and “ape” to reinforce social inferiority among black Marines as well as to dehumanize them. Whites used this animal imagery to stereotype blacks as lazy, dumb, and undisciplined. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, racist images and books relied heavily on the Negro-ape metaphor to justify violence against African Americans and other oppressed groups.¹⁴

LETTER OF INSTRUCTION No. 421:

The Mainspring of Formalized Jim Crow Practices

On May 14, 1943, the commandant of the Marine Corps, General Thomas Holcomb, insured that institutional racism would expand throughout the ranks, which specifically stifled the social and military progress of African Americans during the early stages of the war. At the time, the only document the Commandant of the Marine Corps issued regarding general policies towards blacks was Letter of Instruction No. 421, classified as CONFIDENTIAL, to all Marine commanders. Despite General Schmidt’s attempt to intelligently inform commanders of the “employment” of *Colored Personnel*, Holcomb’s letter left no room for interpretation when it came to the “position” of *Colored Personnel*.

¹³ Master Sergeant Fred Ash was born in Mississippi. He joined the Marine Corps in 1945 making it his career. During the war, Ash served with occupation forces in Saipan and Guam. During the Korean War he fought in both the Inchon and Chosin Reservoir campaigns and also served in Vietnam. He retired to live in Jacksonville, North Carolina, where he died in March 2005. See Series 4: Military, Sub-Series 4.2: Montford Point, Item 1: Interview with Fred Ash, December 17, 2004, Melton McLaurin Papers, MS323, Folder 1 [hereafter cited as Ash interview].

¹⁴ Philip Atiba Goff, Jennifer L. Eberhardt, Melissa J. Williams, and Matthew Christian Jackson, “Not Yet Human: Implicit Knowledge, Historical Dehumanization, and Contemporary Consequences” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 94 (April 2008): 292–306; see also George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817–1914* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1971), 256–282; John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 148–156.

Since the admission of African Americans into the Marine Corps was such a *new departure* and foreign concept to many white Marines, this letter provided biased information and guidance on how to *manage* black Marines, according to a prejudiced and racially motivated commander. The most important item that General Thomas Holcomb addressed in the letter was the basic rule of racial etiquette at Camp Montford Point, which remained inflexible: “At no time was a black man to be in a position to give orders to white Marines.” Not a single black Marine ever saw the letter or knew of its existence during World War II. Furthermore, the American public did not learn of the existence of Letter of Instruction No. 421 until 1946. Holcomb’s employment of bureaucratic language in efforts to maintain a “white face” of leadership, and keep his beloved Corps free from the stain and detrimental effects of allowing blacks to become “real” Marines was one of his top priorities while modernizing the Marine Corps.¹⁵

¹⁵ Letter from the Commandant, U.S. Marine Corps, to All Commanding Officers, dated May 14, 1943, Subject: Colored Personnel (formerly classified CONFIDENTIAL), Record Group 127: Records of the United States Marine Corps, History and Museums Division, PUBLICATION BACKGROUND FILES, “Brief History of Blacks in USMC, 1942–73,” Draft Text & Source Documents, Box 135 (College Park, MD: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration) [hereafter cited as RG 127: Box 135, NARA]. See also Holcomb quoted in Culp, *First Black United States Marines*, 86–87, Melton A. McLaurin, *The Marines of Montford Point: America’s First Black Marines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 6–7; Morris J. MacGregor and Bernard C. Nalty, eds., *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces: Basic Documents VI, Blacks in the World War II Naval Establishment* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1977), 431–432; Marine Corps – Clippings, “Marine Corps Had Race Barrier in 1943; Two Letters From Corps Chief Ordered No Negro Eligible To Outrank Whites In Outfits,” Claude A. Barnett Papers: The Associated Negro Press, 1918–1967, Part 3: Subject Files on Black Americans, 1918–1967, University of Missouri Libraries, Series F: Military, 1925–1965, Folder: 001592-003-0834 (Marine Corps and Black Personnel in World War II, including training, officers, Pacific operations, and discrimination, Date: January 1, 1939–December 31, 1945) [hereafter cited as Claude A. Barnett Papers]. The term *new departure* was a euphemism used by members of Headquarters Marine Corps for African Americans. See also Ulbrich, *Preparing for Victory*, 167, 167n58; MacGregor and Nalty, eds., *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces VI*, 431–433.

Jim Crow America and the racial etiquette outlined in Letter of Instruction No. 421 operated in eerily similar fashions. However, the principles of Jim Crow were more than a series of rigid anti-black laws. It was a way of life, which provided sign posts for all Americans regarding daily comportment in all sectors of society. Under the provisions of Letter of Instruction No. 421, nearly identical to Jim Crow laws, black Marines were viewed and treated as enemies of a social contract, and in many ways, classified as *anti-citizens* rather than second-class citizens. Letter of Instruction No. 421 represented the legitimization of white supremacy while simultaneously strengthening anti-black racism.¹⁶

The summer of 1943, in many ways, expressed the story of African American Marines in the early twentieth century. With a year of service and military training, black Marines were hitting their collective stride and rounding into form as “real” Marines.¹⁷ From the end of August 1942 to May 1943, a nine-month period, Montford Point had transitioned from an all-white drill instructor cadre to black drill instructors who began training and making U.S. Marines. Furthermore, the spring and summer of ‘43 was mixed with both the hint of progress and the sting of disappointment. White officers and staff non-commissioned officers continued to serve as permanent fixtures of oversight and

¹⁶ David Pilgrim, *Understanding Jim Crow: Using Racist Memorabilia to Teach Tolerance and Promote Social Justice* (Oakland, CA: Ferris State University and PM Press, 2015), 43. See also David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991; revised edition, 2007), xxii–xxiv; Bertram Wilbur Doyle, *The Etiquette of Race Relations in the South: A Study in Social Control* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 136–159.

¹⁷ Department of the Navy, “Marines Announce Plans for Recruiting African-Americans,” Department of the Navy, May 20, 1942, RG 127: Box 135, NARA. See also Record Group 24: Bureau of Naval Personnel General Correspondence, 1941–1945, Box 611, NARA [hereafter cited as RG 24: Box 611, NARA].

ultimate authority, which is why General Holcomb found it prudent to outline and emphasize the “proper place” of black Marines.

One could argue that General Holcomb’s letter authorized commanders to lead with impunity, buttressed by Jim Crow doctrine. In this case, a man did not abandon his prejudices when he donned the nation’s uniform; therefore, the doctrine of white supremacy, which was simply Hitler’s doctrine of Nordic supremacy, became the official policy of the Marine Corps. Racism would be monstrous on the part of Nazi Germany but completely acceptable in the U.S. Armed Forces. “The Jim Crow system was undergirded” by baseless notions that magnified the superiority of whites to blacks in all significant ways, including but not limited to “intelligence, morality, and civilized behavior.” Furthermore, the preservation of the pure blood of white America—not to be confused with Adolf Hitler’s motives for Jewish extermination—would be protected by white Americans by any means necessary. At the time, white America believed, “Sexual relations between blacks and whites would produce a mongrel race which would destroy the United States; treating blacks as equals would encourage interracial sexual unions; any activity which suggested social equality encouraged interracial sexual relations; if necessary, violence must be used to keep blacks at the bottom of the racial hierarchy.”¹⁸

¹⁸ Pilgrim, *Understanding Jim Crow*, 43–47. See also Dwight MacDonald and Nancy MacDonald, “The War’s Greatest Scandal! The Story of Jim Crow in Uniform,” *The March on Washington Movement*, June/July 1943, James Leonard, Jr. and Lula Peterson Farmer Papers, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Box: 2R637, Folder: “Printed Materials”: Reports, etc. 1930s–1940s [hereafter cited as Leonard and Farmer Papers]; Jesse Walter Dees, Jr., *Jim Crow* (Westport, CT: Negro University Press, 1951), 53–63; Doyle, *The Etiquette of Race Relations in the South*, 136–159. See also Rawn James, Jr., *The Double V: How Wars, Protest, and Harry Desegregated America’s Military* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013), 145–146.

Before whites reached their threshold of violence against blacks, the rules of social etiquette were honored and used as a measuring stick before exacting Jim Crow justice. Stetson Kennedy, author of *Jim Crow Guide: The Way It Was*, outlined seven general rules of conduct that African Americans were to strictly observe when interacting with whites during the 1940s, specifically in the South:

1. Never assert or even intimate that a white person is lying.
2. Never impute dishonorable intentions to a white person.
3. Never suggest that a white person is from an inferior class.
4. Never lay claim to, or overtly demonstrate, superior knowledge or intelligence.
5. Never curse a white person.
6. Never laugh derisively at a white person.
7. Never comment upon the appearance of a white female.¹⁹

In contrast to the Letter of Instruction No. 421, Jim Crow laws and the system of social etiquette in the United States were supported by violence, real and perceived. Moreover, African Americans could only exercise minimal, and restricted, legal recourse against the human rights violations. An all-white polity that freely exercised Jim Crow laws supported the American criminal justice system: “police, prosecutors, judges, juries, and prison officials. Violence was instrumental for Jim Crow. It was a method of social control,” with the most extreme form of Jim Crow violence being lynching.²⁰ Under these practices and stipulations in the United States, black Marines had to tread very lightly in an organization that had never admitted anyone other than whites in its entire history.

¹⁹ Stetson Kennedy, *Jim Crow Guide: The Way It Was* (Boca Raton, FL: Florida Atlantic Press, 1959; 2nd edition, 1990), 203–227; Pilgrim, *Understanding Jim Crow*, 47.

²⁰ Kennedy, *Jim Crow Guide*, 203–227; Pilgrim, *Understanding Jim Crow*, 47–55; Doyle, *The Etiquette of Race Relations in the South*, 136–159.

Comprised of nine paragraphs, Letter of Instruction No. 421 took on the gratuitous form of previous measures used throughout American history (i.e., the exercise of the *Black Codes* by the Southern states at the conclusion of the U.S. Civil War) to reduce the influence of black Marines. For General Holcomb, suppressing the social and professional mobility of African Americans precluded them from gaining greater legitimacy within the Marine Corps. Analogous to the Black Codes of the nineteenth century, Letter of Instruction No. 421 was part of a larger pattern of the Marine Corps to assure the permanent establishment of white supremacy over this new breed of leathernecks. Additionally, Letter of Instruction No. 421 proved to be crucial for several reasons. The first reason served as a reminder to all white commanders of their place in the Marine Corps, which highlighted the psychological impact of white supremacy in both black and white circles. As commissioned officers, who served at the pleasure of the president, commanders were now fully aware of their legal range for implementing Jim Crow laws; any letter of instruction issued from the commandant's office was equivalent to a White House directive.²¹

This reminder of information and guidance in the proper handling of colored personnel to all commanding officers remained less about the mission of the Marine Corps and more about the maintenance of social traditions. Paragraph three of Letter of Instruction No. 421 states, "While rapid promotion, when deserved, is necessary, it is essential that in no case shall, there be colored noncommissioned officers senior to white men in the same unit, and desirable that few, if any, be of the same rank." In all fairness

²¹ Ulbrich, *Preparing for Victory*, 116–117, 117n69.

to the United States, discrimination and segregation were historical conventions (and in several states the law during the 1940s).²² In addition, the Marine Corps was considered an elite space according to General Holcomb, who publicly declared his opposition to any change in the prevailing policy concerning blacks. He saw his beloved Corps as an exclusive club that blacks had no right to join. Incredulous to the thought of blacks donning the Marine Corps's official emblem: the Eagle, Globe, and Anchor, Holcomb reputedly stated, "If it were a question of having a Marine Corps of 5,000 Whites or 250,000 Negroes, I would rather have the whites," believing there would be a "definite loss of efficiency in the Marine Corps if we have to take Negroes." For Holcomb, African Americans had every opportunity to satisfy their aspirations for military service in the U.S. Army; moreover, the general believed, "... their desire to enter the Naval Service is largely, I think, to break into a club that doesn't want them."²³ Holcomb's antagonistic declaration would continue to manifest itself in various ways for black Marines.

²² RG 127: Box 135, NARA.

²³ Major General Thomas Holcomb's testimony during the hearings of the General Board of the United States Navy, dated January 23, 1942. Subject: "Enlistment of Men of Colored Race," RG 127: Box 135, NARA. To a certain extent, this prevailing sentiment was based on an ill-conceived 1925 Army War College study, which concluded that African Americans were genetically inferior to whites, unfit to fight, unintelligent, and submissive; suffered from low self-esteem; were easily manipulated; and were likely to crumble under fire. See "Memorandum for the Chief of Staff regarding Employment of Negro Man Power in War, November 10, 1925," President's Official Files, Box 3, Folder 4245-G: Office of Production Management: Commission on Fair Employment Practices: War Department, 1943 (Hyde Park, NY: Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum). By World War II, eighteen northern and western states had civil rights laws forbidding discrimination or segregation in public accommodations. Those states were California, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Washington, and Wisconsin. See Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008), 131–132, 134, 579n133; Lawrence Dunbar Reddick, "What the Northern Negro Thinks About Democracy," *Journal of Educational Sociology* 17 (January 1944): 296.

George Taylor, who entered the Marines in 1943, recalled, “When we went in, we weren’t even considered as a whole man. We were considered as half a man. And if people say, ‘why?’ ‘How come?’ I said, the white boys got stripes on both arms. But we only got them on one. That’s how you determine where you was at.”²⁴ The challenges that black Marines faced during this period, which tested their sense of equality, identity, and manhood were painful. However, they remained resolute, relying on one another during challenging times. Simultaneously, challenges arose within the ranks among African Americans; for instance, black northerners were viewed as “gangsters” and troublemakers, and black southerners were viewed as “submissive,” which further highlighted the effects of a document such as Letter of Instruction No. 421.

Taylor further described how, at times, northern and southern culture among blacks and whites clashed, “We had the black southerner. We had the black northerner. Some of them was good. Some of them was bad. So, you had to fight some of the black southerners, plus you had to fight the white man in order to be able to relax and do what you had to do. And that’s the way it was.” For many black northerners this internal friction became less of an issue after the initial weeks of Marine Corps indoctrination, in addition to an acute acclimation period to life south of the Mason Dixon. Moreover, for their own safety, black northern enlistees had to choose a neutral position concerning the race situation for fear of reprisals.²⁵

²⁴ Private George Taylor, an Indianapolis native, grew up in Chicago. See Series 4: Military, Sub-Series 4.2: Montford Point, Item 48: Interview with George Taylor, June 29, 2005, Melton McLaurin Papers, MS323, Folder 1 [hereafter cited as Taylor interview].

²⁵ Taylor interview. See also “Civilians Made Into Marines at Lejeune,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, November 27, 1943; Astor, *Right to Fight*, 230.

For black Marine recruits like Steven Robinson from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, who joined the Marines in September 1942, he was unaware that there had been an organized effort to block African Americans from joining the Corps. When asked if he had any regrets or if his decision would have been influenced in any way after realizing there were no African Americans in the Marines prior to 1942, Robinson replied: “I don’t know. I was pretty ambivalent ... I mean it; at 17, I wanted to enlist. I wanted to become a Marine ... the fact that there had been no other African Americans before me really didn’t enter into my mind.”²⁶ Robinson is in the majority with regard to those who entered the Marine Corps without any previous knowledge of either Executive Order 8802 or the Navy Department’s press release on May 20, 1942.

Like many northern blacks who entered the Marine Corps, Robinson had never traveled to the South. Traveling on the train to North Carolina, for the first time, he experienced segregated railroad passenger cars and stations, “... as far as I know, I never saw anybody on there that looked like me but me. The rest [of the passengers] were white.” After detraining in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, Robinson immediately encountered the fabled racial opposition he had only heard about. When a train station attendant curtly instructed Robinson to leave the station, he had no choice but to obey. As Robinson walked out of the train station, he recalled how this particular experience devastated him, “I looked over at the station, at the entrance to the station, and I saw a sign *For White Only*. Now, I heard about things like that ... this was the South but I never

²⁶ Sergeant Steven Robinson saw combat during the invasion of Iwo Jima, Japan. Sergeant Robinson was discharged from the Marine Corps at the end of the war; he is now deceased. See Series 4: Military, Sub-Series 4.2: Montford Point, Item 47: Interview with Steven Robinson, June 29, 2005, Melton McLaurin Papers, MS323, Folder 1 [hereafter cited as Robinson interview].

experienced it. And that was the first time that the realization hit me that this was a different world.” Robinson’s perceptions of whites and blacks quickly shifted, “That these were different people. I [had] never seen anything like them. It was unreal. Absolutely unreal.” Robinson struggled to comprehend how a group of people could possess such rage and contempt toward another group because of their skin color. Notwithstanding, he did not feel the same contempt that whites felt against him, Robinson believed, “If anybody should have that feeling, that attitude, I should have it against them.”²⁷

Traveling with a large group of black Marine recruits, Charles Davenport, who responded aggressively toward southern racism recalled, “The first prejudice or discrimination that I suffered was at Rocky Mount [North Carolina]. From Washington, D.C., to Rocky Mount, we were all over the train with no assigned seats.” However, when Davenport arrived at Rocky Mount and went in to see the station manager (completely unaware that he had literally crossed cultural lines as the train moved south past the Mason-Dixon Line) he said, “Hey buddy, I have to get my ticket straightened out,” and the station manager replied, “Who are you talking to, calling me buddy?” Davenport was not accustomed to this type of response. After a short argument, he found himself surrounded by the city police. Davenport explained to the police that the station manager refused to amend his ticket, contending, “You have no jurisdiction over me, because I’m a United States Marine.”²⁸ Consequently, the Army’s Military Police (MP)

²⁷ Robinson interview; Robinson also quoted in McLaurin, *Marines of Montford Point*, 90.

²⁸ Gunnery Sergeant Charles Davenport served in the Marshall Islands (World War II); he also served in Korea, leaving the Marine Corps in 1957 with the rank of Gunnery Sergeant. See Series 4: Military, Sub-

arrived at the train station, verified Davenport's orders, and those of the other eighty-five blacks in his group, and ordered the station manager to amend the tickets. Despite the verification of government orders by the MPs and being a U.S. Marine recruit, as Davenport and the others boarded the train to Wilmington, North Carolina, they were told to continue to the rear of the train.

Davenport a native of Monongahela, Pennsylvania, heard on the radio that President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed a law that permitted black people to enlist in the Marine Corps. He subsequently enlisted on November 27, 1942, fully aware of the Marine Corps's previous racial policy. His older brother had enlisted in the Army in 1940, but Davenport wanted to be a Marine.²⁹ At that time, the Army was the only outfit permitting a combat role for blacks. The Navy was recruiting blacks but assigning them to the steward's branch, which Davenport found demeaning, "I wasn't going in [to] a branch of service and shine pots and pans, and, cook food, things like that. So, the Navy was definitely out, and the Marine Corps had no options at that time." Upon enlisting, Davenport asserted, "It was in me to show that even though I was small in stature, I was big enough and strong enough, and willing to be in the best fighting force they had, and I joined the Marines."³⁰ Davenport is one of the few northern Marine enlistees to specifically recall hearing President Roosevelt announce the Navy Department's May 20,

Series 4.2: Montford Point, Item 15: Interview with Charles Davenport, June 29, 2005, Melton McLaurin Papers, MS323, Folder 1 [hereafter cited as Davenport interview]. Davenport also quoted in McLaurin, *Marines of Montford Point*, 40–41. In 1940, Rocky Mount, North Carolina was a substantial city in the South with a population of 25,568. See United States Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940 Population I*, Chapter 7, 1940, 772, <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/decennial/1940.html>.

²⁹ RG 127: Box 135, NARA.

³⁰ Davenport interview; Davenport also quoted in McLaurin, *Marines of Montford Point*, 26, 185.

1942 press release and understood the immediate consequences that resulted from this change in racial policy.

For other African Americans, the consequences would surface in astonishing ways. Norman Payne, who grew up on the south side of Chicago, Illinois, enlisted in 1944. He remembered his experience in the Marines as a time of personal stress and confusion. Payne also felt that he maintained a negative perspective and attitude during his tour as a Marine, recalling,

Not because of anything the Corps had done to me, but I think I became defiant after my parents died ... I don't mean in the sense of hating the world, but I think in terms of fighting against a lot of things I didn't understand. So I went into the service, I had never been to the South before, and when I came through on the training there they put the black Marines on one side, and the white Marines on the other side [of the camp].³¹

Payne asserted that his time in the South was unlike anything he had experienced in the North. Payne sorely reflected on a particular incident while on liberty:

Everything was new to me, not only new, but totally strange. I think the hardest adjustment I had to make in North Carolina was black people. I never knew at that time that I didn't know anything about [southern] black people. I didn't. I was involved in this incident where two white [men] were in front of me, and two black women coming from the opposite direction, and when they stopped, the white [men] said, 'Now don't you black bitches know you're supposed to get off the sidewalk when a white man passes?' So I said, 'what did you say?' And he said, 'Nigger, I wasn't talking to you.' I hit him, and I knocked the hell out of him.³²

Unsurprisingly, Payne had a distressing encounter with local authorities, "The next thing

³¹ Private Norman R. Payne served with the 52nd Defense Battalion on the Marshall Islands during World War II. See Series 4: Military, Sub-Series 4.2: Montford Point, Item 44: Interview with Norman Payne, July 14, 2004, Melton McLaurin Papers, MS323, Folder 1 [hereafter cited as Payne interview]; Payne also quoted in McLaurin, *Marines of Montford Point*, 32–33, 189.

³² Payne interview.

I know, the sheriff was there and the townspeople, they took me to a little area and one fella said, ‘I told you, this must be one of them fellas from up north, ‘cause they ain’t had the education that they supposed to be having.’”³³ The white North Carolinian’s statement rang through Payne’s ears like nothing he had ever heard before. After being asked “boy, where are you from?” Payne described what immediately transpired: “I said I’m not a boy.” The man then pulled his pistol and pressed it to Payne’s head and said, “Boy, I’m gonna ask you one damn time, boy, where you from?” Payne said, “Chicago.” Immediately one of the men responded, “I told you. I told you that boy wasn’t educated. He never been educated as to what he supposed to be doing. Well nigger, I’m gonna give you one more chance, if I ever catch you again, I’m gonna blow your damn brains out, you got that boy?”³⁴

Payne immediately understood the situation had escalated beyond his control and acknowledged his failure to understand life in the South while on liberty. Notwithstanding, he believed he would return to the black southern community as a hero. Much to his surprise, the members of the community were not pleased. Their response to Payne’s so-called heroic deed was one of, “Why did you come down here causing trouble?” This devastatingly lucid encounter shook Payne to his core, affecting him in such a way to question his personal knowledge of his own people,

I didn’t understand at the time, but the fact was that northern blacks were more defiant than the southern blacks, so consequently, what went on the agenda was that I was gonna get taught a lesson, made an example of, so I wouldn’t do the same thing again. I couldn’t piece all this together, at one time. This rolled around in my mind;

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

the first thing that hit my mind was that I didn't know anything about my own people.

Growing up in the North, Payne, along with most northern blacks, was accustomed to interacting with whites in public establishments.³⁵

The experiences of Davenport, Payne, and Robinson illustrate that northern blacks neither understood the full ramifications of their decision to join the Marine Corps nor the difficulties they would inevitably encounter in the American South. Miscalculations such as Payne's, regarding his lack of southern education, would only further legitimate the scope and influence of Letter of Instruction No. 421, "... that in no case shall, there be colored noncommissioned officers senior to white men in the same unit, and desirable that few, if any, be of the same rank."³⁶ Saddled by this statement, black Marines would continue to adversely feel the sharp focus and the long-range effects of this document, specifically during the Battle of Peleliu (The Mariana and Palau Islands campaign).

With paragraph three of Letter of Instruction No. 421, Holcomb would lock into place that even the most undisciplined and degenerate of white Marines would still predominate the ranks over even the most outstanding of black Marines. Holcomb's achievement in setting rigid parameters for promotions and the exercise of leadership for African Americans gave new meaning to *earning one's stripes*. If paragraph three served

³⁵ Ibid. In 1940, Onslow County, North Carolina, in which Jacksonville is located, contained a population of 17,939. In 1940, the population of Jacksonville proper was 873. These population figures during the 1940s illustrate that northern black Marines from cities such as Chicago (pop. 3,396,808), New York City (pop. 7,457,995), and Pittsburgh (pop. 671,659) had to deal with a significant shift from dense urban population centers to sparse rural communities. Chicago, New York City, and Pittsburgh averaged 18,086 people per square mile in 1940. See *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940 Population I*, 766–783; *U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population of the 100 Largest Urban Places: 1940*, Table 17, <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/tab17.txt>.

³⁶ RG 127: Box 135, NARA.

as a first course of caustic strictures black Marines would endure, the restraints expressed in paragraph five would cast a pall of limitless jurisdiction over Montford Pointers who fought in every clime and place. “Beyond the continental limits of the United States, commanding officers will control promotions of colored personnel as necessary to carry out the spirit of the directive.” This paragraph not only lengthened the rungs of the promotion ladder for black Marines, but it also hindered combat valor recognition. The deleterious effects of paragraph five, in *carrying out the spirit of the directive*, robbed African American Marines of completely cementing their legacy as members of what journalist Tom Brokaw called America’s *Greatest Generation*.³⁷

There are several notable Marine memoirs of World War II that have received national recognition, however, the majority fail to mention the wartime achievements or military contributions of African American Marines. For example, during an intense firefight on the island of Peleliu, and in desperate need of replacements, Corporal Edward Andrusko, author of *Love and War Beneath the Southern Cross* and a veteran of the 3rd Battalion 7th Marine Regiment, recalled an incident in which black Marines participated in significant combat. The members of Andrusko’s unit found themselves,

Exhausted from the heat, we rested near the beach in the shade of a damaged supply truck. A young black sergeant who had overheard our plight, walked up and said, ‘I heard you were all looking for some troop replacements.’ Our top sergeant looked a little stunned and speechless at the black, uniformed sergeant. The Top cleared his throat and asked, ‘Who are you? Are you Army, Navy, Seabees or

³⁷ Ibid. See also Tom Brokaw, *The Greatest Generation* (New York: Random House, 1998); Charles Poore, “Books of the Times,” *New York Times*, October 4, 1945.

what?’ The Marine sergeant replied, ‘Top Sergeant, I am a U.S. Marine Sergeant. My men on this beach are all U.S. Marines.’³⁸

These black Marines were members of the 11th, 16th Field Depot, and 7th Ammunition Companies, and had completed their duties on the beach. Andrusko further recalled, “Our top sergeant appeared very puzzled. How could he bring in an all-black unit to rescue members of a line company that was part of the famous, all-white 1st Marine Division? It was heavily complemented with southern officers and men, home-based at New River, North Carolina, and ‘the pride of the South.’”³⁹

According to Andrusko, the black Marines armed themselves despite the top sergeant’s statements that they were neither trained nor qualified for the terrors of battle. The black Marines lined up behind their platoon sergeant, insisting to be led to the frontlines of the battle. After the initial firefight, Andrusko described, “When we reached our mauled and overrun company area, it looked like General Custer’s last stand.” Only one officer remained, Second Lieutenant Bill Bailey, the new commanding officer

³⁸ During World War II, Corporal Edward Andrusko served with Company I, 3rd Battalion 7th Marines. He served four years as a Marine combat Infantry rifleman and fought in four major campaigns, earning three Purple Hearts. Edward Andrusko, interviewed by Cameron D. McCoy, August 12, 2011 [hereafter cited as Andrusko interview]. See also Edward Andrusko, *Love and War Beneath the Southern Cross: A World War II Memoir from the South Pacific Islands and Australia* (N.P.: Andrusko, 2003), 193–200; Gerald Astor, *The Right to Fight: A History of African Americans in the Military* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2001), 229–230, 259–260, 499; Andrusko also quoted in Gerald Astor, *The Greatest War: Americans in Combat, 1941–1945* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1999), 661–662, Astor, *Right to Fight*, 1–4

³⁹ The following are other notable Marine memoirs of World War II, but do not mention significant wartime achievements or contributions by blacks in the same fashion as Edward Andrusko: George P. Hunt, *Coral Comes High* (original publication, 1946; reprint, Nashville, TN: Battery Press & Quantico, VA: Marine Corps Association, 1995); James W. Johnston, *The Long Road of War: A Marine’s Story of Pacific Combat* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); Robert Leckie, *Helmet For My Pillow: From Parris Island to the Pacific* (New York: Bantam Books, 1957); Eugene B. Sledge, *With the Old Breed: At Peleliu and Okinawa* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1981); Bertram A. Yaffe, *Fragments of War: A Marine’s Personal Journey* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1999). Andrusko interview. See also Andrusko, *Love and War Beneath the Southern Cross*, 193–200; Astor, *Right to Fight*, 1–4, 229–230, 259–260, 499; Andrusko also quoted in Astor, *Greatest War*, 661–662.

replacement, who said to the black platoon sergeant, “Thank God. Thank you, men. Sergeant, take over. Get our wounded and dead out [and off the battlefield].” Following the cleanup of the company area, Andrusko explained what took place afterwards:

We gave cover fire and watched in awe as our new, gallant volunteers did their job. Some of these new men stoically held a casualty stretcher gently in one hand as true angels of mercy. Then, when necessary, they would fire an automatic weapon with the other hand, while breaking through surrounding enemy. The grateful wounded thanked the volunteers as each was brought to the rear aid station and safety. One badly wounded southerner said, ‘I felt like I was saved by Black Angels sent by God. Thank you. Thank you all!’⁴⁰

The platoon of approximately 50 black Marines braved enemy fire to supply needed ammunition, food and water to Andrusko’s company, and remained with the unit through the morning until they evacuated all the wounded. After a long night of occupying foxholes with the black Marines, and fighting small, nighttime enemy counter attacks, Andrusko recalled that the next morning consisted of hours of fighting, taking hill after hill. On the brink of exhaustion and fatigue, his unit was finally replaced. “We were relieved from the gruesome mountain by a U.S. Army infantry company. As soldiers passed, they asked sarcastically, ‘Who are the black guys in your outfit?’ Our top sergeant bellowed, ‘Why some of our company’s best damn Marines, that’s who!’”⁴¹

Andrusko reflected on his feelings of gratitude after being rescued by these black angels, but expressed even greater disappointment in the following,

Despite being saved by untrained stevedores, our top sergeant would not put the black Marines up for a medal. When I asked that he recognize them for saving our lives on Peleliu [by putting them up

⁴⁰ Andrusko interview.

⁴¹ Ibid.

for a medal], he replied, ‘A medal! We will be lucky if we don’t get our asses shot off for this [embarrassing disaster]!’ It was so prejudiced back then that whites would not acknowledge the [combat] achievements of black Marines, even though they saved our company.⁴²

The Battle of Peleliu, a small part of the campaign known as Operation FORAGER, is less known when compared to battles such as Iwo Jima and Okinawa. Nevertheless, this small island was host to approximately 6,500 Japanese soldiers, who withstood days of American aerial bombing raids for their moment to execute a counterattack on U.S. beachheads, hoping to repel the invading American troops and force them into the ocean. The result of this Japanese strategy led to arguably the bloodiest battle of all amphibious operations in the entire Pacific theater. From September 15, 1944 until the end of October, U.S. Marine casualties exceeded 5,200 with more than 1,200 fatalities. Despite the ferocity and fierceness of Japanese resistance, Japanese forces felt the brunt of this battle, losing nearly all of their soldiers.⁴³

Although the Battle of Peleliu occurred three months after D-Day, where was the fanfare and media propagand machine for these black Marines to cement their legacy as war heroes of the Greatest Generation and icons of the Pacific? Accounts such as these, in this case, a lack thereof, failed African American Marines by reinforcing popular notions and biased studies that blacks were unfit for combat. Among war planners and

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Frank O. Hough, Verle E. Ludwig, and Henry I. Shaw, Jr. *Pearl Harbor to Guadalcanal: History of the U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II*, Volume I (Washington, D.C.: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1958), 94, 243–245; Henry I. Shaw, Jr., Bernard C. Nalty, and Edwin T. Turnbladh. *Central Pacific Drive: History of the U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II*, Volume III (Washington, D.C.: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1966), 568; Frank O. Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu* (Washington, D.C.: Historical Division, Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps, 1950).

officials, it was generally dubious regarding the prospects of blacks serving with success in combat roles. The experience at the Battle of Peleliu disproved white racist assumptions about African American Marines' tactical abilities in the field. Nevertheless, the collective combat service of black Marines would be mired in quotidian details and treated as less than routine. In addition, downgrades of their combat performance such as this example would serve as chronic symptoms of discrimination throughout World War II.

African American Marine ammunition companies participated in every major amphibious landing, which began with the landing made on the island of Saipan during the Mariana and Palau Island campaign, also known as Operation FORAGER. These ammunition companies earned high praise for their actions in repelling Japanese counter attacks and were credited for destroying a Japanese machinegun nest, all while performing around-the-clock ammunition handling in support of operations conducted by the 2nd and 4th Marine Divisions. In addition to maintaining a high level of proficiency during 24-hour operations, and braving mortar, artillery, and sniper fire, members of these field depots and ammunition companies simply earned a "well done" for their combat achievements.⁴⁴ It is important to note that prior to serving overseas, black Marines had never trained exclusively for the exigencies of combat (i.e., combat weaponry: grenades, small arms employment, or infantry tactics), they were trained to serve strictly in support/auxiliary military occupational specialties.

In a 1944 "Marines Combat Report," *Time Magazine* emphasized, among other

⁴⁴ "The Negro in the Marine Corps," undated fact sheet, RG 127: Box 135, NARA.

matters, the Marine Corps's failure to recognize the battlefield performance of African American Marines. Combat correspondent Robert Sherrod reported that the conduct of black Marines under fire, for the first time, during the battle of Saipan rated a universal 4.0 (the Annapolis mark of perfection). Sherrod described an incident involving a black Marine named Jenkins sharing a foxhole, under fire, with a wounded white Marine. According to Sherrod's article, the white Marine handed a grenade to Jenkins, who said, "I don't know how to use this thing." After a quick tutorial, Jenkins threw the grenade, killing three Japanese and destroying an enemy machine gun position. Upon reading Sherrod's article, the black press castigated the Marine Corps for placing "service support/auxiliary" Marines in battle with inadequate training on one of the most basic weapons of combat, the hand grenade.⁴⁵

Outrage on the part of members of the black press carried great merit during the 1940s. At the time, and according to award citations associated with military decorations for gallantry and valor, Jenkins's actions merited the highest of combat distinctions. For example, a white Marine, Private First Class Richard B. Anderson, received the Congressional Medal of Honor for combat actions in the Pacific around the same time as Jenkins's actions. Anderson's citation reads:

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above

⁴⁵ Robert Sherrod, "Army & Navy – MARINES, AIR, COMMAND: Combat Report" *Time Magazine* 45 (July 24, 1944): 59; "OUR BLACK MARINES," *Chicago Defender*, August 19, 1944. See also "Suggestion for the Next Broadcast," *Baltimore Afro-American*, August 19, 1944; "Mr. President, What of the Marines?" *Baltimore Afro-American*, August 19, 1944; "Not One Officer in Marines," *Philadelphia Afro-American*, August 19, 1944; Mary A. Morton, "The Federal Government and Negro Morale," *Journal of Negro Education* 12 (Summer 1943): 452–463; Culp, *First Black United States Marines*, 170–171. Upon the completion basic training, black Marines were assigned as labor troops, so there was no need for specialized training in infantry tactics or weapons. See Culp, *First Black United States Marines*, 77.

and beyond the call of duty while serving with the 4th Marine Division during action against enemy Japanese forces on Roi Island, Kwajalein Atoll, Marshall Islands, 1 February 1944. Entering a shell crater occupied by 3 other marines, Private First Class Anderson was preparing to throw a grenade at an enemy position when it slipped from his hands and rolled toward the men at the bottom of the hole. With insufficient time to retrieve the armed weapon and throw it, Private First Class Anderson fearlessly chose to sacrifice himself and save his companions by hurling his body upon the grenade and taking the full impact of the explosion. His personal valor and exceptional spirit of loyalty in the face of almost certain death were in keeping with the highest traditions of the U.S. Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life for his country.⁴⁶

Anderson's actions were essentially recognized for a fumble. Despite the fact that Jenkins successfully destroyed an enemy machine gun position while under fire, causing no friendly casualties or endangering his personal safety, his courage and bravery went unrecognized. Although Jenkins's combat actions surpassed those of Anderson's, a Jim Crow military would even use *white only* and *colored only* yardsticks for measuring combat valor. It bears repeating that no black Marines received grenade training at anytime during basic training or throughout the war, demonstrating the nuanced exclusionary practices exercised by Marine Corps officials and commanders.

Brigadier General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., commander of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade (May–August 1944), led the brigade during the Peleliu invasion and the

⁴⁶ Private First Class Richard Beatty Anderson, U.S. Marine Corps. Anderson was born on June 26, 1921, Tacoma, Washington. See Marc Cerasini, *Heroes: U.S. Marine Corps Medal of Honor Winners* (New York: Berkley Books, 2002); see also Congressional Medal of Honor citation dated February 1, 1944, U.S.A., Medal of Honor, World War II, <http://www.army.mil/medalofhonor/citations20.html>; "OUR BLACK MARINES," *The Chicago Defender*, August 19, 1944.

subsequent recapture of Guam during this period, commended the African American ammunition companies for,

[The] splendid and expeditious manner in which the supplies and equipment were unloaded from the [Landing Ship, Tanks] and [Landing Ship, Tanks] of our Attack Group. Working long hours, frequently during nights, and in at least two instances under enemy fire ... so coordinated your unloading efforts as to keep supplies flowing to the beach. You have contributed in large measure to the successful and rapid movement of combat supplies in this amphibious operation.⁴⁷

For his notable leadership during D-Day operations, Brigadier General Shepherd received his first of three Navy Distinguished Service Medals and was promoted to Major General after having only been a brigadier general for 13 months! Again, this form of individual recognition was virtually nonexistent for African American Marines throughout the war.

The all-black 7th Ammunition Company and the all-black 11th Marine Depot Company trained for months before the bitter landing on Peleliu. Lawrence Diggs, a member of the 7th Ammunition Company, recalled, “They shipped us to Guadalcanal, and that’s where we finished what they called jungle warfare training. So I went to special weapons school over there for different machine guns and mortars and what have you ... We got attached to the 1st Marine Division and the 3rd Battalion.” Similar to Douglas’s experience, Diggs expressed, “We were replacing evidently some other unit that they had lost during the fighting out there before I got there. So, I was just one of the

⁴⁷ “The Negro in the Marine Corps,” undated fact sheet, RG 127: Box 135, NARA. Landing Ship, Tank (LST), or tank landing ship, is the naval designation for vessels created during the Second World War used to support amphibious operations by carrying cargo, vehicles, and for landing troops directly onto unimproved shorelines/surfaces. The Navy Distinguished Service Medal is awarded to members of the Department of Defense for distinguished and exceptional meritorious service to the United States while serving in a duty or position of great responsibility.

replacements, evidently.” For Diggs, friction, uncertainty, and the fog of war were real! “When we boarded the ship to Guadalcanal [and Peleliu], we really didn’t know where we were going until after we’d been out to sea, for, oh, maybe a day. I think they set out in the water maybe a day or two before they told the truth where we were headed to. And then they briefed us about what you were supposed to do when you get [to the island].”⁴⁸

The first four days of the Battle of Peleliu proved to be a loathsome undertaking when it came to establishing ammunition supply points on the beach because unloading the tank landing ships (LST) was tricky for troops. In addition, the beach surfaces severely compromised the stability of the LSTs. Given the complexity of handling logistics and military materiel, African American Marines exercised greater detail in planning and preparing the LSTs. Black troops had to contend with waves of heavy fire and multiple Japanese attempts to blow them up using floating mines in the currents. By the fifth day of battle, black troops landed ashore and rushed ammunition to the front lines, in addition to carrying the wounded back from Bloody Nose Ridge. For their actions, Major General William H. Rupertus, Commanding General of the First Marine Division, praised black Marines in an official *Letter of Appreciation*:

The performance of the officers and men of your command has, throughout the landing on Peleliu and the assault phase, been such as to warrant the highest praise. Unit commanders have repeatedly brought to my attention the whole-hearted cooperation and untiring efforts exhibited by each individual. The Negro race can well be proud of the work performed by the 7th Ammunition Company as

⁴⁸ Lawrence Diggs served with the 7th Ammunition Company during Operation FORAGER. See Series 4: Military, Sub-Series 4.2: Montford Point, Item 16: Interview with Lawrence Diggs, July 23, 2004, Melton McLaurin Papers, MS323, Folder 1 [hereafter cited as Diggs interview]; Diggs also quoted in McLaurin, *Marines of Montford Point*, 124–125.

they appreciate the privilege of wearing a Marine uniform and serving with Marines in combat. Please convey to your command these sentiments and inform them that in the eyes of the entire First Marine Division they have earned a ‘Well Done.’⁴⁹

The strategic importance of Operation FORAGER and the logistical feats executed by members of the African American depot and ammunition companies cannot be overstated, specifically when it came to supporting successive shore landings throughout the Pacific. It was absolutely criminal for General Rupertus to express an approving remark such as “Well Done” in a simple letter of appreciation for the combat achievements of African American Marines during arguably the fiercest fighting in the Pacific theater.

The organizational task of effectively carrying out shore landings was one of the most challenging and demanding assignments Marines would have to execute for the duration of the war. Moreover, this task was successfully accomplished under concentrated artillery and small arms fire on loose sand, which was a duty reserved for combat-trained Marines who served in assault divisions. As the need for draft replacements rose, due to casualty rates, combat units quickly discovered that experience

⁴⁹ “The Negro in the Marine Corps,” undated fact sheet, RG 127: Box 135, NARA. “Bloody Nose Ridge,” named for its narrow paths between the ridges, with each ridge fortification supporting the other with deadly enemy crossfire. Marine units took increasingly high casualties as they slowly advanced through the ridges. The Japanese always demonstrated unusual fire discipline, striking only when they could inflict maximum casualties. As casualties mounted, Japanese snipers began to take aim at stretcher-bearers, knowing that if two stretcher bearers were injured or killed, more would have to return and replace them, and the snipers could continually eliminate large amounts of Marines while affecting units psychologically. The Japanese infiltrated friendly lines at night to attack Marines in their foxholes. As a result, Marines built two-man foxholes, so one could sleep while the other maintained watch. See Hough, et al., *Pearl Harbor to Guadalcanal*, 94; Hough, *Assault on Peleliu*, 36–103. An official Letter of Appreciation is equivalent to a glorified “thank you” note. Any non-commissioned officer (i.e., E-4 or above) can issue a Letter of Appreciation.

with the LSTs was vital, and that disciplined and well-trained troops would be the standard for prosecuting combat missions. Operation FORAGER was the first campaign in which Marine commanders assigned special (black) Marine units to unload LSTs. After the success registered by the African American Marine depot and ammunition companies during the first battles of the operation, Marine commanders exercised and implemented more detailed plans to account for a determined Japanese enemy as operational plans came into clearer focus with the battle of Iwo Jima on the horizon.⁵⁰

While World War II Marine legends John Basilone and Lewis “Chesty” Puller made names for themselves on Guadalcanal, Peleliu, and Iwo Jima, African American Marines Gene Doughty and Steven Robinson, who participated in the invasion of Iwo Jima, and witnessed the flag raising on Mount Suribachi, are commonly unknown. As a member of the all-black 8th Ammunition Company, Doughty served with the 5th Marine Regiment (the most decorated infantry regiment in the Marine Corps) during the invasion of Iwo Jima. According to Doughty, black Marines conducted noncombat duties such as grave registration and cleaning up debris on the beach, while other black Marines with the ammunition companies outfitted weapons and ammunition for frontline combat units. Doughty struggled to accept being relegated to cleanup and labor tasks; he joined the Marines to fight for his country, “I felt that we were taken advantage of. The black Marines were essentially laborers and that did not go well with me. I believed that we,

⁵⁰ Hough, *Assault on Peleliu*, 36–103; “The Negro in the Marine Corps,” undated fact sheet, RG 127: Box 135, NARA. See also Claude A. Barnett Papers.

American citizens, should have the right to stand beside any man there and take part in opposing the enemy as United States Marines in defense of our country.”⁵¹

Steve Robinson shared a unique experience during the invasion of Iwo Jima, “When I think about all the men, and I’m talking about not just the blacks, I’m talking about the whites, young kids, 17, 18, 19 years old that I buried. I buried, Basilone, John Basilone.” Basilone had received the Congressional Medal of Honor for gallantry while serving on Guadalcanal. He was revered by the Corps and the American public. He was also the face of the Marine Corps and poster boy for war bonds. Robinson’s excessive deference for Basilone was common among Marines; he was a modern day hero for so many, “[Basilone] was killed on Green Beach on Iwo Jima. I took his personal items out of his wallet to send back to his mother or his wife whoever [survived him]. I took his gear. I took pieces of his skivvies and his underwear because Basilone was a hero to me.” Basilone was killed and buried on Green Beach, “We buried him up at the National Cemetery on Green Beach. That was courage.”⁵²

Robinson also stressed how tactically involved African Americans were during the invasions of Iwo Jima, Peleliu, Saipan, and Okinawa.⁵³ He described several incidents

⁵¹ Sergeant Gene Doughty, born in Stamford, Connecticut. He moved to New York where he finished high school and entered City College. He joined the Corps in 1943 and participated in the invasion of Iwo Jima and was discharged in 1946. See Series 4: Military, Sub-Series 4.2: Montford Point, Item 18: Interview with Gene Doughty, June 29, 2005, Melton McLaurin Papers, MS323, Folder 1 [hereafter cited as Doughty interview]; Doughty also quoted in Clarence E. Willie, *African American Voices From Iwo Jima: Personal Accounts of the Battle* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2010), 87; Doughty also quoted in Gail Buckley, *American Patriots: The Story of Blacks in the Military from the Revolution to Desert Storm* (New York: Random House, 2001), 320–321.

⁵² Robinson interview.

⁵³ “Saipan Landing a Grim Ordeal Of ‘Taking’ Rain of Mortar Fire,” *New York Times*, July 2, 1944; “Saipan Raids Cost Japan 13 Aircraft,” *New York Times*, November 29, 1944; “Books of the Times,” *New*

in which black Marines defended airstrips and security posts, saving the lives of American pilots and killing hundreds of Japanese, “If it had not been for [us, with the help of a few white Marines on our flank], but mostly black Marines to stop those Japanese from coming through the lines and overrunning our position, overrunning the white Marines behind us and killing all the pilots, [they would not have made it].” Robinson’s personal bravery, worthy of combat valor and gallantry, meant little to him. He inherently knew that personal accolades would be overdue at best, “But you never heard of that. But nobody, at least to my knowledge, nobody fought a war for recognition. They fought a war because it’s something you have to do.”⁵⁴ Instances such as these, which shaped the overall African American World War II experience, litter the landscape of untold, unrecognized, and incomplete versions of the journey and wartime record of black Marines.

For African American Marines the combat achievement gap throughout the war would remain massively wide. It would take herculean efforts for blacks to receive equal combat recognition that their white counterparts routinely received. Despite this fissure between earning a “Well Done” and the complete omission or reduction in describing the full story of black Marines, one Montford Pointer’s gallantry in action could not be limited to a simple letter of appreciation.

Marine Private First Class Luther Woodard, an African American, earned the Silver Star (the third-highest military combat decoration that can be awarded to a member

York Times, October 4, 1945. See also David F. Winkler, “The Montford Point Marines,” *Seapower* 54 (September 2011): 60; Gerald Astor, *The Right to Fight: A History of African Americans in the Military* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2001), 1–4, 229–230, 259–260, 499; Astor, *The Greatest War*, 661–662.

⁵⁴ Robinson interview.

of the U.S. Armed Forces) for his actions against the Japanese while serving as an ammunition supply guard on Guam, Marianas Islands. Woodard's citation reads:

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity while serving with the Fourth Marine Ammunition Company, Fifth Field Depot, Supply Service, Fleet Marine Force, in action against enemy Japanese forces on Guam, Marianas islands, 11 January 1945. Following freshly-made footprints which he had discovered in the vicinity of the ammunition dump, Private Woodard, voluntarily and unaided, trailed a party of six Japanese through heavy underbrush to a small clearing near an abandoned shack where he opened fire against the enemy, killing one and possibly wounding another before the survivors fled. Returning to his company, Private Woodard organized a patrol of five men, and, when contact was again established with the hostile group, was successful in killing one of the two who were annihilated by his group. His initiative and cool courage in the face of grave peril were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.⁵⁵

It is unclear who submitted this award for Woodard; nevertheless, it was the highest award presented to an African American Marine during World War II. Furthermore, the recognition of Woodard's personal combat achievement did not appear to be a form of tokenism. Since the early eighteenth century, military commanders have commended the value that fighting men placed on distinctive symbols and insignias of valor in combat. Much of a Marine's military service is communicated by what he/she wears above or on his/her left breast pocket; these awards represent the *what*, *when*, and *where* of a Marine's

⁵⁵ Private First Class Luther Woodard was born March 18, 1916 in Calhoun City, Mississippi. He enlisted in the Marine Corps on August 12, 1943 and was honorably discharged on April 25, 1946. Initially, Woodard was awarded a Bronze Star for "his bravery, initiative and battle-cunning." The personal award was later upgraded to the Silver Star for his combat actions on Guam. The Silver Star is awarded for gallantry in action: While engaged in action against an enemy of the United States; while engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing foreign force; or while serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in an armed conflict against an opposing armed force in which the United States is not a belligerent party. See "The Negro in the Marine Corps," RG 127: Box 135, NARA.

career. Marines are well known for allowing their personal medals, ribbons, and badges to introduce them to fellow members of the armed forces, which carries much more weight than many are willing to comfortably admit.⁵⁶

During the war, Marine officers carried with them the complete responsibility of ensuring their Marines were promptly, and accurately, recommended for personal awards and decorations they earned. Typically, but not always, award recommendations were written and submitted up the chain of command, beginning at the platoon level. If the company commander concurs with the platoon commander's recommendation, he will then forward it to the battalion commander, who has endorsing and awarding authority depending on the level of the award (e.g., battalion commanders cannot award bronze stars or higher). After the battalion commander's endorsement, an awards board at the regiment or division level has the final authority and, with the majority of submissions, will approve, downgrade, or deny the personal award.⁵⁷

Oftentimes, when it came to black Marines' awards, submissions would make their way through the higher echelons of command, which were so far removed from where the Marine's actions were noted that personal awards were downgraded, denied, or worse, lost. The majority of Montford Pointers discussed how recommendations for personal awards or promotions never reached the light of day for their wartime achievements. Routinely, the recommendation would be made and that would be the end of it—no follow up and no resubmission.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Shaw, et al., *Central Pacific Drive*, 568; Culp, *First Black United States Marines*, 164–166, 188.

