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Patriotism Betrayed: How the U.S. Military Resegregated From 1913-1939

Louis Sheridan

From 1913 to 1939, segregation in the U.S. military grew steadily worse due to President Woodrow Wilson's racist policies, an influx of white officers commissioned during World War I who had no experience working with black soldiers, and white society's fear of black veterans. Popular narratives of racism and the fight against it often unfold as a steady linear progression that gets slowly better with time. However, there are many dispiriting cases in American history in which racial progress occurred, only to be rolled back, leaving things as bad as or worse than before. The imposition of Jim Crow following the collapse of Reconstruction is the best-known example. Sadly, the racial resegregation of the U.S. military during this period stands as another.

The first and most straightforward factor responsible for military resegregation was the presidency of Woodrow Wilson. Wilson became President of the United States on March 4, 1913 and immediately sought to marginalize black people in every part of the federal government. Born in Virginia in 1856 and raised in Georgia, he was the first southerner elected to the White House since the Civil War, as well as the only President in U.S. history to have been a citizen of the Confederate States of America before being elected. He was eight when the war ended, and his southern upbringing and memories of the conflict may help to explain his fervent support of segregation and white supremacy. As a professor at Princeton University, he wrote a five-volume series in 1902 titled *A History of the American People* that spoke favorably of the Ku Klux Klan, describing it as "bound together in loose organization to protect the southern country from some of the

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ugliest hazards of a time of revolution.”¹ In office, he was criticized by many for segregating the workspaces of previously unsegregated departments and for appointing almost no black nominees to office, even to positions that had traditionally been filled by African-Americans like the Haitian and Liberian ambassadorships. Oswald Garrison Villard, a nationally famous white journalist and civil rights activist at the time, excoriated Wilson's administration in 1913 for its "distinct hostility to the colored people," decriing that "to the colored workers all this segregating has been more brutal than a slap in the face. It is as if the great Government of the United States had gone out of its way to stamp them publicly as lepers, as physically and morally contagious and unfit for association with white people."² His approach towards race relations in the military reflected the same approach.

It is impossible to understand what occurred both broadly in the United States and the military specifically during this period of time, which many historians now call "the nadir of race relations," without analyzing Wilson and the political forces he represented. After the Civil War, which ended less than fifty years before he took office, white supremacy in the country had been at least somewhat suppressed by both Reconstruction and a series of Republican and Northern Democrat administrations. The country still scorned Southern Democrats, the most racist political faction and the one many voters still blamed for the secession and the brutal civil war that it caused. Reconstruction had been ended with the attendant rollback of most of its civil rights gains in the south long before Wilson took office. However, his election to the highest office in the United States marked an ultimate triumph in the comeback of white southern political power and heralded its ascension into national politics as well as at the state level. This

¹ Woodrow Wilson, *A History of the American People* (New York, NY: Harper, 1902), 225.

² Oswald Garrison Villard, "The President and the Segregation at Washington." *The North American Review* 198, no. 697 (1913): 800-07.

largely explains why race relations within both the military and broader society became so bad at this specific time; it was when the strongest forces of organized white supremacy finally gained the power to reassert it.

One of Wilson's first actions in this regard involved implementing Jim Crow within the U.S. Navy, which had historically been relatively physically integrated simply because the lack of space aboard ships made racial separation difficult.³ While the branch had always suffered from widespread discrimination and classification of black sailors into undesirable jobs, Wilson and a fellow southerner, Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels, formalized them and made them far more restrictive.⁴ Black sailors were almost entirely relegated to the role of messman, where their duties involved serving food, acting as servants to white officers, and cleaning. Issues of African American newspapers like the *Chicago Defender* from the time provide a depressing record of Jim Crow's steadily tightening grip on the Navy during the Wilson administration. On October 16th, 1915 after close to three years of Wilson and Daniels's governance, the paper finally declared that within "the navy of the United States we are Jim-crowed, just as we are in all large industrial institutions. For race men to seek employment in the army or navy, except as scullions and inferiors seems to be the unwritten law of American institutions."⁵ Despite lobbying by civil rights activists and efforts by black publications to highlight the contributions of black sailors, the Department of the Navy remained unmoved. On March 31, 1917, the *Chicago Defender* was reduced to pleading with its light-skinned readers to prove the

³ Charles Hughes Williams III, *We Have...Kept the Negroes' Goodwill and Sent Them Away": Black Sailors, White Dominion in the New Navy, 1893-1942* (Texas A&M: August 2008), 3.

⁴ "Daniel E. Worthington" and "Josephus Daniels," *1914-1918 Online: International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, ed. by Ute Daniel et al., www.encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/home.html.

⁵ "More Recognition Demanded in Army and Navy Than Scullions and Chambermaids," *The Chicago Defender*, 16 October 1915.

capabilities of African Americans by passing as white and joining the Navy. It suggested that "it would please the entire race if those of you who can pass for white enlist by the thousands. In this case it is fair for you to deny your Race and get this education that is denied us..."⁶ Sadly, despite the efforts of the 10,000 black sailors who served in the Navy during World War I and many civil rights activists, the branch actually stopped recruiting black people entirely in 1922, and only desegregated with the rest of the military in 1948.⁷

Wilson's efforts to segregate the military did not end with the Navy. One of the most stomach-turning came when he sided with an insubordinate white officer to undercut and retire a man who might have been America's first black general. Colonel Charles Young was a highly regarded African-American officer in the U.S. Army with a stellar record of service when World War I began. He had been a trailblazer for his entire career, overcoming tremendous prejudice to become the third black graduate from West Point and serving with distinction in combat during the Spanish-American War and the U.S.'s expedition