⁵⁷ Ash interview; see also Culp, *First Black United States Marines*, 165–166.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

Given the nature of promotions and their natural connection to combat actions and personal decorations, the inherent spirit of Letter of instruction No. 421 would only continue to provide greater credence to General Holcomb's previous declarations regarding the status of African American Marines. The letter's directives further emboldened commanders to channel blacks into "meaningless assignments that had little to do with winning the war."⁵⁹ Al Banker, who was unaware of the existence of Letter of Instruction No. 421, illustrated an instance in which the practical application and pervasive spirit of the letter's intent manifested itself during his service as a cook. "We could not, see during that time, if we had white cooks working with us and they could be the best cooks in the world and they wanted to get promoted and I would be just as good as they are, they want to promote me, but in order for them to promote me, they'd have to promote my counterpart, the white Marine." For example, in 1943, if a white Marine were an E-5 (E-Enlisted; 5-Sergeant) and a black Marine were an E-4 (E-Enlisted; 4-Corporal), who was selected for promotion to E-5, the white Marine would be promoted to E-6 (E-Enlisted; 6-Staff Sergeant), "At no time could I have the same rank that he [the white Marine] had," Banker concluded.⁶⁰ In addition, "The highest rank that [a black] enlisted man could have at that time was six stripes, three up and three down."⁶¹

⁵⁹ Nalty, *Right to Fight*, 4.

⁶⁰ Master Sergeant Alvin J. Banker joined the U.S. Marine Corps on July 16, 1942. He attended boot camp at Montford Point, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, which opened April 26, 1942. Banker was assigned to a Special Duty Platoon of the 51st Composite Defense Battalion. He remained at Montford Point as a cook and Mess Supervisor until September of 1946. He was then transferred to the 6th Colored Replacement Draft Marines and Deployed to the Marianna Islands. He served in the Pacific and the U.S. until August 1966. See Series 4: Military, Sub-Series 4.4: Veteran's Heritage, Item 3: Interview with Alvin J. Banker, December 20, 2000, William M. Randall Library Special Collections, University of North Carolina Wilmington, Oral History Collection, 1990–Present, UNCW Archives and Special Collections Online

African American Marine promotions would face a veritable roadblock along the pathway to military advancement. For this racial impediment to be removed, white non-commissioned officers would have to eventually be placed outside of black units. Furthermore, black Marines needed to be ready for the added responsibilities. Banker shared an experience in which he proved not only to be completely trained for such a case, but also prepared, and more than capable of executing all the duties and responsibilities associated with his occupational specialty:

... I had an incident where the mess officer from Mississippi, the mess sergeant was from New Bedford, Massachusetts and I was from Louisiana, and I was a technical sergeant [E-7] and the mess sergeant, I was his assistant. He told me one day, he said, 'Joe, you know I don't want you to learn how to do the books because as a rule when a white person teaches colored people how to do something, they do the job better.' I said okay. He said, 'I want you to stay out in the galley and supervise the cooking and take care of the storage areas.' I said 'Okay, fine.' Well one day, he received orders to go overseas into combat. Now he was going to give me a crash course on how to keep the books.⁶²

Banker further explained the significance of the inspection of the books with regard to accuracy, credibility, and upholding the standards of the Marine Corps. The proper maintenance of the mess records fell in direct correlation with military performance and influenced potential future promotions and career recognition.

For national standards, you have to keep the financial status of the mess. We had to run it just like it was a business. You have to stay within your budget and also order supplies and everything. You

Database. (hereafter cited as Series 4: Military, Sub-Series 4.4: Veteran's Heritage) [hereafter cited as Banker interview].

⁶¹ Hines interview.

⁶² Banker interview.

have to do the whole nine yards like you're in the restaurant business. I had completed a business course before coming into the Marine Corps. So when he told me I had to learn, I went to my barracks, I opened up my foot locker and I got my certificate out and I took it back and threw it on the desk and said, 'Here you are Frenchie. This is my credentials here.' I said, 'You don't have to teach me the books. I don't want to take your job away from you.' He looked at me. His face got as red as that book over there and the lieutenant was sitting behind his desk. He looked at me and smiled and winked at me. So out he went. A couple months later, I was promoted to master sergeant [E-8].⁶³

Despite the adherence of all directives attendant with Letter of Instruction No. 421, most situations between white and black Marines seldom bore favorable results. The Banker experience is one that is unique to the overall story concerning the first African American Marines during this period. Moreover, what most Montford Pointers quickly became familiar with regarding proper military indoctrination was communicated in paragraph seven of Letter of Instruction No. 421:

Since the inclusion of colored personnel in Marine Corps organizations is a new departure, it is requested that commanding officers make a study of one situation as it exists from time to time and the problems involved, and make reports to the commandant, Marine Corps. This report should include the adaptation of Negroes to military discipline and guard duty, their attitude towards other personnel, and vice versa liberty facilities, recreation facilities, and any other matter that would be of interest to the Commandant.⁶⁴

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ RG 127: Box 135, NARA.

Akin to the spirit of Rudyard Kipling's renowned poem, "The White Man's Burden: The United States and The Philippine Islands, 1899" (1929), this paragraph became a euphemism for a zero tolerance policy toward an emergent black identity.⁶⁵

The effects of this policy of zero tolerance created deep inroads into the psyche of many white commanders, who believed the science behind the 1925 Army War College study that dubiously measured the combat fitness of black soldiers for service in a future war—which was nothing more than racist assumptions about African Americans' biology, leadership, and mental capabilities. During the fall of 1943, Marine Major General Charles F. B. Price, commander of the Defense Force, Samoan Group, advised Marines commanders against sending black troops to Samoa. Price "based his opinion on his interpretation of the science of genetics." Price considered the light-skinned Polynesians to be, by nature, "primitively romantic." His conclusion found merit in the "very high class half caste" and "very desirable type" of offspring produced between whites, Polynesians, and the Chinese. Price feared that the arrival and infusion of Negro blood into the purer populations would make the island "predominately Negro" and produce, what Price considered, "a very undesirable citizen." More suitable, Price

⁶⁵ Rudyard Kipling, "The White Man's Burden: The United States and The Philippine Islands, 1899." *Rudyard Kipling's Verse: Definitive Edition* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1929). See also Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876–1917* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), 2–9, 161, 224, 229–234. Many Christian ministers and theologians taught that whites were the chosen people, blacks were cursed to be servants, and God supported racial segregation. Craniologists, eugenicists, phrenologists, and Social Darwinists at every educational level buttressed the belief that blacks were innately intellectually and culturally inferior to whites. Pro-segregation politicians gave eloquent speeches on the great danger of integration: the mongrelization of the white race. Newspaper and magazines writers routinely referred to blacks as niggers, coons, and darkies; and worse, their articles reinforced anti-black stereotypes. Even children's games portrayed blacks as inferior beings. All major societal institutions reflected and supported the oppression of blacks. See Pilgrim, *Understanding Jim Crow*, 43.

recommended, sending the African American depot and ammunition companies to Melanesia (from Greek, meaning “black islands). The Melanesian pigmentation proved to be more a fitting and proper place for hosting black troops, according to Price; in addition, he believed any strain on race relations would be minimized among the black islanders and African American Marines. After forwarding his recommendation to Headquarters Marine Corps, though not necessarily due to his logic, HQMC approved Price’s request and the African American depot and ammunition companies were promptly transferred from Samoa.⁶⁶

The overseas image of the Marine Corps was just as critical as it was domestically. Despite the push for black Marine recruits, the Marine Corps refused to have its face of battle darkened by anything more than the sun and the sands of the Pacific beaches. When asked why he decided to join the Marines, Ruben Hines described his experience with little animation, “The word ‘join’ did not apply to me or to anybody else at that particular time. We were slated for the Marine Corps through volunteering for the draft. And after we got our physical, then that was what we called quota assignments to various branches of the service.” Hines just happened to be selected to join the Marine Corps in 1942, he was only aware of the Army as the only fighting force at the time. “My brother was in the army, but I was selected among that quota. I enlisted, whatever you want to call it, in the Marine Corps. Some of the guys went on and some guys went in the navy. I was selected to go into the Marine Corps,” lamented Hines.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Nalty, *Right to Fight*, 12. Major General Charles F. B. Price served during the Second Occupation of Cuba, the Spanish-American War, and World War I.

⁶⁷ Hines interview.

Hines's description of the myth and image the Corps sought to maintain throughout the war is addressed in greater detail in Aaron B. O'Connell's *Underdogs: The Making of the Modern Marine Corps* and Craig Cameron's *American Samurai: Myth, Imagination, and the Conduct of Battle in the First Marine Division, 1941–1951*. In *American Samurai*, Cameron asserts that protecting its elitist image was a top priority for Marine Corps officials. During World War II, the Marines did not want to lose the essence of "true volunteerism," which added to the allure of an elite fraternal order. Marine recruiters would discharge willing inductees in order to have them "enlist" into the regular forces or the Reserves, thus dropping the Selective Service (SS) tag attached after their names. The Selective Service designation was a "damning symbol" to Marine recruiters.⁶⁸ For the Marine Corps to obtain volunteers in the true sense of the word, its

⁶⁸ The induction and processing of Marine inductees were the duties of the Recruiting Service and were performed as they had been for volunteers. At first, all inductees were enrolled into the Selective Service, but after February 25, 1943, the Recruiting Service was authorized to discharge inductees to permit them to enlist in the Regular or Reserve Marine Corps. However, a stigma came to be attached to Selective Service inductees, unjustified, of course, this pseudo-voluntary procedure became very popular. Of a total of 224,323 inductees, fewer than 70,000 chose to remain in inductee status. On February 11, 1943, the Marine Corps received its first recruits through the Selective Service. Results during this first month were disappointing, as only 9,349 men of a quota of 13,400 were actually assigned to the Marine Corps. Marine officials had hoped that recruiting goals would improve in subsequent months, but this was not the case. The Selective Service would not meet the monthly quota established for the USMC until June 1944. In August 1944, the number of inductees assigned to the Marine Corps once again fell below the quota established by the Selective Service. With the exception of July 1944, the Selective Service never again met the quota it agreed upon for the USMC. The Marine Corps was able to avert a serious manpower shortage only because voluntary enlistment by 17-year-olds was still permitted, a practice that began in February 1943, the month of the first Marine draft call. The Commandant of the Marine Corps directed the heads of Recruiting Divisions to build up a pool of men in this age group by enlisting them in the Reserves and placing them on inactive duty subject to call. During the remaining months of World War II, this pool was drawn upon repeatedly. Of the 275,985 men who entered the Marine Corps between February 1, 1943 and July 31, 1945, 58,927 were 17 year-old volunteers. See Julius A. Furer, *Administration of the Navy Department in World War II*, United States Navy Department (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1959), 567–568; Craig M. Cameron, *American Samurai: Myth, Imagination, and the*

recruiters had to venture outside the 18–36 age pool, which the Selective Service covered. Using the cosmetic device of dropping the “SS” proved most profitable for the Marine Corps. Between 1943 and 1945, this method drew more than 58,000 seventeen-year-olds into the Marine Corps Reserves, subject to calling them to active duty (Regulars) as they turned eighteen.⁶⁹ The draft’s significance was pivotal in achieving the Corps’s manpower needs, despite its efforts to increase the organization’s visibility and “image of volunteerism.” According to the *Marine Corps Administrative History*, which recorded monthly inductions (volunteer and Selective Service) from February 1941 through July 1945, approximately 80 percent of those who entered the Corps in 1943 did so through the Selective Service, whether “volunteering” at the induction centers or not. Without the Selective Service, the Marine Corps could not have made up the difference through recruiting volunteers.⁷⁰

Despite the avid rush of volunteers to enlist following the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Marine Corps found itself at a disadvantage when the Selective Service, the other branches of service, and the federal service organizations all drew from the same limited pool of manpower. Cameron contends that by the end of 1942, Marine recruiters struggled to meet monthly recruiting goals as rapidly as Congress increased authorized manning levels—even after entrance requirements were lowered. The Marine Corps had

Conduct of Battle in the First Marine Division, 1941–1945 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 61; Sledge, *With the Old Breed*, 171.

⁶⁹ Furer, *Administration of the Navy Department in World War II*, 568; Aaron B. O’Connell, *Underdogs: The Making of the Modern Marine Corps* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012); Cameron, *American Samurai*, 61.

⁷⁰ United States Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Administrative History*, dated 1946, Typed manuscript, RG 127: Box 136, NARA; see also Cameron, *American Samurai*, 58, 61; Sledge, *With the Old Breed*, 171.

no choice but to fall under the guidelines of the Selective Service, which would ensure that personnel were going to be more equitably distributed among all the services.⁷¹

In March 1943, as the U.S. Army, Navy and Marine Corps struggled to meet their personnel needs; however, Paul V. McNutt, chairman of the War Manpower Commission, insisted that the armed forces accelerate the induction of African Americans, and immediately, the *Pittsburgh Courier* reported,

This new policy of apportioning colored selectees among the Army, Navy and Marine Corps is said to have the approval of the White House. It is designed to solve the problem of the large number of colored men passed over in the induction process. Until recently, the Navy and the Marine Corps met their personnel needs through voluntary enlistments, but restricted the enlistments of colored men.⁷²

When officials in Washington urged the service branches to increase their number of African Americans, the Marine Corps attempted to provide a sense of unity as blacks came through training at Montford Point. Initially, white Marines staffed all the positions at Montford Point, officers, non-commissioned officers, and drill instructors. However, there is speculation that these men were chosen for duty at Montford Point given their

⁷¹ Of the 19,168 African American Marines that served during the war, 16,039 were drafted. The first Marine draftees received their induction notices in November 1942 and reported to boot camp in February 1943. See Cameron, *American Samurai*, 61.

⁷² “Army, Navy To Call 1,080,000 Negroes,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, March 20, 1943. See also Morris J. MacGregor, Jr., *Integration of the Armed Forces, 1940–1965* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, Center of Military History, United States Army, 1981), 100–104; Richard M. Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces: Fighting on Two Fronts, 1939–1953* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1969), 53.

service in the Caribbean, Nicaragua, and the Philippines, which was deemed to constitute experience with “colored” peoples, and therefore, “colored” troops.⁷³

There is further speculation that only “southern” white Marines were placed in charge of blacks during the war because white southerners were better prepared or qualified to deal with blacks; however, the accuracy of this notion and practice is highly questionable. With that said, the nearly two decade U.S. Marine Corps occupation of Haiti, during the early to mid 1900s, lends itself to providing credence to the questionable notions of white southerners being placed in key positions of authority at Camp Montford Point. Although not occupational in nature, several connections can be drawn from the Haiti experience to Montford Point. The first connection is paternalism, which was built into Marine Corps military relations through Letter of Instruction No. 421; it acutely structured the distinct relationships between white officers, white non-commissioned officers, and black enlistees, specifically how blacks viewed white officers in significant command positions, as “fathers.” For example, Colonel Samuel A. Woods, Jr., who was selected by the commandant to launch the training program at Montford Point, was known as “the Great White Father of everybody.”⁷⁴

⁷³ McLaurin, *Marines of Montford Point*, 49; Ulysses G. Lee, Jr., *The Employment of Negro Troops* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966; reprint, Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 2000), 179–204; Bernard C. Nalty, *Strength for the Fight: A History of Black Americans in the Military* (New York: Free Press, 1986), 163–164. See also Bell I. Wiley, *The Training of Negro Troops* (Washington, D.C.: Army Ground Forces Historical Section, 1946); Jean Byers, *A Study of the Negro in Military Service* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, 1950).

⁷⁴ Nalty, *Right to Fight*, 6. See also Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation & the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915–1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); “EX-‘KING’ AIDS MARINES: Sergt. Wirkus, Once Crowned in Haiti, in Recruiting Drive,” *New York Times*, December 13, 1939.

Marine Corps general officers believed that officers born in the South were uniquely qualified to lead and manage African Americans, which in large part was an adoption from Army practices at the time. Colonel Woods fit this pattern. A native of South Carolina, Woods was a graduate of the Citadel, South Carolina's military college and a veteran of the Haiti occupation. He also served in various regions in Central America and China.⁷⁵

Bertram Doyle's *The Etiquette of Race Relations in the South: A Study in Social Control*, examines etiquette as a form of social control. In his chapter "Etiquette Restored," he summarizes the social necessity to subordinate Negroes as outlined in a southern credo: "Only Southerners understand the Negro question.... Let the South settle the Negro Question.... Let the lowest white man count for more than the highest Negro."⁷⁶ This 1937 southern credo was in accordance with popular notions within the Marine Corps in 1942; nevertheless, there would be commanders who believed that such doctrines carried minimal value.

Before entering the Marines as a commissioned officer, Anthony Caputo's only exposure to the South was when he traveled to play sports at Duke University, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, and Wake Forest University. Caputo, who grew up in Montclair, New Jersey, with a significant number of African Americans, admits that he gave little thought to segregation and racial discrimination. He had no qualms or trepidations with the assignment of training and working with America's first black

⁷⁵ Nalty, *Right to Fight*, 6.

⁷⁶ Doyle, *The Etiquette of Race Relations in the South*, 140–141; see also Ulbrich, *Preparing for Victory*, 119.

Marines. “I just took it as another challenge, something for me to do as a duty, and that I would do the very best I could. No matter [where] I was assigned, there or some other assignment. It was still a responsibility of a Marine officer to do the best he could under the circumstances,” asserted Caputo.⁷⁷

Considering that Caputo’s observations are in keeping with the times, it appears that he did not possess a genuine connection with, or concern for, black Marines. When asked if he believed his background, in terms of relating to minorities, was a factor in his selection to serve at Camp Montford Point, Caputo naïvely replied: “I don’t think I was selected because of my prior experience with African Americans at all. I think I was just selected because, Colonel Woods thought that I could do the job. And he asked, the general [Allen H. Turnage, base commander of Camp Lejeune] if he could take me with him, and that’s what happened.” Caputo debunked the myth concerning white Marines, who had served in Latin America, the West Indies, and the Philippines, of having an advantage over other white Marines who lacked experiences with “colored” populations during the 1920s and 1930s. “I don’t remember anything like that,” Caputo recalled,

The DIs [drill instructors] were selected because of their backgrounds [in dealing] with other African Americans... I know that they were selected because they were good men, and they were, they were experienced in training [other] men.... I know nothing about their previous [backgrounds], and how they were selected,

⁷⁷ Colonel Anthony Caputo joined the Marines in 1941. He was commissioned on November 1, 1941, after graduating from the University of Pennsylvania. During World War II, Caputo served as the Battery “A” company commander in the 51st Defense Battalion on Guam and Okinawa, Japan. He also fought in Korea and served as a staff officer in Vietnam. See Series 4: Military, Sub-Series 4.2: Montford Point, Item 7: Interview with Anthony Caputo, June 29, 2004, Melton McLaurin Papers, MS323, Folder 1 [hereafter cited as Caputo interview].

other than the fact that they could train [Marines], they were good at training individuals.⁷⁸

Beyond training duties, Caputo asserted that nothing was ever brought to his attention regarding any social problems that blacks encountered while off base. Surprisingly, Caputo recalled, “As long as I was with [black Marines] at Montford Point, I don’t think I ever had any experiences with any of this kind of [adverse] treatment on the base or off the base. No problems were ever brought to me.”⁷⁹ It is evident, that although hand selected to serve at Camp Montford Point in 1941, as the first company commander (Battery “A”) in the 51st Defense Battalion, Caputo either was an absentee leader or wore blinders. It would have been impossible for him not to hear about the bus seizure involving Joseph Myers in October 1942, which involved Colonel Woods.

After a few hours of waiting for the bus in New Bern, NC, Myers and several other black Marines took over a bus when they were not permitted to board, “We took the bus over and drove the bus back to [Montford Point] camp. We had some guys and they were pretty strong. So, what we did, we just took the guys that we were having [a] problem with, [the] white driver, [sat] him outside the bus, and we took the bus and drove it back to the camp.” Myers and the others were immediately greeted by the MPs as they arrived at Montford Point. After turning the bus over, Colonel Woods reprimanded the Marines, informing them that this type of behavior was unacceptable.⁸⁰ As a company

⁷⁸ Caputo interview.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Sergeant Joseph Myers from Atlanta, Georgia, volunteered to join the Corps after completing high school. He served as a drill instructor at Montford Point; he participated in the invasion of Iwo Jima, Japan, served on Guam, and participated in the occupation of Japan. See Series 4: Military, Sub-Series 4.2: Montford Point, Item 41: Interview with Joseph Myers, June 29, 2005, Melton McLaurin Papers, MS323,

commander, Caputo reported daily to Colonel Woods and served with the 51st through 1945. Nevertheless, he held to the notion, asserting, “As far as I’m concerned, I don’t remember any of these problems, I’m not saying there weren’t any [at Montford Point]. But, I don’t remember them.”⁸¹

Caputo’s testimony stands in sharp contrast to the majority of the Montford Pointers’ accounts that address life on and off base. One possible explanation is that by early 1943, black non-commissioned officers operated Camp Montford Point. Averet Corley asserted, “It was an all black base. The officers of the day were white. And after 1600, they’d leave, there’d be one officer of the day left on the base, and everything else was black. So consequently, on the base, you weren’t bothered too much with racial tensions, racial prejudices and things. The base was very nice. And that was our sanctuary.”⁸² Corley’s account and description of the officer corps could explain, but not justify Caputo’s leadership, and speak to the inconsistency of his recollections. Moreover,

Folder 1 [hereafter cited as Myers interview]. Returning to Jacksonville proved to be difficult on a Jim Crow bus line. Drivers gave priority to white passengers, as state law required, and restricted black passengers to the rear of the bus, unless whites needed space. Since blacks and whites formed separate lines at the bus stop, drivers tended to take only whites on board and leave black Marines, in uniform, fully aware of the deadline for returning to Montford Point. When this happened, frustrated black Marines, at the risk of being subjected to violence by the local police, might commandeer a bus, remove the driver, and take it to the gate nearest Jacksonville, where the transit company could retrieve it the following morning. See Nalty, *Right to Fight*, 5–6. The distance from New Bern to Jacksonville is approximately 37 miles. For more on the public transit system during the Jim Crow era, see Catherine A. Barnes, *Journey from Jim Crow: The Desegregation of Southern Transit* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

⁸¹ Caputo interview. See also United States Marine Corps, Battery A, 51st Composite Defense Battalion Muster Roll, August 1942, RG 127: Box 135, NARA. See also Henry I. Shaw and Ralph W. Donnelly, *Blacks in the Marine Corps* (History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, Washington, D.C., 1975; reprint 2002), 5.

⁸² Corporal Averet Corley was born in Indianapolis, Indiana. He entered the Marine Corps in 1945, served at Montford Point during the Korean War, and left the Corps in 1951. See Series 4: Military, Sub-Series 4.2: Montford Point, Item 11: Interview with Averet Corley, July 23, 2004, Melton McLaurin Papers, MS323, Folder 1 [hereafter cited as Corley interview].

in 1944, the 51st traveled by train from North Carolina to San Diego, California, and encountered several Jim Crow incidents before departing to the South Pacific.⁸³ Again, Caputo was the first company commander at Montford Point. He served with the 51st Defense Battalion from 1942 through 1945.

Even supposing Caputo was unaware of these incidents, his lack of insight fails to explain why two white platoon commanders, Lieutenants John D'Angelo and Kenneth Graham, would often patrol the streets of Jacksonville when their Marines were on liberty. These lieutenants were ready to intercede on the behalf of black Marines when Jacksonville locals harassed them in 1943.⁸⁴ According to several testimonies, D'Angelo and Graham were not the only officers who looked out for their men. Captain John Blackett, commanding officer of the all-black 8th Marine Ammunition Company, "spoke out long and loud about his uncompromising stand that under no circumstance would the staff or anyone else under his command support racism, prejudice, discrimination or oppression."⁸⁵ Nevertheless, the citizens of Jacksonville were not under a federal mandate to adhere to racial accommodations within any organization or institution, which severely dampened the efforts and voices of exponents for racial integration and equality.

Even with limited choices and passively accepting the rules of segregation and racial discrimination, Banker shared an experience in which he and his fellow Marines, both white and black, had reached a culminating point with southern injustices. While

⁸³ Nalty, *Right to Fight*, 6.

⁸⁴ Gerald Astor, *The Right to Fight: A History of African Americans in the Military* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2001), 229, 262. See also Culp, *First Black United States Marines*, 89.

⁸⁵ United States Marine Corps, Muster of the Eighth Field Depot for February 1945, RG 127: Box 135, NARA; Astor, *Right to Fight*, 228; Blackett quoted in Culp, *First Black United States Marines*, 89.

traveling by bus to Kinston, North Carolina, from Jacksonville, a white female passenger attempted to sit in the rear of the bus, which would cause all the blacks to stand behind her despite open seating in the front of the bus. The bus driver told one of the black Marines to give up his seat and he refused. The driver then, not pleased with the Marine's response, said a few words, went to the front of the bus and returned with a wrench as if he was going to hit the Marine. It was then that "a few white Marines on the bus warned the bus driver not to touch the Marine, they said, 'Don't put your hands on him.'"⁸⁶ Isolated incidents such as these are rare and did not evolve into an established practice or pattern of behavior among black and white Marines throughout the war; however, solitary events of this kind inspired confidence in black Marines, knowing they could rely on white Marines to support them on occasion, lightening the burden of segregation and racial discrimination.

Leaders such as Blackett, D'Angelo, and Graham, who were exceptional in their own right, assuming the professional manner in which they treated black Marines by earning their respect, still could not change the racial tides of a segregationist country. Like so many other Montford Pointers, Joseph Carpenter decided that it was easier to simply accept and endure the laws of Jim Crow. For African American Marines, the reach of the federal government could not change the deep-seated racial attitudes of white America, and in turn, prevented them from exerting their natural rights as citizens, but more importantly as men. Turner Blount summed it up best after General Larsen's

⁸⁶ Banker interview. This example is one of a limited sample, and does not speak to the overall interracial experience within the Marine Corps during World War II—the distance from Jacksonville to Kinston is approximately 45 miles.

speech, “The top [Marines], the whites, didn’t want you.”⁸⁷ When southern black recruits arrived at induction centers, they also quickly learned that the Marine Corps had not allowed African Americans to serve in its ranks before 1942.

Ruben Hines vividly recalled, “I heard about that at Fort Benning, [Georgia], where we took our physical [examination] that blacks had not [been] permitted to enlist in the Marine Corps [before 1942]. They were not wanted. They didn’t, they didn’t take them. Period.”⁸⁸ Unsettled by this notion, Hines, who grew up in a prejudiced and segregated society, was less than pleased to discover that for more than a century and a half an entire group of people were denied the opportunity to serve their nation, based solely on ethnicity. Furthermore, the majority of white officers viewed the social experiment to accept African Americans as a distraction and an unworthy effort to bring about equity within its ranks. Notwithstanding, the war did provide black Marines with opportunities to showcase their leadership abilities, albeit under white supervision.

The ethos of Letter of Instruction No. 421 promulgated the core elements of white supremacy and contracted the space in which black Marines could navigate within the ranks of the world’s finest. Moreover, Letter of Instruction No. 421 expressed that all

⁸⁷ Master Sergeant Turner G. Blount was born in Keysville, Georgia and joined the Corps in 1943. He participated in the Tinian, Saipan, and Okinawa invasion during World War II. He served in Korea and Vietnam and retired after the war. See Series 4: Military, Sub-Series 4.2: Montford Point, Item 4: Interview with Turner Blount, July 21, 2005, Melton McLaurin Papers, MS323, Folder 1 [hereafter cited as Blount interview]. Generally, African American Marines inherited disgruntled and therefore less effective white officers. They were also issued, and trained with, inferior gear and equipment; in addition, their training was usually subpar to the level of their white counterparts, who were trained at Parris Island, S.C. and Camp Pendleton, CA. Moreover, African American Marines were expected to do as well or better than white Marines who were better equipped, better trained, and better officered. See Morton, “The Federal Government and Negro Morale,” 452–463; John F. Marszalek, Jr., “The Black Man in Military History,” *Negro History Bulletin* 36 (October 1973): 124.

⁸⁸ Hines interview. See also RG 127: Box 135, NARA and Banker interview.

Marines were “entitled to the same rights and privileges under Navy Regulations” and that African American Marines would be “carefully trained and indoctrinated” within the spirit of the letter. At the time, training was narrowly defined to boot camp and support training; with regard to indoctrination, black enlistees were required to understand not only their second-class citizenship in the Corps, but also outside of the Corps. Black Marines were “expected to conduct themselves with propriety and become a credit to the Marine Corps.” Be that as it may, the letter’s author ensured that the *credit* of African American Marines to the Corps would be compromised during his tenure of leadership.

Furthermore, under the auspices of Letter of Instruction No. 421, commanding officers ensured that their position and influence of authority would serve as a daily reminder of white supremacy. Considering this manner of deportment on the part of all white Marines, there was very little room for interpretation of who dictated the course of success for black Marines. The privilege of wearing the coveted Eagle, Globe, and Anchor came at a steep price for blacks, which would endure for more than two decades, setting the stage for white America to further question the leadership capabilities of African American Marines.

Chapter 4

United We Win?: Cultural Myths, Images, and Popular Mass Media

I do not believe the black Marines were given an opportunity to prove themselves as Marines in World War II. They were given little to no chance in combat. There was complete segregation. They became box and ammunition carriers. There were no black officers.

—**Captain Robert (Bobby) Troop,**
Recreation Officer, Camp Montford Point, 51st
Defense Battalion and Commanding Officer, 6th
Marine Depot Company

For the United States, World War II gave rise to the nation's democratic values as a beacon of hope for all of society to see. Fighting a war to extinguish global fascism, and in part against racism and bigotry, the United States self-identified as the champion and defender of freedom and equality *for all*. For African Americans, the war served as an opportunity to realize the doctrine and principles of this American creed.¹ According to culture critic, M. Thomas Inge, "along with jazz, the comic strip as we know it perhaps represents America's major indigenous contribution to world culture."² Leaving aside the accuracy of Inge's assertion, the coupling of jazz and comics makes for an odd pairing. Jazz itself is a conflation of African American cultural influences and music. Comics, however, are traditionally associated with, and viewed as, a medium of white entertainment.³ These visual elements of American popular culture, made for the

¹ Bruce Lenthall, "Outside the Panel: Race in America's Popular Imagination: Comic Strips before and after World War II," *Journal of American Studies* 32 (April 1998), 39–40.

² M. Thomas Inge, *Comics as Culture* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1990), xi.

³ Lenthall, "Outside the Panel," 39–40. Although often grouped together, comic strips and comic books are not the same. Comic strips are syndicated features in newspapers and sold to the masses, mostly an adult audience. Comic books are created distributed, and sold on their own merits to a paying, and overwhelmingly, young audience. There is overlap between the two: comic strips have been packaged as comic books, and a few comic books have been syndicated as comic strips. This overlap is a by-product of marketing practices and target audiences, which have provided each medium its own specific look and

common person, carried a collective message that resonated loud and clear in both black and white communities regarding racial stereotypes and attitudes.

This chapter will begin with the assertion that World War II era propaganda (i.e., comics strips, films, and the advent of the war poster) served as a significant device for psychologically and emotionally influencing how American culture, and *attitudes*, would define the face of combat and wartime military leadership. Although propaganda has never served as a substitute for a nation's respective military strength, "extensive resources, or skillful negotiation," its significance during armed conflicts has often proven beneficial with regard to wartime strategies. For example, it is difficult to deny the effect of "German propaganda in softening up the French in 1940, nor the part played by Allied propaganda in preparing the German people for surrender after Normandy."⁴

Within this context, the term *propaganda* applies to various components from comics, motion pictures, post cards, postage stamps, and war posters. These elements of propaganda exposed the American public to images of its own fighting men and women, its allies, and the Axis powers. Anthony Rhodes and Victor Margolin contend that this form of *psychological warfare* was "intended to directly influence the actions of civilians and troops. In its most broad meaning, World War II propaganda was just about anything that affected [attitudes] or confirmed the feelings and behavior of all parties involved,"

character. See Bradford W. Wright, *Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), xiii–xiv.

⁴ Anthony Richard Ewart Rhodes and Victor Margolin, ed., *Propaganda: The Art of Persuasion: World War II* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1976), 24–25; Richard H. Kohn, "The Social History of the American Soldier: A Review and Prospectus for Research," *American Historical Review* 86 (June 1981): 553–567.

including the fighting members of the Allied forces and the Axis powers.⁵

Notwithstanding, this chapter will not presume that propaganda such as comic books, films, and war posters held a deceptive and seductive power in shaping national attitudes or emphasizing stereotypes over a completely passive audience.

With the nation's leading newspapers and magazines headlining the seemingly *always* heroic war efforts of white troops—who came to embody the American fighting spirit—the intrepid combat actions of black troops, at best, received a footnote (i.e., reduced and inaccurate representations of African Americans handicapped their societal and military advancement). Even Paul Joseph Goebbels, chief of Nazi Propaganda and one of Adolf Hitler's closest associates and devoted followers, understood the magnitude of propaganda and used it to call attention to racial stereotypes (e.g., the Soviet Untermensch, the Jewish Bolshevik, and African American soldiers) “as symbols of cultural barbarism.”⁶ On the other hand, the United States lacked the skill to manipulate public opinion in the same manner as Goebbels. As a gifted and dynamic politician, Goebbels possessed sagacious skills of persuasion to leverage public opinion like a seesaw. Rhodes and Margolin assert that before the early 1940s, America “had no taste for commercial advertisement and propaganda like their European counterparts. Americans regarded propaganda as alien, un-American, and a method of persuading people to subscribe to doctrines in which they had no interest.”⁷

⁵ Rhodes and Margolin, ed., *Propaganda: The Art of Persuasion*, 24–25.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 30–32, 96. Paul Joseph Goebbels was a German politician and Reich Minister of Propaganda in Nazi Germany from 1933 to 1945. Goebbels was known for his skills in public speaking and his deep and virulent anti-Semitism, which led to his supporting the extermination of the Jews in the Holocaust.

⁷ Rhodes and Margolin, ed., *Propaganda: The Art of Persuasion*, 139.

Considering the United States's "isolationist feelings/vision and ideology, visual influence during the 1920s and 1930s, Americans viewed propaganda as Fascist." Before the United States entered World War II, "no government-sponsored attempts to influence Americans about foreign affairs existed, many believing it would have the reverse effect."⁸ Moreover, for democratic nations, *propaganda* proved more difficult to organize. Unlike totalitarian governments, democratic nations could not limit the exposure of lies as easily. "The big lie cannot be continually repeated or it will become ludicrous and have the reverse effect," asserted President Franklin D. Roosevelt. For this reason, the propaganda department that President Roosevelt established in 1940 adopted the attitude that propaganda "must always retain the essence of truth in what it said. It could embellish (embroider) the truth, but there must be some truth to embroider."⁹ This attitude to retain elements of truth within its propaganda spearheaded the central mission of America's two leading departments of psychological warfare, the Office of War Information (OWI) and the Office of Strategic Services (OSS).¹⁰

The OWI was responsible for covering overt or *white* propaganda and the OSS dealt with covert *black* propaganda. The OWI and the OSS very badly wanted the approval of President Roosevelt; however, by issuing vague charters to both departments, Roosevelt made matters worse, leaving a vacuum in how each department would manage its respective domain.¹¹ The visual formats presented through these departments, and

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 144.

¹⁰ Ibid., 139. See also Gail Buckley, *American Patriots: The Story of Blacks in the Military from the Revolution to Desert Storm* (New York: Random House, 2001), 280–282.

¹¹ Ibid.

mainstream media outlets, were so powerful during this era that they worked two fold: the images assisted in boosting national unity and pride within America, but also stoked the flames of racial discrimination and prejudice in the minds of war planners and society.

In addition to emphasizing the role of propaganda during World War II, this chapter will also use salient examples for comparison by juxtaposing U.S. Army and Marine Corps historical methods and practices of African American assimilation, task organization, and combat employment (e.g., reports of black Union troops' wartime participation during Civil War battles and the 1925 U.S. Army War College study of the use of Negro manpower in war). It will also explore the meaning of military service in the minds of black Marines and how their service meshed with imperative organs of citizenship, the multivalent nature of Camp Montford Point, and the stages leading toward integrating the U.S. Armed Forces.

Before and after World War II, comics illustrated how race dynamics played out in the popular imagination. In addition, comics demonstrated the uneven visions of race, specifically of blacks and their place in society throughout the war. These visual interpretations and representations of racial identity in America operated not only as instruments of defamation but also as “vehicles for far more subtle manipulations of race.”¹² Furthermore, as the comic book set sail to far away lands to support the Allied effort, race, politics, and propaganda would continue to shape and transform the

¹² Lenthall, “Outside the Panel,” 40; Marc Singer, “*Black Skins and White Masks: Comic Books and the Secret of Race*,” *African American Review* 36 (Spring 2002), 107.

democratic values of a peace-loving America, thus welcoming a patriotic symbol that projected an unforgettable face for all of society to see.

In the spring of 1941, Jack Kirby and Joe Simon introduced an emblematic character of truth, justice, and the American way: Captain America—or simply “Cap.” Approximately nine months before the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor, *Captain America Comics* #1 hit U.S. newsstands. The story of Steve Rogers, a frail weakling from New York, captured the zeitgeist of America’s youth as so many heeded the call to arms to fight against the Axis Powers. A patriotic young American, Rogers failed every qualifying standard for military service; he was a feeble pushover with little hope of promoting peace and ending global tyranny. Willing to do whatever he could to serve his beloved country against the ruthless warmongers of Europe, Rogers volunteered for a dangerous, but U.S. government sanctioned, “super-soldier” project. The super-soldier experiment resulted in success and Rogers was physically transformed into a nearly perfect human being with peak strength, agility, stamina, and intelligence. No longer a frail patriot, Rogers adopted a new name, accepted a bold new mission, and *Captain America* was born, becoming the nation’s first super-soldier!¹³

By early 1942, reports by *Business Week* and *Publishers Weekly* revealed that monthly sales for comic books had climbed to 15 million since their inception in 1938. This monthly sale rate would almost double by the end of December 1943; moreover, publishers generously assumed that there was a “pass-along value” of five readers per

¹³ “Meet Captain America,” *Captain America Comics* I (Marvel Comics, March 1941). See also Mark D. White, *The Virtues of Captain America: Modern-Day Lessons on Character from a World War II Superhero* (Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, 2014).

comic book. With almost 125 different titles hitting newsstands each month, retail sales of comic books neared \$30 million.¹⁴

With the intervening war years, U.S. industries experienced a boom, and the comic book industry was no exception. In 1944, the *New York Times* reported, “one of every four magazines shipped to troops overseas was a comic book. At least 35,000 copies of *Superman* alone went to [service members] each month. Comic books became part of G. I. culture ...”¹⁵ In addition, comic books, specifically the dominant genre of superhero comics, proved to be fertile ground for inducing stereotyped representations of race and race relations. Given the nature of comic books, which relied heavily upon visually codified depictions of characters that are “continually reduced to their appearances,” this particular method of reductionism was “especially prevalent in superhero comics, whose characters are wholly externalized into their heroic costumes and aliases.”¹⁶ For African Americans there would be no heroic costumes to disguise any sort of alias; no such costume could separate their appearance in order to gain greater assimilation into a culture and institution such as the white man’s military. For many

¹⁴ “Superman Scores: Comic Magazines Become Big Business,” *Business Week*, 18 April 1942, 54–56; “The Comics and Their Audience,” *Publishers Weekly*, April 18, 1941. See also Wright, *Comic Book Nation*, 31, 31n2.

¹⁵ “Comics Have a Place,” *New York Times*, August 6, 1944. See also Wright, *Comic Book Nation*, 30–36. Despite comics becoming a significant part of G.I. culture during this period, many (specifically Europeans) viewed this custom as immature and unsophisticated. Moreover, some Americans also found this aspect to be concerning, believing that furnishing comics to a service members would produce a less intelligent military. Nevertheless, these cheap, disposable, and entertaining comics books found favor among service members and captured a place on the shelves of the PXs and in the barracks throughout the war and beyond.

¹⁶ Singer, “*Black Skins and White Masks*,” 107. See also Mark Edele, “Paper Soldiers: The World of the Soldier Hero according to Soviet Wartime Posters,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 47, H. 1, Themenschwerpunkt: Magnaten und ländliches Gewerbe (1999): 89–108.

blacks, the only measure for disguising one's self was to appear invisible, which is what many accomplished through no fault of their own.

Nevertheless, the story of Steve Rogers served as a natural template for many of America's white youth, it also revealed the deep passions of many African Americans who desired to carry the banner of freedom into harms way. The steely resolve to sacrifice and accept the challenges of overcoming any obstacle to join the Allied effort, which included reconciling "the contradictions between an ideology of democracy and a history and practice of [racial] prejudice," espoused the virtues of the American creed of democracy.¹⁷ Moreover, many African American Marines embraced this moral stance that became the centerpiece of their pursuit for a double victory.

On January 31, 1942, less than two months after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor and the United States's entrance into World War II, the *Pittsburgh Courier* circulated a letter from a cafeteria worker at the Cessna Aircraft Corporation in Wichita, Kansas. In this letter to the editor, James G. Thompson shared the following message regarding his feelings on patriotism and the war: "Like all true Americans, my greatest desire at this time, this crucial point of our history, is a desire for a complete victory over the forces of evil, which threaten our existence today. Behind that desire is also a desire to serve, this, my country, in the most advantageous way."¹⁸ For young African Americans to heed the country's call to arms, and potentially make the ultimate sacrifice,

¹⁷ Ibid. See also Alexander C. Irvine, *Captain America: The First Avenger* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2014).

¹⁸ James Gratz Thompson, "Should I Sacrifice to Live 'Half-American?'" *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 31, 1942 [hereafter cited as Thompson letter].

there remained lingering questions. Thompson, 26, at the time of publishing this letter, asked,

Should I sacrifice my life to live half American?" "Will things be better for the next generation in the peace to follow?" "Would it be demanding too much to demand full citizenship rights in exchange for the sacrificing of my life?" "Is the kind of America I know worth defending?" Will America be a true and pure democracy after this war?" "Will Colored Americans suffer still the indignities that have been heaped upon them in the past?"¹⁹

African Americans were curious to know if white America could answers these, and other questions. If African Americans were to lay a crucial foundation for domestic freedom as a marginalized body, how would their participation in the Allied effort yield, or better yet, reflect true American democracy? Thompson further observed,

The V for victory sign is being displayed prominently in all so-called democratic countries, which are fighting for victory over aggression, slavery and tyranny. If this V sign means that to those now engaged in this great conflict then let we colored Americans adopt the double VV for a double victory. The first V for victory over our enemies from without, the second V for victory over our enemies from within. For surely those who perpetrate these ugly prejudices here are seeking to destroy our democratic form of government just as surely as the Axis forces.²⁰

Thompson's letter is arguably the most famous ever circulated by an African American newspaper; its significance was profound within the black community. Subsequently, the *Pittsburgh Courier* launched the notable Double V campaign, which "ranked historically

¹⁹ Thompson letter.

²⁰ Thompson letter. The Double Victory Campaign was not so much an event, but rather used more as a motivational tool by African Americans during the time of World War II. The movement for two causes was not simply so blacks could fight and participate in the war, but also in everyday society, as equal citizens. The Double Victory Campaign became another marker in American history in which blacks took another step toward complete emancipation. See *Pittsburgh Courier*, "Readers Want Double 'V' Made Into Pins, Emblems," February 21, 1942.

in importance with Ida B. Wells's vigorous anti-lynching crusade and Robert Abbott's extraordinary call for blacks to leave the South." From coast to coast, and for the remainder of the war, other African American newspapers quickly embraced and promulgated the push for a double victory. The war would also signal a declaration of war for a double victory in underrepresented communities. Thompson, like many other African Americans who enlisted in the armed forces, was willing to die for a country whose citizens viewed democracy through varying lenses. Nevertheless, African Americans were determined to create a better life—albeit through military service—for subsequent generations that would potentially transform the United States into a *true democracy*. Refusing to live as “half Americans,” the obligation to fight for a double victory would embody the best hopes of a dream that would offer greater societal and military opportunities for blacks and other disenfranchised minorities.²¹

Despite the black press's push to engineer such a noble movement, the national (white) press maintained a forceful grip when it came to the dissemination of information from the war front, and how the country would consume such media. Images of young, white, strapping men overshadowed ethnic minority achievements and contributions in the armed forces. This lack of visibility in mainstream American popular culture reflected the large-scale absence of blacks, and minority characters, in almost every aspect of U.S. culture during the 1940s.

²¹ Two months after the *Courier* published his letter, Thompson enlisted in the army. See *Pittsburgh Courier*, March 13 1942; Ronald Takaki, *Double Victory: A Multicultural History of America in World War II* (New York: Little, Brown and Company), 8–21; Patrick S. Washburn, *The African American Newspaper: Voice of Freedom* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2006), 143–144.

World War II was a total war, one that humans had never participated in on arguably any other scale; this conflict encircled the globe and swept over nearly every continent and ocean. The war involved every citizen in each belligerent nation and mobilized many subjects of colonized areas. At the time, unimaginable quantities of national economies were exhausted under the demands of producing war materiel en masse. The destruction wrought by such a war not only touched those in uniform, but also civilian communities; the home front often became the battlefield. The war forced the states of the Union to mobilize in ways that tested the durability of a national fabric founded on democratic principles and practices (i.e., culturally, economically, and politically). In short, the war wholly dominated and transformed life around the world.

In addition to comic books, another impressive tool used by the fourth estate at the local, state, regional, and national levels, in attempts to mobilize populations, was the *war poster*. Produced by commercial firms and government agencies such as the OWI, war posters inspired patriotism through a combination of emotional illustrations and memorable phrases urging Americans to make sacrifices for their national cause. Early examples of the modern propaganda poster appeared during the second half of the nineteenth century in urban areas. During the First World War, governments had limited resources at their disposal for mass communication; nevertheless, these governments were able to dramatically expand the political and social place of the war poster. During World War II, the art of the war poster shifted. The advent of communication technologies and tools such as the radio, newspapers, and newsreels eclipsed the prominence of the war poster as an instrument for shaping public opinion.

Notwithstanding, war poster production centers continued to manufacture posters in considerable numbers. Both official and private propagandists used this impactful tool to engage the public while taking part in shaping the entire war effort at home and abroad.²²

Furthermore, war posters accomplished several things. They publicized the national call-to-arms for able-bodied young men and women, with messages such as, “Join the Army-Navy-Marines-Coast Guard.” For women, the aversion of them entering the workforce in the 20th century dramatically shifted. A new trend of public campaigning targeted women who had never before held jobs. Americans quickly realized that a woman’s femininity would remain in tact despite maintaining a job that required her to use her hands outside the home. War posters and film images glorified and glamorized the roles of working women in the factory, the home, the military, and in the office. The OWI captured and portrayed (white) women as attractive, confident, and resolute in doing their part to aid in the Allied effort.²³

For women, the advertisement of auxiliary forces such as the Women’s Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC), the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES), and the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) further served as

²² Washburn, *African American Newspaper*, xvi – vii, 3–7, 15–17, 22–27, 48–49, 61–62, 82–83, 99–110, 119–121, 129, 136–139, 143–178, 182, 188, 179–205; Todd Vogel, ed., *The Black Press: New Literary and Historical Essays* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 161–187; Henry Lewis Suggs, ed., *The Black Press in the South, 1865–1979* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983), vii–xi, 3–21, 23, 83, 423, 430.

²³ Lou-Ann Shoemaker, “The Powers of Persuasion: Poster Art of World War I & II,” *Antiques and Collecting Magazine* 112 (July 2007): 34–39; Rhodes and Margolin, ed., *Propaganda: The Art of Persuasion*, 144–176; U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, *Powers of Persuasion: Poster Art from World War II*. See Posters from the Powers of Persuasion exhibit in the Online Exhibit Hall, https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/powers_of_persuasion_home.html. See also Stacey Bredhoff, *Powers of Persuasion: Poster Art from World War II* (published for the National Archives and Records Administration by the National Archives Trust Fund Board, 1994), 2, 6;

instrumental recruiting tools for civil service and heavy industry that would instill in young women their duty to join the workforce. Moreover, war posters promoted the conservation and rationing of almost all materials and stimulated factory workers to increase industrial production, they warned civilians and soldiers of careless talk that could result in the deaths of American service members, exhorting, "... because somebody talked!" Above all, war posters encouraged the American public to do their part and "Buy War Bonds!"²⁴ While the OWI focused on increasing the visibility of the role that white women would play in promoting democracy in the contest over fascism, Nazism, and oppression, the increasing circulation of the black newspaper gave rise to additional forms of freedom and meanings of victory in a war for racial equality.

By design, the African American press unapologetically lacked objectivity due to the white supremacist vision of democracy. Noted journalists Claude A. Barnett and Percival L. Prattis typically did not find the white press's reporting on black Americans to be objective, which often led to the black press taking an offensive position when reporting the facts. According to black journalists, there was news, however, the white brand of news carried with it an "admitted and deliberate slant."²⁵ For this reason, the African American press served more as an advocate rather than an appendage of the media. As the events of the war took on greater shape, members of the black press believed that the use of a systematic slant by the white press could potentially have deleterious effects on the morale of black America throughout the entire war.

²⁴ Peter Paret, Beth Irwin Lewis, and Paul Paret, *Persuasive Images: Posters of War and Revolution from the Hoover Institution Archives* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992); Shoemaker, "The Powers of Persuasion," 38.

²⁵ Carolyn Martindale, *The White Press and Black America* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 1–52.

During the war, the media's system of visual typology combined with the comic book superhero genre's long history of minimizing, tokenizing, or worse, excluding African Americans created a social discourse that centered on publishers promulgating an image worthy of its readership. World War II provided American advertising and publication companies with the perfect platform and opportunity to improve their relationship with the public. So much so, that companies such as Detective Comics (DC) and Fawcett Publications formed exclusive editorial advisory boards to oversee, and ensure, that their messages to the youth of American were "wholesome" and upheld the highest of moral standards. The responsibility to proliferate this message and image was so crucial that the editors of DC enlisted the assistance of life-long academics that made their living studying "child psychology, education, and welfare."²⁶

Although DC's advisory board emerged somewhat out of a sense of social responsibility, its members very well understood the power of the modern media to influence public attitudes. Nevertheless, it failed to incorporate and endorse members of the African American communities. Despite this absence of recognition, and failure to propagate a *wholesome image*, many African Americans would continue to volunteer for military service in the Marines, with a clear understanding of their moral obligation to the mission of universal democracy.

For Washington, D.C. native Herman Darden, Jr., the fighting reputation of the Marines was a huge selling point for him in joining the exclusive organization. After

²⁶ Singer, "Black Skins and White Masks," 107; "A Message to Our Readers: Introducing the Editorial Advisory Board," *More Fun Comics* 72 (DC Comics, cover date: October 1, 1941; in Store Date: August 21, 1941). See also Wright, *Comic Book Nation*, 33–34.

seeing a Marine Corps recruiting poster, before being drafted in 1943, Darden knew the Corps was the place for him, “The reputation of the Marines was known to be rough and ready ... they’re supposed to be first in battle....”²⁷ Darden’s exposure to this pugilistic society engendered mental images of daring valor and heroic conquests. Despite Harden’s knowledge of the organization’s wartime standing, the image of white soldiers storming international beachheads and deploying from aircraft in and over foreign territories captured the imagination of America’s youth and served as the nation’s global call to arms, which only headlined a single racial hue.

The significance of comics, war posters, and other visual propaganda communicated and chronicled the progress of the U.S. Armed Forces and how the military waged war. Advertising companies and publishers “sought to boost their image by linking their products to patriotism and the war effort.” For example,

Superman urged readers to give to the American Red Cross. Batman and Robin asked boys and girls to ‘keep the American eagle flying’ by purchasing war bonds and stamps. Captain America and his sidekick Bucky showed readers how to collect paper and scrap metal. Publishers throughout the industry printed an open letter from Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau Jr. asking boys and girls to buy savings stamps.²⁸

The majority of comic books and war posters that depicted images of bravery, courage, and heroism displayed a white face. In addition, “war bond tours” by service members functioned in a similar fashion, black bodies in the national propaganda as symbols of

²⁷ Corporal Herman Darden, Jr., served with the 51st Defense Battalion in the Ellice Islands and was discharged at the end of the war. See Series 4: Military, Sub-Series 4.2: Montford Point, Item 14: Interview with Herman Darden, July 23, 2004, Melton McLaurin Papers, MS323, Folder 1 [hereafter cited as Darden interview].

²⁸ Wright, *Comic Book Nation*, 34, 34n8.

democracy and gallantry received limited advertisement or recognition. However, one exceptional black face the national media, and the U.S. Navy, embraced for his heroism was Mess Attendant Third Class Doris “Dorie” Miller. During the initial wave of Japanese attacks, Miller distinguished himself by shooting down several Japanese planes with a machine gun from the deck of the USS *West Virginia* during the assault on Pearl Harbor.

When news of Miller’s actions reached the American public, the black community saw him as their symbol of patriotism and pride. Local African American leaders wanted Miller to give speeches, named Boys Clubs after him, and started a write-in campaign to have President Roosevelt admit him to the U.S. Naval Academy. For his heroic actions, Miller received the Navy Cross for bravery. He was the first African American awarded the Navy Cross—at the time, the second highest honor awarded by the U.S. Navy after the Navy Distinguished Service Medal.²⁹

Miller’s iconic image, after receiving the Navy Cross, even graced the cover of a national Navy Department recruiting poster, which read, “above and beyond the call of duty.” This 1943 David Stone portrait of Miller was the only prominent advertisement of a combat decorated African American, issued by the Navy Department, during the entire war. With the Japanese assault of the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, which appeared to instantly unite the nation—while raising its collective level of patriotism to critical mass like never before witnessed in the twentieth century—African American servicemen

²⁹ “Messman Awarded Navy Cross By FDR,” *Chicago Defender*, May 16, 1942.

assumed that many, if not all, discriminatory obstacles would fall in the push for a complete victory. They were wrong.

White America's penchant for sustaining long held beliefs that whites *must* command blacks, that blacks were ill-suited for combat duties, and conversely, better suited for fatigue/labor duties, broadened *less wholesome* images and deepened negative stereotypes of African American service members. The negative qualities attributed to blacks centered on incompetence, poor leadership ability, lack of initiative, and above all, *cowardice*. While white racial attitudes have prejudiced the social, cultural, and combat fitness levels of African Americans since the early American period, the answer to whether blacks were "battle ready" had been answered on battlefields in Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina eighty years earlier.

MEN OF COLOR: To Arms! To Arms! NOW OR NEVER

The embattled image and reputation of America's first black Marines is also partly explained by the black military experience during the American Civil War. Therefore, in order to tell the complete story of America's first black Marines, it is necessary to devote a worthy amount of historical context associated with the all-black Union regiments of the American Civil War. It is also necessary, for the most part, to use the words of white observers, civilian and military, to illuminate this particular component of modern military history. Except for occasional letters to a few black newspapers, African American troops did not document their wartime experiences. Bear in mind, during the early years of the Civil War, the majority of black troops were illiterate. This historical context is crucial to understanding the roots of the challenges African American Marines

faced during World War II and throughout the Cold War era. The U.S. Army's historical examples of racial integration during the Civil War era, partially served as a natural precursor for senior Marine Corps officials. Marine officials would use the Army's Civil War models of racial integration as evidence to justify the exclusion of blacks from Marine infantry units during World War II and the Korean War.

Given the lack of information and resources on America's first black Marines, this section of the chapter will also emphasize the historical methods and practices of African American assimilation, task organization, and combat employment (e.g., reports of black Union troops' performance during American Civil War battles and the subsequent 1925 U.S. Army War College study of the use of Negro manpower in war). Specific focus on the U.S. Civil War and black wartime participation is a central element in further understanding the 20th century models senior Marine Corps officials used as their foundation for training and employing African Americans. Furthermore, these salient examples for comparison illuminate the ideological and philosophical relationship that Army and Marine Corps commanders shared with regard to the future of military integration.

In December 1863, Union Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton made a significant statement: "Many people believed, or pretended to believe, and confidently asserted, that freed slaves would not make good soldiers; that they would lack courage, and could not be subjected to military discipline. Facts have shown how groundless were these apprehensions. The slave has proved his manhood, and his capacity as an infantry soldier,

at Milliken's Bend, at the assault upon Port Hudson, and at the storming of Fort Wagner."³⁰

The first major engagement in which black soldiers participated in during the Civil War was the battle of Port Hudson on May 27, 1863. For the Union, its prime objective was control of the Mississippi River, and by the spring of 1863 the Union Army secured the entire course of the river with the exception of Vicksburg, Mississippi and Port Hudson, Louisiana, both Confederate bastions. To cut off the Confederates in the Trans-Mississippi West and provide Midwestern farmers with a water route for crop shipments, the Department of War determined that a command under Major General Ulysses S. Grant was to capture Vicksburg and Major General Nathaniel P. Banks, head of the Department of the Gulf, was to seize Port Hudson.³¹

Historian Joseph Glatthaar explores the relationship between black troops and white officers, in *Forged in Battle*, covering the period from 1861 until the early stages of Reconstruction. Glatthaar provides a compelling study of the inner workings of the United States Colored Troops (USCT), investigating conduct, attitudes, and experiences among black soldiers and white officers. With regard to the battle of Port Hudson, Glatthaar argues that Port Hudson was clearly a defeat for the Union, highlighting that black troops of the 73rd and 75th United States Colored Infantry (USCI) and the 1st and

³⁰ Union Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, December 1863, quoted in Dudley Taylor Cornish, *The Sable Arm: Negro Troops in the Union Army, 1861–1865* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1966), 132; Richard H. Kohn, "The Social History of the American Soldier: A Review and Prospectus for Research," *American Historical Review* 86 (June 1981): 553–567.

³¹ James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: the Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 668; Joseph T. Glatthaar, *Forged in Battle: The Civil War Alliance of Black Soldiers and White Officers* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 123–124.

3rd Louisiana Native Guards never had a chance to break Confederate lines, regardless of their grit.³²

Glatthaar asserts that despite the terrible defeat, the Battle of Port Hudson marked a turning point in attitudes concerning the use of black soldiers. Major General Henry W. Halleck commented, “The severe test to which they were subjected, and the determined manner in which they encountered the enemy, leaves upon my mind no doubt of their ultimate success.” In concurrence, Brigadier General Daniel Ullmann, who was in the process of raising an African American brigade in Louisiana, informed Secretary of War Stanton, “The brilliant conduct of the colored regiments at Port Hudson, on the 27th has silenced cavilers and changed sneers into eulogizers. There is no question but [*sic*] that they behaved with dauntless courage.”³³

The *New York Times*, which cautiously endorsed the limited use of black troops in a trial basis just four months before the assault on Port Hudson, now declared the experiment a success,

Those black soldiers had never before been in any severe engagement. They were comparatively raw troops, and subjected to the most awful ordeal than even veterans ever have to experience—the charging upon fortifications through the crash of belching batteries. The men, white or black, who will not flinch from that will not flinch from nothing. It is no longer possible to doubt the bravery and steadiness of the colored race, when rightly led.³⁴

³² Glatthaar, *Forged in Battle*, 128.

³³ *Ibid.*, 129–130.

³⁴ *New York Times* quoted in Glatthaar, *Forged in Battle*, 130; Russell Duncan, *Where Death and Glory Meet: Colonel Robert Gould Shaw and the 54th Massachusetts Infantry* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1999), 51; William A. Gladstone, *United States Colored Troops, 1863–1867* (Gettysburg, PA: Thomas Publications, 1990), 51.

Historian Noah Andre Trudeau contends that in such actions, as the attack on the Confederate bastion at Port Hudson, the USCT were deliberately committed to a hopeless task—not for any strategic reason, but solely to test their mettle. Civil War historian John David Smith, who supports Trudeau’s claim, concludes that despite terrible odds, African American troops distinguished themselves, while whites grudgingly took note. After observing the valiant performance of African American soldiers of the 1st and 3rd Louisiana Native Guards at the defeat of Port Hudson, a white New Yorker commented, “They charged and re-charged and didn’t know what retreat meant. They lost in their two regiments some four hundred as near as I can learn. This settles the question about niggers not fighting well. They, on the contrary, make splendid soldiers and are as good fighting men as any we have.” A white Massachusetts soldier agreed with the New Yorker’s assessment, writing with considerable prescience, “A race of serfs stepped up to the respect of the world and commenced a national existence.”³⁵

The improving reputation of African American soldiers ran through the ranks and up the chain of command. Writing to his wife, Union Colonel Benjamin H. Grierson remarked, “The Negro regiments fought bravely yesterday ... there can be no question about the good fighting qualities of Negroes hereafter.”³⁶ African American soldiers proved themselves in battle, and their actions spoke for them at every level of Union and Confederate commands. On Tuesday, June 9, 1863, in an official report from General Nathaniel Banks regarding the effectiveness of the Negro troops in the siege of Port

³⁵ John David Smith, ed., *Black Soldiers in Blue: African American Troops in the Civil War Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2002), 54; Noah Andre Trudeau, *Like Men of War: Black Troops in the Civil War, 1862–1865* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Co., 1998), 26, 27, 34–45, 288, 396, 467.

³⁶ Colonel Benjamin H. Grierson quoted in Smith, ed., *Black Soldiers in Blue*, 55.

Hudson, The *New York Times* reported, “in speaking of the Negro troops, [General Banks] says: ‘They answered every expectation. Their conduct was heroic. No troops could be more determined or more daring. They made, during the day, three charges upon the batteries of the enemy, suffering very heavy losses, and holding their position at nightfall with the other troops.’” In the report, Banks further acknowledged that each commanding officer bestowed the highest commendation upon his men. Also adding, “... what ever doubt may have existed before as to the efficiency of organizations of this character, the history of this day proves conclusive to those who were in a condition to observe the conduct of these regiments, that the [Federal] Government will find in this case of troops effective supporters and defenders.”³⁷

General Banks’s statement regarding the battle of Port Hudson was similar to reports that had previously been published during this time. Despite Union forces suffering approximately 1,000 casualties, black soldiers engaged the enemy leaving no doubt in the minds of skeptics that they too were combatant equals. However, to become an excellent soldier required good officers and commands with careful discipline to properly guide these men. For this final reason, many whites believed that blacks, by their very nature were of bad produce. They also believed that their character remained in question and that they lacked the discipline and courage to withstand the rigors of such an endeavor as combat. The perception that blacks were endowed with “a strain of latent savagery,” and that they were childlike, irresponsible, and lazy made it difficult for

³⁷ “The Siege of Port Hudson: An Official Report from General Banks,” *New York Times*, June 10, 1863.

African American soldiers to break the mental chains of oppression so many whites naturally held over them, despite subsequent Union victories.³⁸

In contrast to the *New York Times*' cautious endorsement of the limited use of African American soldiers, *Harper's Weekly* completely sanctioned the enlistment and full participation of black troops during the war, commending their performance at the battle of Port Hudson. "The magnificent behavior of Negro troops at Port Hudson recalls the fact that it is just two years since a warning, stated in the columns of this paper, 'that if this war lasted we should arm the Negroes, and use them to fight the rebels,' was received with shrieks of indignation, not only at the South and in such semi-neutral States as Maryland and Kentucky, but throughout the loyal North and even in the heart of New England."³⁹ *Harper's Ferry* further observed, "At that time, the bulk of the people of the United States entertained a notion that it was unworthy of a civilized or a Christian nation to use in war soldiers whose skin was not white."⁴⁰ While whites continued to harbor negative stereotypes through religious justifications, it became clear that black manpower during the Civil War would make deep inroads into the psyche of all white Americans.

For more than two hundred years, slavery had warped the hearts and minds of the American people. A generation of men grew up in awe of slavery, and in unchristian contempt of blacks, declaring that it would not accept black soldiers. According to an additional *Harper's Weekly* report, "It is very cheering to believers in human progress,

³⁸ Joseph T. Glatthaar, "Black Glory: The African-American Role in Union Victory," in *Why the Confederacy Lost*, ed. Gabor S. Boritt (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 152.

³⁹ "Negro Troops," *Harper's Weekly*, Vol. VII, No. 338, June 20, 1863. During this period, *Harper's Weekly* was the nation's foremost magazine.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

and to men who honestly admit that the world moves, to perceive that the short period of two years has sufficed to cure an evil of so long standing, and has educated even the most hunkered Democrat of 1861 into a willingness to arm the blacks.”⁴¹ The battle of Port Hudson was the first battle that marked a significant shift in attitudes concerning blacks in uniform; moreover, this engagement was not the last to bring about changes in attitudes regarding the military service and valor of black soldiers. Nevertheless, despite the positive reports from *Harper’s Weekly* and General Banks’s commendatory remarks, even when African Americans acquitted themselves in their charge of soldiering, the specter of discrimination and negative stereotypes remained.

For the next fifty years, less wholesome images and the specter of discrimination would supplant the military achievements of so many free blacks. The mood of the U.S. Civil War, which united belligerent nations, found its citizens conflicted due to the inherent tight grasp of prejudiced notions and practices that came to define race relations in the United States. D. W. Griffith’s fervidly racist motion picture *Birth of a Nation* (1915), arguably the most extreme version of the negative black stereotype, poignantly describes the savage imagery assigned to African Americans. *Birth of a Nation*, which finds its origins in Thomas Dixon’s pro-Ku Klux Klan novel *The Klansman*, illustrates how positive images of black Union soldiers were intentionally disregarded. This absence of African American wartime recognition not only set the stage for white reconciliation,

⁴¹ Smith, ed., *Black Soldiers in Blue*, 54; Trudeau, *Like Men of War*, 26, 27, 34–45, 288, 396, 467.

but also quickly eroded the convictions of a democracy and the enumerated tenets of a completely free nation from the white collective mind.⁴²

Because of inherent racism, segregation in American society, and long standing assumptions that African Americans did, and would continue to, make poor military men, the majority of blacks who served during World War II often found themselves relegated to the sidelines of combat.⁴³ Evidence indicates that the 1925 Army War College (AWC) study, which focused on the limitations of African American's abilities to occupy significant military leaderships, also highlighting their dependence on the white race in order to achieve success. The 1925 AWC study emboldened white assumptions that blacks would make poor soldiers and carried with it twisted conclusions regarding military discipline and comportment on the part of African Americans.⁴⁴

What is most telling about the AWC study is its reference to the U.S. Civil War and the combat performance of black troops. According to Brigadier General Lytle Brown, "It is exceedingly difficult to get accurate information as to the [Negro] troops in this war. To cull out the facts from the records of the Rebellion would be a task entirely out of question in the time we are allotted for this study, and most writers on the subject have been either [Negroes] or persons who approached the subject from a sentimental standpoint, both having as motives the glorification of the negro."⁴⁵ Army records

⁴² David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 394–397; Buckley, *American Patriots*, 280–282.

⁴³ Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), 9.

⁴⁴ U.S. Army War College, *The Use of Negro Manpower in War*, AWC 127–25, October 30, 1925 (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army Military History Institute) [hereafter cited as AWC 127–25].

⁴⁵ AWC 127–25.

provide no clear indication as to the exact amount of time General Brown had to complete this study; nevertheless, he reveals that black Union troops participated in multiple battles, including Port Hudson and Fort Wagner. He even goes on to describe their conduct during the war as “good.”⁴⁶ Brown’s evaluation of *good*—as it defines the combat performance of black Union troops—presents an interesting issue, which is in direct conflict with his assessment and ability “to cull out the facts from the records of the Rebellion...”⁴⁷

Despite General Brown’s lack of thorough research for such a comprehensive study, the story of Fort Wagner, which occurred on July 18, 1863, is arguably the most memorable in USCT history. The combat actions of black Union troops during this specific assault call attention to the dearth of proper military evaluations of African Americans in war, rather it addressed all the questions surrounding the senior aspects of soldiering and citizenship: *courage*, *discipline*, *bravery*, and *commitment*, laying to rest the inferiority of black soldiers.

Still, the reality was that most black troops in the Union Army saw little or no combat. Many Union commanders could not overcome their own racist attitudes

⁴⁶ Ibid. Brigadier General Brown submitted his findings of the study to the Army War College on October 30, 1925; Major General H. E. (Hanson Edward) Ely submitted the final copy of the study to the Army Chief of Staff on November 10, 1925. His comments regarding the letter are as follows: “I am enclosing a study on the Employment of Negro Man Power in War, made by a committee of The Army War College composed of Colonel Bishop, Major Drain and Major Somervell. It is based on research by previous classes, by the Faculty, as well as on War Department experiences during the World War. It is believed to be of such value in lieu of further study by the General Staff, as to furnish a basis for employment of the negro in the next war. I recommend, unless and until a more complete study be made on the subject by the General Staff, that it be accepted as the War Department policy in handling this problem.” See AWC 127–25.

⁴⁷ AWC 127–25.

sufficiently enough to trust African Americans in combat, rather choosing to utilize them only for labor or garrison duty—thus freeing up white soldiers for battle. William Gladstone emphasizes that despite this racism, black Union soldiers had lower desertion rates than their white counterparts. More than 14 percent of white Union soldiers deserted during the Civil War, compared to fewer than 5 percent of African American troops. In part, the lower desertion rate was a reflection of the fact that whether they were free-born volunteers or confiscated slaves, many black soldiers realized they had no place else to go. Certainly the fate of former slaves was tied to Union victory and the end of slavery. Similar to their World War II, Korean and Vietnam War successors, these men also understood that they were fighting for the freedom of their race, legal equality, and civil rights.⁴⁸

This embattled image of African Americans would endure through several wars and combat engagements, and remain in direct conflict with mainstream local and national media outlets' expressions of black participation in the American armed forces. Beset by numerous difficulties, African Americans nevertheless worked to prove their commitment to democratic principles and practices. By the middle of World War II, many African Americans supported the moral stance of a war effort centered on extinguishing fascist regimes, despite their personal struggles within an overtly prejudiced society.

The Ripples of War, Pride, and Prejudice

Even with the constant pressure of adhering to Jim Crow laws, the influence of U.S.

⁴⁸ William A. Gladstone, *Men of Color* (Gettysburg, PA: Thomas Publishing, 1993), 97.

propaganda remained a chief tool for propagating national unit and a spirit of uncorrupted democracy. Several Montford Pointers drew inspiration from the wartime pageantry of motion pictures in deciding to join the Marines. The spectacle of film depicting military men as heroes greatly impressed African Americans. Moreover, the United States portrayed the Axis powers in such a manner that incited the general population for war; average Americans, at home and abroad, were willing to do whatever was necessary to defeat the enemy.⁴⁹

For instance, Joseph Myers, who entered the service in 1942, reveals the power of motion picture media in his decision to join the Marines. Myers recalled, "... We went to see this picture *The Fighting Devil Dogs*. And we decided then that we were going in the Marine Corps." Myers, along with others who were influenced by film and comic book media, knew nothing of the Marine Corps's practice of racial exclusion. Like other Montford Pointers, he would not discover this until he arrived at the induction center. At the induction center, a Marine gunnery sergeant informed Myers that he would be a Marine, and then told him, "You don't want to go there. That's the first to fight and the first to die." Myers responded: "I don't mind dying. But I am going to take a whole lot of them [America's enemies] with me."⁵⁰ Despite white America's aversion to almost

⁴⁹ Clarence E. Willie, *African American Voices from Iwo Jima: Personal Accounts of the Battle* (Jefferson, NC; McFarland & Company, 2010), 165.

⁵⁰ Sergeant Joseph Myers from Atlanta, Georgia, volunteered to join the Corps after completing high school. He served as a drill instructor at Montford Point; he participated in the invasion of Iwo Jima, Japan, served on Guam, and participated in the occupation of Japan. See Series 4: Military, Sub-Series 4.2: Montford Point, Item 41: Interview with Joseph Myers, June 29, 2005, Melton McLaurin Papers, MS323, Folder 1 [hereafter cited as Myers interview]; Myers also quoted in McLaurin, *Marines of Montford Point*, 31. The story line for *The Fighting Devil Dogs* takes place in Singapore. Released in 1938, this episodic serial featured two U.S. Marine Lieutenants, Tom Grayson and Frank Corby, who discover the threat of a

anything involving African Americans, black men refused to be deterred from serving their country. The steely resolve to sacrifice and accept the challenges of overcoming any obstacle to join the Allied effort, which included reconciling “the contradictions between an ideology of democracy and a history and practice of prejudice,” espoused the virtues of the American creed of democracy.⁵¹ Moreover, men like Myers embraced the moral stance that became the centerpiece of their pursuit of a double victory. African Americans saw no reason to wait until the war was over to validate their claims to full citizenship; however, they would be wrong, again.

In December 1940, William H. Hastie, the civilian aide to the Secretary of War, met with Roosevelt’s unofficial “black cabinet” and nongovernmental black leadership. During this meeting, the group discussed necessary strategies for the complete integration of African Americans into the military and defense programs. All the members agreed that the time was right to eliminate racism in the armed forces. Hastie urged Walter White, Executive Secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and A. Philip Randolph, Executive Secretary of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Maids, to stress three major points during their meetings with Roosevelt: (1) that blacks vigorously opposed segregated army units; (2) that some whites supported this opposition; and (3) that the Army was not, as Congress had mandated in 1940, training blacks for the Army Air Corps.⁵²

new enemy called “The Lightning,” a masked villain who uses a powerful lightning-based weapon in his bid for world domination.

⁵¹ Singer, “*Black Skins and White Masks*,” 107.

⁵² Letter from William Hastie to Walter White, Civilian Aide to the Secretary of War, December 21, 1940, NAACP Papers, pt. 9, reel 1 [University Publications of America microfilm collection]. Group II, Series A,

While influential black leaders never relinquished their demand for a fully integrated Army, historians Morris J. MacGregor and Bernard C. Nalty emphasize that William Hastie was more immediately concerned with the practical problem of guaranteeing the assimilation and fair employment of thousands of new African American recruits. Hastie was frustrated by the discrimination attendant in a segregated military establishment, most notably by the Department of the Army's failure to open combat occupation specialties to blacks. MacGregor and Nalty further emphasize that Hastie was also deeply concerned with the Army's failure to procure and train a sufficient number of African American officer candidates for military service.⁵³

Measures to eliminate racism in the American military took center stage for Hastie, who further stressed to White and Randolph the imperative to raise other matters with Roosevelt. These matters included whether all-black units would be officered by whites; whether military facilities would be integrated; and whether the War Department would make sincere efforts to prevent racial discrimination. In all these matters, Hastie's desire was that White and Randolph convey to Roosevelt the idea that the black community was diametrically opposed to Army racism and the prejudicial attitude of the federal government toward African American service members.⁵⁴

General Office File. Part 15: Segregation and Discrimination, Complaints and Responses, 1940–1955, Series B: Administrative Files (Washington, D.C.: Manuscripts Division of the Library of Congress). See also Walter F. White, *A Man Called White* (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1969), 220–223, 342; Philip McGuire, “Judge Hastie, World War II, and Army Racism,” *Journal of Negro History* 62 (October 1977): 353; Philip McGuire, “Judge Hastie, World War II, and Army Air Corps,” *Phylon* 42 (2nd Quarter 1981): 157–167.

⁵³ Morris J. MacGregor and Bernard C. Nalty, eds., *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces: Basic Documents V, Black Soldiers in World War II* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1977), 41.

⁵⁴ McGuire, “Judge Hastie, World War II, and Army Racism,” 353.

Based upon these priorities, during his first three months in office, Hastie reviewed Army policies relating to African American soldiers, the manner in which they were employed and organized, and how to increase the visibility of black personnel in all branches of the armed forces. In 1941, Hastie submitted, *Survey and Recommendations Concerning the Integration of the Negro Soldier into the Army* to the Secretary of War. In his survey and recommendations, Hastie advocated the development of a detailed plan to accomplish the progressive utilization of Negro officers in wartime arms and services; a correlative plan to assure the selection of sufficient Negro officer candidates for training in the established Officer Candidates Schools; the assignment of Negro junior officers then available in the Reserve Reception Centers, Replacement Training Centers, the command of small detached units, and to perform morale functions; and the integration of Negro flying and non-flying personnel for Air Corps combat forces to be trained at installations other than the limited facilities at Tuskegee in order to significantly increase the number of airmen and thereby alleviate manpower shortages.⁵⁵

Before resigning his position as the civilian aide to the Secretary of War in 1943, Hastie's primary objective was to push legislation regarding the utilization of African Americans as commissioned officers in the Army, and he succeeded. An additional objective of Hastie's, which he achieved, was to increase the presence of blacks in the Army Air Forces (AAF) by creating all-black fighter squadrons. By March 1943, the

⁵⁵ Memorandum from William Hastie to Robert Patterson, Civilian Aide to the Secretary of War, February 7, 1941, Record Group 220: Records of the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Forces (College Park, MD: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration) [hereafter cited as RG 220, NARA]; Letter from William Hastie to Henry Stimson, Civilian Aide to the Secretary of War, September 22, 1941, RG 220, NARA.

Army Air Forces had established an all-black fighter squadron (the 99th Pursuit Squadron, part of the 332nd Fighter Group); additionally, the War Department had an Advisory Committee on Negro Troop Policies, which addressed issues related to the treatment of blacks in the Army.⁵⁶ In contrast, during this same period, the Marine Corps had just allowed blacks to become non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and serve as drill instructors at Montford Point. Training for black Marines centered more on service support and auxiliary assignments, whereas the Tuskegee Airmen were being trained exclusively as combat fighter pilots, aircraft armorers, mechanics, and aviation support technicians.⁵⁷

During the first six months that African Americans served in the Marine Corps, the focus of attention was on the 51st Composite Defense Battalion. It was to be “the first [and for a time, the only] black combat unit.” However, during the battalion’s initial stages of training, equipment shortages and the men’s complete unfamiliarity with

⁵⁶ In the 1930s, the rejection of blacks by the Air Corps remained an institutionalized practice as black applicants, time after time, received the standard reply that “there are no organizations in the Army Air Corps made up of colored men and none are contemplated.” Until 1939 the Air Corps had succeeded in excluding blacks; however, black and white leaders and organizations were no longer willing to accept such racist practices and challenged this policy of exclusion. Intense political pressure was applied to Congress, the President, Secretary of War, and the War Department, and through them, upon the Air Corps. Gradually the Air Corps altered its policies, backed down, and admitted blacks. See Osur, *Blacks in the Army Air Forces During World War II*, 21–31; Memorandum from Acting Civilian Aide to the Secretary Truman Gibson to Special Assistant to the Secretary of War Charles Poletti, March 22, 1943, RG 220, NARA; Lerone Bennett, Jr., “William H. Hastie set New Standard by Resigning Top-Level Post to Protest Racism,” *Ebony Magazine* 54 (August 2001): 96–100. Hastie served as the Civilian Aide to the Secretary of War from October 25, 1940–July 31, 1943.

⁵⁷ Letter from Robert Patterson to Wilbur La Roe, Jr., Undersecretary of War, March 26, 1943, RG 220, NARA; Letter from James A. Ullo to John J. McCloy, the Adjutant General, August 27, 1942, RG 220, NARA. See also William A. Percy, “Jim Crow and Uncle Sam: The Tuskegee Flying Units and the U.S. Army Air Forces in Europe During World War II,” *Journal of Military History* 67 (July 2003): 773–776; “First Class of Colored Aviation Cadets Begins Pilot Training on July 19, 1941,” in MacGregor and Nalty, eds., *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces V*, 51–54; David F. Winkler, “The Montford Point Marines,” *Seapower* 54 (September 2011): 60.

the weapons systems and supporting equipment stifled the unit's pre-deployment training program. Despite having numerous trained and qualified white instructors and officers, the unit's biggest shortfall was its progress in training.⁵⁸

Notwithstanding, Lieutenant Colonel Floyd A. Stephenson, Colonel Woods's executive officer, who later became the commanding officer of the 51st, discovered that blacks could learn to perform all the duties within a defense battalion. An experienced artillery officer, and Texas native, Stephenson was a product of a segregated society; nevertheless, he approached his new assignment with enthusiasm and considerable drive. During the summer of 1943, Stephenson recommended to Colonel Woods that the defense battalion become a "regular" unit; he was fully convinced that blacks could be forged into first-class warfighters. Given the significance of such a recommendation from a white commanding officer to drop the "Composite" title and be designated as a rifle company (Reinforced), Montford Pointer Obie Hall "thought [the men of the 51st] were the cat's meow." Hall had every right to feel this way considering that the 51st was the only black Marine unit fully engaged in large-scale combat training. However, and despite the unit's achievement, this sentiment would be short lived and completely avoided in practice, as Hall and many others would feel the acute pain of disappointment as they were forced to the fringes of the war effort.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Henry I. Shaw, Jr. and Ralph W. Donnelly, *Blacks in the Marine Corps* (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1975), 15–19; Bernard C. Nalty, *The Right to Fight: African-American Marines in World War II* (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1994), 11.

⁵⁹ Mr. Obie Hall quoted in Shaw and Donnelly, *Blacks in the Marine Corps*, 15–22; Nalty, *Right to Fight*, 11.

Initially the 51st was designed to repulse amphibious landings, however, according to Marine Corps officials, this requirement was no longer imperative. By the time the unit deployed to the Ellice Islands in 1944, the battalion's new mission became defending against Japanese air strikes and hit-and-run raids by warships. In addition, as World War II progressed and battalion commanders changed within the 51st, rather than being employed for their tactical capabilities, African Americans found themselves on the peripheries of the action, relegated to garrison and training assignments for the remainder of the war.⁶⁰

In every respect the Marines of Montford Point and the Tuskegee Airmen, were the first African Americans in their respective service branches, but the opportunities available to each group greatly differed.⁶¹ Even with restrictive racial policies, there were more opportunities during World War II for African American men to be commissioned as officers than during World War I. The *Pittsburgh Courier* released an article on June 18, 1942 addressing the new racial policies for the 93rd Infantry Division: "When the 93rd goes into action it will carry a living symbol of American democracy in action. From present indications, both colored and white officers will lead this combat unit—a distinct departure from the military policy of World War I." However, this departure did not accelerate the pace at which such a policy would take effect, "It is not expedient at

⁶⁰ Shaw and Donnelly, *Blacks in the Marine Corps*, 15–22; Nalty, *Right to Fight*, 11; see also Winkler, "The Montford Point Marines," 60.

⁶¹ Although segregated and separated from whites, the airmen were organized and employed in standard units with black commissioned and non-commissioned officers. Moreover, the "Tuskegee Experiment" provides an example of how the Marine Corps could have called upon this pattern for commissioning blacks. The Army Air Corps (AAC) allowed for the Tuskegee Experiment to run its course, even though many officers hoped that it would fail; nevertheless, it ran its course and yielded astounding results.

this time to have the entire division staffed by colored officers. Colored officers, fresh from training, are arriving daily and are taking their assigned places, ready to take and give commands that will help these Tan Yanks keep that rendezvous with destiny.”⁶² In the same way as the Marines of Montford Point and the Tuskegee Airmen, the 93rd Infantry Division trained separately from whites as they prepared for combat in the South Pacific; notwithstanding, the Army did permit blacks to serve as commissioned officers in the 93rd.⁶³

The soldiers of the 93rd were trained as “combat” infantrymen and employed as such during the war; whereas, the 51st and 52nd Defense Battalions of Montford Point were *organized* and *equipped* as “combat” units, but employed solely as service support/auxiliary units. The Marine Corps’s notion that African Americans were incapable of serving as infantrymen during World War II stemmed from insufficient pre-deployment combat training; moreover, the push for more black infantry representation in the Army came to a point on March 2, 1944. As head of the War Department’s Committee on Negro Troop Policy, Assistant Secretary of War John McCloy signed a statement to Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson advising, “It is the feeling of the Committee that colored units should be introduced in combat at the earliest practical moment, we must be more affirmative about the use of our [Negro] troops.”⁶⁴

⁶² “93rd [Infantry] To Be Commanded By Both Colored And White Officers,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, June 18, 1942. See also Maggi M. Morehouse, *Fighting in the Jim Crow Army: Black Men and Women Remember World War II* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 27–28.

⁶³ Robert F. Jefferson, *Fighting for Hope: African American Troops of the 93rd Infantry Division in World War II and Postwar America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 121–135.

⁶⁴ In 1942, according to Henry Stimson, each man came into contact with “the Negro problem” with his own deep-set beliefs. Stimson’s convictions were those of a northern conservative born in the abolitionist

One reason for this push could have resulted from a memorandum sent to John McCloy on November 3, 1943, from the civilian aide to the Secretary of War, Truman K. Gibson, Jr., in which he stated, “The film, *The Negro Soldier* [1944] should, in my opinion, be released publicly as soon as revisions have been completed. This film will do much to extend the public appreciation for the Negro soldier.” According to historians Thomas Cripps and David Culbert, the U.S. Army’s First Motion Picture Unit released this film in January 1944 and used director Stuart Heisler’s documentary as a means of propaganda to convince blacks to enlist in the Army. Most Americans regarded the film

tradition. He believed in full freedom, political and economic, for all men of all colors; at the time, he did not believe in the desirability of social intermixture. However, these two views were inconsistent, he believed, only in the opinion of those who *desired* them to be inconsistent. In Stimson’s opinion, the man who would “keep the nigger in his place” and the man who wished to jump in one bound from complex reality to unattainable Utopia were the twin devils of the situation—he struggled with both. See Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947), 461–464. In the same year, Secretary of the Navy William Frank Knox was forced to deal with accepting blacks in limited numbers into the Navy for newly established segregated units, thus adopting the Army’s basic racial policy. See “A New Policy,” in Morris J. MacGregor and Bernard C. Nalty, eds., *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces: Basic Documents VI, Blacks in the World War II Naval Establishment* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1977), 1. See also Letter from John McCloy to Henry Stimson, Assistant Secretary of War, March 2, 1944, RG 220, NARA; McCloy quoted in Gerald Astor, *The Right to Fight: A History of African Americans in the Military* (New York: Presidio Press, 2001), 239. As the war dragged on and racial unrest deepened, Stimson turned to the Advisory Committee on Negro Affairs and continued to suggest changes in his department’s racial practices. Under the leadership of McCloy, the committee quickly assumed responsibility for the organization and assignment of African American units. McCloy worked effectively with the new civilian aide to the Secretary of War, Truman K. Gibson, Jr. to remedy the plight of African Americans. The committee also became increasingly concerned with the social problems involved in the development of a large segregated military force. McCloy and Gibson urged the Army to make better use of the thousands of African American soldiers whose potential was being wasted in segregated units. Because of the committee’s efforts, black infantry divisions and numerous other black units were dispatched to combat zones in the South Pacific. The committee’s efforts also provided some of the smaller black combat units the opportunity to fight with distinction; nevertheless, most African Americans found themselves involved in undistinguished, though often important, service occupations miles behind friendly lines. See “Piecemeal Reforms,” in MacGregor and Nalty, eds., *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces V*, 245; Ulysses G. Lee, *Employment of Negro Troops* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966; reprint, Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 200), 111–135.

highly, while some even claimed that *The Negro Soldier* was “one of the finest things that ever happened to America.” Due to the film’s success, *The Negro Soldier* became a model for filmmakers, and proved to be a breakout film that positively influenced many Americans, both black and white. *The Negro Soldier* also influenced future African American films and their viewers in a variety of ways. It represented a watershed in the use of film to encourage racial tolerance in three areas: promotion, production, and the demise of “race films.”⁶⁵

The Negro Soldier was the only wartime film that attempted to weave blacks into the fabric of American life. For example, instead of showing images of slavery and stereotypes, Heisler’s film showed blacks as lawyers, musicians, and other valued professionals. In different movies during this era, African Americans were typically portrayed as funny characters that played out perceived racial stereotypes. However, after *The Negro Soldier*, blacks not only played more respectable and prominent roles in films, the film showed that African Americans played a highly creditable role in securing America’s freedoms and values overseas. Furthermore, people came to realize the importance and influence of films as a tool for social change. The message within *The*

⁶⁵ See “Memorandum from the Civilian Aide to the Secretary Truman K. Gibson, Jr. to the Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy, dated November 3, 1943,” in MacGregor and Nalty, *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces V*, 288–290. See also *The Negro Soldier*, directed by Stuart Heisler (1944, U.S. War Department), Record Group 111: Records of the Office of the Chief Signal Officer (College Park, MD: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration) [hereafter cited as RG 111, NARA]; Buckley, *American Patriots*, 280–282; Thomas Cripps and David Culbert, “*The Negro Soldier* (1944): Film Propaganda in Black and White,” *American Quarterly* 31 (Winter 1979): 637–640.

Negro Soldier solidified the notion and provided visual proof that racial equality was a justified concept and should be accepted.⁶⁶

Despite the success and the support for *The Negro Soldier*, the Advisory Committee believed that it was powerless to successfully strike at Jim Crow in America. The members of the committee were convinced that much of the Army's racial problems centered on white leadership in black units. McCloy and Gibson worked to obtain and commission more African American officers and to improve the quality of white officers assigned to black units. In the same year, the committee also instituted an Army-wide educational program covering the command and leadership of black troops. The 18-page pamphlet, *Command of Negro Troops* and the 101-page Army Service Forces Manual, *Leadership and the Negro Soldier* were two significant examples of this educational initiative.⁶⁷

In 1944, there existed no similar documents, committees, or initiatives in the Marine Corps. Although the members of the Army's Advisory Committee on Negro Troop Policy could not directly influence institutionalized racism, the Navy Department could have looked to the examples set by the Army and the Air Corps and worked with the War Department to create a uniformed guide or manual of instruction regarding the command, training, and employment of African American Marines. As the Army proved the need for combat integration, the Marine Corps figured out ways not to have black infantry. In 1944, when *The Negro Soldier* was showing in American theaters, the Marine

⁶⁶ Cripps and Culbert, "*The Negro Soldier* (1944)," 616–640.

⁶⁷ See "Piecemeal Reforms," *Command of Negro Troops*, and *Leadership and the Negro Soldier*, in MacGregor and Nalty, eds., *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces V*, 245, 307–325, 343–450.

51st Defense Battalion was preparing to deploy to the Pacific Theater. This pre-deployment phase of the battalion's training program would have been a prime opportunity for the Marine Corps to adopt elements of the Army's educational initiatives, and follow its example in being more affirmative about the use of black Marines in combat units.⁶⁸

Furthermore, in the same year, black writers on the OWI press section staff, such as Ted Poston, were well aware of southern politicians' conspicuous objections to any "international publicity" of African Americans in the armed forces. Poston, who held "considerable editorial input" in the OWI, pressed the agency about reporting and depicting accurate representations of black soldiers, airmen, and sailors. In turn, the OWI found itself in a precarious situation in which it received charges of black radicalism and militant rhetoric in the black press. According to Ted Poston, OWI officials expected the black press to reduce (or not print at all) this brand of rhetoric in reporting, which officials considered inflammatory. For example, assignments to film the wartime participation of the all-black 332nd Fighter Group (Tuskegee Airmen) failed to reach the American public's view due to conveniently outdated or invalid travel/press credentials among black members of the press. Yet, *New York Amsterdam News* writer Ellen Tarry chose to focus her articles on aspects of military life highlighting discriminatory practices "by naval officers against blacks in their command," which the agency never addressed. As the OWI made attempts to change its methods and practices toward portraying blacks in a more favorable manner, southern congressional representatives continued to object

⁶⁸ RG 111, NARA; Cripps and Culbert, "*The Negro Soldier* (1944)," 616–640.

to, and forestall, the disbursement of any funds contributing to photographing African American military contributions during this phase of the war.⁶⁹

This is a sobering reminder of the OWI's purposeful strategy to minimize or remove the presence of African Americans from white audiences and publications. In addition, the agency generated publications it viewed as "appropriate" for black publications and audiences. Nicholas Natanson emphasizes that the OWI typically depicted minorities in a context of *safety*, which called attention to minority contributions in various arenas such as "civil defense meetings" and attending classes at Bethune-Cookman College. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, the popular mainstream media "limited the number of interracial images" that would fill newsstands across America. "Photographer Howard Liberman's 'Americans All' was noteworthy in this effort [to project an image of a unified and inclusive nation that would capture the ethos of democracy and patriotism]. Acknowledging blacks' presence in American life, the OWI composed 'non-threatening' images and texts of blacks in the armed services."⁷⁰

African American's skepticism of the mainstream media is what led so many of them to balk at the notion of fighting for one bigoted nation against another. However, the OWI believed its promulgation of *safe* images of minorities would mitigate black skepticism and persuade them to join a segregated military in an effort to "advance racial

⁶⁹ Kathleen A. Hauke, *Ted Poston: Pioneer American Journalist* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 101–102, 104; Studs Terkel, "Alfred Duckett," in *The Good War: An Oral History of World War II* (New York: New Press, 1984), 366–372. See also Kimberley L. Phillips, *War! What Is It Good For?: Black Freedom Struggles and the U.S. Military from World War II to Iraq* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 28–29.

⁷⁰ Nicholas Natanson, *Black Image in the New Deal: Politics FSA Photography* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1992), 39–42. See also Phillips, *War! What Is It Good For?*, 29; "HAILS NEGRO WAR EFFORT: Marshall Filed Urges Press to Give It More Attention," *New York Times*, June 22, 1944.

progress.”⁷¹ A *safe* images campaign failed to serve members of African American communities in ways that provided relief from domestic institutional racism and gratuitous violence. Furthermore, the OWI’s propaganda efforts for minorities were always *reactive* rather than *proactive*. Given the nature of this system of publicity, African Americans, relative to whites, remained in the dark about the full meaning of what joining the nation’s armed forces meant for advancing racial and social progress.

For Glenn White, a Washington, D.C. native, his knowledge of the racial history of the Marine Corps is best expressed in the following: “I didn’t know anything about it, I didn’t know nothing about it, in fact I didn’t know nothing about it ‘till I got to Montford Point.” White, who was drafted in 1945, was not even aware that he would be training at an all-black, segregated facility, “They [recruiters] didn’t tell me nothing like that. No, I didn’t know I was going to an all-black Marine Corps [facility] at that time. I learned everything after I got in the Marine Corps.”⁷² For many African Americans, especially the majority of southern born recruits, the lack of information available pertaining to the Marine Corps’s background and mission was a moot point. World War II was the time to take full advantage of proving to America that blacks were worthy of all the rights and privileges of first-class citizenship.

From 1942 to 1945, an absence in knowledge concerning the Marine Corps’s history failed to deter black enlistees. Inspired by the film *Fighting Devil Dogs* in 1942,

⁷¹ Phillips, *War! What Is It Good For?*, 29–30.

⁷² Gunnery Sergeant Glenn White, born in South Carolina, moved to Washington, D.C., where he completed high school and joined the Marine Corps. A thirty-year veteran of the USMC, White served in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. He retired from the Marines in 1973. See Series 4: Military, Sub-Series 4.2: Montford Point, Item 55: Interview with Glenn White, June 29, 2004, Melton McLaurin Papers, MS323, Folder 1 [hereafter cited as Myers interview].

Joseph Myers, who demonstrated tremendous patriotism, as the doors opened for blacks to enter the Marines, fully accepted the challenge of being a pioneer in the formerly exclusive all-white organization. According to Myers, his adjustment to life in the Corps was seamless. Recognized for his leadership potential, he graduated from Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) School and went on to become a drill instructor at Montford Point until 1944. Myers commented, “I brought them seven different platoons. I had some good guys and some wrong guys. I had to break it down and teach them [the] Marine Corps way. Which they later learned that that was the easiest way itself.”⁷³ For drill instructors like Myers, being in charge of black recruits was a privilege. To train, equip, and educate African American recruits in how to negotiate life in the Marines the “black way” proved to be the primary objective for Montford Pointers.

Rather than selecting the service of his choice, William Foreman embraced the challenge. Drafted in 1943 and assigned to the Marine Corps, Foreman was unaware that African Americans had never been officially permitted in the Marines before 1942, “There was such a tradition there, and there was one other of my comrades that went in before me and he was in the Marine Corps. And, I thought that would be something different from what we had seen in my community.” Despite Foreman’s mandate to serve his country, he quickly adopted the Corps’s elitist mantra as one of *the few* and *the proud*. Foreman expressed, “Most of my other friends were carryovers from what we called the Civilian Conservation Corps [CCC]. And they went immediately into the Army. And I thought there should be something different so I had chosen the Marine Corps as mine.”

⁷³ Myers interview.

In the same year, the landscape of Montford Point would begin to experience changes that would reflect not only the service pride concomitant with the Marine Corps, but also an emergent group of black men gained a foothold that would lead to greater heights of leadership.⁷⁴

According to Marine Corps officials, the pinnacle of representative combat heroism resembled John Basilone and “Chesty” Puller. The face of battle and the physical attributes of a highly decorated combat Marine would continue to be displayed in the image of a white face throughout the war. Despite a change in leadership at Camp Montford Point during the spring of 1943, black Marines experienced marginal changes in their status as members of an exclusive fighting force. According to Al Banker, as the war came to an end, “... things were beginning to change. The white [leaders] were being moved out and the blacks were taking over the troops, drill instructors, and things like that. Drill instructors were all white also and the black drill instructors were called acting jacks.”⁷⁵ As white drill instructors trained African Americans to assume their former duties at Montford Point, many black Marines saw this as military and social progress.

⁷⁴ Private William Irvin Foreman of Catonsville, Maryland, joined the Marines in 1943. He was a member of the Special Weapons Group of the 51st Defense Battalion and was stationed Hawaii for the duration of World War II. After the war, Foreman was discharged. See Series 4: Military, Sub-Series 4.2: Montford Point, Item 24: Interview with William Foreman, August 11, 2005, Melton McLaurin Papers, MS323, Folder 1 [hereafter cited as Foreman interview]. Beginning September 16, 1940, all inductees were enrolled into Selective Service (“SS”), but after February 25, 1943, the Recruiting Service was authorized to discharge inductees to permit them to enlist in the Regular or Reserve Marine Corps. However, a stigma came to be attached to Selective Service inductees, unjustified, of course, this pseudo-voluntary procedure became very popular. See Julius A. Furer, *Administration of the Navy Department in World War II*, United States Navy Department (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1959), 567–568; see also, Cameron, *American Samurai*, 61; Sledge, *With the Old Breed*, 171.

⁷⁵ Master Sergeant Alvin J. Banker, a career Marine, served with the occupation forces on Saipan during World War II. See Series 4: Military, Sub-Series 4.2: Montford Point, Item 2: Interview with Alvin J. Banker, June 29, 2005, Melton McLaurin Papers, MS323, Folder 1 [hereafter cited as Banker interview].

Furthermore, African American Marines viewed this new assignment (to serve as drill instructors) as an opportunity to influence their community beyond the confines of war.

However, this was simply a form of token leadership. In addition, Montford Pointers fixated on this small amount of perceived *autonomy*, and still, there were no black officers. Furthermore, given the historical relationship between black troops and white officers, African American Marines remained under the leadership of such commanders. In this respect, as in every other, Marine officials ensured that blacks would never have military jurisdiction over *any* white Marine, despite the progress of uniformed African Americans. Marine officials deliberately conspired to mentally keep black Marines wanting. This form of paternalism is best expressed by Banker, who highlighted the exodus of white Marines from Camp Montford Point. “Some of them were moved out [of Camp Montford Point] and some of them stayed there until they [deployed and] went overseas with the units that the blacks were in.”⁷⁶ This particular move, albeit seemingly favorable in the view of black Marines, served to pacify and unofficially keep African American Marines on the sidelines, both physically and mentally. Marine officials anticipated that this social experiment of allowing blacks to join the Marine Corps was simply that, *an experiment*.

Marine Corps records suggest that changes “on the recruit drill field was most drastic” as hundreds of African American recruits swarmed into Camp Montford Point. By the end of April 1943, nearly all the white Special Enlisted Staff (SES) drill instructors had departed Camp Montford Point. Because of the competing demands for

⁷⁶ Banker interview.

experienced white Marines, it became imperative that qualified African Americans receive training as drill instructors as soon as possible. During this same period, Al Banker further described this mass departure of experienced white Marines as the war progressed, “I was on my own then. All the white Marines had left. By the end of World War II, all the white Marines had left camp and we were on our own then. There were no white drill instructors, they were all black drill instructors. There were no white cooks, they were all black cooks.”⁷⁷ Former black recruits, such as Banker, who were now sergeants and corporals assumed duties as senior drill instructors. This frantic pace and movement of black recruits called for the augmentation and reorganization of new recruit units such as messmen branches, motor transportation companies, depot companies (i.e., labor troops), and stewards’ schools. With the waging of intense warfare in the Pacific, Montford Pointers were being honed into *skilled* cooks, truck drivers, and typists while their white counterparts cemented their legacy and reputation as men-of-arms in the “white man’s service.” To the extent that white Marines who were assigned to Montford Point followed their former trainees overseas, which allowed them to capitalize on their knowledge of how to train and lead “colored folk.”⁷⁸

As the fighting reputation of Marines gained greater credibility towards the end of the war, one of the most notable Montford Pointers of the time, then-Sergeant Gilbert “Hashmark” Johnson, sought to push for black Marines to be *combat trained* and *combat ready*. Nevertheless, the sands of Iwo Jima and the Island of Okinawa would never feel the footsteps of official African American Marine *infantrymen* in the test of combat.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Shaw and Donnelly, *Blacks in the Marine Corps*, 11.

Although black Marines reached a milestone by taking over all recruit-training duties at Camp Montford Point, Marine Corps war planners had succeeded. They achieved their goal of pacifying officials in Washington, all the while maintaining fractured policies of white exclusiveness and tradition. However, for many African Americans this meager portion of shared ownership concerning the execution of military duties at the camp proved to be a significant victory. Notwithstanding, this superficial victory of token leadership not only highlighted the racial hierarchical social status of blacks with regard to citizenship, but also muted the great military equalizer of the time: *equal fighting status and standing among whites*. Despite earning the title, “Marine,” it always felt hollow to many black Marines like “Hashmark” Johnson, who carried with him the philosophy that “black boots would measure up in every way to Marine Corps standards,” under his tutelage as a field sergeant major and later as sergeant major of the Recruit Depot Battalion.⁷⁹ However, and unlike white Marines, men like Johnson would contend the legitimacy of the very title they held and the recognition of wearing the coveted Eagle, Globe, and Anchor.

For black Marines, the struggle for equal combat recognition during World War II proved to be one mean feat. Moreover, black military performance in the Marine Corps remained a contested issue given white assumptions and the visual formats presented through newsprint and other mainstream media outlets. Even the efforts of the black press could not overcome the powerful imagery and literature that stoked the flames of discrimination and prejudice in the minds of white Marines, society, war planners, and

⁷⁹ Ibid., 12.

officials in Washington. This poor image and projection of African American Marines and other service members would persist postwar. In addition, any measure of reprieve from institutional racism and discriminatory practices would not come into sharper focus until after the latter stages of the Vietnam War.

Furthermore, drawing on historical precedence, the significance of the 1925 Army War College study set the tone for how black Marines would be treated from the close of the war and throughout the Korean War era. The report's inaccurate assessments, belittling classifications, and dubious generalizations stymied the social and military advancement of an entire demographic of the American population. At the same time, it is also interesting to note that the report never stated that black men should not serve in the military as commissioned officers. Rather, the report described the conditions for training black officer candidates (i.e., segregated facilities with the exception of replacement camps and training schools for officer candidates) who would serve under the leadership of white commanders. The report further asserts that the black troops and NCOs would continue to be serviceable as combat troops and members of auxiliary units.⁸⁰

Although familiar with the military and social developments of African Americans during World War II, Marine officials would maintain a vice grip on the myths and driving notions of the AWC study. For example, “[the Negro] cannot control himself in the face of danger to the extent the white man can. He has not the initiative and resourcefulness of the white man. He is mentally inferior to the white man... the Negro

⁸⁰ AWC 127–25.

[has] shown [an] inability to compete with the white in professions and other activities during peace time when mental equipment is essential for success”⁸¹ Gratuitous descriptions such as this not only punctuated, but nourished, the natural prejudices associated with white supremacy and intolerance towards African Americans. As seen throughout the 19th century, *Black Codes* and *separate but equal* status—in this case, erroneous reports and studies—continued to influence and shape the anatomy of racial attitudes inside the Marine Corps.

The hypocrisy and paradox associated with prosecuting a world war for the four freedoms and against aggression by an enemy sermonizing a master race ideology, while simultaneously endorsing racial segregation and white supremacy, were patently obvious. The World War II crisis presented African Americans with a distinct opportunity to point out, for all to see, the differences between the democratic creed of the United States and its practice. The democratic ideology and rhetoric with which the United States pursued the war stimulated a sense of hope and certainty among African Americans that the traditional race structure would be spoiled forever. In part, this confidence was also a result of a developing cultural consciousness that evolved among blacks during the era. Furthermore, when the expected acquiescence from the white community failed to occur in a new racial hierarchy, the stage was set for the emerging civil rights revolution of the 1950s and 1960s.⁸²

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Richard M. Dalfiume, “The ‘Forgotten Years’ of the Negro Revolution,” *Journal of American History* 55 (June 1968): 106.

Moreover, at war's end, during a time when the heroic deeds and combat actions of white service members graced the pages of newsprint and media, African American Marines quickly discovered that the nature of their military achievements and contributions would continue to raise questions surrounding their legitimacy as disciplined warfighters. This contest for wartime legitimacy would remain a shared adversity among black Marines well into the 20th century. In addition, the cultural stereotype that focused on African American Marines as *inadequate* and *second-rate* would continue to hang as a fixture in the collective mind of white Americans. Nevertheless, it would not forestall the dawn of a collective race awakening, the integration of the U.S. Armed Forces, nor the advent and commissioning of the first black Marine officer in 1945.

Chapter 5

A Return to Normalcy: “What are you doing saluting that Nigger?”

I was the CO of an all-white platoon. I went by the book and trained and led them; they responded like Marines do to their superiors.

—**Captain Frederick C. Branch,**
Montford Pointer and Battery Commander,
First Anti-Aircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion

V for Victory home and abroad. In other words, we want to overcome bigotry at home and we want to overcome the Totalitarianism, Nazism and all other isms abroad. So it was, there were two fronts we were actually fighting the war against the bigotry at home and fighting the war against bigotry overseas. And we were fighting the war to liberate people who had more liberty than we had.

—**Sergeant Steven Robinson,**
Montford Pointer and Battle of Iwo Jima Veteran

In late 1945, the United States stood transformed; it had become a global military power with a potent economy unmatched by any other nation in the world, yet blacks were no closer to being recognized as *full-fledged* Americans than they were in 1845. After winning a war over the forces of tyranny, for African Americans the topic of all inclusive citizenship still remained a national flashpoint despite fighting for a country that propagated the ideals of freedom (from oppression) and equality for all. World War II is evidence of the collective and individual strength of America, demonstrated by the incredible sacrifice and courage of its citizens; notwithstanding, the years of this war were sullied by pervasive military policies and practices centered on racial discrimination and segregation.

For Americans this was an era of incredible glory, it was also, beyond dispute, a time of implausible shame. This does not mean that one supplanted the other, it simply highlights the two sides of the era; moreover, each viewpoint tells its own story of how those who served the country fought for freedom of speech and expression, freedom of

worship, and freedom from want and fear. Nevertheless, President Roosevelt's vision was an illusion for many African Americans during the 1940s. The United States of America had also emerged from the World War II crisis as *the* global beacon of freedom. Nevertheless, the African American portion of the millions of free men and women, who answered the call of duty for a country that defined freedom as the supremacy of human rights everywhere, often found themselves short-changed when it came to paying the price for admission into full-fledged citizenship.

What African Americans experienced would be disturbing enough if it was just the prejudiced deeds of a few close-minded, misguided bigots, but the military's highest officials sanctioned the most egregious acts of systematized racism and discrimination. It is commonly understood among the general population that African Americans, in the most polite company and in official documents, were addressed as "colored" or "Negro," but the most detestable epithet, *nigger* was the most conventional expression used when referring to, and addressing, black servicemen. African American Marines had few, if any, champions of racial and social equality outside of their own chain of command. The majority of U.S. officials remained mostly quiet on the subject of the military's "Negro Policy" (i.e., aggressive efforts to ensure segregation, and maintain America's racial hierarchy, especially in the South).¹

This chapter examines how the other service branches made relatively greater strides toward racial assimilation by following its pre-World War II framework of the

¹ Kimberley L. Phillips, *War! What Is It Good For? Black Freedom Struggles and the U.S. Military from World War II to Iraq* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2012), 68; Tom Brokaw, *The Greatest Generation* (New York: Random House, 1998), 183–184, 193–202.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) program. Based on the framework of the CCC program, this alternative approach to utilizing blacks, albeit in segregated units, served as a model for the armed forces to commission blacks as officers, whereas the Marine Corps instituted no comparable reform throughout World War II. This chapter will also investigate the events and processes that led to the creation, evolution, and significance of President Harry S. Truman's landmark Executive Orders 9808 and 9981, and how the Marine Corps integrated its ranks in comparison to the other service branches. Finally, this chapter will briefly explore black military participation during the Korean War and contend that this war assisted in carving out substantial space for African American Marines to earn greater military legitimacy, specifically through an emerging civil rights era in arguably the last major battle of the Cold War—Vietnam.

The engine of the U.S. military's "Negro Policy" started long before the United States became a superpower with unrivaled capabilities. In 1639, during a meeting with the Virginia House of Burgess, Governor Sir George Yeardley declared that all legal age *white* males had the obligation, whenever necessary, to serve the military in their respective territories. Following Yeardley's order, the House passed laws forbidding blacks and all minorities from military service and their right to self-defense in the colony of Virginia. In 1660, Connecticut established a similar law; it would not take long for the remaining American colonies to follow suit. Moreover, by the early 1700s, each colony had created laws barring African and Native Americans from military service.²

² Gary B. Nash, *The Forgotten Fifth: African Americans in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 1–7; Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961), 78; Alan Gilbert, *Black Patriots and Loyalists: Fighting*

Even so, and much to the surprise of the Second Continental Congress, free blacks and African slaves had been serving all the while. With permission from their masters, these men were enlisted in local militias, most notably in Lexington and Concord and at the battle of Bunker Hill. By early July of 1775, Congress signaled a new policy regarding minority soldiers after their appointment of George Washington as commander-in-chief. During this period, Congress approved sixty-nine articles of war, which enumerated the foundation for establishing an army of able-bodied men, ages 16 to 50 to form militia companies. Under these Congressional provisions, there is no evidence suggesting the exclusion of minorities from military service.³

Regardless, Washington's recruiting officer, General Horatio Gates disseminated orders further prohibiting blacks and "vagabonds and strollers" from enlisting in the army. General Gates's actions, coupled with Washington's endorsement, demoralized the veteran community. Subsequently, official policy concerning the use of African American soldiers remained ambivalent, "until [the] fear of losing the war resulted in its reversal." Due to an appeal from the black community, on September 20, 1775, Congress addressed the subject of barring blacks from military service, and subsequently refused to support the commander-in-chief's prejudiced policy. In spite of that, and "at the insistence of Washington and his staff, Congress, on October 2, excluded Negroes from

for Emancipation in the War for Independence (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), vii–xii; Isaac Hampton II, *The Black Officer Corps: A History of Black Military Advancement from Integration through Vietnam* (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), 1.

³ Lorenzo J. Greene, "The Negro in the Armed Forces of the United States, 1619–1783," *Negro History Bulletin* 14 (March 1951): 125

the service.”⁴

Previous chapters have called attention to this normative behavior on the part of government and senior military officials, most notably when the nation regained its bearing during, and immediately after, a significant crisis. During these temporary states of emergency, which are highly useful to the majority, the minority found their voices muted and actions supplanted—especially when they demand the rights associated with the shared sacrifice and suffering encountered during these emergencies. Because minority communities also experience the sharpest pains of war, their contributions are typically ignored, but mostly forgotten. Despite numerous wars and armed conflicts, the Marine Corps seemed to always choose the latter when it came to the wartime service of its black leathernecks; intent on protecting its exclusive past and elitist image, it would adopt, and fiercely cling to, General Gates’s recruiting practices for more than a century and a half. The Great Depression would provide, yet another opportunity, displaying a model framework for the Marine Corps to adopt and tailor for African American advancement within its ranks.

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) serves as a sound example Marine officials could have used to get a head start on plans to commission African Americans, even if it meant they would serve in all-black units. From 1933 to 1942, the CCC was a New Deal program that operated in America for unemployed, unmarried men, ages 17–28 from families receiving relief assistance. President Roosevelt approved the design of the CCC to provide employment for young men in relief families who had difficulty

⁴ Ibid.

finding jobs during the Great Depression while at the same time implementing a general natural resource conservation program in every state and territory. According to many in the federal government, the CCC was a success. At any one time, the maximum enrollment was 300,000.⁵

During the nine-year existence of the CCC approximately three million young men participated in the program, serving, on average, a period of approximately ten months. U.S. Army Reserve officers were in charge of the residential work centers and camps, but there was no military training or issue of official U.S. Army uniforms.⁶ Still, members of the Civilian Conservation Corps were issued U.S. Government military-style uniforms, held titles such as “recruits” and “enrollees,” and were organized into “companies.”⁷ These terms are more commonly associated with the military than with civilian organizations, which allowed for a measure of pseudo-military pride and ethos among CCC members. Because the U.S. Army was “centrally involved in the day-to-day operations of the CCC camps,” its role became even more prominent with regard to shaping policies in Washington. Charles W. Johnson, a leading historian on blacks in the

⁵ Michael W. Sherraden, “Military Participation in a Youth Employment Program: The Civilian Conservation Corps,” *Armed Forces & Society* 7 (Winter 1981): 227. For images of the uniforms worn by members of the CCC, see Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, Records of the Division of Planning and Public Relations, Record Group 35: Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933–1953 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration); Olen Cole Jr., *The African-American Experience in the Civilian Conservation Corps* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999), 32–41; Stan Cohen, *The Tree Army: A Pictorial History of the Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933–1942* (Missoula, MT: Pictorial Histories Publishing, 1980), 10, 12, 15, 32–33, 38, 42–43, 51, 56–63, 81, 121, 129, 156–162.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Upon entering the Civilian Conservation Corps, each enrollee subscribed to an “Oath of Enrollment/Enlistment.” It was a contract between the enrollee and the U.S. Government, and was required to be lived up to in each respect of the oath. Additionally, enrollees received “Certificates of Discharge” from the CCC. See Cohen, *Tree Army*, v, 24, 126–127.

U.S. Army, contends that beyond operating the camps and serving on the CCC Director's Advisory Council, War Department personnel were given responsibility for the supply, administration, medical care, sanitation, education, and welfare of this conservation army.⁸ Hence, the pervasive military tone at CCC camps; therefore, the CCC framework served as suitable blueprint for U.S. Marine officials to parallel as local and national calls for desegregating their ranks intensified.

The U.S. Army's presidential appointment and stewardship over the Civilian Conservation Corps demonstrated that military involvement was key in creating the program and that it would run according to the president's desires. The CCC is a valuable case study of military performance that addressed the needs of the youth and temporary national employment. As a further matter, it continued with an established framework for a *separate but equal* role for African Americans in the military, keeping staunch segregationists appeased for the moment. Historians and scholars largely agree that the Civilian Conservation Corps was popular with the public and successful as both an income redistribution program and work organization; this was especially beneficial for minorities, as the majority had experienced the most acrimonious treatment in professional sectors.⁹ The CCC bore President Roosevelt's personal stamp of approval and support. However, there is no evidence that the CCC brought about a significant

⁸ Charles W. Johnson, "The Army, the Negro and the Civilian Conservation Corps: 1933–1942," *Military Affairs* 36 (October 1972): 82.

⁹ U.S. Civilian Conservation Corps, *Final Report* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1942); Howard W. Oxley, "The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Education of the Negro," *Journal of Negro Education* 7 (July 1938): 375–382; Mary A. Morton, "The Federal Government and Negro Morale," *Journal of Negro Education* 12 (Summer 1943): 452–463. From 1933–1942, the Civilian Conservation Corps was the largest and most productive single conservation effort ever undertaken in the United States. See Cole, *African-American Experience in the Civilian Conservation Corps*, 1.

measure of positive change in race relations, nor does it suggest that the CCC was devoid of issues pertaining to segregation, racial discrimination, and prejudice.

Senior leadership in the Civil Conservation Corps limited black enrollment using a quota system, which only served to further racial discrimination and restrictions upon the program's supervisory positions, which at the time were occupied by an all-white staff. This abuse of official procedure occurred in some areas of the North but predominated in the South. Complaints regarding the CCC's selection process filtered up to black leaders, who expressed their concerns to officials in the Department of Labor. As a result, the CCC Director of Selection, W. Frank Persons, took action against racial discrimination by local CCC selection representatives, "firmly believing it contrary to the intent and letter of the CCC Act." Persons applied steady pressure on officials in Washington and the Department of Labor, and threatened to withhold funding for future CCC projects in Army Corps areas located in the southeast United States. Persons's threat resulted in an immediate impact on black enrollment as it increased throughout the CCC, specifically in the South.¹⁰

From 1933 through 1942, influential black leadership and officials in the War Department addressed the issue of black officers in the Civilian Conservation Corps with program administrators. Robert Fechner, director of the CCC, discussed supervisory positions for African Americans in the CCC with the program's council, and decided that

¹⁰ Ann Burkly, "Blacks in the Civilian Conservation Corps: Successful Despite Discrimination," *Proceedings and Papers of the Georgia Association of Historians* 14 (Fall 1993): 38; John A. Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933–1942: A New Deal Case Study* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1967), 85, 88–101.

few blacks were capable of holding supervisory positions. Unsurprisingly, in 1933, Fechner and the council took no further action regarding the subject.¹¹

During the spring of 1935, the Secretary Treasurer of Howard University, Emmett J. Scott, who had held the official post of Special Assistant to the Secretary of War during World War I, appealed to President Roosevelt for executive action to force the War Department to appoint black infantry and medical corps reserve officers to the Civilian Conservation Corps. However, the War Department was reluctant to address any complaints regarding civil rights issues and equally unresponsive to pressure from other interested minority groups. Sensitive to potential political repercussions should the discrimination continue, Scott warned Roosevelt that pressure from the black newspapers would only increase and emphasize the fact that African Americans did not hold any positions of leadership in the CCC.¹²

Refusing to deviate from entrenched segregationist policies, the War Department continued to ignore such outside pressures to change its position concerning African American officers. Nevertheless, the War Department was susceptible to pressure from the president; only Roosevelt was in a position to force a change in policy. By late July 1935, FDR told Fechner that he wanted the Army to begin, in a small way, to call Negro reserve medical and chaplain corps officers to duty in the Civilian Conservation Corps. By August 1936, a presidential election year, Roosevelt ordered the establishment of the first CCC camp to be officered entirely by African Americans in the Third Corps Area

¹¹ Johnson, "The Army, the Negro and the Civilian Conservation Corps," 84.

¹² Ibid., 85; see also Calvin W. Gower, "The Struggle for Blacks for Leadership Positions in the Civilian Conservation Corps: 1933–1942," *Journal of Negro History* 61 (April 1976): 127–131; Salmond, *Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933–1942*, 94–100, 189–190.

(Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia). By 1937, a second all-Negro CCC camp was established in Elmira, New York. Roosevelt's continued pressure on the War Department to place blacks in commissioned officers' uniforms and assign CCC leadership billets to existing African American officers simply demonstrated that presidential authority was a small ingredient to eliminating entrenched racial policies and practices within the War Department.¹³

In evaluating the role of African Americans who participated in the Civilian Conservation Corps, the U.S. Army model for the program illustrates the measures and executive activity that, if handled well, could have been used as a template for all the service branches during World War II. Examples such as W. Frank Persons's threat to withhold funding for Army Corps area projects was a significant act that made officials in Washington respond in a manner that enabled African Americans to participate in more leadership roles and supervisory positions. The pre-World War II model established by the CCC, under the stewardship of the U.S. Army, showed progress, albeit only a crack, in opening the door toward total military integration and leadership advancement.¹⁴

Similar to the Marine Corps, the Army remained grounded in its deep-rooted traditions and obstinate views that white officers lead blacks, which was reinforced by World War I experiences and reports such as the Army War College's 1925 study.

¹³ Ulysses G. Lee, Jr., *The Employment of Negro Troops* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966; reprint, Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 2000), 36–39; Johnson, "The Army, the Negro and the Civilian Conservation Corps," 86; Virginius Dabney, "Nearer and Nearer the Precipice," *Atlantic Monthly* 171 (January 1943): 94–100; Gower, "The Struggle for Blacks for Leadership Positions in the Civilian Conservation Corps," 130–134; Salmond, *Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933–1942*, 98–101.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Whether or not reports of events from World War I accurately represented the actual wartime performance of blacks, conventional wisdom in the Army dictated that African American troops only performed well under the leadership of white officers.¹⁵

Be that as it may, by late 1940, due to the increased need for junior officers in the expanding Regular Army, the War Department was willing, for the first time, to consider training and appointing Negro enrollees as subalterns (i.e., junior officers in the Civilian Conservation Corps) and appointing Negro reserve infantry officers to all-black CCC camps as vacancies occurred.¹⁶ Vocal black leaders and community activists viewed this token black representation in the Army as completely inadequate. The War Department's actions failed to signal a major shift in the Army's overall policy regarding African Americans, and only served as an elaborate attempt to pacify certain elements within African American communities, specifically the black press. Given the nature and importance of the presidential election year, Roosevelt did not have the tolerance to bear

¹⁵ Lee, *Employment of Negro Troops*, 15–20. During World War I most African American soldiers were draftees, since few were allowed to enlist. Most blacks were assigned to traditional menial occupations in peripheral units such as supply, stevedore, engineer, and labor crews. Approximately 200,000 African American soldiers served in France during the war, with eight out of ten black soldiers assigned to Service Support/Auxiliary units. The relatively small number who served in combat units were subjected to unusually harsh criticism. In one of the most publicized incidents, the 368th Regiment of the 92nd “Buffalo Soldier” Division allegedly became demoralized and fled to the rear during the Meuse-Argonne offensive in the fall of 1918. Many extenuating circumstances have been cited, such as inadequate training, inferior officers, and lack of firepower. See Lee Nichols, *Breakthrough on the Color Front* (New York: Random House, 1954), 33; Arthur E. Barbeau and Florette Henri, *The Unknown Soldiers: Black American Troops in World War I* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1974), 111–136; Bernard C. Nalty, *Strength for the Fight: A History of Black Americans in the Military* (New York: Free Press, 1986), 203; Richard M. Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the Armed Forces: Fighting on Two Fronts, 1939–1953* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1969), 21; U.S. Army War College, *The Use of Negro Manpower in War*, AWC 127–25, October 30, 1925 (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army Military History Institute) [hereafter cited as AWC 127–25].

¹⁶ Johnson, “The Army, the Negro and the Civilian Conservation Corps,” 86; Lee, *Employment of Negro Troops*, 179–204.

the criticism of the black press, which had already headlined evidence of black service members being denied opportunities for advancement, their blood plasma being segregated by the Red Cross, injustices within the service branches, which was punctuated by white hostility and violence. Instead, the president applied greater pressure on Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson to set forth the War Department's general policy towards blacks in the Regular Army, the Organized Reserve Corps, and the National Guard.¹⁷ FDR's failure to address these racial issues head on, before the Second World War, set the tone for the heads of service branches to easily dismiss African American wartime service. Furthermore, it demonstrated to civilians and the Axis Powers the untenable nature of black humanity.

Is it Safe for Democracy?

At the close of World War II, white American society "returned to normalcy," which included a reassertion of pre-war racial norms since U.S. officials continued to remain quiet on the subject of the military's "Negro Policy." In addition, several military officials believed the *social experiment* involving black manpower was over. For African American Marines who returned home, as decorated combat veterans, the military's social experiment left many unanswered questions. Several returned home believing they had achieved, and earned, greater equality and social justice; however, when brothers came marching home, the welcome was all but warm; the civilian welcoming committee could be antagonistic, hostile, vulgar, and even deadly.

¹⁷ Ibid. See also Richard M. Dalfiume, "Military Segregation and the 1940 Presidential Election," *Phylon* 30 (January 1969): 49–50; Harvard Sitkoff, "Racial Militancy and Interracial Violence in the Second World War," *Journal of American History* 58 (December 1971): 662.

Black veterans who returned triumphantly to the United States were still forced to ride in the back of buses and separate coaches. As an eruption of violence spread throughout the South after 1945, “neither uniform nor ribbons could protect veterans from racists who were eager to remind them of ‘their [inherent and proper] place’ in the southern race hierarchy.” Thus, while articles in the national press celebrated the occasion of the U.S. military ridding Europe of Nazi racism, the black press’s coverage reminded their readership of the country’s civic obligation to black people. Days after VE-Day, the *Chicago Defender* somberly reminded African American communities that, “Hitlerism is dead in Germany but not in Dixie.”¹⁸ Regardless of their regional differences, *all* black Marines quickly learned to be patient on and off base upon returning home from the Pacific. After discovering that donning a U.S. military uniform made no guarantees of one’s safety, Washington, D.C. native Joseph Carpenter recalled how southern police officers treated black servicemen: “When we went out on leave some of us got arrested for impersonating Marines. And they had to send white [Marine] officers to get us out of jail. I wasn’t one of them, but there were a lot of people, several of them went to Texas and they were arrested and they had to send the white [Marine] officers ... to get the [black] Marines out.” Although Carpenter never found himself

¹⁸ Maria Höhn, “‘We Will Never Go Back to the Old Way Again’: Germany in the African-American Debate on Civil Rights,” *Central European History* 41 (December 2008): 628, 628n89; “Hitler is Dead but Not Hitlerism,” *Chicago Defender*, May 12, 1945. See also Thomas J. Sugrue, “Crabgrass-Roots Politics: Race, Rights, and the Reaction against Liberalism in the Urban North, 1940–1964,” *Journal of American History* 82 (September 1995): 551–578; Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 54. For more on Germany in American civil rights debates after 1945, see Maria Höhn, *GIs and Fräuleins: The German-American Encounter in 1950s West Germany* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

behind bars for charges of impersonating a U.S. Marine, one of the more pronounced examples involved Edgar R. Huff, who would later become the first African American Marine to be promoted to the rank of sergeant major.¹⁹

The Gadsden, Alabama native, who enlisted in the Marine Corps on September 24, 1942, recalled how he was treated while traveling from North Carolina to visit his mother who was sick, days before Christmas: “So I got on the bus, and when it pulled into Atlanta, I got off and went in the station. It was two Marine MPs. They walked up to me. One said, ‘Hey, boy, C’mere. What are you doing with that uniform on?’ I say, I’m a Marine,” replied Huff. For Huff, this situation was not one that caused alarm, he knew that blacks in the Corps was new, and news of this event may not have reached all

¹⁹ Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Carpenter served stateside as a clerk until 1946, when he was discharged. After receiving a college degree, he re-entered the Corps in 1956, obtained a commission, and achieved the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. See Series 4: Military, Sub-Series 4.2: Montford Point, Item 8: Interview with Joseph Carpenter, July 23, 2004, Melton McLaurin Papers, MS323, William M. Randall Library Special Collections, University of North Carolina Wilmington, Oral History Collection, 1990–Present, UNCW Archives and Special Collections Online Database. See also, *Marines of Montford Point Documentary, 2006–2007* in the Office of Marketing and Communications records: Montford Point Marines, ARCH2011.09, UNCW Archives, W. M. Randall Library, University of North Carolina, Wilmington, Folder 1 (hereafter cited as Series 4: Military, Sub-Series 4.2: Montford Point, Melton McLaurin Papers, MS323, Folder 1) [hereafter cited as Carpenter interview]. The average white Marine’s attitude toward black Marines reflected the canons of both black and white American society. To most whites, black Marines had no more rights than the average black civilian. For African Americans, wearing the Marine Corps’s uniform did not change the social mores of the United States, nor did it easily shift racial opinions. Black Marines were, at best, viewed and treated as second-rate citizens in the eyes of white Americans. Black Marines’ demands for equal treatment and rights were viewed with the same skepticism within both the military and American society. Only in isolated incidents did white Marines side with their black counterparts; moreover, contact between black and white Marines was minimal due to segregation—on and off base. It was only natural that when white and black Marines interacted it was in the accustomed role of superior-inferior. See also John F. Marszalek, Jr., “The Black Man in Military History,” *Negro History Bulletin* 36 (October 1973): 124. See also Wallace Terry, *Bloods: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Black Veterans* (New York: Random House, 1984), 148–159.

Marines. “There ain’t no damn nigger Marines. You going to jail,” barked one of the MPs.²⁰

Huff, then quickly handed over his furlough papers, which simply authorized him to travel home, not prove he had earned the right to wear Marine Corps green. Incredulous of the existence of *nigger* Marines, the MP tore Huff’s furlough papers right in his face, insisting that he remove the uniform immediately despite not having a change of clothes. Emphatically responding, “I’m not impersonating a Marine. I am a Marine,” Huff still found himself in the city jail. “That night a Marine captain came in to get some white Marines who’ve been locked up for [being] drunk. I knew a captain when I see a captain so I asked him to get me out, too.” For sure Huff believed this to be his opportunity to prove his legitimacy as a genuine Marine. “Ain’t no nigger Marines,” asserted the Marine captain.²¹

Stuck in jail on Christmas day, a Navy chaplain visited the city jail to provide Christmas prayers, but to no avail, Huff failed to even get the chaplain to talk to him. “Finally, a Marine major came in. It must have been that twenty-eighth [of December]. And I convinced him to call Colonel Woods, even though he thought I was making up a bunch of lies. He didn’t know about Montford Point, being as it was a brand new camp.” Colonel Woods informed the major of the situation and instructed him to get Huff released immediately; in addition, the major advised Huff to go home and forget about his furlough papers.²² While several black Marines, like Carpenter and Huff, viewed

²⁰ Terry, *Bloods*, 148–159.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

these confrontations as consequences of local and national tensions, many African Americans also considered these types of actions insulting and abuses of authority that military and local law enforcement perpetrated against blacks and minorities.

Perhaps most galling, which compounded the insults and blatant disregard towards African American Marines, was that enemy prisoners of war (POWs), Germans and Italians, were accorded better treatment, respect, and greater common courtesy in the United States. For instance, while stationed in Norfolk, Virginia, Carpenter described how POWs had more freedom than black Marines: “When we were sent to Norfolk we were stationed right opposite, or adjacent, to the Italian prisoners. Now they had freedom of the base, freedom of Norfolk City, which we didn’t have, and when we caught the bus to the train, we had to sit in the back [and] they could sit anywhere they wanted and they were supposed to be our prisoners.”²³ The United States might have triumphed over Fascism and Nazism and stood poised to further spread democracy throughout Europe, but black Marines understood that the objectives of the Double V campaign, for which many had worked so assiduously to realize during the war, remained out of their reach.

For many African American Marines, especially from the North, this example highlighted the sustained institutional policies of racial segregation. Institutionally, a zero-tolerance policy was in effect in the Marine Corps when it came to demonstrating loyalty to African Americans. Carpenter highlights this institutional measure when explaining the freedom POWs possessed simply because of their white heritage, “Blacks

²³ Carpenter interview. See also Clarence Mitchell, “The Status of Racial Integration in the Armed Forces,” *Journal of Negro Education* 23 (Summer 1954): 203–213; Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams & the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 43.

were always [placed in] a separate part of the camp. Anyway, and then that's where they put us [and the prisoners] 'cause the whites were elsewhere on the base. They could go anywhere in town they wanted, we could only go in the black section." Even in uniform, while transporting POWs, Carpenter described the details of carrying out his duties, "And of course, they could ride in the back of the train or anywhere on the train they wanted, but we had to get in the car right behind the coal car or the baggage car, whichever one was there. And, buses, they sat in front and we sat in the back."²⁴ Despite African American objections to such treatment on base, the military's "Negro Policy" would remain in tact.

New Jersey native David Dinkins poignantly recalled, "One thing that sticks in my mind was that the prisoners of war, Italian and German prisoners of war, some of them were guarded by black soldiers. And they were treated better than those people who were protecting our country, soldiers and Marines. That I remember."²⁵ Regarding the on base privileges for POWs, Averet Corley also described an encounter he had with a German POW at the Post Exchange (PX) in Norfolk, Virginia: "I wanted to go over [to the PX] and get a malted milk or a Coke. And blacks couldn't go in there. I had to pay the

²⁴ Ibid. See also "James H. Ferguson Memoir, 1942–1946," COLL/2457, Montford Point Collections, USMC Archives, Marine Corps University, Archives and Special Collections Branch, Library of the Marine Corps, Gray Research Center, Quantico, VA; Terry, *Bloods*, 148–159.

²⁵ Private David Dinkins was born in Trenton, New Jersey, where he finished high school. He enrolled in the Marine Corps in 1945, and after stateside duty was discharged the following year. He completed a degree in mathematics at Howard University in 1950, a law degree from the Brooklyn School of Law in 1956, and practiced law in New York City until 1975. Politically active, he became president of the New York City Board of Elections in 1975 and in 1989 was elected mayor of New York City. Rudy Giuliani defeated him in a 1993 bid for re-election. See Series 4: Military, Sub-Series 4.2: Montford Point, Item 17: Interview with David Dinkins, July 21, 2005, Melton McLaurin Papers, MS323, Folder 1 [hereafter cited as Dinkins interview].

German POW a quarter to get me a malted milk. And he couldn't understand that. He said, 'you're a Black soldier, you're American black, you're American soldier. This is your country.'" For Corley, the implementation of a "Negro Policy" was more than simply maintaining segregation, but more so an elaborate plan to cement racial hierarchies in his beloved country. The German POW said, "I'll get your malted milk and anything else you want." Corley knew the German POW could not understand his plight, "And that kind of got to me," he said. "You know. Here a prisoner of war has more privileges than a black American, you know."²⁶ Corley and Dinkins's sentiments, albeit painful, were common; nevertheless, their struggle to understand how this social dynamic expanded beyond their country's shores caused the most consternation.

As World War II ended, white America began to quickly forget, and summarily dismiss, the sacrifices made in the name of democracy by so many blacks in defense of the country. Roland Durden, who served with the 33rd Marine Depot Company recalled, "The 33rd and 34th Depot traveled together on a troop train from North Carolina going south toward New Orleans where we picked up German prisoners. [We traveled with] two carloads of German prisoners [as] we headed out west." After arriving at a local train station for coal and water, "... the Red Cross nurses came out to the train to give us coffee and donuts. Our captain, who was white said, 'Serve the Germans first.' Our Red Cross nurses said, 'No, we'll serve our boys first.'" Although white Marine officers

²⁶ Born in Indianapolis, Indiana, Corporal Averet Corley entered the Marines in 1945 and was recalled for a tour of duty during the Korean War, but served at Montford Point. He left the Marine Corps in 1951, completed a bachelor's degree in agriculture at Purdue University and a master's in education at Indiana University. See Series 4: Military, Sub-Series 4.2: Montford Point, Item 11: Interview with Averet Corley, July 23, 2004, Melton McLaurin Papers, MS323, Folder 1 [hereafter cited as Corley interview].

typically treated their black troops in this fashion, the response from the Red Cross nurses was atypical. Most of the nurses boldly trumped the power and ideology of Jim Crow, especially during a time when the laws of segregation were so expansive.²⁷

Even with the shock of Jim Crow abroad, Corley shared that while aboard ship and traveling through the Panama Canal, “All black troops had to stay on board and white troops could have liberty. Because in that segment, in Colón [Panama], the [white] Americans didn’t want blacks mingling with the other folks [Panamanians].” The reach of Jim Crow laws was limitless, and its customs never showed any tolerance among white and black Americans. For instance, Corley explained, “In fact, there was a [white] girl from Indianapolis, Catherine Hicks, a Red Cross girl. [During this time all Red Cross nurses were white]. So [a] black sailor asked one of these white girls to dance, and she said, ‘how dare you ask a white woman to dance.’”²⁸ This example illustrates the steadfast nature of Jim Crow; its laws transcended all borders.

While serving in the Ellice Islands, under a brand new commander, Herman Darden recalled, “Colonel Curtis W. LeGette [the commander of the 7th Defense Battalion] told us, ‘it’s a disgrace to be seen with boys like you. They got boys like you working on my plantation, down in South Carolina. They tell me you have no

²⁷ Corporal Roland Durden, born and raised in Harlem, New York, completed high school and joined the Marines in 1943. He served in the Pacific, participating in the invasion of Iwo Jima, and was discharged from the Marine Corps in 1946. See Series 4: Military, Sub-Series 4.2: Montford Point, Item 21: Interview with Roland Durden, July 23, 2004, Melton McLaurin Papers, MS323, Folder 1 [hereafter cited as Durden interview]. See also Record Group 127: Records of the United States Marine Corps, History and Museums Division, PUBLICATION BACKGROUND FILES, “Brief History of Blacks in USMC, 1942–73,” Draft Text & Source Documents, Box 135 (College Park, MD: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration) [hereafter cited as RG 127: Box 135, NARA].

²⁸ Corley grew up in Indianapolis, Indiana. See Corley interview.

discipline.”²⁹ In addition, he used the phrase “you people,” in his *first speech* to the men, convincing many African Americans that LeGette did not consider them to be real Marines. Much in the same manner as Civil War Union Brevet Brigadier General Charles Francis Adams, Jr., who, in July of 1862, emphatically wrote, “the idea of arming the blacks *as soldiers* must be abandoned ... the Negro is [w]holly unfit for cavalry service.” Colonel LeGette believed the same about black Marines and their suitability as infantrymen to be “wholly unfit.”³⁰

Even so, as their contact and interactions with African Americans increased and evolved, these commanders adopted similar views. “The Negro regiment question is our greatest victory of the war so far, and, I can assure you, that in the army, these [men] are so much a success that they will soon be the fashion,” Adams confidently wrote to his father in 1863.³¹ LeGette, after nearly two years in command, found himself also praising the wartime contributions of blacks. On December 13, 1944 when he turned the battalion over to Lieutenant Colonel Gould P. Groves, Darden recalled that LeGette apologized for his initial comments, “I want you to know, I didn’t want to leave you. I’d like to go back to the States with you. But I can’t, but I want you to know, I’ve never served with a better bunch of men in all my life.” Standing there with tears in his eyes, he told the Marines, “You have shown me that you can soldier with the best of ‘em.” Both men led African

²⁹ Herman Darden, Jr., a native of Washington, D.C., joined the Marine Corps in 1943; the Marine Corps discharged him at the end of the war. See Series 4: Military, Sub-Series 4.2: Montford Point, Item 14: Interview with Herman Darden, Jr., July 23, 2004, Melton McLaurin Papers, MS323, Folder 1 [hereafter cited as Darden interview].

³⁰ See Dudley Taylor Cornish, *The Sable Arm: Negro Troops in the Union Army, 1861–1865* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1956), 132.

³¹ *Ibid.*

Americans during wars when national survival was in question, and both men discovered that victory would only be achieved through a united effort.³²

Although opinions slowly changed regarding the wartime performance of African American Marines, overt racism loomed largely. Keenly aware of southern race relations and traditions, the overt and prejudiced nature of such a social system, oftentimes, was principally acute and agonizing for black Marines to internalize. Many white Marine officers had no qualms with inhumane treatment towards blacks, and using terms such as nigger and *you people* among officers was characteristically habitual. Furthermore, this powerful and evocative language used by white Marine officers, adopted from General Larsen's remarks in 1943, crystallized the organization's racial subordination of African Americans.³³

Despite the fact that blacks understood the Marine Corps was racist and the common perception was that the majority of Marines, both black and white, were from the South, the actions of white officers bothered him more as an American than as a Marine, as it had profoundly affected so many others in the same way during the era. As Americans, blacks knew the United States was at the tail end of fighting a war for democracy, which called for, and required, unity from *all* its citizens. African Americans not only believed, but were also aware that national "unity" started and ended with whites. Percival Prattis asserted that the average white, "free, white and twenty-one,"

³² Darden interview. LeGette quoted in Bernard C. Nalty, *The Right to Fight: African American Marines in World War II* (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1994), 16.

³³ See Series 4: Military, Sub-Series 4.2: Montford Point, Item 31: Interview with Ruben Hines, May 17, 2004, Melton McLaurin Papers, MS323, Folder 1 [hereafter cited as Hines interview].

thinks, feels, and does whatever he desires; he is indifferent to what others think because he is “the people.” The majority of African Americans subscribed to this idea, yielding to this independence of mind, willing, if not eager, to join in any undertaking that congressional leadership deemed expedient for national unity.³⁴

Adhering to this white prescription, opinions did shift, and national unity grew one community at a time as black Marines returned home. Sergeant Howard L. Williams recalled an incident on the train while traveling to boot camp: “I remember once, in my hometown, as we were boarding, getting ready to go to the Corps, a [white] person, said, ‘oh, this is the first time I’ve ever seen a black Marine.’” Upon returning home to Emporia, Virginia, Williams expressed, “Well ... they were happy to see me as a Marine and my little, uniform that was different from the Army and the Navy which they were accustomed to, and of course, they knew that the Marine Corps had not really accepted, blacks, and, of course, they wanted to know, if we were superman, that type of thing.”³⁵ Ellis Cunningham, who joined the Marines in 1944, described an experience in which he saw a black Marine in his neighborhood for the first time: “When he came [home] on boot camp leave, wearing his green uniform, I said, my goodness, what kind of Marine is that? I didn’t know him personally, before he went into the Marine Corps, but I got to

³⁴ Percival L. Prattis, “The Morale of the Negro in the Armed Services of the United States,” *Journal of Negro Education* 12 (Summer 1943): 357.

³⁵ Sergeant Howard L. Williams served with the First Ammunition Company at Saipan and during the invasion of Okinawa, Japan. See Series 4: Military, Sub-Series 4.2: Montford Point, Item 58: Interview with Howard L. Williams, August 30, 2005, Melton McLaurin Papers, MS323, Folder 1 [hereafter cited as Williams interview].

know him afterwards. And that's when I first heard about Montford Point, but it still didn't sink in."³⁶

The experiences of Williams and Cunningham speak to the Marine Corps's exclusion of minorities since the American Revolution; notwithstanding, Marine recruiters attempted to enlist African Americans who had no familial tradition of service. (i.e., no one joined because his grandfather, father, uncle, or brother had served as a Marine).³⁷ In 1942, when the federal government officially authorized blacks to enter the Marine Corps and don the coveted uniform for the first time in history, these men began their adjustment to a new way of life in the military. However, the United States struggled to fully accept and treat them as equals. As Marines, African Americans were first viewed as blacks, at times something less, and if lucky, viewed as a quasi-Marine.

The nation's military exploits had many white Americans euphoric and basking in their global achievements; for all that, black Americans wrestled with widespread apathy as many returned home to a less than united nation. The draft failed to inspire confidence for opportunities to achieve social equity. Moreover, African Americans still held to notions of a sound democracy purported and defended by their leaders; nevertheless, while remaining cautiously optimistic, they soon discovered that the war served only to

³⁶ First Sergeant Ellis Cunningham was born on a farm near Florence, South Carolina. He participated in the invasion on Iwo Jima, Japan. A career Marine, he served in Korea and in Vietnam, where he participated in the Tet Offensive campaign, retiring from the Marine Corps in 1970. See Series 4: Military, Sub-Series 4.2: Montford Point, Item 13: Interview with Ellis Cunningham, June 29, 2005, Melton McLaurin Papers, MS323, Folder 1 [hereafter cited as Cunningham interview].

³⁷ Ronald K. Culp, *The First Black United States Marines: The Men of Montford Point, 1942–1946* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2007), 1.

magnify the dual nature of their citizenship.³⁸

Walter White, Executive Secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), for example, contended that African Americans had to “fight for the right to fight” for democracy. For young black men, serving as a U.S. Marine was a notable accomplishment, and a highly visible action during the 1940s, which would later contribute to America’s civil rights movement of the 1960s. While black Marines saw military service as an opportunity to prove their individual worth and help raise the prestige of their group—thereby striking a blow against segregation—the laws of Jim Crow remained staunch and relentless, making the endeavor to achieve greater group recognition and status overwhelming. In turn, the Marine Corps was greatly handicapped in filling its ranks by manipulating the draft process throughout the war, and severely limited African American access to Officer Candidates School in order to preserve its elitist and exclusive white image.³⁹ For black Marines, balancing their loyalties between their race and their country proved to be quite the task, and remained in question, even towards the end of the war. Chicago sociologist and black leader, Horace Cayton submitted, “Am I a Negro first and then a policeman or soldier second, or should I forget in any emergency situation the fact that . . . my first loyalty is to my race?” World War II prompted millions of African Americans to ask

³⁸ Walter White, “Race Relations in the Armed Services of the United States,” *Journal of Negro Education* 12 (Summer 1943): 350–354; Michael C. C. Adams, *The Best War Ever: America and World War II* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), xi–xv, 69; Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, “Blacks, Loyalty, and Motion-Picture Propaganda in World War II,” *Journal of American History* 73 (September 1986): 383.

³⁹ Martin Binkin, Mark J. Eitelberg, Alvin J. Schexnider, and Marvin M. Smith, *Blacks and the Military: Studies in Defense Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1982), 23.

themselves this very question. This break for black Marines came in 1944. Suddenly, black populations in northern U.S. states found members of the Republican Party bidding for their vote. Purporting strategies to investigate the treatment of African Americans in the armed forces, the party believed it could wrestle a sizeable majority of black votes from the democrats.⁴⁰

As a result, and an attempt to curry favor with the African American population, FDR's administration further reviewed the "Negro Problem" with a renewed commitment to be more affirmative in the use of African American service members. "Mr. President, What of the Marines?" William A. Brower's editorial cartoon asked, suggesting that Roosevelt discuss the absence of black officers during the next national fireside chat. Despite the Marine Corps having an enlisted strength of 18,000 blacks, with half serving overseas, not one had been afforded the chance to earn the right to lead his peers as a commissioned officer at the close of 1944.⁴¹ For African Americans, breaking through

⁴⁰ Walter F. White, "Right to Fight for Democracy," *Survey Graphic* 31 (November 1942): 472; Horace R. Cayton, "Negro Morale," *Opportunity Journal Magazine* 19 (December 1941): 371; Chad L. Williams, "Vanguards of the New Negro: African American Veterans and Post-World War I Racial Militancy," *Journal of African American History* 92 (Summer 2007): 347–352. As most committed white liberals proclaimed it, the distinguishing feature of the newfound concern with racial issues was that it focused on white racism, particularly racism buttressed by government sanction and enforcement. These liberals wrote for or read journals of opinion (i.e., *Nation*, the *New Republic*, *Common Sense*, and *Survey Graphic*) that were the most prominent forums of liberal discussion during this era. Since U.S. officials consistently heralded the democratic character of their country as the leader of the "free world," the problem with official bigotry ultimately became a test for their moral integrity. See Robert Fredrick Burk, *The Eisenhower Administration and Black Civil Rights* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984), 11–12; Peter J. Kellogg, "Civil Rights Consciousness in the 1940s," *The Historian* 42 (November 1979): 18–41.

⁴¹ "Suggestion for the Next Broadcast," *Baltimore Afro-American*, August 19, 1944; "Mr. President, What of the Marines?" (18,000 Colored Marines, Not One Colored Officer) *Baltimore Afro-American*, August 19, 1944; "Not One Colored Officer in Marines," *Philadelphia Afro-American*, August 19, 1944. See also Terry H. Anderson, *The Pursuit of Fairness: A History of Affirmative Action* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 32; Campbell C. Johnson, "The Mobilization of Negro Manpower for the Armed

the ceiling into this elite and exclusive club (to serve at the pleasure of the commander-in-chief) never evolved into a viable discussion point in the view of senior Marine Corps officials; ergo, making it even less important to FDR.

During this election year, however, an unseen benefit emerged because of Nazism. Adolf Hitler's official policies of merciless racism, dramatized by extermination camps, dealt a massive jolt to entrenched American complacency towards the most gratuitous forms of racial policies and practices. After Americans witnessed the absolute horrors of a doctrine of Aryan supremacy, few could continue to openly justify the U.S. version by contending its benevolence. American bigotry and racism had now stood exposed as an inexcusable abomination, and its continued, and legally sanctioned, existence across vast regions of the United States had seriously called into question the country's democratic credentials.⁴²

By the end of 1944, the black press's circulation had increased by 40 percent and functioned primarily to advance racial solidarity, prod increasing militancy, and campaign to embarrass America's war efforts for democracy by publicizing the nation's criminal Jim Crow policies and practices. As a further matter, black membership in the NAACP experienced exponential growth, nearly ten times during the war with the number of chapters tripling. The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) experimented with

Forces," *Journal of Negro Education* 12 (Summer 1943): 298–306; Dwight MacDonald and Nancy MacDonald, "The War's Greatest Scandal! The Story of Jim Crow in Uniform," *The March on Washington Movement*, June/July 1943, James Leonard, Jr. and Lula Peterson Farmer Papers, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Box: 2R637, Folder: "Printed Materials": Reports, etc. 1930s–1940s [hereafter cited as Leonard and Farmer Papers].

⁴² Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction and Beyond in Black America, 1945–2006* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 12–14; Burk, *Eisenhower Administration and Black Civil Rights*, 10; Kellogg, "Civil Rights Consciousness in the 1940s," 18–41.

non-violent techniques to end segregation in the North, by inspiring students at Howard University (Washington, D.C.), and inter-racial groups in various cities to conduct sit-ins and other forms of direct action. African American businesses and professional societies even collaborated in the struggle against domestic oppression. Almost everywhere one turned, black urban youth found “new Negro organizations,” enlisting in the crusade with new leaders and journals exhorting vehement calls for equality. Each concession wrested from the government and every sign of the weakening of white supremacy added new converts, which made fund raising easier, and stimulated greater confidence and higher hopes among black youth in urban America.⁴³

Nevertheless, the attempts to educate white society to end racial discrimination and cease prejudiced behaviors reached its apex in 1944. One of the most famous publications on American race relations that emerged was Gunnar Myrdal’s *An American Dilemma*. In addition, the establishment of the United Nations, anti-imperialistic pronouncements of government and military officials, and a series of literature (i.e., works from Pearl S. Buck, Eleanor Roosevelt, Charles S. Johnson, Carey McWilliams, and Henry Wallace) impugning the scientific basis of racism and imploring the United States to genuinely practice the tenets of democracy it propagated, further augmented the militancy of black America. Disavowing the socio-economic explanations popularized by American Marxists during the 1930s, Myrdal described the race problem as a moral issue

⁴³ Percival L. Prattis, “The Role of the Negro Press in Race Relations,” *Phylon* 7 (3rd Qtr., 1946): 273–283; see also Lee H. Finkle, “Conservative Aims of Militant Rhetoric: Black Protest during World War II,” *Journal of American History* 60 (December 1973): 692–713; Sitkoff, “Racial Militancy and Interracial Violence in the Second World War,” 662–663; Dabney, “Nearer and Nearer the Precipice,” 94–100;

for white America, an outgrowth of America's creed to guarantee liberty and equality to all except African Americans.⁴⁴

Myrdal did not conceal the hardships of blacks in the U.S., but *An American Dilemma* clearly displayed his gradualist optimism. Furthermore, Myrdal woefully underestimated the depth and range of American racism; optimistically predicting the United States would resolve this dilemma by ending racial discrimination and segregation. Despite the failure of whites to live up to, and promote, the ideals of creating an egalitarian society and its resulting damage to national cohesion and morale, not all government and senior military officials were personally troubled by this "moral gap" between democratic ideals, policies, and "official racial practices." Nevertheless, America's international image suffered due to the effects of overt discriminatory practices, which ultimately disturbed many of these same officials. Whether liberal or conservative on domestic and international issues, members of both parties recognized that foreign governments and populations could be disgusted and alienated by formal U.S. bigotry.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Chas H. Thompson, "The Basis of Negro Morale in World War II," *Journal of Negro Education* 11 (October 1942): 454–464; Roscoe E. Lewis, "The Role of Pressure Groups in Maintaining Morale Among Negroes," *Journal of Negro Education* 12 (Summer 1943): 467–473; Charles S. Johnson, "The Present Status of Race Relations in the South," *Social Forces* 23 (October 1944): 27–32; Sitkoff, "Racial Militancy and Interracial Violence in the Second World War," 663–664.

⁴⁵ Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1944), 75–78; David Held, *Models of Democracy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 96–122; Lewis, "The Role of Pressure Groups in Maintaining Morale Among Negroes," 467–473; Johnson, "The Present Status of Race Relations in the South," 27–32; Sitkoff, "Racial Militancy and Interracial Violence in the Second World War," 663–664; Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), 11–15; Burk, *Eisenhower Administration and Black Civil Rights*, 11–12; Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion*, 12–14.

Even through educational reform and recognition of wrongdoing on the part of white society, the experience of living in a Jim Crow America led blacks to be acutely aware of their deprivations and impediments to first-class citizenship. The preoccupation of civil rights' reformers and advocates concerning the moral image of the United States, as reflected in official measures, led to the twin conclusions that civil rights policies needed to be tailored in a manner to significantly shift white racial attitudes and that such reform could only be achieved through the removal of prejudicial sanctions and the projection of formal images of racial equality.⁴⁶ Although 1944 signaled that government and senior Marine Corps officials had to pave the way to commission minorities, black Marines consistently found it difficult to dislodge the "poor soldier" image from the American psyche, which only further served to delegitimize their wartime contributions and efforts, while highlighting the racial divide in America.

Furthermore, segregation and racial prejudice interfered with the optimal training of African Americans with high potential. Notwithstanding, in the face of these handicaps and obstacles black Marines encountered while in uniform, their actions positively changed the impressions of many white Marines at the small unit level (i.e., squad and platoon). As *esprit de corps* gradually increased among white and black enlisted Marines, initial racial opinions evolved, giving way to a accepting a new breed of *Devil Dogs* that was more representative of a unified and diverse nation engaged in a military and ideological struggle for freedom and democracy at home and abroad. However, this ethos for change was frequently contested, especially when it came to breaking through the

⁴⁶ Burk, *Eisenhower Administration and Black Civil Rights*, 10; Kellogg, "Civil Rights Consciousness in the 1940s," 18–41.

officer ranks, which acutely demonstrated the limiting factors of military advancement for African Americans.

After the release of Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma*, three distinct, but interrelated, events of the postwar and Korean War eras shaped and defined the status of black Marines in Cold War America. The first occurred in early 1945, when the staff at Officer Candidates School, Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia received its first African American Marines. As these men entered OCS, they carried the hopes and pride of an embattled community. Sergeant Major Charles F. Anderson, Sergeant Major Charles W. Simmons, and First Sergeant George F. Gills—three senior noncommissioned officers—however, for various reasons failed to graduate and earn commissions. “The letdown was tremendous when all three men failed to make the grade and receive their commissions;” Ralph W. Donnelly writes, “one was given a medical discharge for a congenital heart murmur, the other two failed to maintain the required military and scholastic rating, becoming a part of the 13 percent of the class that was not commissioned.” This disturbing news did not sit well among African American Marines; there were several questions that needed to be addressed and “quite a bit of consternation,” according to the sergeant major at Montford Point, Gilbert “Hashmark” Johnson.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Ralph W. Donnelly, “The Black in the Marine Corps,” Original Draft, Record Group 127: Records of the United States Marine Corps, History and Museums Division, PUBLICATION BACKGROUND FILES, “Brief History of Blacks in USMC, 1942–73,” Draft Text & Source Documents, Box 135 (College Park, MD: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration) [hereafter cited as RG 127: Box 135, NARA]. See also Henry I. Shaw, Jr. and Ralph W. Donnelly, *Blacks in the Marine Corps* (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1975; reprint 2002), 47–48; Judson L.

The dismay expressed by Johnson was also shared among several black Marines. For many, this was not perceived racism. These men were among the best, and highly educated; in addition, before attending OCS, Marines were subjected to a thorough physical and mental screening process. Furthermore, these men went on to successful civilian careers (e.g., lawyer, college professor, author, and physician). Subsequently, three similarly qualified black Marines attended OCS and failed to graduate, earn commissions, and were unceremoniously excused. However, several whites scoffed at the notion when blacks argued that there was a correlation between success in the civilian sector and the making of a good Marine officer. Despite the merits of such an argument, it could not assuage the concerns of many African American Marines, who undoubtedly believed covert racism was the single factor precluding them from entering the officer ranks.⁴⁸

Historian Judson L. Jefferies's interviews with Montford Pointers Gene Doughty and Sam Saxton are poignant testimonies of how black Marines truly felt regarding Marine Corps era policies and practices. Gene Doughty asserted, "a few of those who failed to complete OCS were found to have health issues, [and] the Corps used those minor health issues as a way to keep those men from becoming officers." Sam Saxton, who served in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam was less subtle, "the Marine Corps was

Jeffries, "The Marine Corps' First Black Commissioned Officer: The Life and Legacy of Frederick C. Branch," *North Carolina Historical Review* 87 (October 2010): 379–402.

⁴⁸ RG 127: Box 135, NARA; Jeffries, "The Marine Corps' First Black Commissioned Officer," 388; Shaw and Donnelly, *Blacks in the Marine Corps*, 48.

pretty racist at that time ... they simply didn't want us to become officers, that's all there is to it."⁴⁹

These testimonies underscore the unofficial organizational practices, according to African American Marines, and highlight their disappointment in a prejudiced system. Furthermore, these perceived actions discouraged qualified black Marines, they assumed the Corps would never allow them to become commissioned officers; as a result, many never bothered to apply for OCS, despite their capabilities. For the time, it appeared the Marine Corps had effectively won the psychological battle among African Americans.

However, the impossible occurred. The undaunted, Frederick C. Branch, along with four other African American Marines received orders to OCS to join the 16th Platoon Commanders Class during the summer of 1945. Not surprisingly, OCS officials offered the five men the option to be discharged, revert to regular enlisted status, or remain in "abbreviated training and go on inactive duty" upon being commissioned. Branch, however, elected to complete the officer program of instruction and training. "I read all the requirements to be an officer and nowhere in there did it say anything about race," Branch recalled.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Jeffries, "The Marine Corps' First Black Commissioned Officer," 388.

⁵⁰ In 1946, three African American Marines who had been enrolled in the V-12 program were commissioned as reserve officers on inactive status: Charles C. Johnson (Washington, D.C.), Judd B. Davis (Fuquay Springs, NC), and Herbert L. Brewer (San Antonio, TX). Lieutenant Johnson resigned in order to accept a commission in the U.S. Public Health Service in November 1947; Lieutenant Davis was recalled to active duty during the Korean War, but found physically disqualified, and honorably discharged for physical reason in 1952; Lieutenant Brewer served on active duty during the Korean War and, in 1973, achieved the rank of colonel as a reservist in the Philadelphia area. In 1973, Brewer was the highest-ranking black officer in the Marine Corps Reserves. See RG 127: Box 135, NARA; Matt Schudel, "Frederick C. Branch; Was 1st Black Officer In U.S. Marine Corps," *Washington Post*, April 13, 2005, B06; Jeffries, "The Marine Corps' First Black Commissioned Officer," 388; Shaw and Donnelly, *Blacks in*

Branch went on to graduate as the only African American in his class of 250 candidates. On November 10, 1945, Frederick C. Branch became the first African American commissioned officer in the United States Marine Corps. What made this moment even more distinct is that Second Lieutenant Branch received his (Reserve) commission on the 170th birthday of the Marine Corps; recalling his experience at OCS, Branch stated, “I was treated just like one of the class, like everyone else. We trained together and stayed together.” After receiving his commission, Branch immediately went on inactive duty, during this period, he reentered Temple University, graduating in 1947 with a bachelor’s degree in physics. Despite Branch’s achievement, Marine officials refused to assign the newly minted lieutenant to command white troops, citing the policies of Letter of Instruction No. 421. Black officers would only command black troops; therefore, Branch first commanded an all-black volunteer reserve unit in Philadelphia in 1949. He remained active in the Marine Corps Reserves until recalled to active duty during the Korean War.⁵¹

At the outbreak of the war with North Korea, First Lieutenant Branch received orders to Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, California, where he would serve as a platoon commander, battery executive officer, and the battery commander of the First Anti-Aircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion. Lieutenant Branch commanded black and white Marines during the war, “I was the [commanding officer] of an all-white

the Marine Corps, 48; Gail Buckley, *American Patriots: The Story of Blacks in the Military from the Revolution to Desert Storm* (New York: Random House, 2001), 306–309; “FIRST NEGRO MARINE ‘OFFICER,’” *Chicago Defender*, November 24, 1945; “Regular Marine Corps Accept Negro Officers,” *Chicago Defender*, August 28, 1948.

⁵¹ Jeffries, “The Marine Corps’ First Black Commissioned Officer,” 392, 392n47.

platoon. I went by the book trained and led them; they responded like Marines do their superiors.”⁵² For Branch, there was never any doubt that Marines, regardless of pigmentation, would follow his orders and respond accordingly. Nevertheless, white Americans continued to struggle with adjusting to the professional military advancement of blacks within the Marine Corps. For example, when a young Marine’s father witnessed him salute Lieutenant Branch, he contemptuously remarked, “what are you doing saluting that nigger?” the son replied in a matter of fact way, “That’s my commanding officer.”⁵³

The concerned father’s response was not unexpected, especially considering the era. Nevertheless, the commissioning of blacks in the Marine Corps, albeit segregated when the war emergency ended and remained so for an additional four years, created a new seam in the overall institutional rank structure. Considering their treatment in the Marine Corps, one might be puzzled as to why African Americans would continue to not only serve, but reenlist. Sandwiched between Jim Crow laws and white terror in the immediate aftermath of World War II, evidence suggests that black Marines found life in a Jim Crow military less brutal than life in Jim Crow America; this is a penetrating observation regarding America’s reception of its returning black veterans.

On February 12, 1946, the tragic blinding of U.S. Army Technical Sergeant Isaac Woodward horrified President Harry S. Truman. This particular event punctuated white violence against African Americans, signaling to black communities that no one was safe. Like most black World War II veterans, Sergeant Woodward was not trusted to serve in a combat assignment; therefore, he served as a military longshoreman (i.e., a dock worker).

⁵² Ibid., 394, 394n53.

⁵³ Ibid., 394–395, 395n54.

Nevertheless, the sight of blacks in uniform and the respect and admiration they received from their community was viewed as arrogant and defiant in the eyes of whites. Moreover, black and white service members often expressed camaraderie, laughing and talking in public. When black veterans traveled home in uniform, oftentimes many did not have any other clothes, they had to weather the storm of accusations of disorderly behavior, misconduct, and other multiple fronts; in addition, local law enforcement arbitrarily arrested them. In the case of Woodward, he was traveling on a Greyhound bus from Camp Gordon, Georgia, in uniform, to New York. During a routine stop in South Carolina, Woodward asked the bus driver, A. C. Blackwell, a white man and native of Columbia, SC, if he could wait while he ran to the restroom. “Don’t have time to wait,” Blackwell barked, “Boy, go on back and sit down and keep quiet and don’t be talking out so loud.” Woodard emphatically retorted, “Goddamn it, talk to me like I’m talking to you. I am a man just like you.” After multiple years of fighting against Nazism and Fascism, African American veterans had grown fatigued with Jim Crow practices and being referred to as “boys” and “niggers” rather than being welcomed as heroes.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Isaac Woodward Case and Law School Teaching Materials on Civil Rights Cases, January 1, 1947–December 31, 1947, Papers of the NAACP, Part 18. Special Subjects, 1940–1955, Series A: Legal Department Files (Group II, Series B, Legal File), Folder: 001455-003-0007; “NEGRO MADE BLIND AT BATESBURG, S.C.,” *New York Times*, August 18, 1946; “POLICE CHIEF FREED IN NEGRO BEATING: Federal Court Jury Acquits South Carolina Officer After Blind Veteran Accuses Him,” *New York Times*, November 6, 1946; Rawn James, Jr., *The Double V: How Wars, Protest, and Harry Desegregated America’s Military* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013), 221–223; Sherie Mershon and Steven Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines: Desegregating the U.S. Armed Forces* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 161–162; Michael S. Sherry, *In the Shadow of War: The United States Since the 1930s* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 144; William D. Smyth, “Segregation in Charleston in the 1950s: A Decade of Transition,” *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 92 (April 1991): 99–123; Borstelmann, *Cold War and the Color Line*, 54; Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the Armed Forces*, 134; Nalty, *Strength for the Fight*, 204–205; Phillips, *War! What Is It Good For?*, 88–89, 89n74.

Blackwell immediately assumed Woodward was in a “drunken condition” given the audacious manner in which he spoke to a southern white man. Nevertheless, Blackwell waited for Woodward, and at the next stop, instructed the local police to arrest Woodward on charges of disturbing the peace. When Police Chief Linwood Shull and Officer Elliot Long of Batesburg, SC, addressed the situation with Woodward, before he could finish his response, Chief Shull struck Woodward with his nightstick. Woodward attempted to defend himself and fight back but to no avail, he was beat unconscious; officer long drew his gun while Shull continued to strike Woodward in the face and head, severely rupturing both of Woodward’s corneas, causing permanent damage. Then the officers arrested him. The following morning, Woodward awoke in his jail cell and discovered he was blind in both eyes. Subsequently, an all-white federal jury acquitted Chief Shull of misconduct charges after thirty minutes of deliberation.⁵⁵

Civilian and military police showed a blatant disregard for the safety and lives of African Americans, especially returning veterans. The Woodward incident “aroused revulsion” in multiple regions of the United States, even the South. This sort of vicious behavior made lasting impressions, “MY GOD, I had no idea it was as terrible as that!” exclaimed President Truman. His reaction came after Walter White and other civil rights leaders informed him of the Woodward incident; this response of outrage on the part of Truman forced him to take personal responsibility, “Whatever my inclinations as a native of Missouri might have been, as President I know this is bad. I shall fight to end evils like this.” During Truman’s meeting, he also learned of numerous atrocities committed

⁵⁵ Ibid.

against black veterans at the hands of white men. The fact that black veterans had been beaten, humiliated, and even murdered, since V-J Day, “offended Truman’s sense of decency,” it also “reinforced his long-term concerns about embedding race-based inequalities in the law.”⁵⁶

Shortly following Truman’s meeting with civil rights leaders in September, he established a committee on civil rights, issuing an executive order on December 5, 1946 guaranteeing “the preservation of civil rights by the Constitution ... domestic tranquility, [and] national security.” Truman and the committee emphasized, “... the action of individuals who take the law into their own hands and inflict summary punishment and wreak personal vengeance is subversive of our democratic system of law enforcement and public criminal justice, and gravely threatens our form of government ... it is essential that all possible steps be taken to safeguard our civil rights.”⁵⁷ The president’s executive order, however, provided no assurances against the pervasive energy of white supremacy, and did even less in addressing equality of treatment and opportunity in the armed forces.

During the spring of 1946, the Marine Corps had carefully reflected on how to proceed concerning the postwar status of African American Marines. At the end of the conflict, War Department officials were prepared to admit that their original policy regarding blacks had been wrong. Officials willingly acknowledged mistakes were made during the planning phases on how to fully utilize African American service members in

⁵⁶ Quoted in David McCullough, *Truman* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 588 and Walter White, *A Man Called White* (New York: Viking Press, 1948), 330–331; see also James, *Double V*, 223; Mershon and Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines*, 162. See also Nalty, *Strength for the Fight*, 204–205.

⁵⁷ See Appendix E.

order for them to perform at the highest level. War Department officials also admitted to past errors that thwarted the progress of blacks, and sought to outline broad principles with a vision toward military integration.⁵⁸

For the War Department, this admission demonstrated that progress had been made and this progress meant focusing on the elevation of African Americans. In addition, this progress also gestured an improvement in race relations. Considering the direction of the War Department, the desired aims in race relations had to rest on friendship and cooperation. Percival L. Prattis, asserted, “There can be no friendship and cooperation between two groups which are separated by a caste-like social structure, particularly when that structure is designed to depress and debase one group and to elevate and glorify another.... If two men or two groups are to be friendly, they must accept each other as human beings.” Prattis further asserted, “It is only by doing so that they can come to know each other and respect each other.”⁵⁹ Despite pronouncements from the War Department and other service branches regarding non-discrimination policies due to color or race, Marine officials remained steadfast in their traditions.

The director of the Marine Corps Division of Plans and Policies issued the following memorandum declaring the foundation and preferred position of the Corps

⁵⁸ RG 127: Box 135, NARA; Prattis, “The Role of the Negro Press in Race Relations,” 281.

⁵⁹ Prattis, “The Role of the Negro Press in Race Relations,” 281. Deliberations in Washington concerning race relations remained a deeply contested issue. Whites opposed any alterations in the American racial *status quo*; moreover, white society failed to notice the racial discrimination and prejudice in American society that blacks experienced everyday. A 1946 National Opinion Research Center Poll revealed that 66 percent of whites believed that blacks were treated fairly; only 25 percent said blacks were not treated fairly. The contrast between the black and white analysis of the poll was indicated by the fact that 66 percent of the black population was convinced they received unfair treatment in American society. See Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the Armed Forces*, 138.

regarding military integration and the postwar employment of African American Marines. First, the memorandum identified two issues: first, “Should separate Negro units be maintained in the postwar Marine Corps, or should Negroes be assimilated into white units and all marines, irrespective of race or color, be assigned alike?” Second, “What is the total number of Negro marines that the Marine Corps can absorb and utilize in the postwar organization?”⁶⁰ In addition, the memorandum did reference Army and Navy racial policies—note that Marine officials were under no obligation to mimic the policies of other services, but were responsible for establishing and implementing its own policies—and sanctimoniously declared:

It appears that the Negro question is a national issue which grows more controversial yet is more evaded as time goes by. During the past war the services were forced to bear the responsibilities of the problem, the solutions of which were often intended more to appease the Negro press and other ‘interested’ agencies than to satisfy their own needs. It is true that a solution to the issue was, and is, to entirely eliminate any racial discrimination within the services, and to remove such practices as separate Negro units, ceilings on the number of Negroes in the respective services, etc., but in certainty appears that until the matter is settled on the higher level [Washington], the services are not required to go further than that which is already custom.⁶¹

⁶⁰ RG 127: Box 135, NARA. See also Shaw and Donnelly, *Blacks in the Marine Corps*, 49. Near the end of February 1946, Marine Corps officials remained indignant toward the black press. In the same month, *Chicago Defender* reporter, James L. Hicks asked Brigadier General Franklin A. Harte, Director of the Division of Public Information at Marine Corps Headquarters, to confirm the rumored existence of a CONFIDENTIAL letter outlining the proper handling of African American Marines. General Harte did confirm that the commandant issued Letter of Instruction No. 421 to all commanding officers on May 14, 1943. See James L. Hicks (National Newspaper Publishers Association Staff Writer), “Bare Secret Marine Order on Race,” *Chicago Defender*, February 16, 1946; see also Ronald K. Culp, *The First Black United States Marines: The Men of Montford Point, 1942–1946* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2007), 226–228; Appendix D.

⁶¹ RG 127: Box 135, NARA; see also Shaw and Donnelly, *Blacks in the Marine Corps*, 49, 49n17; Culp, *First Black United States Marines*, 227–228; Hicks, “Marines Halt Race Enlistments,” *Chicago Defender*, November 17, 1945; “Marines Cut Negro Personnel To 1,900,” *Chicago Defender*, August, 1947.

Even with the increasing and looming signs of complete military integration, this formal memorandum illustrates that senior Marine officials would remain steadfast in their traditions; meanwhile, criticizing politicians for appeasing the black press at the expense of institutional structure. Marine Corps records indicate that postwar recruitment and the future utilization of black Marines was a chief concern, but more for quality control in efforts to not exceed ten percent of the total authorized strength of the organization. Moreover, given that Corps officials would go no further than what was customary, the organization would hold fast to, *we're busy, it's your problem, you fix it*.⁶²

Therefore, the black press continued to unapologetically advance arguments centered on the improvement of race relations in the armed forces. The black press was more than intent on elevating the status of African American veterans and their wartime contributions. "Naturally, when the Negro press began to bombard the War Department and Congress impolitely, there were those in both bodies that asserted it was radical, inflammatory and intemperate. They wrote memos and secret reports condemning the Negro press," according to the *Pittsburgh Courier*.⁶³ Despite the black press's influence being largely outside the province of the Marine Corps, senior officials used the actions of the black press as an excuse to justify institutional practices against African American Marines.⁶⁴

Marine officials believed the black press was trying to rush racial integration. Also, many senior Marine Corps officials cried for continued segregation, failing to

⁶² Ibid. See also "Marines Had Race Barrier, Board Told," *Washington Post*, January 9, 1949.

⁶³ Prattis, "The Role of the Negro Press in Race Relations," 280.

⁶⁴ See Appendix C.

realize the suggestion was first intended to require the armed forces to remove restrictions on the number of African Americans and their employment within the organization, even on a basis of segregation. Nevertheless, and in spite of the criticism, the black press aggressively pushed their agenda. Although the Marine Corps highlighted that the perfect utilization and treatment of African Americans failed to be achieved in the short term, one by one, traditional restrictions dissolved and the status of blacks would inevitably rise.

As the Marine Corps, a department of the Navy, continued to redefine its manpower needs and restrict the number of African American Marines to 2,880, partitioned among anti-aircraft, garrisons, service/auxiliary support, and stewards' branches, by late December 1946, this number fell to 2,238. By 1947, black Marines were offered two choices: be discharged or transfer to the stewards' branch, meaning new enlistees could only serve as stewards rather than train in combat occupational specialties. Notwithstanding, several chose the latter, reducing the number of African Americans Marines to 1,532 by the fall of 1948 (with only one regular officer). Although in 1946, the U.S. Navy had modified its racial policy by lifting all restrictions governing the various assignments blacks could obtain; nevertheless, the Navy continued to place blacks in the stewards' branch.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ RG 127: Box 135, NARA. See also Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps* (New York: Free Press, 1980), 468; Frank E. Petersen, Jr., and Joseph A. Phelps, *Into the Tiger's Jaw: America's First Black Marine Aviator, the Autobiography of Lt. Gen. Frank E. Petersen with J. Alfred Phelps* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1998), ix; James L. Hicks, "Marines Halt Race Enlistments: Quota Filled, Volunteers Now Rejected," *Chicago Defender*, November 17, 1945; "Marines Cut Negro Personnel To 1,900," *Chicago Defender*, August, 1947; Shaw and Donnelly, *Blacks in the Marine Corps*,

Throughout this period the racial composition in the military remained unchanged, 60 percent of blacks in the naval services comprised the stewards' branch. Again, confining them to non-combat assignments and reinforcing their *subordinate status*. Furthermore, "the highest-ranking stewards were treated more like valued retainers than full-fledged petty officers. The taint of being servants, not sailors [or marines], still clung to members of this branch regardless of their length of service or demonstrated competence," concluded Bernard C. Nalty. It is important to note, many black Marines worried they lacked the requisite amount of education to compete with their white counterparts, therefore remaining in uniform, in what many expected to be weak economy. Thus, the cluster of the 1,532 who reenlisted were often less educated and less skilled, which did not bode well in terms of advancing a *vigorous* image of the African American Marine, validating the organization's unequal treatment and limited assignments for blacks.⁶⁶

Consequently, one of the leading themes of postwar recruiting advertising concentrated on the fears of a tenuous economy and limited employment opportunities. The military's recruiting campaign targeted the country's white middle-class, playing off their fears of diminishing social prestige, all in order to bolster the military's ranks with members who possessed leadership, managerial, and technical skills. During postwar advertising, recruiters strategically excluded all imagery of black service members. This form of hypocrisy on the part of the United States, claiming to be the defender of global

51; Culp, *First Black United States Marines*, 226, 226n2; Nalty, *Strength for the Fight*, 210; "Navy Now Has 34 Commissioned Negro Officers," *Chicago Defender*, January 27, 1945.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 219. See also Epoch P. Waters, "WHITE MARINES ASK HIGHER RATINGS FOR NEGRO BUDDIES," *Chicago Defender*, June 30, 1945.

democracy against bigotry and racist tyranny, continued to segregate the armed forces along racial lines. This ultimately served as convenient symbol of the divergence between the doctrine and the practice of white society.⁶⁷

For the Truman Administration, African Americans ensured that the “race issue” remained on the public agenda during the postwar years, especially with the gradual introduction of new draft laws and the supervision of a large active military establishment. Considering this single matter, equal opportunity in the armed forces for minorities did not come easily or quickly. Furthermore, by 1948, crucial forces such as the increasing significance of the black vote, emphasis on civil rights, and the continued embarrassment of the U.S.’s race problem during the Cold War, all converged on the Truman Administration. This gradual approach to policies and institutions proved difficult for Truman to handle alone as he sought to recast social and military relations during the 1940s.⁶⁸

However, during a hard fought 1948 presidential campaign in which the black vote was regarded as pivotal, President Truman delivered a stunning blow to segregationist policies, which forever changed the landscape of the armed forces. The *most celebrated event* of this process occurred on July 26, 1948 when Truman issued

⁶⁷ George Q. Flynn, *Lewis B. Hershey, Mr. Selective Service* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 94, 118–126; George Q. Flynn, *The Draft, 1940–1973* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1993), 42–44, 89; Mark R. Grandstaff, “Making the Military American: Advertising, Reform, and the Demise of an Antistanding Military Tradition, 1945–1995,” *Journal of Military History* 60 (April 1996): 299–323; Richard M. Dalfiume, “The Fahy Committee and Desegregation of the Armed Forces,” *The Historian* 31 (November 1968): 1–20.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* See also Ethan Michaeli, *The Defender: How the Legendary Black Newspaper Changed America from the Age of the Pullman Porters to the Age of Obama* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016), 271–294.

Executive Order 9981, a national policy declaring, “there shall be equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion or national origin.” The president’s new policy would be contested by several institutions, such as the armed forces, which it was intended to reshape. In addition, the policy failed to move the needle of social change in supplanting legal discrimination, segregation, and racial disenfranchisement in the Jim Crow South—and to a lesser degree in the North. Moreover, many senior U.S. military officials loyally defended traditional practices of the old ways; fortunately, this type of attitude lost support and gradually became the minority. Even so, political pressures and manpower needs prompted by the Korean War, forced the Marine Corps to reluctantly implement the order completely. Before the war, each service branch would respond differently to Executive Order 9981, which shaped how African Americans would continue to pursue civil rights and cement their place within the U.S. Armed Forces as full-fledged members.⁶⁹

Despite the Marine Corps’s failure to submit to the prescribed directives of Executive Order 9981, even when it was inevitable that the tide of racial integration was nigh, it would not be the most resistant service branch. Because the president’s order also stated, “This policy shall be put into effect as rapidly as possible, having due regard to the time required to effectuate any necessary changes without impairing efficiency or morale.” Marine Corps officials, who are under the control of the Department of the

⁶⁹ See Appendix F; “TRUMAN ORDERS END OF BIAS IN FORCES AND FEDERAL JOBS; ADDRESS CONGRESS TODAY,” *New York Times*, July 27, 1948; Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 468; Sherry, *In the Shadow of War*, 145. The Marine Corps had tested the process of integration on athletic teams and at recruit training depots. See Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces*, 180; Millett, *Semper Fidelis*, 468.

Navy, explained that after a thorough investigation of Army records, its adopted methods of segregation fell under the best practices as outlined by the U.S. Army—which was based on racist assumptions about the fighting abilities of African Americans. Senior Army officials made it clear that it did not interpret the policy to mean an end to segregation, defending its position based on military necessity and a history of proven success. Furthermore, Army officials emphasized that under the principle of separate but equal, African Americans received equal opportunity and treatment.⁷⁰

The Army had good reason to delay integrating its units. During sworn testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee in 1948, General Dwight D. Eisenhower remarked,

In general, the Negro is less well-educated than his brother citizen that is white, and if you make a complete amalgamation what you are going to have is in every company the Negro is going to be relegated to the minor jobs, he is never going to get promoted to such grades as technical sergeant [E-7], master sergeant [E-8], and so on because the competition is too tough. I personally have always stood for organizing the Negro down to include units no larger than platoons.⁷¹

This was a brilliant tactical move on the part of Army officials; General Eisenhower was the poster boy of military leadership with future aspirations of national office. In addition, the Army was the most important service branch because of its sheer size, and because of the number of African Americans serving in its ranks. Nevertheless, the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services,

⁷⁰ See Appendix F; Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces*, 175–200; “ARMY NEARS ENDS OF SEGREGATION,” *New York Times*, July 6, 1954.

⁷¹ Dwight D. Eisenhower remarks during *Senate Hearings on Universal Military Training*, March 17–April 3, 1948. See Mitchell, “The Status of Racial Integration in the Armed Forces,” 204–205.

popularly known as the Fahy Committee, found the general's testimony canned and deficient, leading them to further stress that segregation led to racial discrimination.⁷²

The Fahy Committee had already inquired into the long held assumptions by senior military officials “that (1) Negroes do not have the education and skills to perform efficiently in the more technical military occupations, and (2) Negroes must be utilized, with few exceptions, in segregated units.” After extended studies, investigations, and hearings, the Fahy Committee “believed the assumption that equality of treatment and opportunity would impair efficiency, was of doubtful validity.” In fact, the committee discovered “that inequality had contributed to [military] inefficiency,” the committee was “convinced that a policy of equality of treatment and opportunity [would only] strengthen the nation.” With the exception of the Air Force, which became a separate service branch in 1947, and had overcome internal resistance to integrating its units, other service commanders still held to old ideas rooted in World War I myths that African Americans were inherent cowards in combat. This particular version of military white supremacy doctrine expressed the opinions of biased field commanders who argued that integration led to unit inefficiency. Their primary contention was that a dispersal of inherent cowards damaged combat organizations, whereas segregation naturally placed African Americans in labor and service roles. The leading objection given by senior Army and Marine

⁷² Charles H. Fahy, chairman of the committee (a seven-man group) met for very first time with President Truman, on January 12, 1949. Truman asserted, “I want it done in such a way that it is not a publicity stunt. I want concrete results—that’s what I’m after—not publicity on it.” See Monroe Billington, “Freedom to Serve: The President’s Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Forces, 1949–1950,” *Journal of Negro History* 51 (October 1966): 262, 262n3–274; Dalfiume, “The Fahy Committee and Desegregation of the Armed Forces,” 2; see also Lee Nichols, *Breakthrough on the Color Front* (New York: Random House, 1954), 33, 58–59.

officials was a racist belief that blacks were natural cowards; therefore, integration would severely damage good order and discipline.⁷³

Through gradual measures of desegregation and the onset of the Korean War, like the Marine Corps, the Army would eventually surrender its segregationist position and yield to the demands of the Fahy Committee. Integrating the military elicited mixed reactions among the U.S. population, even years after the establishment of Executive Order 9981. Notwithstanding, the Air Force's model of integration proved to be the most instant and least disruptive. Black media outlets such as *Ebony Magazine* lauded the air branch's integration efforts as "the swiftest and most amazing upset of racial policy in the history of the U.S. military."⁷⁴ In the time leading up to the Korean War, the Air Force had established a relatively successful model for an "expansion" service branch, providing an additional framework for the Marine Corps to emulate and implement; yet again, Corps officials failed to take notice. This is most concerning especially for the Marines. During the immediate postwar era, each service department head had to justify why his branch should be retained as a separate department and not be absorbed into another (i.e., defense unification, 1947). With survival on the line Marine officials balked

⁷³ President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services, *Freedom to Serve* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1950), 11, 67. See also James C. Evans and David A. Lane, Jr., "Integration in the Armed Services," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 304 (March 1956): 78–85; Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces*, 175–200; Edwin Wentworth Kenworthy, "The Case Against Army Segregation," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 275 (May 1951): 27–33; Dalfiume, "The Fahy Committee and Desegregation of the Armed Forces," 12.

⁷⁴ "The Air Force Goes Interracial," *Ebony Magazine* 4 (September 1949), 15–18. See also Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces*, 195.

at military integration measures; thus, providing an unvarnished view into the psyche of senior Marine officials and their attitudes towards African Americans.

The Air Force showed the armed forces that the success or failure of military integration rested in the hands of *command leadership* and the *willingness* of the men to accept racial policies. As early as November 1948, Air Force officials had introduced sweeping organizational policies to officially eliminate nearly all segregation. While unannounced to the public, these plans called for the abandonment of racial quotas for enlistment and selection for branch schools, the lifting of all restrictions to occupational assignments, and instituting an unbiased merit-based system.⁷⁵

For example, during his visits to Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas and Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama, *New York Times* correspondent and Executive Secretary of the Fahy Committee, Edwin Wentworth Kenworthy observed that the officers with previous apprehensions regarding integration discovered their “fears to have been completely groundless.” These officers were “amazed at the ease with which the new policy had been effected and the absence of trouble.” Even officers who were repelled by racial integration admitted that the new policy worked smoothly. Most officers expressed that the new policy provided for increased military efficiency and a complete halt to chronic accusations of racial discrimination. Furthermore, officers discovered that placing blacks and whites on a level and equal competitive field improved race relations.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Alan L. Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates, 1945–1964* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998), 63–94; Billington, “Freedom to Serve,” 263–264.

⁷⁶ Gropman, *Air Force Integrates*, 63–94, 94n143, 95–105.

Despite the associated challenges, Executive Order 9981 owes the functionality of its creation to the Korean War (1950–1953). The war served as the coup de grâce for segregation in the armed forces. The war in Korea affected both the pace of integration and the images of minorities in popular culture. Marine recruits flooded induction centers and military installations to mobilize for war, yielding a fluctuation of racially mixed recruits. During the early stages of the war, 1950 to 1951, the Marine Corps had 8,315 black enlisted personnel and three black commissioned officers. Entering the final year of the war in 1953, its numbers increased to an enlisted strength of 14,479 with ten commissioned officers—without the traditional quota system, the percentages jumped more than 5 percent. At the beginning of the Korean War, African Americans constituted 1.6 percent of total Marine Corps strength, by July 1953 they accounted for 6 percent.⁷⁷

Even though the Marine Corps attempted to segregate African Americans, the absence of a quota system made it virtually impossible. In addition, with such a large number of black volunteers and replacements, all-black units were overloaded with bodies. Simultaneously, white units found themselves on the fringes, begging for black troop replacements. Instances such as these resulted in *ad hoc* integration. African American Marines found themselves being transferred from non-combat units to augment

⁷⁷ Morris J. MacGregor, Jr., *Integration of the Armed Forces, 1940–1965* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, Center of Military History, United States Army, 1981), 463; Charles C. Moskos, Jr., “Racial Integration in the Armed Forces,” *American Journal of Sociology* 72 (September 1966): 132–148; Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces*, 201–219; Mershon and Schlossman, *Foxholes & Color Lines*, 249; Paolo E. Coletta, “The Defense Unification Battle, 1947–50: The Navy,” *Prologue Magazine* 7 (Spring 1975): 6–17; Herman S. Wolk, “The Defense Unification Battle, 1947–50: The Air Force,” *Prologue Magazine* 7 (Spring 1975): 18–26; Richard F. Haynes, “The Defense Unification Battle, 1947–50: The Army,” *Prologue Magazine* 7 (Spring 1975): 27–31; “‘Well in Hand’: Mr. Truman Regrets,” *New York Times*, September 10, 1955; “THE NEGRO IN UNIFORM,” *New York Times*, April 27, 1955.

infantry division units in Korea. Unit commanders often broke up all-black units and assigned African Americans to white combat units that desperately needed additional personnel. Thus for the Marine Corps, the integration process in Korea occurred in the same manner as it did for the Army: an informal method stemming from the decision of overburdened officers who had to meet the exigencies of war.⁷⁸

Those who did serve in racially mixed units became convinced that integration greatly assisted African Americans, “I think if you put them all together they think people look down on them, where if you mix them in they get the feeling that they’re wanted, they’re just the same as anyone else,” declared one white officer. Black troops emphatically favored desegregation, stressing that many social scientists and military officials had come to readily accept the view that racial segregation produced destructive social dynamics by overstating the disadvantages that accompanied African Americans into the military from civilian life and further advancing a perceived sense of “isolation, injustice, and exaggerated group identity.”⁷⁹ Furthermore, African Americans highlighted the advantages of serving in desegregated units. For many, these units experienced minimal friction because blacks and whites had the opportunity to exchange ideas and

⁷⁸ The implementation of integration in the Marine Corps followed a parallel course to that of the Army. See Mershon and Schlossman, *Foxholes & Color Lines*, 248–251; MacGregor, *Integration of the Armed Forces*, 463–464; Rupert Emerson and Martin Kilson, “The American Dilemma in a Changing World: The Rise of Africa and the Negro American,” *Daedalus* 94 (Fall 1965): 1074; Alfred H. Hausrath, “Utilization of Negro Manpower in the Army,” *Journal of the Operations Research Society of America* 2 (February 1954): 17–30; “Mixed Texas Marines Camp in California,” *Chicago Defender*, July 25, 1953. See also “Role of the Marine Corps in Global War,” Naval War College, May 29, 1952, Papers of Clifton B. Cates, Box 1, Folder 36, Marine Corps University, Archives and Special Collections Branch, Library of the Marine Corps, Gray Research Center, Quantico, VA [hereafter cited as Clifton B. Cates Papers].

⁷⁹ Mershon and Schlossman, *Foxholes & Color Lines*, 236, 237, 237n54, 237n55; see also “Marines Tear Down ‘For Colored Only’ Sign, Jailed,” *Chicago Defender*, January 26, 1946.

skills (i.e., speech improvement). Taking into account that America's race relations had been born out of conflict, some blacks felt uncomfortable in racially mixed units and affirmed their continued mistrust of whites. Nevertheless, and despite their reservations, most African Americans firmly supported military integration.⁸⁰

In accordance with E. W. Kenworthy's previous observations at southern military bases, evidence indicates that African American Marines performed well in racially mixed units, and at times, with marked distinction. Observers also noted that the combat fighting abilities among black and white Marines showed little variation, thus convincing (on scene) commanders that racial integration *did not* reduce unit cohesion, performance, or combat effectiveness. Official testimonies such as these influenced the Marine Corps Division of Plans and Policies, which conducted a favorable report on integration during the fall of 1951. During this same period, the senior Marine officials issued a policy statement prescribing that African Americans receive orders to any unit requiring their skills, and ordered the elimination of black/white unit designations. These Marine Corps-wide policy changes dissolved the legal foundations of racial segregation.⁸¹

By 1954, just a year after the war, the color line had been largely erased throughout the Marine Corps. Nevertheless, the country continued to deal with issues that would accelerate its reckoning with its ugly past. Despite their courageous performance in Korea, African American Marines could not avoid the negative stereotypes associated

⁸⁰ Ibid., 237. See also "Mixed Texas Marines Camp in California," *Chicago Defender*, July 25, 1953.

⁸¹ Morris J. MacGregor and Bernard C. Nalty, eds., *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces: Basic Documents XII, Integration* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1977), 115. Moskos, "Racial Integration in the Armed Forces," 132–148; Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces*, 201–219; Mershon and Schlossman, *Foxholes & Color Lines*, 235–249; MacGregor, *Integration of the Armed Forces*, 464–465.

with their military contributions; as another matter, these men suffered from post traumatic stress due to constant racial prejudice and feelings of inadequacy. Despite the branch of service, African Americans were lumped together when it came to negative publicity, which further tarnished and undermined the wartime record of black Marines.⁸²

The image of the African American Marine would slightly improve throughout the 1950s, and by the 1960s reach a more acceptable level of *separate but equal*. However, the work of integration during the late 1940s through the 1950s encountered an unexpected shift as blacks experienced an “awakening,” one spearheaded by radical visions and actions that came to shape and mold a new generation of Marines.⁸³

Notwithstanding, this awakening found a familiar foe, white supremacy; ultimately, this

⁸² Previous charges of the unreliability of large all-black combat units were revived in Korea, leading many officers to recommend integration as the only feasible solution. The 24th Infantry Regiment was charged by one battalion commander of fleeing “like rabbits” before the enemy. As with the two previous world wars, the truth of the charges against black combat units was difficult to determine. Several all-white units fled “like rabbits” during the first months of the Korean War, but race did not figure into the explanation as it did for all-black units. Moreover, all-black units (just like the 24th) suffered from the same handicaps as in the past—a concentration of poorly educated troops, low morale, substandard equipment, and a tendency for (white) commanders to blame their unit’s failures on race. The available evidence suggests the 24th Infantry Regiment’s performance was a mixture of success and failure. Regardless of the circumstances, General William B. Kean, Commander of the 25th Division, of which the 24th Infantry was a part of, recommended in September 1950 that the unit be abolished and its black soldiers be integrated throughout other units in Korea. At the same time, General Kean made it clear that he was criticizing all-black units, and not the black soldiers who performed well while serving in integrated units. See Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces*, 9–12, 18, 204, 204n8, 205, 205n9, 205n10, 205n11, 206, 211–212; Moskos, “Racial Integration in the Armed Forces,” 135–136; Kevin Adams, *Class and Race in the Army: Military life in the West, 1870–1890* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 2009), 171–177. For an official account of the 24th’s participation during the Korean War in the context of the severity of combat conditions, the unpreparedness of many U.S. fighting units, and the impact of racial discrimination, see the Army’s first detailed official history of the 24th Infantry Regiment by William T. Bowers, William M. Hammond, and George L. MacGarrigle, *Black Soldier, White Army: The 24th Infantry Regiment in Korea* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1996).

⁸³ Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie*, 71–75, 213–219. For more on the slight improvement of the wartime image of the African American serviceman during Korea, see Gerald Early and Alan Lightman, “Race, Art, and Integration: The Image of the African American Soldier in Popular Culture during the Korean War,” *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 57 (Autumn 2003): 32–38.

clash along ideological and social lines would increase racial tensions and often erupt in violent clashes, which severely tested black solidarity. Fed up with the old guard, long-held racial biases, and living in a social environment not of their choosing, impatient African American Marines ceased to tolerate inadequate and obstinate leaders who perpetuated theories of black inferiority or engaged in discriminatory behavior. Despite legislative change, several forms of systemic racism endured, which included vestiges of occupational segregation. Less than enthusiastic about racial liberalism, senior Marine officials would only respond pragmatically to building race relations. According to Marine leaders, institutional reform was an outgrowth of political demands to simply reduce overt manifestations of racist behavior. During the decade following the Korean War, senior Marine officials failed to grasp one concept: a return to the glory days had died; there would be no resurrection of the pre-World War II practices and traditions. Notwithstanding, African American Marines challenged established social norms and sought to exterminate significant ambiguities concerning military racial policies and practices, which only fostered mutual suspicion among blacks and whites.

As a consequence of the halting pace of integration after Korea, black Marines struggled valiantly to reduce the Corps's multiple failures at implementing lasting institutional reform. In addition, African American Marines quickly discovered that eliminating covert forms of institutional racism only produced greater tools of opposition that contested their legitimacy. Ultimately, the Vietnam era Marine Corps would call into question the validity of military integration, and simultaneously broadcast the challenges of institutional reform and inter-racial progress.

Chapter 6

Growing Pains: Black Solidarity and the Arsenal of White Supremacy

...I'm not going to help nobody get something our Negroes don't have. If I'm going to die, I'll die now right here fighting you. You're my enemy. My enemy is the white people, not the Viet Cong or Chinese or Japanese. You're my opposer when I want freedom. You're my opposer when I want justice. You're my opposer when I want equality. You won't even stand up for me in America for my religious beliefs, and you want me to go somewhere and fight, but you won't even stand up for me here at home.

—**Muhammad Ali**,
Interview, Vietnam War Draft, 1967
“The Trials of Muhammad Ali”

The same tensions that strained race relations in American society continued to be the single greatest strain in the Marine Corps during the 1960s. On the evening of Sunday, July 20, 1969, the Camp Lejeune enlisted men's club became the battleground for several ethnically diverse groups of Marines. Like so many other racial flare ups that led to protest and, oftentimes, violence, this incident would quickly separate itself from the status quo of racial strife, sending shockwaves throughout the Marine community. This particular skirmish between a group of blacks, Puerto Ricans, and whites drew such a sharp amount of focus and attention that it headlined the *New York Times*—not a position Marine Corps officials coveted given the volatile nature and hostile reputation of U.S. race relations during the period. Nevertheless, the official Marine Corps statement read:

So far as it is known, this is the first major racial incident at Camp Lejeune, one of the Marines Corps's biggest installations ... It appears that a white sailor was dancing with a Negro girl when a Negro marine attempted to cut in and was refused. There was a scuffle on the dance floor but it was stopped and the mixed couple left the club. The incident did have some racial overtone, but no evidence has been uncovered to indicate that it was a preorganized demonstration. There have been some minor racial incidents here as

in any large city, but [again] this is the first major outbreak of violence. We have militants, both black and white.¹

As a result, a white Marine Corporal, Edward Bankston, 20 years old, of Picayune, Mississippi was fatally injured after receiving a skull fracture. According to the report, Bankston had been severely beaten by “a band of 30 Negro and Puerto Rican marines.” The *New York Times* also reported, “some marines were carrying chains, clubs and knives,” which were, according to one Marine Corps spokesman, “for offensive purposes and not defensive.”² Although this was the *first* (reported) *major racial incident* at Camp Lejeune, it paled in comparison to previous clashes between servicemen, especially overseas; there were far worse race conflicts than the one at Camp Lejeune, and yet, were never reported in the U.S. press. Notwithstanding, the incident at Camp Lejeune received ten times the attention in the national press, and in Congress, than a brawl which occurred the previous year outside a bar in Germany frequented by U.S. soldiers—a brawl that resulted in the deaths of three black soldiers.³

According to Major General Michael P. Ryan, the commanding general of the Second Marine Division, this racial scuffle was simply “an isolated situation.” However, the death of Corporal Bankston made this first major racial incident erupt in the South. This time, rather than three black soldiers gasping their final breathes “from knife wounds,” a young white Mississippi native “lay with his head split open.” But Corporal Bankston happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, and unfortunately killed

¹ Martin Waldron, “Corporal, 20, Dies of Injuries Week After Marine Base Fight,” *New York Times*, July 28, 1969; “5 Marines Charged in Lejeune Killing,” *New York Times*, August 8, 1969.

² Ibid.

³ Steven Morris, “How Blacks Upset the Marine Corps: ‘New Breed’ leathernecks are tackling racist vestiges,” *Ebony Magazine* 25 (December 1969): 55.

on what the Marines called “a s – – t trick.” Nevertheless, Bankston’s death was not in vain, it initiated organizational reform measures pertaining to Marines of all hues and ethnicities. These institutional reform measures would begin to shape and guide the direction of the Corps’s turbulent racial past and unstable future.⁴

With the Korean War era in the distant rear view of the United States Armed Forces, the adjustment to a fully integrated military was far from seamless and even less harmonious. Similar to 1960s America, the Marine Corps’s chief issue of the day centered on race relations and the fundamental conflict it presented to all Americans. The legacy of slavery, and more than a century of discrimination and injustice that followed, created a complex and deeply rooted problem within the psyche of its citizens. However, the most acute factor concerning race relations in the Marine Corps had less to do with the promise and core aims of the Civil Rights Movement, but rather *representation*. Most importantly, the slow pace of change related to promotions, selections for positions of authority, and assignments. While the landmark Supreme Court decisions such as *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), the Civil Rights Acts (1964), and the Voting Rights Act (1965) provided legislative equality for African Americans, they still faced *de facto* discrimination.

Despite landmark legislation, *de facto* discrimination signaled to blacks that they had achieved only a hollow victory; equality in the eyes of the law failed to translate into equality of opportunity for African Americans. Even at this moment of legislative

⁴ “3 Marines Hurt in Lejeune Fight,” *New York Times*, July 24, 1969; Martin Waldron, “General Finds ‘Indications’ Black Panthers Took Part in Camp Lejeune Clash,” *New York Times*, July 29, 1969; Morris, “How Blacks Upset the Marine Corps,” 57.

triumph, the U.S. Supreme Court's actions meant little if the government refused to enforce preexisting laws; therefore, the road to peaceful integration and racial harmony would highlight this pronounced opposition within American society. The decades of regulated economic and educational opportunities could not simply be undone with the passage of legislation, neither could the vestiges of racial discrimination and prejudice be abolished overnight. Moreover, African Americans grew increasingly frustrated by the notion, "with all deliberate speed." This sort of vagueness on the part of the Supreme Court during the 1950s allowed segregationists the opportunity to organize resistance and drastically lengthen the pace of societal change. Segregationists played on the fears and prejudices of their communities by launching militant campaigns of defiance and resistance, given that many considered these landmark legislative decisions to be an assault on their way of life. The racial polarization and tension that resulted was the number one domestic problem in America; in turn, the call for full citizenship among African Americans became more dynamic and vocal as the initial pledges of the Civil Rights Movement lost steam. Fed up with the constant backlash and social turbulence associated with pursuing civil rights, many African Americans took to the streets. In striking contrast to the previous decade, race riots became a regular occurrence in major U.S. cities during the late 1960s.⁵

⁵ Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting 'Til The Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006), 95–131. See also Gail Buckley, *American Patriots: The Story of Blacks in the Military from the Revolution to Desert Storm* (New York: Random House, 2001), 376–378; Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 172–221.

This racial polarization and tension within the United States reflected the social ills that had been festering for decades and suddenly forced its way onto the national agenda. “After many years of striving to achieve integration, the 1960’s brought a strong contradiction from within the ranks of the Blacks of the United States,” asserts Ralph W. Donnelly; this separation from society solely based on color brought into sharp focus the complexities of intra-racial relations.⁶ For many African Americans, this desire for separation, which Donnelly highlights, is a result of the influence of black power rhetoric. African American Marine recruits were more aware of their rights as U.S. citizens, and now had flexible strategies to meet the challenges of race relations. Turning the other cheek would no longer satisfy black youth who grabbed hold of the potent messages of Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture); this era of black social and cultural reform would find expressions and export slogans such as “Black is beautiful” and “Black Power.” This particular generation of African American youth pushed for *recognition*, campaigning that their heritage be taught in schools and institutions of higher education. Furthermore, the 1960s black youth movement would cultivate unity, self-determination, embrace aspects of African life (i.e., dress, music, and hairstyles), and advocate for Black Nationalism.

Nevertheless, the push for cultural and social recognition, on the part of young blacks, would interfere with what many popularly considered a panacea for race relations in America. “Integration, to the extent it meant equal opportunity and treatment was

⁶ Ralph W. Donnelly, “The Black in the Marine Corps,” Original Draft, Record Group 127: Records of the United States Marine Corps, History and Museums Division, PUBLICATION BACKGROUND FILES, “Brief History of Blacks in USMC, 1942–73,” Draft Text & Source Documents, Box 135 (College Park, MD: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration) [hereafter cited as RG 127: Box 135, NARA].

accepted, but integration in a social context was viewed in a different light by many young blacks,” adds Henry I. Shaw, Jr. and Donnelly, “Their own life styles and values had more significance to them than those of others. These men were not ready to fit themselves into a behavior mold not of their own choosing.”⁷ Within the Corps, not all black Marines found the tenets of Black Nationalism to be most suitable during a time of personal and professional opportunities; this militant approach of cultural separation, at times, ran counter to that which governed life in the service and led to discord even among African American Marines. For instance, George Taylor recalled how challenges arose even within the black rank and file, highlighting the dynamics between troublemaking “gangsters” from northern urban cities and “submissive; yes, Massa” southern folk.⁸ Even so, they had each other’s backs during multiple crises in a racially charged southern environment, where a single misstep could cost one his life.

For Marine officials, moving to head off any potential race relation crises remained at the top of their agenda. Despite previous attempts to minimize the number of African Americans from entering the Corps and unofficially remain an exclusively white military service branch, by 1960 the service’s official position was that it was a color-

⁷ Henry I. Shaw, Jr. and Ralph W. Donnelly, *Blacks in the Marine Corps* (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1975; reprint 2002), 69.

⁸ See Series 4: Military, Sub-Series 4.2: Montford Point, Item 48: Interview with George Taylor, June 29, 2005, Melton McLaurin Papers, MS323, William M. Randall Library Special Collections, University of North Carolina Wilmington, Oral History Collection, 1990–Present, UNCW Archives and Special Collections Online Database. See also, *Marines of Montford Point Documentary, 2006–2007* in the Office of Marketing and Communications records: Montford Point Marines, ARCH2011.09, UNCW Archives, W. M. Randall Library, University of North Carolina, Wilmington, Folder 1 (hereafter cited as Series 4: Military, Sub-Series 4.2: Montford Point, Melton McLaurin Papers, MS323, Folder 1) [hereafter cited as Taylor interview]. See also “Civilians Made Into Marines at Lejeune,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, November 27, 1943. See also Gerald Astor, *The Right to Fight: A History of African Americans in the Military* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2001), 230.

blind organization. The Marine Corps was only *green*. There were no longer black or white Marines. Even with this proclamation, the Marine Corps remained a racist institution throughout the Vietnam era, which was systematically biased towards whites or *light green* Marines—black Marines were referred to as *dark green*. Although integrated, social and cultural traditions regarding race handicapped the Marine Corps by creating built-in disadvantages that led to continued practices of discrimination and prejudice against African Americans.⁹

The purpose of this chapter is not to condemn the discriminatory practices of white Marines, and praise the suffering and patience of blacks during the Vietnam era. Rather, this chapter will concentrate on the negotiation processes both races struggled to balance during an unpopular war, the seismic shifts in cultural and social expressions, and the effects of landmark legislation. In an attempt to provide greater context to these events, this chapter will analyze the various forms of racism that affected black Marines during the Vietnam era.

During the Vietnam era, African Americans were exposed to various “intellectual philosophies and political ideologies,” ranging from endorsing the Democratic National Party to Maulana Ndabezitha Karenga and Hakim Jamal’s cultural nationalist and social change organization *US*, which propagated that blacks completely separate from white America. Many Marine Corps officials believed that most African Americans trended toward the latter. This increased awareness in culture and pride, for many blacks, had not been felt since the 1920s when Alain Locke declared, “Negro life is seizing its first

⁹ James E. Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts: African Americans and the Vietnam War* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 74–75.

chances for group expression and self determination.”¹⁰ On the other hand, a 1966 *Newsweek* Gallup poll revealed strong support for the Selective Service System among blacks. During the time, three out of four African Americans considered the system equitable for minorities. Black recruits also believed military service offered the most genuine opportunity for social and professional advancement, “I was in a profession,” former Vietnam veteran and retired Army General Colin L. Powell stated, “that would allow me to go as far as my talents would take me. And for a black, no other avenue in American society offered so much opportunity.”¹¹ To include his time in the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) at City University of New York, City College, Colin Powell’s military service *was* his life; he spoke about this period with nostalgia, despite being haunted by the nightmare of the Vietnam War. Powell’s experience of attending college and receiving a commission in the armed forces proved to be a limited option for many African Americans. Most blacks did not qualify for the college and occupational deferments that many whites obtained; in addition, the government’s low draft calls during the early part of the decade promoted few, if any, objections on the part of African Americans.¹²

Regardless of the limited objections of black draftees, “A certain ambivalence [had] always [existed] among African-Americans about military service,” according to

¹⁰ Isaac Hampton II, *The Black Officer Corps: A History of Black Military Advancement from Integration through Vietnam* (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), 25–26; Alain Locke, *The New Negro* (New York: Albert & Charles Boni, Inc., 1925), 3–16.

¹¹ James E. Westheider, *The African American Experience in Vietnam: Brothers in Arms* (New York: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2008), 9; Hampton, *Black Officer Corps*, 38; Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts*, 19. See also Colin Powell with Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey: An Autobiography* (New York: Random House, 1995), 61.

¹² Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts*, 22.

Powell, “Why should we fight for a country that, for so long, did not fight for us, that in fact denied us our fundamental rights? How could we serve a country where we could not even be served in a restaurant and enjoy the ordinary amenities available to white Americans?” Regardless, this would not deter young blacks from entering the armed forces, “whether valued or scorned, welcomed or tolerated,” the country was in a recession and the only relief from relative poverty was military service. For many, like Powell, soldiering would ultimately be the only profession for African Americans to demonstrate their rights as citizens, display courage and sacrifice through candid military proficiency, and highlight a warrior ethos traditionally associated with whites.¹³

However, under these circumstances, an increasing number of militant young African American men entered the armed forces. In order to fill the manpower shortages that many white men left due to deferments, the Department of Defense attempted to push blacks to join the National Guard and Reserves. The issue that arose with this particular recruiting effort is that many of these young men grew up in urban areas and cities, and were exposed to governmental forces that enabled discrimination and prejudice, which deepened racial disharmony. For example, during urban riots, such as the Watts riots in 1965 and the Detroit riot of 1967, National Guard units arrived in these cities to suppress rioting and restore order. According to military and Department of Defense officials, blacks were underrepresented in the National Guard and Reserves; nevertheless, African Americans eschewed the notion of potentially invading the ghetto to subdue their own people. Furthermore, the National Guard and Reserves did not appeal

¹³ Powell, *My American Journey*, 61.

to African Americans, in part, because it did not afford the same benefits of a regular enlistment. Serving on active duty provided a decent living and greater social status; in contrast, the evening and weekend obligations associated with serving in the National Guard and Reserves interfered with maintaining a job for many blacks.¹⁴

Nevertheless, as the war in Southeast Asia escalated, increasingly young Americans sought refuge from overseas deployments in the National Guard and Reserves. “In the past, Southern states in particular denied Negroes the opportunity to serve in the National Guard, or provided segregated units.” In addition, “The National Guard [and Reserves] quickly became viewed by the white middle class as a relatively honorable and safe alternative to active military service.” For example, from 1969 to 1975, former Vice President James Danforth “Dan” Quayle chose to serve in the Indiana Army National Guard, which was “typical of his class and generation.”¹⁵ As late as 1964, the National Guard remained the only branch of the armed forces that had not been *fully* integrated; therefore, African Americans did not share in the relative safety of reserve duty. Moreover, to reserve this safe alternative to active military service for the white middle class, states resorted to token integration to placate blacks and nominally meet

¹⁴ Since the decline of black militia units early in the century, African Americans had shown very little interest in either the National Guard or Reserves. Other observers added that many Air National Guard units had been over strength for years, and that the organizations tended to reflect the racial composition of the area of recruitment. See Bernard C. Nalty, *Strength for the Fight: A History of Black Americans in the Military* (New York: Free Press, 1986), 297; Charles Johnson, Jr., *African American Soldiers in the National Guard: Recruitment and Deployment during Peacetime and War* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992); Monroe Billington, “Freedom to Serve: The President’s Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Forces, 1949–1950,” *Journal of Negro History* 51 (October 1966): 262–274; Richard Stillman II, “Negroes in the Armed Forces,” *Phylon* 30 (2nd Qtr., 1969): 139–159.

¹⁵ Dan Quayle served as a Sergeant in a headquarters unit in the Army National Guard. See Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts*, 8–11, 28–32.

federal standards. However, tokenism would not be enough. More than “90 [percent] of the National Guard’s financial support [came] from the Federal Government, and since the Defense Department’s policy was one of integration, federal support [would] be withdrawn from the Guard of any state that refused to comply.” By 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson had informed Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara that discrimination against African Americans in the National Guard and Reserves must end. During this period, through 1967, blacks constituted a mere 1.15 percent of the Army National Guard, which proved to be substantial against the 0.6 percent representation in the Air National Guard. The threat of losing federal funding by not adhering to the government’s mandate of integration induced National Guard and Reserve units to remove formal restrictions based on race.¹⁶

Considering these varying approaches and methods toward racial equality and representation, the Vietnam era Marine Corps witnessed an assortment of racial discrimination and prejudiced actions. Although not singular to the Marine Corps, author James E. Westheider, who has written extensively on the black military experience during the Vietnam era concludes,

The armed forces had, in fact, helped create their own problems. Despite their proud boasts about being on the cutting edge of racial integration and opportunity, the armed forces had originally been reluctant participants ... Many white career military personnel

¹⁶ See The President’s Committee on Equal Opportunity in the Armed Forces, *Final Report: Military Personnel Stationed Overseas and Membership and Participation in the National Guard* (November 1964), White House Central Files, Box 378: Federal Government Organization (FG 642), 1964 (Austin, TX: Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library and Museum). 12–22. See also Richard M. Dalfume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces: Fighting on Two Fronts, 1939–1953* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1969), 1–5, 132–147; Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts*, 29; Nalty, *Strength for the Fight*, 307. “Draftees,” “Enlistees,” and “Inductees” will be used interchangeably throughout this chapter.

would continue to harbor racist preconceptions and resent the services being used as a social laboratory, and the result would be dogged perseverance of prejudicial policies and practices.¹⁷

For the majority of white service members, using the armed forces as a social petri dish, especially for the Marine Corps, was an affront to the sacredness and purity of a military service organization built on the tradition of bravery. Several Marine commanders believed the African Americans had no right to stain such an illustrious institutional image by achieving equity among the officer ranks. Westheider further concludes,

Racism was endemic to the system and had a major impact on every aspect of the minority serviceperson's military career. From induction to discharge, the color of one's skin did matter, in training, assignments, promotion, and the administration of military justice; African Americans were always at a disadvantage, compared to their white counterparts.¹⁸

Furthermore, Westheider identified three distinct, but interrelated, forms of racism that significantly influenced black service members: the first, *institutional*, or *systemic* racism, which occurred when the vestiges of racism within an institution resulted in systemic disadvantages for minority service members. Oftentimes this would be unintentional and very subtle, typically a residual effect from earlier periods of racial adjustment (i.e., 1925 Army War College report).¹⁹

New inductees performed a battery of tests at the outset of their military career, the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) serves as one of the best examples of institutional racism given that it was biased in favor of white inductees. The scores on the entrance exams were critical for determining an enlistee's career path. An outstanding

¹⁷ Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts*, 3–4.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., 4.

score on the AFQT exponentially expanded the inductee's choice of occupational specialty, including the more "prestigious and rewarding 'hard-core' specialties, such as military intelligence and the more advanced technical fields." The test divided inductees into four educational and training categories. Once determined, an inductee's score would be used to place them in the appropriate occupational specialty; those in category/mental group I qualified for all positions while those in categories/mental groups III and IV most often qualified for non-technical specialties, or "soft-core" specialties such as supply, transportation, and combat infantry.²⁰

"Once categorized, it was virtually impossible to escape one's classification, meaning blacks could not receive training in, or advance to, the more lucrative technical fields, which were, in turn, usually dominated by whites." Historically, African Americans tended to underperform in comparison to whites on standardized tests due to inequalities in the nation's educational system and cultural biases within the test(s). For instance, in 1966, more than 92 percent of nonwhite enlistees received below average scores placing them in categories/mental groups III and IV; 7.2 percent scored in category/mental II, and 0.6 percent scored in category/mental group I. By comparison, 55.7 percent of whites placed in categories/mental groups III and IV, 36.9 percent scored in category/mental group II, and 7.4 percent scored in category/mental group I.²¹

²⁰ RG 127: Box 134, NARA; Westheider, *African American Experience in Vietnam*, 43. The AFQT is the armed forces equivalent of an intelligence quotient (I.Q.) test.

²¹ AFQT statistics throughout the Vietnam era follow a similar pattern. See Donnelly, "Chapter 9: Black Militancy and the War in Vietnam," RG 127: Box 135, NARA; see also Martin Binkin, Mark J. Eitelberg, Alvin J. Schexnider, and Marvin M. Smith, *Blacks and the Military: Studies in Defense Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1982), 48; Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts*, 4–5.

Institutional racism manifested itself in several ways in the 1960s Marine Corps. Collectively, the influence and significance of Black Nationalist ideas sprang from blacks' anger and frustrations with Jim Crow laws, the memory of slavery, and the invisible chains of *systemic* racism that imbued America's economic, educational, legal, political, and social structure. Moreover, racial prejudice and systemic economic inequality were inextricably linked to an uphill battle to break out of the cycle of poverty and achieve greater civil rights on the part of African Americans. For these reasons, socioeconomic circumstances increased African American's chances of being drafted more than that of whites. Before U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War, blacks accounted for approximately 11 percent of the draft-eligible population and only 9.5 percent in the armed forces.²²

Between 1965 and 1970, the height of U.S. involvement in Vietnam, blacks represented approximately 14.5 percent of all draftees. The average draft-age African American male oftentimes could not afford college or lacked the education needed to gain admittance, thereby closing off the primary means of securing a draft deferment. In addition, strict federal oversight of the National Guard and Reserves limited black men from obtaining a relatively safe stateside assignment. During the war, President Johnson never made a concerted effort to mobilize the National Guard or Reserves as a considerable option.²³ Thus, the pressure of the draft was borne to a disproportionate degree by members of the black community. Nevertheless, black America had limited

²² Hampton, *Black Officer Corps*, 31; Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces*, 224; Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts*, 20.

²³ Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces*, 224; Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts*, 20.

employment options during the war. In 1966, as Congress rejected calls to reform the draft, it was also fiscally unfeasible for Congress to establish an all-volunteer force; yet, by 1967, as the war steadily gained momentum, arguments for alternatives to the then-current draft emerged. A *universal national service*, according to noted anthropologist Margaret Mead, could mitigate a variety of socioeconomic issues among minorities.²⁴

Mead asserted that a national service system “would provide an opportunity for young adults to establish an identity and a sense of self-respect and responsibility as individuals before making career choices or establishing homes. At present a very large number go from dependency on their parents into careers that have been chosen for them, or use early marriage as a device to reach pseudo-adult status.”²⁵ Mead’s recommendation, if properly instituted, would have benefitted disadvantaged populations. Nevertheless, counter arguments to such a recommendation would prevail. Morris Janowitz, America’s leading military sociologist, believed that an all-volunteer force would create “a predominantly or even all Negro enlisted force in the Army, an ‘internal

²⁴ “Congress . . . (rejected the idea of an all-volunteer force and) all the substantive proposals for reform and, in June, passed the Military Selective Service Act of 1967. The Act prevented the President from implementing a lottery or provisions to draft younger men first without congressional approval. Congress also reaffirmed the “1951 proviso” and protected undergraduate deferments from presidential tampering except in national emergencies. . . . The failure of Congress and the Johnson Administration to reform the draft in 1967 was important to the evolution of the All-Volunteer Force. That failure, continued high draft calls, and increased opposition to the war and the draft assured that the draft would be a major issue during the 1968 presidential campaign. In October of that year, the Republican candidate for president, Richard Nixon, declared his intention to move toward ending the draft when the war in Vietnam was over.” See Bernard Rostker, *I Want You! The Evolution of the All-Volunteer Force* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2006), 32.

²⁵ Margaret Mead, “A National Service System as a Solution to a Variety of National Problems,” in Sol Tax, ed., *The Draft: A Handbook of Facts and Alternatives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 105; see also Rostker, *I Want You!*, 32.

foreign legion' which would be disastrous for American political democracy."²⁶ Dr. Harry A. Marmion, President of Saint Xavier College in Chicago, speculated whether justifications against compulsory military service were nothing more than "pragmatic self-interest" for those who "did not want to serve." Marmion asserted, "... an all-volunteer army would liberate the middle class from the legal necessity of serving but commit others to compulsory service by economic circumstances." He asked, "Is it not, in effect, forcing the poor and the less fortunate into the armed forces? Is this truly democratic?"²⁷

Before 1967, Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC) enthusiastically claimed that all its enlistees were volunteers. In truth, however, many were *draft-motivated*—a similar phenomenon that existed during World War II—meaning they joined to avoid being

²⁶ Morris Janowitz, "The Logic of National Service," in Sol Tax, ed., *The Draft: A Handbook of Facts and Alternatives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 75; Morris Janowitz, "The All-Volunteer Military as a 'Sociopolitical' Problem," *Social Problems* 22 (February 1975): 432–449; see also, Rostker, *I Want You!*, 33.

²⁷ Harry A. Marmion, *The Case Against a Volunteer Army: Should America's Wars be fought Only by the Poor and the Black?* (Chicago, IL: Quadrangle Books, 1971), 46; see also Rostker, *I Want You!*, 33. Professor Milton Friedman countered these arguments when he wrote,

Clearly, it is a good thing not a bad thing to offer better alternatives to the currently disadvantaged. The argument to the contrary rests on a political judgment: that a high ratio of Negroes in the armed services would exacerbate racial tensions at home and provide in the form of ex-soldiers a militarily trained group to foment violence. See Milton Friedman, "Discussion Recruitment of Manpower Solely by Voluntary Means," in Sol Tax, ed., *The Draft: A Handbook of Facts and Alternatives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 260; see also, Rostker, *I Want You!*, 33.

Friedman's point apparently rang true for many who disagreed with his point of view. In 1969, Professor Charles Moskos, Jr., one of the severest critics of the all-volunteer force for decades to come, concluded, Negroes . . . are still much more likely than whites to have positive views towards the draft and military life. . . . Negro youths by seeking to enter the armed forces are saying that it is even worth the risk of being killed in order to have a chance to learn a trade, to make it in a small way, to get away from a dead-end existence, and to join the only institution in this society that seems really to be racially integrated. See Charles C. Moskos, Jr., "The Negro and the Draft," in Roger W. Little, ed., *Selective Service and American Society* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1969), 161; see also Rostker, *I Want You!*, 33.

drafted in the Army. Thus, many black Marines were disappointed with the induction process and carried deep-seated frustrations with them into the Corps, which in turn led to an uneven distribution of African American Marines amongst the AFQT groups, inadvertently creating occupational “racial enclaves.” The combination of these factors led black Marines to want to be with “their own.” This desire, on the part of blacks, to be among their own was a function of two principal factors: white attitudes toward integration, which ensued from black perceptions of social disequilibrium and the need for social support among blacks, given that many, for the first time, found themselves in a large, white, and alienating bureaucratic institution. These factors proved to be a paradox to what many proclaimed as “America’s first racially integrated war effort.”²⁸ However, what so many failed to understand was that integration did not equate to racial harmony.

As a result, Marine officials struggled to gauge the full extent of *systemic* racism given that the plague of *personal* racism infiltrated the four corners of the institution. This *personal* or *intentional* racism is Westheider’s second form, which was endemic throughout the Marine Corps. “Many white officers, noncommissioned officers (NCOs), and privates harbored a deep prejudice against African Americans,” concludes Westheider, “Personal racism was also a factor in promotions and assignments. One white sergeant bluntly told a black private, ‘If you’re white, you’re all right, but if you’re soul, there ain’t no hope.’” Despite executive orders and official policies, white Marines

²⁸ Charles C. Moskos, Jr., *The American Enlisted Man: The Rank and File in Today’s Military* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1970), 108–118; Alvin J. Schexnider, “The Development of Racial Solidarity in the Armed Forces,” *Journal of Black Studies* 5 (June 1975): 415–420. See also Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts*, 2.; Robert V. Morris, *Black Faces of War: A Legacy of Honor from the American Revolution to Today* (Minneapolis, MN: Zenith Press, 2011), 122.

treated African Americans with contempt and often “provoked racial confrontations.”²⁹ Although there is no concrete evidence to suggest the level of priority in which Marine officials decided to eradicate *personal* racism, it is clear that steps to address racial issues moved at a slow pace. “[Whites] donned makeshift Ku Klux Klan outfits and paraded around the base ... Confederate [battle] flags, a constant source of racial antagonism to black troops, were proudly and defiantly flown.” For many African American Marines the temptation to assign blame to southerners for personal racism served as a popular notion, especially when “[prejudiced] white officers often bypassed deserving blacks for promotion, and white enlisted personnel scrawled racial slurs and graffiti, such as ‘I’d rather kill a nigger instead of a gook,’ on walls of latrines and enlisted men’s clubs.” In addition, there is no evidence indicating that the problem of *personal* racism was confined to southern service members. Westheider asserts that South Carolina native General William C. Westmoreland was magnanimous in his praise of African American participation during the war.³⁰

It is important to note that while *personal* racism felt acute given its prevalence among blacks and whites, the *systemic* nature of bigotry and racism blurred the lines of organizational structure, making it even more difficult for blacks to make a clear distinction between the two. For the majority of black and white Marines they were one in the same. The fact that a black Marine scored lower on the AFQT solidified his “proper place” in the Marine Corps in the eyes of many whites; therefore, the treatment he experienced in uniform was simply a by product of a “white-controlled” organization.

²⁹ Westheider, *African American Experience in Vietnam*, 39; Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts*, 5.

³⁰ Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts*, 5.

Further, this institutional form of racism was most visible in the infantry community; the Vietnam era infantry units bore a disproportionate share of casualties. Throughout the war, it appears that Westheider's first and second forms of racism blended more often than blacks would have preferred. In 1968, *Newsweek* and *Time* reported Pentagon statistics noting that African Americans were more likely to serve in combat units, and be killed or wounded as a result.³¹

Military assignments and promotion opportunities for African Americans were limited due to the disproportionate number of blacks concentrated in the previously mentioned "racial enclaves" of job specialties, all of which housed members of the infantry, supply, food services, and administration communities. These occupational fields promoted slower than advanced-skill, technical specialties; moreover, the technical fields were also top-heavy with regard to rank structure, which provided additional promotion opportunities. For a black Marine to make a lateral move from one specialty to another, even during the latter stages of his career, was determined, in part, on entrance exam scores (AFQT). Because of inherent educational disadvantages for African Americans in society, many found it difficult to transfer out of category/mental group III and IV occupational fields regardless of how well they performed. The result was that blacks were overrepresented in the Marine Corps's junior enlisted ranks, which translated into slower-promotions and underrepresentation in the senior enlisted ranks.³²

³¹ "The Draft: The Unjust vs. the Unwilling," *Newsweek*, April 11, 1966, 30–32, 34; "Democracy in a Foxhole," *Time Magazine*, May 26, 1967, 15–19; "The Negro and Vietnam," *The Nation*, July 17, 1967, 37–38. See also Binkin, et al., *Blacks and the Military*, 1; Gilbert Badillo and G. David Curry, "The Social Incidence of Vietnam Casualties: Social Class or Race," *Armed Forces and Society* 2 (July 1976): 397–406.

³² RG 127: Box 134, NARA; Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts*, 4.

From 1965 to 1970, blacks comprised 10 percent of the Corps's enlisted strength, in contrast only 1 percent of the officer corps. For example, in 1967, the black-white officer ratio was 1:150 compared to 1:30 in the Army, 1:60 in the Air Force, and 1:300 in the Navy.³³ "Most combat units in Vietnam were heavy in minorities," concludes Lieutenant General Frank E. Petersen. "The higher you looked through the ranks, the fewer minorities you saw. I'm not just talking blacks, but Hispanics and others as well. The kicker is that those units were being commanded by white noncommissioned officers and, in particular, white officers who were college graduates." According to General Petersen, who was America's first black Marine aviator, the dearth of African American officers severely limited the access young blacks had to minority leadership and mentorship. "Oil and water, a very difficult mix at best—one that the senior commander in the field had a responsibility to ensure worked for the good of the mission and the service."³⁴ As an anomaly, black Marine officers also represented a limited number of occupational specialties, therefore, their guidance to large groups of enlisted minorities rested in the hands of their white counterparts—many of whom failed to recognize the existence of African Americans. Furthermore, occupational specialties such as administration often precluded black Marine officers from commanding large numbers of troops, in turn, making them even less visible. During the Vietnam era there were never more than 15 black field grade officers (O-4 and O-5), and not a single black officer in

³³ RG 127: Box 134, NARA; Morris, *Black Faces of War*, 112–133.

³⁴ Frank E. Petersen, Jr., and Joseph A. Phelps, *Into the Tiger's Jaw: America's First Black Marine Aviator, the Autobiography of Lt. Gen. Frank E. Petersen with J. Alfred Phelps* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1998), 221.

the most senior ranks of colonel (O–6), which is a field grade rank, through general (O–7 through O–10).³⁵

The paucity of African American officers shows how institutional racism can be accidental, yet far-reaching. To a degree, the problem was a matter of timing; the Corps's integration period was too short for blacks to establish a line of traditional service and have the requisite time in service for promotion to the most senior ranks. Entrance exams provide a similar case in point. Department of Defense officials did not design tests and set standards to exclude blacks. The purpose of entrance exams was to determine which enlistees had the best chances of passing a particular course of study. Nevertheless, systemic inequality within the America's education system placed blacks at a decided disadvantage, leading to underrepresentation in coveted occupational fields due to lower exam scores. The outcome of this social process yielded racially stratified service branch in both appearance and reality. Concerning rank, African Americans continued to occupy the lower echelons while whites easily ascended. With regard to military assignments, blacks were more likely to serve on the frontlines or perform labor duties while whites served in technical and skill positions.³⁶

African Americans considered no single aspect of military life to be more inconsistent than the military justice system; for blacks, this system proved to be the sharpest manifestation of systemic racism within the Marine Corps. According to a 1972

³⁵ Fred H. Allison and Kurtis P. Wheeler, *Pathbreakers: U.S. Marine African American Officers in Their Own Words* (Washington, D.C.: History Division, United States Marine Corps, 2013); see also, Alphonse G. Davis, *Pride, Progress, and Prospects: The Marine Corps' Efforts to Increase the Presence of African-American Officers (1970–1995)* (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 2000).

³⁶ Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts*, 4–5.

report, “Racism in the Military,” the Congressional Black Caucus concluded that *a racially based double standard existed in all the service branches*. The report stressed the improper execution of the military judicial system on the part of white officers, who punished blacks for infractions that whites escaped punishment. African American Marines were more likely to receive formal punishments in comparison to their white counterparts. Most notable was the disproportionate rate at which blacks received non-judicial punishment, also known as an “Article 15” in the Army and the Air Force, and a “Captain’s Mast” in the Navy and Marine Corps. Non-judicial punishments were typically administered by the service member’s commanding officer for relatively lesser or minor offenses (i.e., late to duty or a uniform code violation). Moreover, the non-judicial process was designed for service members to receive lighter punishments than a court-martial.³⁷

However, evidence indicates that commanding officers were more likely to assign black Marines Captain’s Mast for minor infractions while white Marines received a mere counseling for similar violations.³⁸ Furthermore, black Marines were more likely to be falsely accused. Blacks also received longer sentences for minor crimes, accounting for a disproportionate percentage of the confined population. For instance, African Americans made up only 9.3 percent of the armed forces in 1969, but nearly 50 percent of the confined population. In connection with confinement rates, African Americans were also

³⁷ Congressional Record, *92nd Congress, 2nd Session, October 14, 1972* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972), 36582–85; Department of Defense, *Task Force on the Administration of Military Justice in the Armed Forces*, Vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972); RG 127: Box 135, Box 136, NARA; see also Westheider, *African American Experience in Vietnam*, 54–62, 155–160; Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts*, 56–57.

³⁸ Ibid.

more likely to receive *general* or *less-than-honorable* discharges, which limited their ability to receive full veteran's benefits after leaving the military.³⁹

As a consequence of disproportionate sentencing rates, confinements, and punitive discharges, the Marine Corps's dominant white power structure was able to maintain a vice grip on the administration of military justice concerning *all* judicial matters; thus, the absence of black judge advocates was merely an outgrowth of the institution during the Vietnam era. Therefore, it was common for white counselors to "defend" African Americans to all-white juries in courtrooms presided over by white judges. This factor alone highlights the veritable mountain of distrust black Marines demonstrated towards military courts.⁴⁰

For African American Marines, facing the penalties of a court-martial conviction could be severe, "including reduction to the lowest rank, forfeiture of pay, or long prison terms, often at hard labor," Westheider emphasizes. In a case involving "rape, murder, treason, mutiny, or cowardice or battlefield desertion, [blacks] could face the death penalty. Militant or subversive behavior usually resulted in unduly long prison sentences." Therefore, given the prevalence of race consciousness in the armed forces during the late 1960s—approximately the same period of increased militancy among

³⁹ In 1947 the U.S. Armed Forces adopted the five-tiered discharge system that would be in effect during the Vietnam era: (1) honorable, (2) general, (3) undesirable, (4) bad conduct, and (5) dishonorable. See Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts*, 58; Westheider, *African American Experience in Vietnam*, 54–62, 155–160; see also Thomas A. Johnson, "Armed Forces: Blacks Don't Feel They Get a Fair Shake." *New York Times*, November 29, 1970; Department of Defense, *Task Force on the Administration of Military Justice in the Armed Forces*; Moskos, *American Enlisted Man*, 108–118; Elizabeth Lutes Hillman, *Defending America: Military Culture and the Cold War Court-Martial* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), 1–28, 92–108.

⁴⁰ Westheider, *African American Experience in Vietnam*, 58–59.

black civilians—it is no surprise that these forms of judicial discipline seamlessly carried over into military domains.⁴¹

One salient example of this racially based double standard is the 1969 court-martial involving two Nation of Islam members, Lance Corporal William Harvey, Jr. and Private First Class George Daniels. Both Marines received sentences of six and ten years of hard labor respectively. Each was found guilty for spontaneously “preaching Black Muslim antiwar doctrines to troops being trained for Vietnam combat,” according to *New York Times* legal correspondent, Fred P. Graham, “during a break in field exercises” at Camp Pendleton, CA on July 27, 1967. Harvey and Daniels’s impromptu “rap session” emphasized the plight of blacks in America and their reasons for fighting the North Vietnamese, only to return home and fight the man. “They urged the other Negro marines to ask to see the commanding officer to protest against being sent to Vietnam,” but to no avail. This so-called protest quickly lost steam after the Marines were denied a meeting to express their grievances to their commanding officer; after which, all the men disbursed and returned to complete their respective duties. It is important to note that none of the Marines disobeyed orders or refused to deploy to Vietnam; nevertheless, on August 17, Harvey and Daniels were arrested on an “assortment of charges—including violation of a 1940 law that was passed to combat Nazi agents in World War II and had not been used since.” These men received maximum sentences for griping! This was unprecedented. Furthermore, there is no evidence suggesting that these men did not carry out their full sentences. Again, there was no mutiny, disloyalty, or disobedience to orders at any time

⁴¹ Ibid., 59. In addition, this era of race consciousness among African American Marines manifested itself at a time when race relations in the military were declining.

on the part of Harvey and Daniels. The fact that members of a court-martial convicted these Marines for violating the 1940 Smith Act, a law originally passed that made it a felony to “cause insubordination, disloyalty, mutiny or refusal of duty,” caused increased consternation among many African American Marines and signaled the depth of white contempt against the black race. For this reason, the 1960s U.S. military bore witness to arguably the most race conscience black service members in American history.⁴²

After 1960, the insistence on the part of Marine officials that its service branch was color-blind, and no longer a “white man’s club,” rang hollow throughout the Vietnam era. The effects of white racist leaders, despite limited representation, proved especially destructive among African Americans. For many young black Marines, any form of bigotry or racism, on the part of a senior leader, compromised the integrity of the entire organization. For black Marines, the genesis of *personal* racism began in 1943 when the commandant of the Marine Corps, General Thomas Holcomb clearly expressed the “position” of *Colored Personnel* in his elite service branch.

By the late 1960s, African American Marines were no longer a foreign concept or departure from the mainstream; however, the deeply rooted sentiments of biased information and guidance on how to *manage* black Marines, according to a prejudiced and racially motivated commander, flourished for more than 20 years. During this era, the most important item that General Holcomb addressed in his letter was the basic rule of

⁴² Fred P. Graham, “Two Marines Test Right of Dissent: Negroes Appeal Sentences for Antiwar Statements,” *New York Times*, March 7, 1969; “Black Marines Appeal Harsh Sentences for Speaking Out Against War,” *Black Panther*, September 13, 1969; Derrick Bell, *Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 113, 113n7; Westheider, *African American Experience in Vietnam*, 58–59; Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts*, 56–57.

racial etiquette: “At no time was a black man to be in a position to give orders to white Marines.” Holcomb’s employment of bureaucratic language in an effort to keep his beloved Corps free from the taint and undesirable effects of allowing African Americans to become “real” Marines was one of his top priorities.⁴³

Jim Crow America and the racial etiquette outlined in Letter of Instruction No. 421 functioned in similar; it was a way of life, serving as racial billboards for all Americans to subscribe to as it pertained to the daily comportment of blacks in all social domains. The very presence of African American Marines violated an unwritten social contract, which legitimized white supremacy while underpinning anti-black racism. Class structure was inescapable for blacks in the military; the roles within the armed forces were replicas of the roles played in civilian life (i.e., “a small, educated, professional middle class and a sizable, uneducated, lower class”).⁴⁴

For example, Marine Private First Class Reginald “Malik” Edwards, a native of Phoenix, Louisiana, was the first in his family to graduate from high school. The son of southern itinerant workers describes his upbringing as poor, but he never went hungry, “This was in 1963. I knew I couldn’t go to college because my folks couldn’t afford it. ...

⁴³ Letter from the Commandant, U.S. Marine Corps, to All Commanding Officers, dated May 14, 1943, Subject: Colored Personnel (formerly classified CONFIDENTIAL). See RG 127: Box 134, NARA; Appendix D; David J. Ulbrich, *Preparing for Victory: Thomas Holcomb and the Making of the Modern Marine Corps, 1936–1943* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2011), 167, 167n58; Morris J. MacGregor and Bernard C. Nalty, eds., *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces: Basic Documents VI, Blacks in the World War II Naval Establishment* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1977), 431–433.

⁴⁴ David Pilgrim, *Understanding Jim Crow: Using Racist Memorabilia to Teach Tolerance and Promote Social Justice* (Oakland, CA: Ferris State University and PM Press, 2015), 43. See also David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991; revised edition, 2007), xxii–xxiv; Bertram Wilbur Doyle, *The Etiquette of Race Relations in the South: A Study in Social Control* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 136–159; Stillman, “Negroes in the Armed Forces,” 146.

But the Marines was bad. The Marine Corps built men.” For Edwards, the Marine Corps was his only opportunity to secure realistic employment as a 17-year-old high school graduate. When Edwards arrived at basic training, “There was only two black guys in my platoon ... So I hung with the Mexicans, too, because in them days we never hang with white people. You didn’t have white friends. White people was the aliens to me.” Nevertheless, for the Marine Corps, it had been 15 years since President Truman’s executive order mandating the integration of the armed forces and it had been more than 20 years since the first African American earned the organization’s coveted Eagle, Globe, and Anchor. Yet, the South’s segregationist traditions remained steadfast and immovable for many young black recruits, Edwards expressed, “... somehow in the Marine Corps you hoping all that’s gonna change. Of course, I found this was not true, because the Marine Corps was the last service to integrate... we had a [southern drill instructor] from Arkansas that liked to call you chocolate bunny and Brillo head. That kind of shit.”⁴⁵

Edwards’s claim concerning this particular form of treatment was addressed in a pamphlet to unit leaders in 1969. After members of an Ad Hoc Committee on Equal Treatment and Opportunity, comprised of black and white division officers, warned Major General Edwin B. Wheeler, then-commander of the 2nd Marine Division, of the potential for more race incidents, the division submitted a pamphlet for unit leaders on racial attitudes to General Wheeler on April 22, 1969. According to the pamphlet, the division ordered unit leaders to ban the use of racial, ethnic, and religious slurs. “Marines

⁴⁵ Private First Class Edwards served as a Marine rifleman in Da Nang from June 1965–March 1966 with the 9th Marine Regiment. See Wallace Terry, *Bloods: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Black Veterans* (New York: Random House, 1984), 6–7.

of the Negroid race” were to be called “blacks” or “Negroes,” while the following terms were deemed “unacceptable”: “Boy,” “Coon,” “Nigger,” “Nigra,” “Spook,” “Slib,” “Uncle Tom,” “Oreo,” “Cracker,” “Hunkie,” “Dago,” “Spik,” “Wetback,” “Whitey,” “Redneck,” Kike,” “Jew Boy,” and “Mackerel Snapper.” For the Marine Corps to better combat these issues, such as the one shared by Edwards, General Ryan admonished his unit leaders to take immediate and swift action to correct anyone using any unacceptable names, whether the remark be made *intentional* or *not*. However, the most unfortunate piece of evidence from the report revealed that the leading violators of racial policies were among the most senior enlisted Marines and officers. Division officers concluded: “Many white officers and noncommissioned officers retain prejudices and deliberately practice them ... by the racial stories they tell and the references to blacks or black Marines,” which only served to further highlight the extent of the Corps’s race problem.⁴⁶

A few months later, the fatal beating of Corporal Bankston sent shockwaves throughout the Second Marine Division, calling for swift racial reform if the Marine Corps was to survive as a “color-blind” service branch. Division officers’ report also revealed, in addition to local segregation in civilian establishments, African American Marines were the “special target for discriminatory actions by the military police,” and “only results and never causes” proved to be the object of military investigations and discipline when any incident occurred involving black Marines. Considering that the

⁴⁶ E. W. Kenworthy, “Marine Report Predicted Race Unrest Before Killing: LEJEUNE REPORT FORECAST UNREST, *New York Times*, August 10, 1969; Homer Bigart, “Marines to Set Up Campaign to Ease Racial Tensions,” *New York Times*, February 28, 1970; see also Nalty, *Strength for the Fight*, 306–307; Flora Lewis, “The Rumble at Camp Lejeune,” *Atlantic Monthly* (January 1970): 38. See also Shaw and Donnelly, *Blacks in the Marine Corps*, 72–73.

flames of racial tension burned the brightest among those occupying leadership positions, the committee mandated that all unit leaders “scrupulously” comply with “both the letter and intent of racial policies.” In addition, revitalize grievance procedures, institute a program of “frank education on racial topics,” thoroughly investigate incidents with racial overtones with particular attention to racial causes and discipline, and the “elimination of attitudes or racial bigotry and prejudice.”⁴⁷

Be that as it may, the committee’s stance on the subject of military justice, specifically “request mast,” was inflexible. This privilege, under which any officer or enlisted member was afforded the opportunity to take a grievance or problem to his senior leadership—typically, the commanding officer and, in exceptional cases, to the commandant—had been severely compromised. Unit leaders were reluctant to admit that racial problems existed within their unit or organization; thus, grievances seldom progressed beyond the company level, if they even made it that far. Therefore, the deterioration of request mast procedures into a forum for defensive reaction was indicative of the unwillingness of Marine leaders to recognize legitimate issues and quickly and fairly address them. To no surprise, black Marines had no confidence in request mast procedures. Moreover, black Marines felt they had no available channel for “redress of complaints of discrimination.”⁴⁸

The ramifications of such a failure on the part of unit leaders to strictly adhere to the military justice system, for addressing grievances, were two fold: First, it indicated, “this division and the Marine Corps are returning marines, both black and white, to

⁴⁷ Kenworthy, “Marine Report Predicted Race Unrest Before Killing,” *New York Times*, August 10, 1969.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

civilian society with more deeply seated prejudices than were individually possessed upon entrance [into military] service.” Second, it communicated that the existing conditions “could readily cause a minor incident not necessarily containing racial overtones to expand to a major racial confrontation.” The latter would be the most challenging force, for both black and white Marines, to overcome. Again, the most tragic part of this entire situation was that generationally, younger white and black Marines attempted to strive for greater mutual accommodation. However, their attempts were often blocked and frustrated by commissioned and senior noncommissioned officers, among whom, bigotry and prejudice were either “overtly practiced or tacitly condoned.”⁴⁹

Despite the inherent issues surrounding race problems in the Marine Corps, many African Americans still believed in the American system of democracy, so far as their compliance to mandated good order and discipline, “The only thing they told [me] about the Viet Cong was they were gooks. They were to be killed. Nobody sits around and gives you their historical and cultural background,” asserted Edwards. “They’re the enemy. Kill, kill, kill. That’s what we got in practice. Kill, kill, kill.” What is most fascinating about Edwards’s account is that the very system that he is fighting within, and against, used the same anti-rhetoric created to supplant black freedom in America. Edwards concluded, “... [the] Vietnamese was killing Americans. I felt that if people were killing Americans, we should fight them. As a black person, there wasn’t no

⁴⁹ Ibid.

problem fightin' the enemy. I knew [white] Americans were prejudiced, were racist and all that, but basically, I believed in America 'cause I was American."⁵⁰

What Edwards also failed to recognize during his time in the Marine Corps was that simply acknowledging that one was American was not enough for the black race. African Americans could not exercise their first amendment rights in the same manner as their white counterparts. For example, after his return from Vietnam, now-Sergeant Edwards returned to Quantico, VA to serve as an illustrator, "they gave me the black squad ... especially the militant blacks ... I mean I was against racism. I didn't even call it racism. I called it prejudice. They [started] hippin' me to terms like 'exploitation' and oppression,' [which, as an illustrator,] gave you more time to think." For Edwards, this was his first encounter with black Marines who read books and expressed their political and social thoughts in a dynamic way.⁵¹

During an era in which many white Americans viewed this type of behavior as extremist, borderline terrorist, Edwards's adoption of such education quickly made him a target in the Marines. This predictable torrent of scrutiny led to Edwards being found guilty of fighting during a base riot; he received a five-month jail sentence, and five months without pay. Moreover, Edwards received a Bad Conduct Discharge (BCD)—a forfeiture of all veteran's benefits. He claimed his actions were in defense of a few black women that a white Marine had disrespected by using profane language, nothing different from what a white man would have done if the situation were reversed. Yet, Edwards served a 5-year jail sentence for his conduct and his accuser was never identified.

⁵⁰ Terry, *Bloods*, 7–8.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

Edwards commented, “I [didn’t] feel it was fair. If I had been white, I would never have went to jail for fighting. That would have been impossible.” While in jail, he observed, “... [white Military Police] didn’t want us to read our books, draw any pictures, or do anything intellectually stimulating or what they thought was black.” As a result, Edwards was ineligible to reenlist in the Marine Corps and subsequently gravitated to the Black Panther Party, where he adopted their message of self-determination in an attempt to actualize Malcolm X’s vision of Black Nationalism. He realized that white America had little regard for black lives, “They obviously didn’t care anything about us, ’cause they had killed [Martin Luther] King.” The assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. proved to be a watershed event for many African American Marines. King preached non-violence only to be violently killed by a white assassin. Only a short time earlier, King, like other prominent African Americans such as boxer Muhammad Ali, had openly opposed U.S. participation in Vietnam—as did many members within black communities. By 1969, however, black veterans who participated in these movements developed a strong racial consciousness and heightened appreciation for the potential of both individual and collective resistance to challenge white supremacy, and hold the United States accountable for its belated moral imperative to African Americans.⁵²

For Edwards, being killed by the police as a member of the Black Panther Party or by the Viet Cong made little difference, “I had left one war and came back and got into another one. Most of the Panthers then were veterans. We figured if we had been over in

⁵² Ibid., 13–14. In addition, the common practice of denying copies of the Holy Qur’an to African American Muslims while in military prisons also touched on the extent of institutional racism. See Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts*, 5.

Vietnam fighting for our country, which at that point wasn't serving us properly, it was only proper that we had to go out and fight for our own cause." Furthermore, many young African Americans viewed the Vietnam War as a war for the white man, "If it wasn't, you wouldn't have seen as many Confederate [battle] flags as you saw. And the Confederate [battle] flags was an insult to any person that's of color on this planet," contended Edwards.⁵³

Evidence suggests the African American Marine's expectations with regard to inter-racial and intra-racial experiences significantly influenced his reaction to life in the military. The majority of black Marines entered the service with moderately favorable views concerning black-white relations and high expectations of life in the service. Most of these men were achievement-oriented and entered the Marines with the hope of acquiring respectable training, or marketable skills, ostensibly to carry with them longer after their military service. Thus, when actual inter-racial and intra-racial relations, and career objectives, failed to comport with these expectations, normative assumptions concerning reality were oftentimes realigned on the part of blacks. The intensity of racial prejudice and black militancy often thwarted efforts to provide greater protections for blacks in the Vietnam era Marine Corps. Across the formerly exclusive white man's service club, it was evident that many white commanders and senior enlisted members were determined to continue to control and constrain African American progress through covert measures of power and influence.⁵⁴

⁵³ Ibid., 14.

⁵⁴ Schexnider, "The Development of Racial Solidarity in the Armed Forces," 420.

Westheider's third form of racism, *perceived* racism, highlighted the covert maneuvers many African Americans believed stymied their efforts for greater military equity. According to Westheider, in several cases, black Marines perceived racism where none deliberately existed. Given that so many African American Marines had grown up in completely segregated environments, the military was often the first time they experienced a white dominant power structure. Therefore, it was only natural that blacks would feel extreme suspicion, and on occasion, misread the actions of whites as prejudiced or racist. For example, many believed their drill instructors were racist, and some probably were, but the majority came to realize the harsh treatment they received (during basic training) was a by product of the Marine Corps's broad dehumanizing training routine—all junior Marines, regardless of race were subjected to the same maltreatment.⁵⁵

Nevertheless, the challenge for black Marines was to combat notions that white prejudiced views sullied every inch of the organization. Racial polarization and antiwar dissent accelerated the kinetic methods of the Black Power and Civil Rights movements among blacks, particularly those who were psychologically strengthened to move away from all elements of whiteness and, therefore, embrace biracial solidarity, in addition to Afro centricity. Furthermore, this era represented a psychological renaissance for many black Marines. The cultural aspects of these movements persuaded many to celebrate their unique history of overcoming racial subjugation while forging new self-identities.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts*, 5.

⁵⁶ Newer historical studies contend that the Black Power and Civil Rights movements were a single large mosaic that sought to advance and redefine the civil, political, and social position of black Americans.

AFROS & ‘NEW SALUTE’: Recognition, Unity, and ‘New Brother’ Stuff

As the war peaked during the years of 1968 and 1969, so did troop numbers, which brought an increasing number of African Americans Marines in contact. Even without an advancement in social rank, the Civil Rights and Black Power ideologies forced blacks to remember they were not white people with a darker pigmentation. “Black music, fashion, and literature represented a combination of resistance, pride, and a visual break from white cultural norms found in clothing, behavior, and social edicts.”⁵⁷ Despite the lack of a central ideology, young African American men responded to covert acts of racism and the uncertainty of warfare with new pride shaped by who they were and what they were not. With this new racial pride informed by the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, black Marines greeted each other with the “dap” or “power check,” no matter the duration of friendship, these gestures and ideas within Black Power circles served as a positive alternative to instilling a sense of African American heritage.⁵⁸

For many new arrivals, upon greeting one another, they would often engage in an intricate and elaborate handshake. “Dapping” involved slapping hands, finger snapping,

According to historian Peniel E. Joseph, by thoroughly examining “the multilayered roots of black power-era radicalism, arguing that civil rights and Black Power, while occupying distinct branches, share roots in the same historical family tree.” See Peniel E. Joseph, ed., *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 3; Dean E. Robinson, *Black Nationalism in American Politics and Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 2–3, 128; James A. Banks and Jean D. Grambs, *Black Self-Concept* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972), 7; Rupert Emerson and Martin Kilson, “The American Dilemma in a Changing World: The Rise of Africa and the Negro American,” *Daedalus* 94 (Fall 1965): 1055–1084; Hampton, *Black Officer Corps*, 28–29, 31.

⁵⁷ Hampton, *Black Officer Corps*, 31; Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts*, 89–93.

⁵⁸ “Black Power in Viet Nam,” *Time Magazine*, September 19, 1969; Kimberley L. Phillips, *War! What Is It Good For?: Black Freedom Struggles and the U.S. Military from World War II to Iraq* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 222; Hampton, *Black Officer Corps*, 31–32, 154–155; Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts*, 89–93; Allison and Wheeler, eds., *Pathbreakers*, 61.

and “pounding” chests, as black veteran Marines welcomed newbies into a shifting community given the demands of combat. Moreover, there were reported instances in which this didactic form of communication lasted for several minutes. In the minds of many whites, everything the “dap” represented challenged military etiquette and the established hierarchies of rank and structure.⁵⁹

Even with the small amount of friction the “dap” caused, it would not compare to the level of mixed white consternation, curiosity, and resentment, the Black Power salute raised. The clinched raised fist, reminiscent of John Carlos and Tommy Smith at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico after placing first and third, respectively in the 200 meter final, threatened white Marines. Many whites took exception to this gesture and balked at the disruption it caused. According to Marine commanders, the adoption of ethnically distinctive greetings in lieu of a military salute was considered menacing, provocative, and damaging to good order and discipline. These gestures were, in fact, a violation of military protocols and a conspicuous display of insubordination that merited punitive measures. Nevertheless, when confronted by senior officers, black Marines would often cite how white Marines freely gestured the popular “Peace Sign” in protest of the war, and rarely, if ever, received punishment. Usually commanders had no response. At this time, racial tension in the Marine Corps was such a volatile issue that any attempt to address it, or correct the behavior, could end in a riot. Marine officials were at a crossroads.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ “Black Marines Get OK For Afros, ‘New Salute,’” *Chicago Defender*, September 4, 1969; Edward Grant, “‘Black Power’ Here To Stay, The Polite War Is Finished,” *Chicago Defender*, August 27, 1969;

By the fall of 1969, the *Chicago Defender* reported, “The Marine Corps agreed . . . to let its black enlisted men wear their hair Afro Style—within limits—and to give the black power salute as a gesture of ‘recognition and unity.’”⁶¹ This report highlights the measures the Marine commandant, General Leonard F. Chapman, Jr. was willing to do in an effort to be conciliatory toward many black Marine attitudes, and the impact of Corporal Bankston’s death. Prompted by a series of racial incidents, General Chapman’s order to bend traditional Marine rules was seismic. Explaining his order at a Pentagon news conference, Chapman informed the press that the Marine Corps would not bar nor encourage, but tolerate, the “black power clenched fist salute,” insofar as the gesture was used as a greeting and not “in a manner suggesting direct defiance of duly constituted authority.” Since the findings of the Ad Hoc Committee on Equal Treatment and Opportunity in April 1969, this was the first legitimate action taken on that part of Marine officials to address real, not *perceived*, race issues within the Corps.⁶²

Despite his best efforts to achieve racial parity, Chapman’s response and subsequent concessions to black Marines were negligible. In 1969, Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune was home to 30,000 Marines, with roughly 9 percent of them representing the African American community; in addition, many Marines viewed the commandant’s

James M. Fendrich, “The Returning Black Vietnam-Era Veteran,” *Social Service Review* 46 (March 1972): 60–75; Hampton, *Black Officer Corps*, 154; Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts*, 89–93; Phillips, *War! What Is It Good For?*, 222.

⁶¹ William Beecher, “Marine Commandant Acts To Ease Racial Tensions: Marines Act to Ease Racial Tensions,” *New York Times*, September 4, 1969; “Black Marines Get OK For Afros, ‘New Salute,’” *Chicago Defender*, September 4, 1969. During the later years of the Vietnam War, black Marines often referred to each other as “Bloods,” one of the various ways in which these men expressed black solidarity. See Terry, *Bloods*, xvi; Hampton, *Black Officer Corps*, 154; Allison and Wheeler, *Pathbreakers*, 69; Hari Rhodes, *A Chosen Few* (New York: Bantam Books, 1965).

⁶² Beecher, “Marine Commandant Acts To Ease Racial Tensions,” *New York Times*, September 4, 1969.

actions as a fragile straw in an intensifying storm of racial apathy. Many others believed the commandant's involvement only served to make life harder for black Marines. For one young black Marine Sergeant, he would soon discover that even the highest authority in the Marines could do little to shift the tides of obstinate tradition. The sergeant, a veteran of Vietnam, sat in the barber's chair and requested, "a trim around the ears and the neck." The barber frowned and pointed his scissors at a new collection of photographs depicting the Marine Corps's conception of a well groomed black man, the sergeant emphatically declared, "That ain't no Afro, I thought we were going to get to have Afros, that ain't an Afro." The barber, also African American, replied, "Yep, that's it." Frustrated by the impotence of another "directive," the black sergeant replied, "Well, to hell with it, then," sweeping aside the barber's cloth and marching to the exit.⁶³

The *New York Times* reported, "While [blacks] did grow extreme 'Afros' they did cultivate what they considered to be respectable amounts of hair, and there were very few incidents or complaints or penalties." However, the Marine Corps's conception of an Afro was a joke to black Marines, which resulted in an even higher standard of grooming for black Marines' hair. Although official complaints from black Marines produced a conciliatory response, it had the practical effect of "making regulations on hairstyles more rigid than before." With the Marine Corps addressing issues such as haircuts, the clenched-fist salute, and "rap sessions," the process of integration and goodwill engendered more fear and insular reactions rather than unit cohesion. For many blacks,

⁶³ James T. Wooten, "Marines Divided by Order Allowing Afro Hair Styles," *New York Times*, September 15, 1969; "Marines Afro Haircut Called Joke," *Chicago Defender*, September 27, 1969.

however, this was a small price to pay, especially when most white commanders treated them as if they were invisible.⁶⁴

Lieutenant Colonel Hurdle L. Maxwell, the first African American in Marine Corps history to command an infantry battalion, expressed this issue in the following manner in 1969: “The Corps says it treats all men just one way—as a Marine. What it actually has done is treat everybody like a white Marine.” Although grooming, haircuts, and access to entertainment facilities seemed trivial to whites, they represented touchstones of the black Marines’ non-combat environment. It was critical for a black Marine to be able to decompress, even if for an evening during his off hours, and have affirmations of his importance in an institution that formed, at least for a few years, the compulsory structure of his existence.⁶⁵

However, the problem was not limited to African American Marines. Some white Marines likewise mistook the tendency of black Marines to frequently socialize together as black-on-white racism. Many considered equal opportunity initiatives and racial sensitivity training to be examples of reverse discrimination and thus forms of racial discrimination. Ultimately, accusations of racism where it did not in fact exist led to further polarization. Historian Bernard C. Nalty, who interviewed several Marines during the 1960s, described the self-reinforcing nature of this particular phenomenon as patterns of mutual hostility emerged:

Blacks and whites had grown suspicious of the other. Whites saw blacks congregating and feared violence, whereas blacks saw

⁶⁴ Wooten, “Marines Divided by Order Allowing Afro Hair Styles,” *New York Times*, September 15, 1969.

⁶⁵ Morris, “How Blacks Upset the Marine Corps,” *Ebony Magazine* 25 (December 1969): 57; Davis, *Pride, Progress, and Prospects*, 6–18.

gatherings of whites and believed they were being excluded, made fun of, conspired against, shunned. Members of both races became convinced that the other group was receiving preferential treatment, although blacks were especially resentful at having to perform menial labor.⁶⁶

As result, this “mutual loathing [was] made worse by a lack of interracial communication ... The services had once provided an introduction to racial integration; now tensions in society tore at the fabric of the armed forces. In this explosive situation, perceptions of prejudice against blacks, [whites began calling,] ‘reverse discrimination.’” Thus, the seething racial discontent in American society found a stable home in the Corps’s ranks.⁶⁷

Ignorance and misunderstanding significantly contributed to increased racial tensions. For many Marine recruits, basic training was often the first time they engaged with a member of another race. For a Marine recruit who spent the formative years of his life hearing that blacks were inferior or that whites could not be trusted, or worse, the devil incarnate, the military required a significant adjustment. Marine Private Allen E. Jones of Bridgeport, CT, remarked: “They say I am just a marines, but how can I forget 18 years of being black and all that being black means in this country? How can I fight for freedoms around the world that I and my people don’t have yet?” Marine officials, surprisingly discovered, that many white and black Marines were unaware that racial slurs and terms (i.e., “Whitey” and “Nigra”) were offensive. Racial slurs and terms were

⁶⁶ Nalty, *Strength for the Fight*, 307.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

ubiquitous in homes and communities across the country, which simply replicated a national issue in an organization that represented a microcosm of its citizenry.⁶⁸

Increasingly, these various manifestations of racism led to major grievances black Marines had with the organization, which included the absence of Afrocentric consumer products on Post Exchange (PX) shelves, such as black hair-care products, magazines (i.e., *Ebony* and *Jet*), clothes, and African-American literature in base libraries. Racial polarization had reached such an acute level during this period that one military commander “in Southeast Asia even banned the recorded speeches of Malcolm X and pressured local merchants into removing them from their shops.”⁶⁹ Marine Corporal Geggory A. Cobb, a Harlem native and returning Vietnam veteran, asserted, “We want changes both inside and outside the Corps. How can anyone live like we have to as black people and not try to change things? The problem is in white overreaction and they’re trying to label our legitimate efforts as reverse racism.” Similar to Cobb, many African Americans believed Marine officials had a hidden agenda to delegitimize their grievances for equal treatment. The 18-year-old veteran further asserted, “Racial integration does not mean turning the black man white. We can all be different colors and still work together. Our aspirations, our desires are all the same.” Among the junior ranks, a dynamic arose in which black consciousness fed white racism and vice versa, creating a corrosive atmosphere of mutual fear and distrust.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ “Newer Negro Marines Are Looking for Identity With Blackness,” *New York Times*, December 21, 1969; Lewis, “The Rumble at Camp Lejeune,” 38.

⁶⁹ Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts*, 76, 76n41, 76n42, 76n43; Morris, “How Blacks Upset the Marine Corps,” 57–60; Nalty, *Strength for the Fight*, 308.

⁷⁰ “Newer Negro Marines Are Looking for Identity With Blackness,” *New York Times*, December 21, 1969.

Several Marine officials attempted to correlate, what they perceived as a rise of black militancy with the tensions surrounding military integration. What they had failed to recognize was that a new breed of black Marines had arrived, and come of age during the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements. With an average age of 18–19, these men were younger, “more aggressive, more militant, more confident,” and not content with gradualism. In contrast to the previous generations, that held a more subdued vision and were “resigned to the system,” these men were less willing to tolerate racism and demanded swift reform and nothing short of full recognition. The fact that these young men had been drafted or *draft-motivated* did not ease the situation; many had already been in jail for participating in contested civil rights actions, and did not consider themselves career Marines—they did not acknowledge service in the Marine Corps as a viable occupation or opportunity.⁷¹

This rising generation of radical black Marines was especially critical of career Marines, who had served during World War II and Korea, referring to them as “lifers,” “house niggers,” and “Uncle Toms.” In 1969, the *New York Times* commented, “The returning youths complained of a need for recognition ‘as black people.’ All are young [Vietnam veterans] and most have less than three years in the service. They come from all over the United States. Identifying with blackness ... [pointing] up both generation and a philosophical gap between themselves and some of the black career men in the Corps.” However, many black careerists were proud of their part in desegregating the

⁷¹ Phillips, *War! What Is It Good For?*, 223–224; Moskos, *American Enlisted Man*, 117.

Marine Corps and, albeit not perfect, found that service in the military buffered them from “blatant discrimination” among civilians.⁷²

When discussing the generational gap among African American Marines, one staff sergeant commented to a *New York Times* reporter, “Do you see this fist? Well this is how I got to be a staff sergeant—whipping a whole lot of white marines who thought Negroes had no business in the Corps. Me and a whole lot of Negro sergeants fought everyday to make a place for black people in the Corps, so there would be no difference between the races.” The staff sergeant struggled to understand the younger generations mindset, especially after he had already dedicated 18 years of his life to the Corps, “all the colored marines wanted was a chance to prove ourselves as marines—green marines. Now some of these Negro youngsters are saying that they want to be black first and marines second—it can’t be done.”⁷³ As a product of the Korean War era, the staff sergeant was fortunate enough to enter the Marine Corps during a time when the country experienced incredible prosperity, consensus, and to some degree conformity. For blacks, the era provided institutional expansion and a wider scope of job opportunities. The Vietnam era presented newer challenges that would shake the social and cultural foundations within American society.

Black World War II and Korean War veterans felt disrespected, “The ‘snuffies’ [junior marines] try to call me an Uncle Tom. I have whipped more nigger-hating white marines than they have ever seen and they call me an ‘Oreo’ just because I don’t go along

⁷² “Newer Negro Marines Are Looking for Identity With Blackness,” *New York Times*, December 21, 1969; see also, Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts*, 18–19, 36, 76, 127, 141–142, 150, 152, 162, 165–166.

⁷³ “Newer Negro Marines Are Looking for Identity With Blackness,” *New York Times*, December 21, 1969.

with their ‘new brother’ stuff.”⁷⁴ African American officers dealt with similar issues upon returning home from Vietnam. Marine First Lieutenant Archie “Joe” Biggers from Colorado City, Texas, recalled, “... the thing that hurt me more than anything in the world was when I came back to the States and black people considered me as a part of the establishment. Because I am an officer. Here I was, a veteran that just came back from a big conflict. And most of the blacks wouldn’t associate with me.” Fighting for Uncle Sam as an officer in Vietnam communicated “sell-out” to young blacks, manning the front lines of a “united” civil rights and Black Power struggle at home. Biggers commented, “You see, blacks are not supposed to be officers. Blacks are supposed to be those guys that take orders, and not necessarily those that give them. If you give orders, it means you had to kiss somebody’s rear end to get into that position.”⁷⁵

Biggers lamented his homecoming, specifically during a visit to a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) on the east coast, “One day I wore my uniform over to Howard University in Washington to help recruit officer candidates. Howard is a black school like the one I went to in Texas, Jarvis Christian College. I thought I would feel at home.” Believing he had just returned home from serving on foreign soil, Biggers quickly realized he was once again in enemy territory. “The guys poked fun at me,

⁷⁴ Ibid. An “Oreo,” he explained, is cookie that is black on the outside and white on the inside. The new “brother stuff” represented coming together around their blackness, which was very important for junior Marines.

⁷⁵ First Lieutenant Biggers served as a platoon leader in the 9th Marine Regiment from March 1968–April 1969. See Terry, *Bloods*, 121. Black enlisted and officers had an additional issue dividing them. The average black enlistee was young and likely to be more militant, whereas black officers were generally just as conservative and career oriented as their white counterparts, and they seldom shared the same values as black enlistees. Many of the more radical black enlistees believed that black officers had “sold out” their black brothers to curry favor and rewards from the white power structure, and they derisively labeled black officers “Uncle Toms.” See Westheider, *African American Experience in Vietnam*, 59.

calling me Uncle Sam's flunky. They would say the Marine Corps sucks. The Army sucks. They would say their brother or uncle got killed, so why was I still in. They would see the Purple Heart and ask me what was I trying to prove. The women wouldn't talk to me either," noted Biggers. In a moment of reflection, the experience at Howard forced Biggers to consider his military service, and if finding black graduates to serve as commissioned officers would make a difference for blacks, "I felt bad. I felt cold. I felt like I was completely out of it."⁷⁶ The *New York Times* report and Biggers's account underscore the ineffective attempts made by black officers and senior enlisted personnel to serve as a bridge between the races. Moreover, young African Americans balked at the notion of accepting gradualism in any form, no matter who advocated for it—it was simply intolerable.

However, it is important to note that not all white officers stood in the way of racial equity. In fact, a number of white officers at Camp Lejeune made an effort to understand the black experience in America by enrolling in black history courses at a local college. The *New York Times* reported, "The [commanding general of the Second Marine Division] himself is studying black history at a nearby college and, as such things happen in the military, several high-ranking officers have also enrolled." That a nearby local college offered black history courses in North Carolina demonstrated, to a certain degree, the strides the country had made toward racial accommodation. As a further matter, the assistant division commander, Brigadier General Robert D. Bohn began

⁷⁶ Ibid., 121–122. For more on the history of officer programs at HBCUs see Marcus S. Cox, *Segregated Soldiers: Military Training at Historically Black Colleges in the Jim Crow South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2013).

assembling a library of books and films on African Americans, “Some of the books are dynamite,” warned one of the officers, citing *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* and the works of Eldridge Cleaver (i.e., *Soul on Ice*, 1968). According to General Bohn, some of the works were “potentially dangerous.” Nevertheless, the books were available at the library and newsstands in an effort to furnish “objective” material that provided a “balanced view.” Taking into account the racial dynamics in the United States, the majority of white Marines had reached adulthood without ever having a meaningful interaction with a person of color.⁷⁷

Yet, Marine officials still were reluctant to admit the Corps suffered from racial strife, or that it had created a breeding ground for racial conflict. Senior leadership contended that its racial climate had undoubtedly been “the impingement on the armed services of conditions in [U.S.] society.” According to this logic, the issue was not a matter of racism but rather cultural forces outside of the influence and authority of senior Marines. The 1969 figures compiled for assaults from the provost marshal’s office at Camp Lejeune revealed that from January 1 through the first week of August there had been 190 assaults, only four of which had been black-on-black and fifty only involving white-on-white. During an eight-month period, there were 136 assaults involving blacks and whites—122, according to the provost marshal’s description, were blacks attacking

⁷⁷ In 1969, General Bohn conducted a survey of the racial attitudes of 1,700 Marines; it revealed that 68 percent of blacks believed the Marines Corps had failed to practice its preachments on racial equality. A majority of whites—58 percent—felt that the Corps did practice equality. In addition, the survey found that the longer a man stayed in the Marines the more prejudiced he became. See Bigart, “Marines to Step Up Campaign to Ease Racial Tensions,” *New York Times*, February 28, 1970; “Newer Negro Marines Are Looking for Identity With Blackness,” *New York Times*, December 21, 1969

whites, and 14 with whites attacking blacks. Of the 136 assaults, 114 took place on base, 22 off base with the vast majority occurring from April to July.⁷⁸

These figures indicate that Marine officials could not simply blame society for their racial woes. General Petersen offered sage wisdom as he pointed to the inaccuracy of such a notion:

The extension of that philosophical thought is to say that the Corps had exactly the same problem as did the civilian community. In short, if we have blacks who are dissatisfied, there is a reason for it. I prefer saying, unlike the civilian community, that we have a strong but small, highly disciplined microcosm of the civilian community and because of that we can solve the problems if they are present. It's a little tricky when you get into this stuff to say that we have the same problems or that our problems are a 'reflection' of the civilian community, because they really are two different communities.⁷⁹

From 1968 to 1969, the Marine Corps's senior leadership could no longer pretend that racial violence was not a critical issue. The fatal death of Corporal Bankston opened a Pandora's box of bad press, highlighting the Corps's lack of institutional control. Furthermore, the damaging press hindered recruiting efforts, marred the service's integration record, and ability to accomplish its mission goals. Rather than instilling and maintaining good order and discipline through institutional doctrine, Marine officials sullied the image of the African American Marine, and simultaneously suffered in the department of military readiness as a result.

Racial discrimination not only had a deleterious effect on morale, but also caused the organization to function in the least efficient manner with regard to personnel

⁷⁸ E. W. Kenworthy, "Lejeune Commandant Worried Over Growing Racial Tension," *New York Times*, August 15, 1969; Thomas A. Johnson, "Marine Chief Vows To End Racial Rift," *New York Times*, August 16, 1969.

⁷⁹ Petersen, *Into the Tiger's Jaw*, 198.

management. Limiting the range of available opportunities for blacks damaged the Marine Corps's public image, which in turn, caused the institution to fail in meeting its stated objectives of promoting and retaining the best-qualified candidates. Therefore, the Marine Corps would have to find better, and more innovative, ways to optimize its available human capital, meaning that manpower affairs, policies, and practices had to be merit-based. Lip service from senior Marine officials would no longer serve as a solvent measure for addressing organizational issues that needed immediate action. African American Marines would slowly see themselves move from the fringes of the Corps, and not only increase their visibility to the public at large, but also their wartime contributions. The Marine Corps's implementation of greater institutional reform would eventually come, but the war in Vietnam would have to end before African American Marines would see decisive and meaningful change; in addition, the war would continue to exacerbate the Marine Corps's race problem, and ultimately shape the figure, image, and story of the African American Marine.

Chapter 7

Contested Legitimacy: Scarlet & Gold and Black

The [military] is not a social laboratory. To be effective it must be organized and trained according to principles which will ensure success. Experiments to meet the wishes and demands of the champions of every race and creed for the solution of their problems are a danger to efficiency, discipline and morale and would result in ultimate defeat.

—Colonel Eugene R. Householder, U.S. Army
The official U.S. Army position on integration

By early 1967, the Vietnam War had firmly captured America's attention for various reasons. Storylines addressing President Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society programs, the draft, civil rights progress, and the spread of communism pulled tightly at the corners of the nation's fabric. Even with all that, journalist Wallace Terry, a correspondent at the Washington bureau of *Time* magazine, found himself on a plane headed to Saigon to report on a cover story: the role of the African American soldier in Vietnam. With figures in the black community such as H. Rap Brown, Stokely Carmichael, and Floyd B. McKissick speaking out against the war, Terry's boss thought this topic needed greater attention, and Terry welcomed the assignment.¹

The war had the country divided along so many lines; social and political common ground regarding the war was at a premium with little to spare among Americans; promise of economic and social change were being spoiled by the war, further pushing black communities to the fringes of society. "At the moment the Armed Forces seemed to represent the most integrated institution in American society. For the first time blacks were fully integrated in combat and fruitfully employed in positions of

¹ Wallace Terry, *Bloods: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Black Veterans* (New York: Random House, 1984), xv.

leadership,” Terry reported. “The Pentagon was praising the gallant, hard fighting black soldier, who was dying at a greater rate, proportionately, than American soldiers of other races. In the early years of fighting, blacks made up [approximately] 23 percent of the [casualties] ... Uncle Sam was [definitely] an equal opportunity employer,” making the Vietnam War even more compelling.²

Wallace discovered that most serving African Americans in Vietnam supported the country’s involvement because they believed the United States was “guaranteeing the sovereignty of a democratically constituted government in South Vietnam and halting the spread of communism in Southeast Asia.”³ However, during the spring of 1968, African Americans represented 9.8 percent of the armed forces, approximately 20 percent of the infantry units, 25 percent of the frontline commanders, and 14.1 percent killed in action. Although authorities differ on these figures, by the end of the conflict, U.S. forces had suffered more than 58,000 casualties (deaths), of that number 12.5 percent were black—slightly more than the stateside population. Moreover, less than 3 percent of the Army and 1 percent of the Marine Corps’s commissioned officers were African American.⁴

According to a 1966 Pentagon survey, proportionately more African American service members than whites had been killed in Vietnam. The Army and the Marine

² Terry, *Bloods*, xv–xvi.

³ *Ibid.*, xvi.

⁴ R. W. Apple, Jr., “NEGRO AND WHITE FIGHT SIDE BY SIDE: Race Makes a Difference in Vietnam Only After Hours,” *New York Times*, January 3, 1966; Jack Raymond, “Negro Death Ratio in Vietnam Exceeds Whites: Bias in Battle Assignments Is Denied – Volunteers for Combat Duty Stressed,” *New York Times*, March 10, 1966; Thomas A. Johnson, “NEGRO IN VIETNAM UNEASY ABOUT U.S.: Many Saddened by Turmoil—Intent on Bringing Home Rights Enjoyed Abroad,” *New York Times*, May 1, 1968; Robert V. Morris, *Black Faces of War: A Legacy of Honor from the American Revolution to Today* (Minneapolis, MN: Zenith Press, 2011), 122.

Corps were the two service branches that bore the brunt of the ground warfare casualties. The Marine Corps was approximately 8.9 percent black at the end of 1965, yet the death rate among African American Marines from 1961 to 1965 was approximately 11.3 percent. Nevertheless, Pentagon officials contended that the statistical data was not a reflection of racial discrimination in combat assignments; rather it was an indication of wartime valor on the part of black Marines. The reasons for the relatively high proportion of African American Marine casualties were difficult to ascertain. However, a chief factor for the disproportional death rate was the large number of black Marine volunteers assigned to infantry units.⁵

In contrast to earlier war experiences, where African American Marines were limited to support occupational specialties, a more positive and courageous public image emerged during the early 1960s. The increased visibility and more wholesome image of black Marines unfolded in several media outlets, specifically military recruiting advertisements. Senior U.S. officials of the armed forces, for their part, demonstrated pride in their recent record with military integration and the evident progress of minorities. However, this would be short-lived. As flattering images of minorities began appearing in military propaganda, the escalation of racial violence during the late 1960s caused recruiting agencies to cease production of any advertisements featuring minority images.⁶

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid. See also James E. Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts: African Americans and the Vietnam War* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 2; Hebert Aptheker, *A Documentary History of The Negro People in the United States, 1933–1945* (Secaucus, NJ: Citadel Press, 1974), 421.

This chapter will explore the outcomes of the alternative approaches and educational reform measures used by senior Marine Corps officials to address systemic discrimination and racial strife throughout the 1960s. This chapter will also investigate the social dynamics of the psychological adjustments made by both black and white Marines, and how these adjustments, specifically regarding *black identity*, created a battleground ripe for social conflict. This chapter will further examine the major shifts in African American Marine attitudes toward military service, institutional strategies for greater diversity, Marine Corps institutional guilt, and the eventual awarding of the Congressional Gold Medal to the men of Montford Point. This chapter will conclude by evaluating the subsequent legacy of African American Marines, the significance of their military service from the early 1940s to the early 1970s, and how during this period, their names failed to reach the iconic status of highly decorated combat veterans.

For the Vietnam era Marine Corps, the late 1960s ushered in increasing racial tensions that corresponded with a second new image of black Marines. A more culturally literate, strident advocate of civil rights emerged among young blacks, “I returned to Vietnam for a two-year assignment that ended when I witnessed the withdrawal of the first American forces in 1969. Black combat fatalities had dropped to 14 percent, still proportionately higher than the 11 percent which blacks represented in the American population. But by that same year a new black soldier appeared,” observed Terry. He also observed, “The war had used up the professionals who found in military service fuller

and fairer employment opportunities than blacks could find in civilian society, and who found in uniform a supreme test of their black manhood.”⁷

Expressions of mounting discontent and militancy evoked a response of concern among the relatively older and more moderate African American Marines. Black draftees were now beginning to replace careerists, many were steps removed from “rioting in the rebellions that swept the urban ghettos from Harlem to Watts,” and participating in Black Power and Civil Rights demonstrations. “All were filled with a new sense of black pride and purpose,” speaking the loudest against the racial tyranny they encountered during the era. These racially conscious Marines did not bow to racial slurs and insults or southern customs such as cross-burnings and all manner of Confederate Battle flag displays. Rather they shouted for unity among their African American brothers on the battlefield to confront and protest social injustices and pledge mutual support.⁸

However, such radical behavior linked blacks to troublemaking and racial violence, any African American Marine who did not accept gradualism was branded a militant. In the view of Marine officials, anyone who challenged the *status quo*, peacefully or violently, was a militant and frequently blamed for racial tensions. This response on the part of senior leadership only served to call greater attention to the divide between black and white Marines.

Additionally, during the final years of the U.S. presence in Vietnam, American society observed an ever-growing sense of crisis, having to confront sectional issues that transcended race. The success of General Võ Nguyên Giáp’s Tet Offensive in 1968,

⁷ Terry, *Bloods*, xvi.

⁸ Ibid. See also Aptheker, *Documentary History of The Negro People in the United States*, 421.

coupled with increasing antiwar sentiment and mass support for troop withdrawal, resulted in President Lyndon B. Johnson announcing that he would not seek reelection in the same year. Severely bruised and embattled, the United States appeared to be divided into two camps: pro-establishment and anti-establishment.⁹

For the Marine Corps, Vietnam naturally aggravated underlying racial instability, which forced a dialogue between whites and blacks to be reluctantly opened. From 1968 to 1971, the Marine Corps experienced the death of Corporal Edward Bankston and hundreds of assaults, brawls, muggings, and robberies with racial overtones. By January 1971, senior Marine officials insisted—with qualified agreement from black and white enlisted members—that overt violence and racial tensions no longer existed. “Frankly, I think we have made a lot of progress in the Second Division. I’m under no illusions that we have no attitudinal problems, but at the same time we have changed attitudes and we have overcome overt problems of violence in the division area,” concluded Major General Michael P. Ryan, division commander. Moreover, representations of black and minority Marines in popular culture reflected the cultural and societal tensions of attempting to both set characters apart, using racial stereotypes, and portraying characters with a measure of equality.¹⁰

⁹ Bob Blauner, *Still the Big News: Racial Oppression in America* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2001), 3.

¹⁰ Thomas A. Johnson, “Racial Tensions Ease at Camp Lejeune: Marines Easing Racial Tensions and Violence at Camp Lejeune,” *New York Times*, January 21, 1971; Henry I. Shaw, Jr. and Ralph W. Donnelly, *Blacks in the Marine Corps* (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1975; reprint 2002), 72; Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts*, 2, 112–113; see also Richard H. Kohn, “The Social History of the American Soldier: A Review and Prospectus for Research,” *American Historical Review* 86 (June 1981): 553–567.

A more pronounced example of the pacification of racial unrest held particularly true with active Marine infantry units, whose members experienced daily engagements with the enemy. As prevalent and serious an issue racial violence was in the military, this example demonstrates that it was not everywhere, and not to the degree commonly associated with racial tension. During the early 1970s, the *Baltimore Afro-American* confidently reported that frontline units had a “total absence of racial unrest.” The *Baltimore Afro-American* could have slightly embellished its report, but relative to the previous decade, racial friction seemed to be addressed with greater efficiency and tact, potentially giving the appearance that it had been eliminated. Furthermore, survival in combat forced blacks and whites to quickly develop unit cohesion; survival during war depended on cooperation and teamwork, leaving little room for personal animosities. In 1969, Marine commandant, General Leonard F. Chapman, Jr. commented that racial violence did not reach into frontline units, it was “almost unheard of among Marines in combat but appeared to have taken place as [Marines] moved to other [garrison] areas or returned to the United States.”¹¹

While in Vietnam many Marines discovered that pigmentation meant nothing as it pertained to infantry combat skills and survival in the trenches. Serving in the infantry produced greater camaraderie and solidarity among blacks and whites, the threat of death during combat functioned as the great equalizer. In 1968, *New York Times* correspondent, Thomas A. Johnson reported, “[As] it happens in any situation of great stress, racial differences between blacks and whites have disappeared on the fighting fronts. At the

¹¹ Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts*, 113, 113n91, 113n92; Shaw and Donnelly, *Blacks in the Marine Corps*, 73.

front, the main thing is to stay alive and you do this most often by depending on the man next to you.” In addition to the visceral emotion of survival, small unit leadership played a significant role in minimizing racial turbulence among the races. Field commanders who communicated and maintained clearly defined missions, bolstered morale and welfare, and kept his Marines on task experienced the highest level of unit cohesion.¹²

While on assignment at Camp Lejeune in 1971, Johnson also observed, “The effort by the 16,000-member Second Marine Division, of whom about one-fifth are black, follows closely a recommendation by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, Frank W. Render, that the easing of racial tensions in the military would require ‘a strong commitment’ by field commanders.”¹³ However, Render’s keen recommendation was old news to many senior Marine leaders. In April 1969, an Ad Hoc Committee on Equal Treatment and Opportunity had already enumerated his recommendation emphasizing commander responsibilities. The committee of seven officers submitted their report to Major General Edwin B. Wheeler, then-commander of the 2nd Marine Division, of the potential for more racial turbulence, which highlighted four specific criticisms:

1. That bigotry and prejudice were practiced in the Corps and by white businessmen in the adjacent [civilian] community.
2. That seniors placed obstructions in the way of young Marines seeking to grapple with the race problem.
3. That there was a failure to comply with the spirit and letter of the law.
4. That effective leadership was lacking.¹⁴

¹² Thomas A. Johnson, “Negroes in the Nam,” *Ebony Magazine* 10 (August 1968): 31–40. See also Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts*, 113, 115.

¹³ Johnson, “Racial Tensions Ease at Camp Lejeune,” *New York Times*, January 21, 1971.

¹⁴ Shaw and Donnelly, *Blacks in the Marine Corps*, 72; Bernard C. Nalty, *Strength for the Fight: A History of Black Americans in the Military* (New York: Free Press, 1986), 308–317; see also Alphonse G. Davis,

It is patently obvious that Marine leaders struggled to set the example for their subordinates during this tenuous period. In 1969, three of the four criticisms fell directly on their shoulders, among a group of men who took pride in accepting responsibility and credit for everything that happened in their units, but more importantly, *everything that failed to happen*. By 1971, however, these criticisms were being addressed and at the center of an on going, concentrated program aimed at cross-cultural communication. Cross-cultural communication, throughout the chain of command, and among Marines of similar ranks, was critical for advancing race relations and reducing tensions in the Corps. Division officials tailored these human relations activities to include “gripe sessions, platoon level discussions, special leadership courses for officers and enlisted men, a system of human relations councils, and field trips for some marines to investigate the servicemen’s contact with civilian institutions.”¹⁵

Cross-cultural communication served two fundamental purposes. First, black enlistees believed their superiors never listened to them. The perception was that official channels for addressing grievances appeared to be closed off and largely ignored. Moreover, if one spoke out his superiors immediately branded him a troublemaker. Conversely, many white leaders reported an inability to relate to young black Marines. Second, an open and honest dialogue fostered empathy and raised awareness. “Things have cooled because more and more people became aware here that there was a problem

Pride, Progress, and Prospects: The Marine Corps’ Efforts to Increase the Presence of African-American Officers (1970–1995) (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 2000), 6–18.

¹⁵ Johnson, “Racial Tensions Ease at Camp Lejeune,” *New York Times*, January 21, 1971.

and that some real strong action had to be taken,” commented Alton Roane, a 24-year-old African American Lance Corporal from Grambling, Louisiana.¹⁶

Division officials also introduced discussion groups ranging from “traditional ‘bull sessions’ to structured ‘role playing’ exercises,” which also functioned as group therapy. White non-commissioned officers would assume the role of a “militant” black enlistee and African Americans would play the part of the “hard nosed” white officer. For instance, during one of the role playing exercises, a black sergeant assumed the role of a white commander, making the following remarks: “I’ve tried to counsel *these people*—I can’t do anything with *them*.” “You have two choices; either do it like I say or you go to jail.” “What do you mean you won’t fight against your people [after a black enlisted Marine refused to go on riot prevention duty against other blacks]. As long as it is a lawful order you will do it.” According to Marine officials, the role reversal exercises required the Marines to force themselves to see from the perspective of the other group. “Everything seemed so one-sided. The officers seemed to have their minds made up. I always got the feeling I was being railroaded and they gave me no chance to communicate at all,” lamented a white sergeant who played the role of an African American private.¹⁷

General Ryan’s emphasis on education gained greater appeal among the majority as Marines began to better understand social and cultural backgrounds, “There have been practically no racial problems lately. They seem to be trying to bring a better, a more comfortable and more pleasurable life to us all here,” commented David Rowe, a 22-

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

year-old white Lance Corporal from Boston, Massachusetts. “It’s still not like civilian life,” he added with a grin.¹⁸ During these sessions, it became clear that listening on the part of Marine leaders was the most important first step. Furthermore, Marines in positions of authority often discovered “the mere opportunity for blacks to speak out with an expectation of being heard was enough to defuse a potentially explosive situation.”¹⁹

Role-playing exercises also paired controversial social issues such as black militancy, school busing, and interracial dating, specifically among junior Marine officers. These seminars, led by Lieutenant Colonel Clifford H. Johnson, elicited honest responses given the nature of the subject matter, “Damn it, the issue of race carries into everything we discuss here,” shouted a young white first lieutenant from Seattle, Washington. Lieutenant Colonel Johnson simply “nodded his head in silent agreement” and continued with the seminar. Reactions such as the lieutenants revealed not only the major disconnects between the races, but the dismissal of cultural and regional factors the Marine Corps naturally adopted by its very existence as a *social laboratory*.²⁰

For many Marines the seminars and group sessions represented the first substantive discussions with members of a different race, for the first time in their lives. Several Marines reported gaining an entirely new perspective, “The breakdown is always at the top someplace,” acknowledged Robert Millbery, a 22-year-old first lieutenant from San Francisco, California. When asked about possible solutions, Lieutenant Millbery replied, “It’s effort—knowledge, You must go beyond your normal reaction, take the extra step to

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Nalty, *Strength for the Fight*, 308.

²⁰ Johnson, “Racial Tensions Ease at Camp Lejeune,” *New York Times*, January 21, 1971.

find out what you have to do on your level to open communications, to get the job done, to make sure [black Marines] understand you.”²¹ Consequently, the primary responsibility for bridging the gap between races, rested with small unit leadership (i.e., squad leaders and platoon commanders), which cannot be overstated. For a teenage Marine private, his introduction and initiation to formal and informal racial policies and subsequent formations was, in many instances, the actions of his squad leader or platoon commander. Thus, senior NCOs and junior officers who accepted official Marine Corps policy, and the changing social order, and practiced inclusiveness facilitated meaningful institutional reform. Unlike senior Marine officials, field commanders did not have the luxury of blaming American society; accomplishing mission essential tasks had to take precedence over biased notions of race. Therefore, leaders who openly placed a high priority tag on lowering racial animosity proved essential in pushing the division’s race relations agenda.

For leaders, making a concerted effort to sit down with black and white Marines and have a conversation with them proved invaluable in mitigating racial discrimination and prejudice. In many cases, the act of simply listening on the part of a leader was enough to neutralize a potentially violent situation. Leaders were now identifying and addressing the symptoms rather than the causes of racial discord. “The difference is that whites don’t panic no more when they see brothers getting together to be themselves,” commented one black Marine. Marine leaders also created situations that typically resulted in culturally enriching and positive interactions (i.e., creating racially mixed teams, squads, and working parties). Assistant Division Commander, Brigadier General Robert D. Bohn remarked, “We

²¹ Ibid.

cannot develop a good fighting unit when people are looking around at one another, distrustful, not sure of what another man is going to do.” Although division programs made deep inroads in reducing racial polarization in the Marine Corps, educational reform and greater dialogue failed to unite the races during off-duty hours; in addition, black Marines continued to wear Afro hairstyles, “power check,” and greet each other with clenched fist salute.²²

Among African American Marines, alienation as a response carries historical significance—a consequence senior Marine officials never anticipated given the nature of the military framework. Sociologist Orlando Patterson has done extensive research on this type of societal outgrowth. In his landmark work on slavery and freedom, *Slavery and Social Death*, Patterson uses a concept he identifies as *natal alienation*. Although his work provides a global analysis of the institution of slavery, it aptly applies to what almost all black Marines experienced from their inception into the Corps, particularly with structures of power and how they were defined institutionally. Patterson emphasizes three pillars of social death: natal *alienation*, dishonor, and gratuitous violence.²³

Natal Alienation

During the Vietnam era, the war itself and domestic inter-racial conflict were two major crises. As the United States slowly disengaged from its role in Vietnam, the country had to deal with a number of transitional issues—which have been previously discussed. Notwithstanding, the response of the war-trained African American veteran “to an admittedly racist society and to potentially volatile black communities,” undoubtedly

²² Ibid. See also Nalty, *Strength for the Fight*, 308.

²³ See Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).

affected the future of race relations in America. Furthermore, within these three pillars, the black veteran encountered “an expanding black-consciousness that may border on separatism, and a heightened demand for immediate and radical social change.” In the case of Vietnam, black Marines had been pulled from their communities to fight a “white man’s” war and forced to adopt a white worldview of democracy in which they had limited cultural and political involvement, which is the central theme of Patterson’s definition of natal alienation. In addition, African American Marines who alienated themselves, according to sociologist James M. Fendrich, had “specific objects of political distrust and bonds of identity that [made] them a self-conscious [collective].” This section of the chapter will use elements of both Patterson’s first pillar and Fendrich’s analysis of *alienation* throughout.²⁴

Alienation also stemmed from self-defense, self-respect, and self-determination. However, these inspired calls of the Black Power Movement, were viewed as radical by many whites, and branded African American Marines as troublemakers and militant. Even with different shades of meaning, concepts such as “alienation” and “militant” are often used interchangeably. Fendrich argues that the popular concept of militant is frequently used “so loosely that it embraces too broad a range of activities.” Despite the degree of their messages, African American community leaders, ranging from the most conservative to the most radical typically fell into this category, often labeled by whites as radical or agents of discontent. In the view of whites, Fendrich asserts that calls to “radical” action involved “little more than getting out [to] vote or working for political

²⁴ James M. Fendrich, “The Returning Black Vietnam-Era Veteran,” *Social Service Review* 46 (March 1972): 60–75.

reform.”²⁵ For this reason, it proved difficult for black Marines to be active members in southern communities, which in turn, led them to only be concerned with black institutions. Nevertheless, white Marine leaders interpreted such behavior as a sharp rejection of the values and institutions of white America. As a result, black Marines were *dishonored* relative to their white counterparts.

Dishonor

Although the Vietnam era Marine Corps appeared to be rife with egregious tension against African American Marines, the post-World War II era highlighted the pinnacle of dishonor and disrespect. The Battle of Peleliu serves as just one example of this tragic grievance of *dishonorable* treatment towards black Marines as it connects to the second pillar of social death. After withstanding enemy fire on the small coral island, a platoon of approximately 50 black Marines saved the remaining elements of a company of white infantry Marines decimated by Japanese forces. Second Lieutenant Bill Bailey, the new commanding officer replacement said to the black platoon sergeant, “Thank God. Thank you, men. Sergeant, take over. Get our wounded and dead out [and off the battlefield].”²⁶

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 67.

²⁶ Edward Andrusko, interviewed by Cameron D. McCoy, August 12, 2011 [hereafter cited as Andrusko interview]. See also Edward Andrusko, *Love and War Beneath the Southern Cross: A World War II Memoir from the South Pacific Islands and Australia* (N.P.: Andrusko, 2003), 193–200; Gerald Astor, *The Right to Fight: A History of African Americans in the Military* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2001), 229–230, 259–260, 499; Andrusko quoted in Gerald Astor, *The Greatest War: Americans in Combat, 1941–1945* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1999), 661–662, Astor, *Right to Fight*, 1–4; Frank O. Hough, Verle E. Ludwig, and Henry I. Shaw, Jr. *Pearl Harbor to Guadalcanal: History of the U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II*, Volume I (Washington, D.C.: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1958), 94, 243–245; Henry I. Shaw, Jr., Bernard C. Nalty, and Edwin T. Turnbladh. *Central Pacific Drive: History of the U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II*, Volume III (Washington, D.C.: Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1966), 568; Frank O. Hough, *The Assault on Peleliu* (Washington, D.C.: Historical Division, Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps, 1950).

For the next 24 hours, these men braved enemy fire to supply needed ammunition, food and water to the company, and evacuated all the wounded. After a long night of occupying foxholes with the black Marines, and fighting small, nighttime enemy counter attacks, the unit survived. The company's top sergeant even endorsed the platoon of black Marines as "... some of [the] company's best damn Marines!"²⁷ Once again, disappointment would soon follow; the embarrassment of being rescued by untrained stevedores would have sent shockwaves throughout the division. Losing more than half of one's company (approximately 200 men), due to complete negligence, was not cause for relief in combat during World War II for a commander. However, if a black Marine received a combat award for distinction or valor, that white commander's leadership would raise questions within his chain of command.

There would be no fanfare or media fest for these men to not only create, but cement their legacy as decorated heroes of America's *Greatest Generation*, and icons of the Pacific like John Basilone and "Chesty" Puller. The dearth of accounts such as these reinforced popular notions and biased studies that African Americans were unable to withstand the rigors of combat. It was implausible for war planners and officials to believe the prospect of black valor in combat. Nevertheless, the Battle of Peleliu disproved white racist assumptions about blacks' tactical abilities during war. Furthermore, it was commonplace for black Marines' to receive downgrades of their wartime performance, which further served as chronic symptoms of injustice during, and after, World War II.

²⁷ Andrusko interview. See also Andrusko, *Love and War Beneath the Southern Cross*, 193–200; Astor, *Right to Fight* 1–4, 229–230, 259–260, 499; Andrusko quoted in Astor, *Greatest War*, 661–662.

The figure and image of the African American Marine greatly suffered, which then called attention to their combat legitimacy throughout the postwar period, and even through the Korean War era. With the charge of the military to defeat challenging foes of democracy, the role of blacks always seemed secure and optimistic due to manpower imperatives. African Americans had made greater strides in the military in terms of attaining higher ranks during the all-volunteer force era between the official desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces in 1948 and the inauguration of the all-volunteer armed forces. Nevertheless, their image was truncated and stripped from nearly all wartime advertising throughout the 1950s; furthermore, they emerged from the Korean War with less visibility, which invited greater skepticism to the reputation as warfighters. For African Americans, whose primary toehold in the military profession rested on every non-managerial, less skilled, non-technical occupation, faced the grim prospect of decreasing employment opportunities. A peaceful settlement to the Korean conflict, added to and, severely damaged the possibilities for semiskilled, or worse, unskilled and untrained workers to find gainful employment in a technologically advancing society.²⁸

However, Truman's landmark executive orders rejected public philosophies, much to his chagrin. No matter how intransigent public and private institutions responded, the president pushed societal progress even harder. For example, the litigation leading up to the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision induced violent behavior from racial purists and segregationists, yet despite this contested form of

²⁸ Alan L. Gropman, "Blacks in the Military: The Equal Opportunity Imperative," *The National Interest* 48 (Summer 1997): 77–81; Richard Stillman II, "Negroes in the Armed Forces," *Phylon* 30 (2nd Qtr., 1969): 139–159.

democracy, members of the black community stood optimistic that further social advancement would raise their status as citizens of the United States.

Unfortunately, the 1950s ushered in gratuitous forms of racial violence against blacks. By the 1960s, racial conflict particularly intensified in day-to-day personal encounters; in almost every sphere of American life, African Americans challenged the “spoken and unspoken assumptions” governing race relations for generations. No longer did the *new generation* of black Marines accept an inferior position, especially as they had experience in the racial struggle through the movements. Many sympathetic whites who had previously supported black organizations, and played major, even leading roles in racial politics discovered they were unwelcomed in grassroots organizations and civil rights movements. For centuries, African Americans lived in fear of whites. Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, white feared that blacks would turn the tables on them, increasing their racial anxiety that blacks wanted to dominate them as they had dominated blacks; in addition, whites were fearful of this vocal black awareness and aggressiveness, their political militancy, and potential for violence.²⁹

Gratuitous Violence

Patterson’s final pillar of gratuitous violence contains ulterior meanings. Acts of violence against black Marines on the part of white Marines and civilians is an easy target, however, this final pillar reveals much more during this era. The 1960s offered young black Americans an awakening, which led to amazing cultural empowerment. It was this black consciousness movement that violently shook white America out of the 1940s and

²⁹ Blauner, *Still the Big News*, 10–11; Fendrich, “The Returning Black Vietnam-Era Veteran,” 71.

50s. For all of its tactical, operational, and strategic planning, the Marine Corps never saw this coming.

The Black Great Awakening

William E. Cross, Jr., a leading theorist and researcher in the field of ethnic identity development, specifically black identity development, presented his nigrescence theory in 1971, which is considered one of the seminal black racial identity theories. In part of his work *Shades of Black: Diversity in African American Identity*, William Cross examines the transformations in black identity during the 1960s and 1970s and its connection to social movement dynamics. Cross argues that black identity is textured in ways that previous research had frequently overlooked; for example, not all blacks adopt, assimilate, or share an identical psychological adjustment to racial oppression. In addition, Cross highlights the prominence and significance that race has for each individual and its variances, often dramatically, during a person's lifetime, typically in response to seismic shifts in cultural, political, and social conditions. After the publication of *Shades of Black*, William Cross worked with other scholars, specifically Beverly J. Vandiver, who revisited his work and expanded his racial identity scale.³⁰

³⁰ Using a thorough review of social scientific literature on black identity conducted between 1936 and 1967, William Cross demonstrates that scholars, both black and white, have largely ignored important themes of mental health and adaptive strength. See William E. Cross, Jr., *Shades of Black: Diversity in African American Identity* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1991). See also Beverly J. Vandiver, et al., "Cross's Nigrescence Model: From Theory to Scale to Theory," *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development* 29 (July 2001): 174–200; Beverly J. Vandiver, William E. Cross, Jr., Frank C. Worrell, and Peony E. Fhagen-Smith, "Validating the Cross Racial Identity Scale," *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 49 (January 2002): 71–85. See also Beverly Daniel Tatum, "Talking about Race, Learning about Racism: 'The Application' of Racial Identity Development Theory in the Classroom," *Harvard Educational Review* 62 (Spring 1992): 1–25.

This section of the chapter will only focus on these scholars' *Pre-Encounter*, *Encounter*, *Immersion-Emersion*, *Internalization*, and *Internalization-Commitment* stages on the racial identity scale. During the summer of 1942, when the Marine Corps reluctantly opened its doors to the first African American recruits, the black community viewed this as a major success. In the 1940s, this action on the part of the federal government to compel a service branch to admit blacks was so significant that it shifted the way people viewed the world. For many black Marine recruits, World War II, like previous wars, had cleared an avenue for social change and potential progress; therefore, the majority of black Marines naturally fell into the *Pre-Encounter* stage. An executive order on the part of the president of the United States clearly made these men believe, they would be viewed "primarily as an American" rather than "as a member of a racial group." Why else, despite racial exclusion, would so many of this particular generation heed the call to serve their benevolent country? One argument is that this was the perfect foothold for black Americans to prove their worth. Even so, why did it appear, at least historically, to take a war for blacks to demonstrate and prove their worth to America? Throughout the 19th century, American society had proven that industry and intellectual achievements—not the exclusive enterprise of war—raised the standard of living.³¹

Although characterized by varying grades of race salience, for this section, the *Pre-Encounter* stage will focus on the character of assimilation. Assimilation is the preference for an "American worldview and culture" and to be accepted by whites. In this

³¹ This chapter will follow a combination of William Cross's original racial identity scale and the expanded nigrescence model outlined in Beverly J. Vandiver, et al., "Validating the Cross Racial Identity Scale," 74, and Beverly Daniel Tatum's, "Talking about Race, Learning about Racism" racial identity development.

instance, black Marines preferred to socialize with white Americans through integration, which to many leading black voices was a rejection of black identity (i.e., miseducation and self-hatred). Similar to how American colonists of the late 1700s struggled to live without “the baubles of Britain,” during the 1940s, African Americans were wedded to white consumer interests and societal norms. For many observers, miseducation was represented by the lack of stress blacks placed on formal education; furthermore, fighting in another war for white America in vain attempts to achieve social equality exemplified a secret dislike and hatred of black skin and ethnic features.³²

For the World War II generation, the *Pre-Encounter* stage, however, did create a social paradox. Typically regarded as the highest and most noble form of commitment to one’s respective country, military service epitomizes the tenets of first-class citizenship, making it extremely difficult for African American Marines to turn their backs, to not only defending the nation, but also making history. In addition, the creation of Camp Montford Point enabled racial solidarity and supplied blacks with a physical enclave in which they could learn and grow from one another, and accept the significance of such an endeavor through military service. Furthermore, black Marines did not distance themselves from members of their own race, for the sake of race; rather it was based on a northern and southern approach and mentality to integration. Congressional and leading military officials had a lot of influence during this stage; they controlled the narrative and structure of black life in the Marine Corps. Moreover, there was no significant black

³² Beverly J. Vandiver, et al., “Cross’s Nigrescence Model,” 184; Beverly J. Vandiver, et al., “Validating the Cross Racial Identity Scale,” 74; Tatum, “Talking about Race, Learning about Racism;” Timothy H. Breen, “ ‘Baubles of Britain’: The American and Consumer Revolutions of the Eighteenth Century,” *Past & Present* 119 (May 1988): 73–104.

power structure for African Americans to rely upon. Paternalism was an organic element in Marine Corps relationships because it structured the interactions between white officers and black enlisted men, and was fundamental to white-black perspectives. Paternalism shaped moral codes, the hierarchy of authority, even outside the approved chain of command, and the worth of black enlisted Marines. This presented a precarious situation for black Marines because eventually they would have to evolve with the times and move beyond Montford Point, both mentally and physically after the war.³³

The interwar period and the Korean War era highlight the *Encounter* stage, which forced African American Marines to acknowledge the significance of racism and accept that receiving treatment equal to that of whites was unachievable. Even if possible, General Holcomb's publication of Letter of Instruction No. 421, enumerating racial protocol, ensured the marginalization of blacks. It is during the *Encounter* stage, of this period, when blacks began to focus on their group identity as members targeted by racial discrimination and prejudice.³⁴ Many blacks emerged from this era fiercely challenging the *separate but equal* doctrine and vehemently opposing legal segregation across the country. During this era, no number of court rulings, government edicts, or legislation could shift traditional racial biases overnight. The slow pace of integration tested the patience of a rising generation of African Americans, nothing less than full-fledged

³³ Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915–1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 77; John W. Davis, "The Negro in the United States Navy, Marines Corps and Coast Guard," *Journal of Negro Education* 12 (Summer 1943): 345–349.

³⁴ Beverly J. Vandiver, et al., "Cross's Nigrescence Model," 184; Beverly J. Vandiver, et al., "Validating the Cross Racial Identity Scale," 74; Tatum, "Talking about Race, Learning about Racism." See also Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams & the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 3–59, 61–63, 71–75, 213–219.

citizenship would turn this generation's energy in any other direction than creating a social and cultural environment of their choosing. This new consciousness among blacks leads directly to the *Immersion-Emersion* stage.³⁵

The *Immersion-Emersion* stage exploded during the Vietnam era. African American Marines surrounded themselves with visible symbols of racial and ethnic identity while actively avoiding conspicuous symbols of whiteness. This emotional pro-black view led African American Marines to seek out opportunities to explore critical aspects of their own history and culture with the support of their peers. For many this stage is naturally characterized by the highly imprecise notion of "Black Power," which typically suggested everything from electing African American officials (far from a radical notion) to the belief that formerly colonized blacks could only achieve freedom through a revolutionary struggle for self-determination. As a further factor, this "super-black" response usually led to impatience even among blacks (i.e., "Sometimes I cannot help myself and I 'go off' on someone who thinks like a typical 'Negro'").³⁶

The emotional pro-black view of the *Immersion-Emersion* stage captured the hearts and minds of many Vietnam era African American Marines. These men romanticized everything black, so far as to challenge the "blackness" of other African Americans who failed to adopt their method and technique of promulgating black pride. This led to several clashes among black Marines, "Many people called us 'Uncle Toms,'

³⁵ Henry I. Shaw, Jr. and Ralph W. Donnelly, *Blacks in the Marine Corps* (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1975; reprint 2002), 67.

³⁶ Beverly J. Vandiver, et al., "Cross's Nigrescence Model," 184; Beverly J. Vandiver, et al., "Validating the Cross Racial Identity Scale," 74; Tatum, "Talking about Race, Learning about Racism." See also Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting 'Til The Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006).

but we were actually holding the line,” asserted Lieutenant Colonel Felix L. Goodwin, military information officer. Men like Lieutenant Colonel Goodwin, who “held the line,” were also labeled by the new generation of Marines, Sailors, and Soldiers as “careerists.” Goodwin and many others believed, similar to World War II era Marines, that military service was in its own right a civil rights struggle.³⁷

Notwithstanding, there were many black career officers who “saw the light,” believing their fight was back home in the United States. “No honest Negro can stay in the service,” said a junior officer. “I can’t send a man to die to give the Vietnamese a democracy that he does not have himself.” Another officer held the same view, “There is no doubt about it,” he said. “You’ll have a new Negro coming out of Vietnam who has seen that America will allow him to die without discrimination, and he’ll want to live without discrimination. You’ve also got a new Negro on the streets back home demanding only what white people take for granted everyday.” For the purposes of this example, this form of ultra militancy during the Black Power and Civil Rights movements was neither consistently condoned, nor condemned among African American Marines. Several black career men expressed that understanding of such a philosophy and how militants evolved, “They were created by white people, not by Negroes,” a black officer shared. The Vietnam War was the first war in U.S. history that national leaders of the African American community did not urge young blacks to take up arms in support of an American policy to improve the status of black Americans.³⁸

³⁷ Johnson, “NEGRO IN VIETNAM UNEASY ABOUT U.S.,” *New York Times*, May 1, 1968.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

The 1960s seemed to energize scores of African American Marines; they discovered an untapped reservoir of courage and racial pride, challenging whites in every institution at every level. When asked by a reporter to comment on H. Rap Brown's anti-war statements, a black Marine sergeant replied, "[I will speak out against] Stokely Carmichael publicly as soon as General Westmoreland comes out against George Wallace."³⁹ As African American Marines challenged the establishment for racial and social equity, they were intent on proving they were as good, if not better, than their white counterparts, "I couldn't care less if he likes me, and sure, he does have rights," James Williams a Private First Class from Manhattan, New York said. "But he has no right that says he can keep me down—can deny me my rights." The *New York Times* correspondent remarked, "You're not the first Negro fighting man to say this. They've said it for many wars. If you're right, what will make the difference this time?" This was a pivotal question, one that this new generation had to seriously consider, "[Our predecessors] may have said it and meant it, too." PFC Williams replied, "but I don't know about them. That was them and that was in their time. This is me and this is now, and believe me, I'll make the difference. This stuff has got to stop. I'll make the difference." As the Vietnam War ended, this generation of African American Marines did experience meaningful institutional reform through human relations programs that emphasized cross-cultural communication.⁴⁰

³⁹ Ibid. See also Joseph Lelyveld, "Militant Ex-Marine Leads Philadelphia Negroes," *New York Times*, September 2, 1964; "NEGRO EX-MARINES OPEN RALLY HERE," *New York Times*, August 24, 1967; Thomas A. Johnson, "Negro Veteran Is Confused and Bitter Upon Return to Many of the Old Difficulties," *New York Times*, July 29, 1968.

⁴⁰ Johnson, "NEGRO IN VIETNAM UNEASY ABOUT U.S.," *New York Times*, May 1, 1968.

The Marine Corps's human relations initiative allowed the *Internalization* stage among African Americans to largely flourish. As black Marines softened the "blacker than thou," or similar attitudes characterized by the *Immersion-Emersion* stage, their voices and status were elevated; in addition, they witnessed a new direction of not only institutional policies, but also practices, and significant shifts in attitudes. The internalized individual has adopted a less defensive and more expansive attitude; he is willing to establish sincere relationships with whites who acknowledge their role and demonstrate due deference for the individual's self-definition. Furthermore, the internalized individual is prepared to build coalitions with members of other disenfranchised groups (i.e., as a Black Nationalist, I support combating racism through black solidarity and other cultural minority groups such as Latinos). Although turbulent, black Vietnam era Marines benefitted from the previous stage, which made for a healthier internalization stage filled with greater awareness and collective effort. The success of this stage would be vitally important, specifically as the need for African American officers increased.⁴¹

The *Internalization-Commitment* centers on translating a personal sense of race into a comprehensive plan of action and commitment "to the concerns of the group." The long-term, sustainable goal is that race becomes a "point of departure for discovering the universe of ideas, cultures and experiences beyond [race], in place of mistaking [one's race] as the universe itself."⁴² For this stage to come to fruition for blacks in the Corps,

⁴¹ Beverly J. Vandiver, et al., "Cross's Nigrescence Model," 184; Beverly J. Vandiver, et al., "Validating the Cross Racial Identity Scale," 74; Tatum, "Talking about Race, Learning about Racism."

⁴² Ibid. See also Blauner, *Still the Big News*, 10–11.

senior Marine officials had to make a determined effort to recruit, promote, and retain African American officers. A chief complaint among African American Marines was the dearth of black officers; virtually no minority officer occupied a significant, and visible, position of authority. Senior Marine leaders believed there would be an added benefit to recruiting and promoting black officers: reducing incidents of racial discrimination.⁴³

What senior enlisted Marine or junior officer would be foolish enough to display insubordinate behavior based on racial prejudice if his immediate supervisor was black?

From Integration to Diversity

The Marine Corps's strategy to build and establish a more diverse officer corps fell short of its expected goals during the 1970s. The attractiveness of a military career experienced a sharp decline, the most often cited reasons included the perception that the Marine Corps remained the least progressive of the service branches, increased opportunities for civilian career advancement in the business and government sectors, and the negative coverage of the Vietnam War. Nevertheless, the total number of black officers increased and many received promotions to the highest ranks. From 1962 to 1970, the black officer corps increased from 0.2 to 1.3; on the other hand, black enlisted strength rose from 7.7 to 11.2 in the same period. Although these numbers are negligible, cross-cultural communication between black and white Marines continued to be an important aspect of institutional reform.⁴⁴

⁴³ Davis, *Pride, Progress, and Prospects*, 6–18; Morris Janowitz, "The All-Volunteer Military as a 'Sociopolitical' Problem," *Social Problems* 22 (February 1975): 432–449; "Claim Marines need more black officers," *Chicago Defender*, April 21, 1975.

⁴⁴ Ibid. See also Mark R. Grandstaff, "Making the Military American: Advertising, Reform, and the Demise of an Antistanding Military Tradition, 1945–1995," *Journal of Military History* 60 (April 1996): 299–323;

The issue of race in the Vietnam era Marine Corps can be traced to poor leadership. Absentee Marine commanders turning a blind eye to prejudiced behavior led directly to racial turbulence. Efforts of a commanding officer to apply all the techniques of positive leadership were of little value if the junior officers under his supervision destroyed the effect of his work through actions resulting from disinterest, a lack of knowledge, or personal prejudice. Therefore, the careful selection of junior officers and close observance of their performance proved critical. If Marine leaders, enlisted and commissioned, had taken the time to simply get to know their men, formally and informally, the majority of problems the Marine Corps encountered throughout the 1960s could have been significantly minimized. Marines must have confidence in their officers; there was a natural tendency for African American Marines to be distrustful of white authority, and a tendency of unwillingness or even an inability to speak fully and frankly to whites regarding mutual concerns. This distrust and natural reservation on the part of blacks developed as a protective measure while living under conditions where the threat of violence and even death were so acute. These special issues, however, did stand in the way of white leaders' attempts to understand and gain the confidence of their subordinates. In addition, the withdrawal of Marine forces from Vietnam at the end of 1969 reduced tensions and provided leaders with better opportunities to get to know their men.

By the early 1970s, the number of racially motivated incidents had precipitously dropped. U.S. Marines of all hues and ethnicities achieve an acceptable level of racial

Richard Stillman II, "Racial Unrest in the Military: The Challenge and the Response," *Public Administration Review* 34 (May–June 1974): 221–229.

harmony and fair and equitable treatment. Once Marine commanders abandoned 19th century models of military protocol and understood that *good order* and *discipline* did not necessarily mean segregation but rather greater understanding, and the degree to which racial prejudice undermined unit cohesion and effectiveness, they were resolute in finding meaningful ways to combat the deleterious effects of bigotry and discrimination. As a result, policies were established, but also adhered to, and *all* Marines were held accountable. Learning hard lessons and implementing lasting reform allowed the Marine Corps to overcome its historically self-imposed deficiencies.⁴⁵

Although African American Marine narratives have limitations as sources given the recording and timing of their history, and when, and how it has been shared with the public at large, their history is all too brief. Since 1975, the Marine Corps's leading work, detailing the history of African American Marines, is *Blacks in the Marine Corps*. This 83-page work, excluding front matter, appendices, notes, and index, describes all the major events blacks participated in from 1942 to 1974. Henry I. Shaw, Jr. and Ralph W. Donnelly's *Blacks in the Marine Corps* is an invaluable tool for historians and scholars, but has failed to reach larger audiences, which has severely limited the exposure of this exclusive group. These men are not to blame, it is a history authored by a former Marine officer in Shaw and an historian in Donnelly, for Marines. In his original 1973 draft, *The Black in the Marine Corps*, Donnelly noted,

This study cannot hope to be definitive since some material, known to have existed, cannot be found. It is, at best, an introduction to the subject. If it is to be useful to the Marine Corps and justify the time and expense it has taken, it cannot tell just the nice things that

⁴⁵ Johnson, "Racial Tensions Ease at Camp Lejeune," *New York Times*, January 21, 1971.

people want to hear, but it must also tell even those things people would rather forget or don't want to hear.⁴⁶

Donnelly further noted, "This is an incomplete study because it is inconclusive. The problem is still to be solved. (By 'problem,' we mean any question which arouses or stimulate controversy.) It is manifestly impossible for the author to draw completely valid conclusions because the factual basis is unknown to be complete." Donnelly's aim was to point all the facts toward valid conclusions, "As far as possible, the factual information is obtained from official sources. Other published sources are used to complement the official sources or to bridge the gap between sources. It is the hope that prejudice and bias are at a minimum."⁴⁷

Donnelly's hope that partiality be minimized calls attention to the residual effects of the Vietnam War and the times. Donnelly asserted, "Any author who faces the problem of writing on a highly emotionally charged controversial subject is bound to have personal opinions ('prejudices,' if you will); he who proclaims loudly that he is unprejudiced simply confesses he knows nothing of the subject, or refuses to admit the truth." As with all historians, Donnelly implored readers to know that, "All we ask of history is the truth—it is the historian's job to recreate it as far as the available documents permit." Donnelly's final request, "It is to be hoped that Marines and former Marines will

⁴⁶ Ralph W. Donnelly, "The Black in the Marine Corps," Original Draft, Record Group 127: Records of the United States Marine Corps, History and Museums Division, PUBLICATION BACKGROUND FILES, "Brief History of Blacks in USMC, 1942–73," Draft Text & Source Documents, Box 135 (College Park, MD: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration) [hereafter cited as RG 127: Box 135, NARA].

⁴⁷ RG 127: Box 135, NARA.

be stimulated to come forth with documents, letters, diaries, and written reminiscences to [fill] in the obvious gaps in the story.”⁴⁸

More than 30 years would pass before the United States Marine Corps found interest in this group of men, specifically the Marines of Montford Point. It was after historian Melton A. McLaurin interviewed more than 60 of the nation’s first African American Marines, and had a deal with the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) to air the interviews in 2007, that belated recognition for their bravery and heroism during World War II arrived from Marine officials. This is not to cast aspersions on the beloved Marine Corps, it is simply to highlight the evidence that at the close of each war, each of these men participated in, proved to be major junctures for change, and at these critical moments, their wartime contributions were marginalized.⁴⁹

The policies of the Marine Corps concerning the status of African Americans failed to keep pace with those of the other military services, however, it did maintain pace with American society. Letter of Instruction No. 421 left no room for interpretation, but set the stage for commander to create ambiguous discriminatory practices. Camp Montford Point even enabled racial policies and segregationist practices to persist during and after World War II, supplanting all forms of racial activism within the Corps. During the 1940s, black Marines could not even *push* for a greater role and equality because it was an unrealistic expectation. At the end of World War II, service-wide changes

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Melton A. McLaurin also published, *The Marines of Montford Point: America’s First Black Marines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2007), the first (and only) definitive work of oral histories chronicling the lives of the men of Montford Point. In the same year Ronald K. Culp published, *The First Black United States Marines: The Men of Montford Point, 1942–1946* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2007).

occurred almost immediately regarding the advancement of African Americans. Afraid to acknowledge limits, the Marine Corps remained intransigent and institutionally blind and deaf to meaningful progress, specifically when it came to providing a broader means for commissioning black officers.

Over the next 30 years, Marine commanders got in the way of minority advancement, and had multiple opportunities to destroy myths of black inferiority. The effects of each war yielded specific outcomes pertaining to social equality and minority issues, understandably so, but the military remained ahead of civilian society in race relations. For example, in 1971, two years after the Marine Corps had established an Ad Hoc Committee on Equal Treatment and Opportunity enumerating commander responsibilities the Department of Defense (DoD) introduced a new race relations program. By 1971, DoD officials realized the optimal performance of the armed forces relied on “preparedness, responsiveness, and team cohesion.” The *New York Times* reported that the DoD’s new race relations program would provide training for approximately 1,400 instructors within a year, whose primary focus then would be to teach courses on race relations within each respective service branch. DoD officials asserted that their basic purpose of designing and implementing such programs was to “prevent racial unrest, tension, or conflict” from impairing military readiness and combat effectiveness. In addition, there was an expectation on the part of DoD officials, that “... results of the program [would] be felt in communities where [members of the] armed

forces [were] located and that there [would] be a carryover into the rest of the country as servicemen [returned] to civilian life.”⁵⁰

This new DoD-wide race relations program was the most ambitious measure put into practice by any U.S. government entity at the time. The Defense Race Relations Institute (DDRI), the department’s education center that opened in June 1971, was to serve as a catalyst for change. The DDRI’s cardinal objective focused on counteracting worldwide racial inequities, injustices, and turbulence aboard all Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps installations through positive education, which would affect changes in behavior.⁵¹

From 1945 to 1965, Marine officials had been granted multiple opportunities to get the “race issue” under manageable control and assist their embattled brothers; nevertheless, senior Marine leadership allowed a volcano of racial tension to build and erupt across the national stage, during the most unpopular war in modern U.S. history,

⁵⁰ Dana Adams Schmidt, “Classes in Race Relations Ordered for Armed Forces,” *New York Times*, March 6, 1971; see also Isaac Hampton II, *The Black Officer Corps: A History of Black Military Advancement from Integration through Vietnam* (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), 122–123.

⁵¹ Richard O. Hope, *Racial Strife in the U.S. Military: Towards the Elimination of Discrimination* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1979), 4; Hampton, *Black Officer Corps*, 123, 123n8. Isaac Hampton II contends that the genesis of the modern military’s attempts to ensure equality for African Americans can be traced back to President John F. Kennedy’s administration, when Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara issued Directive 5120.36 in July 1963. McNamara believed issues concerning race be handled at the executive level not by service branch chiefs. Directive 5120.36 served as an early template to how the Department of Defense would handle civil rights imperatives and future race problems in the armed forces. Observers considered McNamara’s actions as aggressive regarding positive change in addressing racial equality in the armed forces. McNamara believed influencing the military to end racial discrimination would trickle down to adjacent local civilian communities. Directive 5120.36 empowered base commanders to use economic power to influence civilian communities to end business prejudices and discrimination against minorities, specifically in businesses, housing, and private education. See Hampton, *Black Officer Corps*, 123; Morris J. MacGregor, Jr., *Integration of the Armed Forces, 1940–1965* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, Center of Military History, United States Army, 1981), 547–549, 620.

bringing with it irreparable damage. The Cold War era assisted in yielding three outcomes that stigmatized and tarnished the fighting reputation of African American Marines. Racial animosity deterred blacks from wanting to enter the ranks of the Marine Corps, which led to an inability for black Marines to build a significant black power structure within the institution. Lastly, the controversy surrounding the Vietnam War precluded African American Marines from achieving the elusive and wholesome image of “good soldiers.” World War II and Korea had made it easy for so many to overlook the significance of race relations, which situated African American Marines in a gray area, relying on their questionable World War II contributions that were all but forgotten, and their seemingly reluctant combat performance during Vietnam.

Throughout the Cold War era, African American Marines emerged after each war with a diminished image in comparison to their white counterparts. There were no flags waving or bands playing upon their return home; matter of fact, many were branded by the left as baby killers and blamed by the right for losing the war. These men came home to less after each conflict. Furthermore, black Marines experienced mental and physical domination at the hands of American society after World War II, since laws had codified their humanity. African Americans are the only group of people in the history of the United States who had to fight for recognition as humans. During the 1950s, they had to fight for freedom and equality after exposure to societal abandonment by white America after the Korean War, and had to fight for survival from near extinction—accounting for the highest percentage of casualties—during the Vietnam War. Evidence indicates the Marine Corps never viewed itself as a progressive institution, nor was it able to set

conditions for greater camaraderie and harmony within its ranks for the continued service and legitimacy of black Marines.

The above factors added to the beleaguered and truncated image of the African American Marine even after the Vietnam War, which in turn served to contest his wartime legitimacy and reminded him of his “proper place,” espousing his historical *service support* wartime role. Furthermore, the sophisticated and subtle nature of systematized racism plagued black Marines in singular ways during these three wars. African American Marines were both direct participants in, as well as historical recipients of, what many scholars refer to as the Cold War era. In its fundamental causes, its scale, and certainly its results, the Cold War era was a revolutionary turn in the course of U.S. history. Nevertheless, the results of World War II carried a cancerous message for more than 30 years, crippling the figure and image of the African American Marine.

Like other major touchstones of American History, the significance of World War II continues to function in serving the present. It served as a harbinger for the Cold War; for example, the perfect case of this historical phenomenon is that no African American Marine received the Congressional Medal of Honor during World War II or Korea. During the Vietnam War, the United States awarded 237 Medals of Honor to its service members. African Americans received 20. The Army received 154 awards, 15 went to black soldiers, the Marine Corps received 56 awards, and only five went to black Marines—all awarded posthumously.⁵²

⁵² “U.S. Gives First Medal of Honor to a Negro Marine,” *New York Times*, August 22, 1968. “For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while serving ...” Private First Class James Anderson, Jr. (February 28, 1967); Sergeant Rodney M. Davis (September 6,

The Cold War era Marine Corps took its toll on African Americans. Rituals that defined the American spirit during this era psychologically affected the majority of black Marines. This minimization of combat decorations and recognition hurt black Marines, first on the battlefield and then in the annals of history. This two-edged sword placed African Americans in the camp of “losers” rather than “winners,” despite the collective dominance of the U.S. Armed Forces at the end of World War II and throughout the Cold War era. Similar to the American Civil War, the Union won, nevertheless, the Emancipation Proclamation lacked the potency, but more so, a plan that would target the collective attitude of the Confederacy and address the social and economic arenas that continue to hamper African Americans. Because basic rights remained just outside the reach of the majority of blacks, the narrative of U.S. history has not always presented a complete and fair picture of minorities in the military.

Taking into account how the literary canon has shaped discrimination, and individual and collective frameworks within the United States, African Americans have endured a long and complicated relationship within the Marine Corps, especially during periods of war. The ugliness of war also brought out the dark side of those who prosecuted these very conflicts, which exposed the incongruities of democracy in the United States. Furthermore, in the opinion of many white Marine officials and leaders, black Marines represented a distinct threat to general social hierarchies and white supremacist visions of democracy. These institutional constructions were characterized

1967); Private First Class Ralph H. Johnson (March 5, 1968); Private First Class Oscar P. Austin (February 23, 1969); Private First Class Robert H. Jenkins, Jr. (March 5, 1969). All were awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously. See also Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts*, 11; Marc Cerasini, *Heroes: U.S. Marine Corps Medal of Honor Winners* (New York: Berkley Books, 2002).

by the actions, sheer presence, and professional aspirations of black Marines. Service in the Marine Corps subjected nearly every African American Marine to the most excruciating forms of systemic racial discrimination, but at the same time, also provided a de facto jobs program. In addition, opportunities for advancement within the armed forces allowed these men to better shape, individually and collectively, their vigorously contested military reputation by debunking myths of cowardly and undisciplined behavior. Furthermore, it would be unwise and historically irresponsible to completely discard literature written by the hands of whites in describing the experiences of African Americans because of views born of a different time.

Over the next 40 years, the Marine Corps would develop and expand its programs of diversity and redefine itself as a force in readiness. Notwithstanding, the pace at which the Corps grew in diversity it also, simultaneously, encountered its ugly racial past. The 70th anniversary of America's entrance in to World War II marked a key moment, especially as institutions and organizations began recognizing members of America's *Greatest Generation*. However, for nearly 70 years the Marine Corps had forgotten about its *first* African American Marines, except on April 19, 1974, Camp Montford Point was renamed Camp Gilbert H. Johnson, after one of the first black Marines, making it the first U.S. military installation named in honor of an African American. The next time a government agency publically recognized Montford Pointers was in 2010. With the national media build up and celebrations commemorating the 70th anniversary of the military feats of America's *Greatest Generation*, Marine Corps officials ensured their beloved institution would make a splash, especially as the smallest service branch, which

may possibly account for the U.S. Senate's resolution, officially recognizing August 26, 2010 as "Montford Point Marines Day."⁵³

It is difficult to argue whether or not Marine Corps officials felt institutional guilt, or internal and external pressures to recognize these pioneers; nevertheless, America's first black Marines found themselves at the center of a media frenzy after 2010. Almost every U.S. media outlet wanted an interview with them, referring to these men as *heroes*, *icons*, and *trailblazers*, and their military achievements as *groundbreaking*. In 2011, the cover story for *USA Today* read, "At last, honors for the first black Marines: Montford Point Marines to become part of Corps' story." Since June 1, 1942, for more than 70 years, black Marines had already been part of the Marine Corps story, however, now they were no longer just a footnote. Despite, this historic oversight, the U.S. Senate had now recognized them as "liberators of the people of the Pacific," officially deeming them members of the inner circle of America's *Greatest Generation*.⁵⁴

Notwithstanding, this belated validation has done little to compensate for past behaviors, during which the Marine Corps, a branch that believed in its own initiative and pioneering spirit, failed to lead by example or even adopt elements of institutional reform measures established by the other service branches in providing for its black members. Although previously exclusive, and the smallest service branch, the Marine Corps could have greatly increased the visibility of black Marines during World War II, Korea, and

⁵³ On April 19, 1974, Camp Montford Point was renamed Camp Gilbert H. "Hashmark" Johnson, after one of the first black Marine Sergeants Major, making it the first U.S. military installation named in honor of an African American. See Shaw and Donnelly, *Blacks in the Marine Corps*, 83. See also Appendix G for "Montford Point Marines Day."

⁵⁴ Jim Michaels, "At last, honors for the first black Marines," *USA Today*, October 27, 2011; Appendix G.

Vietnam by accurately documenting their military achievements, which would have demonstrated to the American public that the price for global democracy and winning wars (at all cost) outweighed tradition. Instead, the Marine Corps successfully denied its black leathernecks the opportunity to be recognized as members of America's publically acclaimed *Greatest Generation* during a period when it mattered most to the African American community at large.

Nevertheless, on June 27, 2012, America's first black Marines received the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest civilian honor, awarded to persons "who have performed an achievement that has an impact on American history and culture that is likely to be recognized as a major achievement in the recipient's field long after the achievement."⁵⁵ Flags have waved, bands have played, and at every social event, their status is VIP. Consequently, this long overdue recognition led Marine Corps officials to begin reevaluating previous awards given to African American Marines, which may have been colored by prejudiced eyes.

Despite this flagrant negligence, no longer was the past contested for black Marines of the Cold War era. Quite the opposite occurred as institutional doors to greater opportunities opened and the sting of bigotry disappeared. Nevertheless, the Cold War era Marine Corps proved challenging on multiple fronts for African Americans. Regardless of their ultimate post-military life, many never felt the "mission was accomplished" as their legitimacy and manhood remained contested for more than 30 years. Although the Double V Campaign faded with the World War II generation, the

⁵⁵ Todd Spangler, Detroit Free Press, "First black Marines receive Congressional Gold Medal," *USA Today*, June 27, 2012. See also Appendix H.

influence of the Black Power and Civil Rights movements carried with it the torch of democracy. The Cold War era called on men from various ethnic groups into the armed forces. Observers presumed that all these men were imbued with common ideals and standards, signaling to the rest of the world unification and national pride. Every black Marine had not only donned, but also earned the coveted Eagle, Globe, and Anchor, assuring American society that he would wear the fabric of his beloved United States and dutifully fight against all enemies, foreign *and* domestic. All were entitled to common respect, without discrimination due to sectional birth, political belief, race, or religion. Yet, African American Marines continued to struggle with the drivers of social and political change, which only served to stall their collective engine of progress and emergence as symbols of cultural achievement and institutional advancement. After Vietnam, many blacks, however, continued to join the Marine Corps in order to stake claim to full-fledged citizenship, assert their fundamental rights to humanity, and alert white American society of its obligation to not only promote, but also practice the very democratic principles it used as a global liberator. On balance, the Cold War era Marine Corps was subject to severe institutional inequities, which was not a result of failure on the part of blacks to meet organizational criteria, but rather a result of direct racist policies and practices created by those who proclaimed universal democracy.

APPENDIX A

EXECUTIVE ORDER 8802*

Prohibition of Discrimination in the Defense Industry

June 25, 1941

WHEREAS it is the policy of the United States to encourage full participation in the national defense program by all citizens of the United States, regardless of race, creed, color, or national origin, in the firm belief that the democratic way of life within the Nation can be defended successfully only with the help and support of all groups within its borders; and

WHEREAS there is evidence that available and needed workers have been barred from employment in industries engaged in defense production solely because of consideration of race, creed, color, or national origin, to the detriment of workers' morale and of national unity:

NOW, THEREFORE, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the statutes, and as a prerequisite to the successful conduct of our national defense production effort, I do hereby reaffirm the policy of the United States that there shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries or government because of race, creed, color, or national origin, and I do hereby declare that it is the duty of employers and of labor organizations, in furtherance of said policy and of this Order, to provide for the full and equitable participation of all workers in defense industries, without discrimination because of race, creed, color, or national origin;

And it is hereby ordered as follows:

1. All departments and agencies of the Government of the United States concerned with vocational and training programs for defense production shall take special measures appropriate to assure that such programs are administered without discrimination because of race, creed, color, or national origin;
2. All contracting agencies of the Government of the United States shall include in all defense contracts hereafter negotiated by them a provision obligating the contractor not to discriminate against any worker because of race, creed, color, or national origin;

* Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Executive Order 8802: "Prohibition of Discrimination in the Defense Industry," June 25, 1941, Record Group 11: General Records of the United States Government, 1778-1992 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration).

3. There is established in the Office of Production Management a Committee on Fair Employment Practice, which shall consist of a Chairman and four other members to be appointed by the President. The Chairman and members of the Committee shall serve as such without compensation but shall be entitled to actual and necessary transportation, subsistence, and other expenses incidental to performance of their duties. The Committee shall receive and investigate complaints of discrimination in violation of the provisions of this Order and shall take appropriate steps to redress grievances which it finds to be valid. The Committee shall also recommend to the several departments and agencies of the Government of the United States and to the President all measures which may be deemed by it necessary or proper to effectuate the provisions of this Order.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

APPENDIX B

NAVY DEPARTMENT

IMMEDIATE RELEASE
PRESS AND RADIO
MAY 20, 1942

MARINES ANNOUNCE PLANS FOR RECRUITING NEGROES IN USMC*

The first battalion of Negroes, numbering about 900, will be enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve during the months of June and July, it was announced at U.S. Marine Corps Headquarters.

Those volunteers will form a composite battalion which is a unit including all combat arms of the ground forces composed of artillery, anti-aircraft, machine guns, tank and infantry, and including also billets for recruits who are skilled in various trades and occupations such as radio operators, electricians, accountants, carpenters, draftsmen, band musicians, riggers and blacksmiths.

Until a training center is ready for their reception recruits will be temporarily placed in an inactive duty status. The training center will be in the vicinity of New River, North Carolina where a large Marine Corps post is now located. As required, Negro recruits will be ordered directly from their homes to duty in this training area.

* Department of the Navy, "Marines Announce Plans for Recruiting African-Americans," Department of the Navy, May 20, 1942, Record Group 127: Records of the United States Marine Corps, History and Museums Division, PUBLICATION BACKGROUND FILES, "Brief History of Blacks in USMC, 1942-73," Draft Text & Source Documents, Box 134 (College Park, MD: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration); see also Record Group 24: Bureau of Naval Personnel General Correspondence, 1941-1945, Box 611 (College Park, MD: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration). See also "NAVY, MARINES BEGIN RECRUITING JUNE 1: MARINES AND NAVY READY FOR RECRUITS," *Chicago Defender*, May 30, 1942.

APPENDIX C

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HEADQUARTERS U.S. MARINE CORPS

WASHINGTON

CONFIDENTIAL

20 March 1943.

From: The Commandant, U. S. Marine Corps.
To: Distribution List.
Subject: Colored Personnel.*

1. Approximately ten (10) per cent of all enlisted men inducted into the Marine Corps subsequent to 1 February 1943 will be Negroes. The assimilation of this number of Negroes will in time result in a wide dispersion of this personnel throughout the Marine Corps. With a view to assisting commanding officers in formulating plans and providing facilities for the reception and employment of colored personnel, the following information on the subject is furnished.

2. Present plans contemplate that initially colored personnel will be employed as follows:

Messman Branch

Officers' Messes (Combat Units)
General Officers' Quarters (Public)

Organized Combat Units

Composite Defense Battalions, Fleet Marine Force.
Separate Infantry Battalion, Fleet Marine Force.

Depot Companies, (including Fleet Marine Force Units.)

Motor Transport Units (including Fleet Marine Force Units.)

* Letter from the Commandant, U.S. Marine Corps, to Commanding Generals, dated 20 March 1943, Subject: Colored Personnel (formerly classified CONFIDENTIAL), Record Group 127: Records of the United States Marine Corps, History and Museums Division, PUBLICATION BACKGROUND FILES, "Brief History of Blacks in USMC, 1942-73," Draft Text & Source Documents, Box 134 (College Park, MD: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration).

Special Detachments, Marine Corps Activities in U.S.

Guard Detachments, U.S. Naval Activities

3. Colored personnel will be given their basic training at Camp Lejeune, New River, North Carolina. Training of Messman Branch personnel and organization training of colored Fleet Marine Force units will also be conducted at Camp Lejeune.

4. In plans for employment of Negroes, the aim will be to use the maximum practicable number in combat units. The bottleneck in forming and training combat units of colored personnel is the lack of noncommissioned officers. In view of the above, every effort will be made to locate Negroes having the requisite qualities of intelligence, education, and leadership to become noncommissioned officers. When once located they will be trained and promoted as rapidly as they can qualify for higher positions. Units being formed for duty with the Fleet Marine Force, will, in all cases, have first call on Negro personnel of noncommissioned officer caliber.

5. Mixing of white and colored enlisted personnel within the same unit will be avoided, except as may be temporarily necessary in providing white noncommissioned officers. Plans should contemplate relief of these white noncommissioned officers as rapidly as colored noncommissioned officers can be qualified.

6. As indicated above, the use of colored personnel in guard detachments and Marine Barracks at Naval shore activities is contemplated. In priority of selection of stations for assignment of Negroes, the Marines Corps will endeavor to conform to the action taken by the Navy in their assignment of colored personnel to stations. To avoid mixed guards, colored personnel for this duty will be assigned initially to individual posts in sufficient numbers to relieve all white Marines of the sixth and seventh pay grades, relieving personnel of other grades as rapidly as practicable.

7. The long experience of the Army with regard to Negro military organizations indicates the importance of the following considerations:

(a) Successful units were commanded by excellent to superior white officers who were firm but sympathetic with their men, and who thoroughly knew their individual and racial characteristics and temperaments. These officers once assigned were not changed. The success of Negro organization has depended largely on the personality of its commanding officers. It has taken this commander many months to gain their loyalty but once it is gained, they follow his leadership without question. Where one commander has been replaced by another officer of equal ability, it has taken the latter many months to gain their loyalty. In view of this characteristic, great care should be exercised in the initial choice of officers assigned to colored units, and, once assigned, every effort should be made to retain them in that organization.

(b) Successful organizations have had colored noncommissioned officers. In nearly all cases to intermingle colored and white enlisted personnel in the same organization has led to trouble and disorder.

(c) Everyone prefers employment on work for which he volunteers, but the Negro is even more influenced by this consideration than is the white. In view of this characteristic, the exigencies of the service permitting, they should be grouped and assigned the type of duty they prefer.

8. A study of the cause of most racial disturbances in military establishments has Disclosed the following:

(a) Lack of Discipline. It is seldom that well disciplined Negro troops have been disorderly. It is not expected that the Marine Corps, if it maintains the same discipline among colored troops as for other Marines, will have any trouble from this source.

(b) Lack of Recreational Facilities. Recreational facilities for colored personnel at the post or station should equal in all respects that supplied for white Marines. In most cases it is not the lack of recreational facilities at the post at which serving which is the main source of trouble, but the fact that the adjacent towns do not offer sufficient desirable recreational facilities for members of the colored race, with the result that they are, of necessity, driven to places which they would not frequent of their own choice. Practically the only solution to this problem is through the local civilian officials. Every effort should be made to have the community concerned provide adequate recreational facilities. Lacking this cooperation, the only other method of preventing trouble is by extensive use of highly trained military police, both white and colored.

(c) The Negro Press. Every possible step should be taken to prevent the publication of inflammatory articles by the Negro press. Such control is largely outside the province of the Marine Corps, but the Marines Corps can, by supplying the Negro press with suitable material for publication and offering them the cooperation of our Public Relations Division, properly encourage a better standard of articles on the Negro in the military service.

9. Colored personnel within the continental limits of the United States will be transferred only on orders of this Headquarters; beyond the continental limits of the United States, they may be transferred in such a manner as the Corps, Area, or Force Commander may direct.

10. Information relative to complements and dates of assignment will be furnished later.

H. SCHMIDT (Acting.)

APPENDIX D

LETTER OF INSTRUCTION NO. 421*

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HEADQUARTERS U.S. MARINE CORPS
WASHINGTON

May 14, 1943

LETTER OF INSTRUCTION NO. 421

CONFIDENTIAL

From: The Commandant, U. S. Marine Corps.
To: All Commanding Officers.
Subject: Colored Personnel.
Enclosure: (A) Copy of ltr CMC to Distribution List,
AO-3BO-Kb, (0107743) dated 20 March 1943.

1. Enclosure (A) is forwarded for your information and guidance in connection with the handling of colored personnel.
2. The initial assignment of colored personnel to Marine Barracks and Marine Detachments at posts and stations within the continental limits of the United States will be in the rank of private first class and private.
3. While rapid promotion, when deserved, is necessary, it is essential that in no case

* Letter from the Commandant, U.S. Marine Corps, to All Commanding Officers, dated May 14, 1943, Subject: Colored Personnel (formerly classified CONFIDENTIAL), Record Group 127: Records of the United States Marine Corps, History and Museums Division, PUBLICATION BACKGROUND FILES, "Brief History of Blacks in USMC, 1942-73," Draft Text & Source Documents, Box 134 (College Park, MD: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration); see also Morris J. MacGregor and Bernard C. Nalty, eds., *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces: Basic Documents VI, Blacks in the World War II Naval Establishment* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1977), 431-432.

shall, there be colored noncommissioned officers senior to white men in the same unit, and desirable that few, if any, be of the same rank.

4. Subject to the above provision, promotion of colored personnel is authorized in the same manner as applicable to all Marines. In case where, for example, a colored corporal is qualified for promotion to sergeant prior to the time all white corporals in the unit have been replaced by colored ones, recommendations will be made to this Headquarters, and if the recommendation is approved, the man will be transferred to a post where his services can be utilized in the higher rank. The same procedure will be followed through all the ranks until only colored noncommissioned officers are employed in all colored units. The above does not apply to members of the Steward's Branch.

5. Beyond the continental limits of the United States, commanding officers will control promotions of colored personnel as necessary to carry out the spirit of the directive.

6. On all change sheets and strength reports, colored personnel will be shown separately. They will not be included in quotas for transfer unless transfer orders so state, except that beyond the continental limits of the United States they may be transferred in such manner as the Corps, Division, Wing, Area or Force Commander may direct.

7. Since the inclusion of colored personnel in Marine Corps organizations is a new departure, it is requested that commanding officers make a study of one situation as it exists from time to time and the problems involved, and make reports to the commandant, Marine Corps. This report should include the adaptation of Negroes to military discipline and guard duty, their attitude towards other personnel, and vice versa liberty facilities, recreation facilities, and any other matter that would be of interest to the Commandant.

8. All Marines are entitled to the same rights and privileges under Navy Regulations. The colored Marines have been carefully trained and indoctrinated. They can be expected to conduct themselves with propriety and become a credit to the Marine Corps. All men must be made to understand that it is their duty to guide and assist these men to conduct themselves properly, and to set them an example in conduct and deportment.

9. Commanding officers will see that all men are properly indoctrinated with the spirit of paragraph 8 above, particularly when Negro troops are serving in the vicinity.

T. HOLCOMB.

APPENDIX E

EXECUTIVE ORDER 9808*

Establishing the President's Committee on Civil Rights

December 5, 1946

WHEREAS the preservation of civil rights guaranteed by the Constitution is essential to domestic tranquility, national security, the general welfare, and the continued existence of our free institutions; and

WHEREAS the action of individuals who take the law into their own hands and inflict summary punishment and wreak personal vengeance is subversive of our democratic system of law enforcement and public criminal justice, and gravely threatens our form of government; and

WHEREAS it is essential that all possible steps be taken to safeguard our civil rights;

NOW, THEREFORE, by virtue of the authority vested in me as President of the United States by the Constitution and the statutes of the United States, it is hereby ordered as follows:

1. There is hereby created a committee to be known as the President's Committee on Civil Rights, which shall be composed of the following-named members, who shall serve without compensation:

Mr. Charles E. Wilson, Chairman; Mrs. Sadie T. Alexander; Mr. James B. Carey; Mr. John S. Dickey; Mr. Morris L. Ernst; Rabbi Roland G. Gittelsohn; Dr. Frank P. Graham; the Most Reverend Francis J. Haas; Mr. Charles Luckman; Mr. Francis P. Matthews; Mr. Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr.; The Right Reverend Henry Knox Sherrill; Mr. Boris Shishkin; Mrs. M. E. Tilley; Mr. Channing H. Tobias.

2. The Committee is authorized on behalf of the President to inquire into and to determine whether and in what respect current law-enforcement measures and the authority and means possessed by Federal, State, and local governments may be strengthened and improved to safeguard the civil rights of the people.

3. All executive departments and agencies of the Federal Government are authorized and directed to cooperate with the Committee in its work, and to furnish the Committee such

* Harry S. Truman, Executive Order 8802: "Establishing the President's Committee on Civil Rights," December 5, 1946, Record Group 11: General Records of the United States Government, 1778-1992 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration).

information or services of such persons as the Committee may require in the performance of its duties.

4. When requested by the Committee to do so, persons employed in any of the executive departments and agencies of the Federal Government shall testify before the Committee and shall make available for the use of the Committee such documents and other information as the Committee may require.

5. The Committee shall make a report of its studies to the President in writing, and shall in particular make recommendations with respect to the adoption or establishment, by legislation or otherwise, of more adequate and effective means and procedures for the protection of the civil rights of the people of the United States.

6. Upon rendition of its report to the President, the Committee shall cease to exist, unless otherwise determined by further Executive order.

HARRY S. TRUMAN.
THE WHITE HOUSE,

December 5, 1946

APPENDIX F

EXECUTIVE ORDER 9981*

Establishing the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Forces

July 26, 1948

WHEREAS it is essential that there be maintained in the armed services of the United States the highest standards of democracy, with equality of treatment and opportunity for all those who serve in our country's defense:

NOW THEREFORE, by virtue of the authority vested in me as President of the United States, by the Constitution and the statutes of the United States, and as Commander in Chief of the armed services, it is hereby ordered as follows:

1. It is hereby declared to be the policy of the President that there shall be equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion or national origin. This policy shall be put into effect as rapidly as possible, having due regard to the time required to effectuate any necessary changes without impairing efficiency or morale.
2. There shall be created in the National Military Establishment an advisory committee to be known as the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services, which shall be composed of seven members to be designated by the President.
3. The Committee is authorized on behalf of the President to examine into the rules, procedures and practices of the Armed Services in order to determine in what respect such rules, procedures and practices may be altered or improved with a view to carrying out the policy of this order. The Committee shall confer and advise the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of the Army, the Secretary of the Navy, and the Secretary of the Air Force, and shall make such recommendations to the President and to said Secretaries as in the judgment of the Committee will effectuate the policy hereof.
4. All executive departments and agencies of the Federal Government are authorized and directed to cooperate with the Committee in its work, and to furnish the Committee such

* Harry S. Truman, Executive Order 9981: "Establishing the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Forces," July 26, 1948, Record Group 11: General Records of the United States Government, 1778-1992 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. National Archives and Records Administration).

information or the services of such persons as the Committee may require in the performance of its duties.

5. When requested by the Committee to do so, persons in the armed services or in any of the executive departments and agencies of the Federal Government shall testify before the Committee and shall make available for use of the Committee such documents and other information as the Committee may require.

6. The Committee shall continue to exist until such time as the President shall terminate its existence by Executive order.

Harry Truman

The White House
July 26, 1948

APPENDIX G

S. RES. 587

**111TH CONGRESS 2D SESSION
IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES**

JULY 20, 2010 Mr. BURR (for himself and Mr. BURRIS) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary
JULY 22, 2010 Committee discharged; considered and agreed to

RESOLUTION

Designating August 26, 2010, as “Montford Point Marines Day”

Whereas, on June 25, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802, which established the fair employment practices that began to erase discrimination in the Armed Forces;

Whereas in 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued a Presidential Directive that integrated the United States Marine Corps;

Whereas approximately 20,000 African-American Marines received basic training at Montford Point in the State of North Carolina between 1942 and 1949;

Whereas the African-American Marines trained at Montford Point became known as the Montford Point Marines;

Whereas the African-American volunteers who enlisted in the United States Marine Corps during World War II—

(1) joined the United States Marine Corps to demonstrate their commitment to the United States, despite the practice of segregation;

(2) served the United States in a most honorable fashion;

(3) defied unwarranted stereotypes; and

(4) achieved distinction through brave and honorable service;

Whereas, during World War II, African-American Marine Corps units fought and served in the Pacific theatre, participating in the liberation of the Ellice Islands, the Eniwetok Atoll, the Marshall Islands, the Kwajalein Atoll, Iwo Jima, Peleliu, the Marianas Islands, Saipan, Tinian, Guam, and Okinawa;

Whereas Robert Sherrod, a correspondent for Time magazine in the central Pacific during World War II, wrote that the African-American Marines that entered combat for the first time in Saipan were worthy of a 4.0 combat performance rating, the highest performance rating given by the Navy;

Whereas the heroism, commitment, and valor demonstrated by the Montford Point Marines—

(1) changed the negative attitudes of the military leadership toward African-Americans; and

(2) inspired the untiring service of future generations of African-Americans in the United

States Marine Corps;

Whereas in July 1948, President Harry S. Truman issued Executive Order 9981, which ended segregation in the military;

Whereas in September 1949, the Montford Marine Camp was deactivated, ending 7 years of segregation in the Marine Corps;

Whereas in September 1965, over 400 former and active duty Marines met in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania at a reunion to honor the Montford Point Marines, leading to the establishment of the Montford Point Marine Association;

Whereas 2010 marks the 45th anniversary of the establishment of the Montford Point Marine Association; and

Whereas the sacrifices, dedication to country, and perseverance of the African-American Marines trained at Montford Point Camp are duly honored and should never be forgotten: Now, therefore be it *Resolved*, That the Senate—(1) designates August 26, 2010, as “Montford 3 Point Marines Day”; (2) honors the 68th anniversary of the first day African-American recruits began training at 6 Montford Point; (3) recognizes the work of the members of the 8 Montford Point Marine Association—(A) in honoring the legacy and history of the United States Marine Corps; and (B) in ensuring that the sense of duty shared by the Montford Point Marines is passed along to future generations; (4) recognizes that—(A) the example set by the Montford Point 6 Marines who served during World War II helped to shape the United States Marine Corps; and (B) the United States Marine Corps provides an excellent opportunity for the advancement for persons of all races; and (5) expresses the gratitude of the Senate to the Montford Point Marines for fighting for the freedom of the United States and the liberation of people of the Pacific, despite the practices of segregation and discrimination.

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S. RES. 587 ATS

APPENDIX H

H. R. 2447

**One Hundred Twelfth Congress
of the
United States of America
AT THE FIRST SESSION**

**Begun and held at the City of Washington on Wednesday,
the fifth day of January, two thousand and eleven**

An Act

To grant the congressional gold medal to the Montford Point Marines.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America
in Congress assembled,*

SECTION 1. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) On June 25, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order No. 8802 establishing the Fair Employment Practices Commission and opening the doors for the very first African-Americans to enlist in the United States Marine Corps.

(2) The first Black Marine recruits were trained at Camp Montford Point, near the New River in Jacksonville, North Carolina.

(3) On August 26, 1942, Howard P. Perry of Charlotte, North Carolina, was the first Black private to set foot on Montford Point.

(4) During April 1943 the first African-American Marine Drill Instructors took over as the senior Drill Instructors of the eight platoons then in training; the 16th Platoon (Edgar R. Huff), 17th (Thomas Brokaw), 18th (Charles E. Allen), 19th (Gilbert H. Johnson), 20th (Arnold R. Bostic), 21st (Mortimer A. Cox), 22nd (Edgar R. Davis, Jr.), and 23rd (George A. Jackson).

(5) Black Marines of the 8th Ammunition Company and the 36th Depot Company landed on the island of Iwo Jima on D-Day, February 19, 1945.

(6) The largest number of Black Marines to serve in combat during World War II took part in the seizure of Okinawa in the Ryuku Islands with some 2,000 Black Marines seeing action during the campaign.

(7) On November 10, 1945, the first African-American Marine, Frederick C. Branch, was commissioned as a second lieutenant at the Marine Corps Base in Quantico, Virginia.

(8) Overall 19,168 Blacks served in the Marine Corps in World War II.

(9) An enterprising group of men, including original Montford Pointer Master Sergeant

Brooks E. Gray, planned a reunion of the Men of Montford Point, and on September 15, 1965, approximately 400 Montford Point Marines gathered at the Adelphi Hotel in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to lay the foundation for the Montford Point Marine Association Inc., 16 years after the closure of Montford Point as a training facility for Black recruits.

(10) Organized as a non-military, nonprofit entity, the Montford Point Marine Association's main mission is to preserve the legacy of the first Black Marines.

(11) Today the Montford Point Marine Association has 36 chapters throughout the United States.

(12) Many of these first Black Marines stayed in the Marine Corps like Sergeant Major Edgar R. Huff.

(13) Sergeant Major Huff was one of the very first recruits aboard Montford Point.

(14) Sergeant Major Huff was also the first African-American Sergeant Major and the first African-American Marine to retire with 30 years of service which included combat in three major wars, World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War.

(15) During the Tet Offensive, Sergeant Major Huff was awarded the Bronze Star Medal with combat "V" for valor for saving the life of his radio operator.

(16) Another original Montford Pointer who saw extensive combat action in both the Korean War and the Vietnam War was Sergeant Major Louis Roundtree.

(17) Sergeant Major Roundtree was awarded the Silver Star Medal, four Bronze Star Medals, three Purple Hearts, and numerous other personal and unit awards for his service during these conflicts.

(18) On April 19, 1974, Montford Point was renamed Camp Johnson after legendary Montford Pointer Sergeant Major Gilbert "Hashmark" Johnson.

(19) The Montford Point Marine Association has several memorials in place to perpetuate the memory of the first African-American Marines and their accomplishments, including—

(A) the Montford Point Marine Association Edgar R. Huff Memorial Scholarship which is offered annually through the Marine Corps Scholarship Foundation;

(B) the Montford Point Museum located aboard Camp Johnson (Montford Point) in Jacksonville, North Carolina;

(C) the Brooks Elbert Gray, Jr. Consolidated Academic Instruction Facility named in honor of original Montford Pointer and the Montford Point Marine Corps Association founder Master Gunnery Sergeant Gray. This facility was dedicated on 15 April 2005 aboard Camp Johnson, North Carolina; and

(D) during July of 1997 Branch Hall, a building within the Officers Candidate School in Quantico, Virginia, was named in honor of Captain Frederick Branch.

SEC. 2. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.

(a) AWARD AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President pro tempore of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements for the

award, on behalf of the Congress, of a single gold medal of appropriate design in honor of the Montford Point Marines, collectively, in recognition of their personal sacrifice and service to their country.

(b) DESIGN AND STRIKING .—For the purposes of the award referred to in subsection (a), the Secretary of the Treasury (hereafter in this Act referred to as the “Secretary”) shall strike the gold medal with suitable emblems, devices, and inscriptions, to be determined by the Secretary.

SEC. 3. DUPLICATE MEDALS.

Under such regulations as the Secretary may prescribe, the Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in bronze of the gold medal struck under section 2, at a price sufficient to cover the costs of the medals, including labor, materials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses.

SEC. 4. NATIONAL MEDALS.

Medals struck pursuant to this Act are National medals for purposes of chapter 51 of title 31, United States Code.

SEC. 5. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS; PROCEEDS OF SALE.

(a) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS .—There is authorized to be charged against the United States Mint Public Enterprise Fund, an amount not to exceed \$30,000 to pay for the cost of the medals authorized under section 2.

(b) PROCEEDS OF SALE .—Amounts received from the sale of duplicate bronze medals under section 3 shall be deposited in the United States Mint Public Enterprise Fund.

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

*Vice President of the United States and
President of the Senate.*

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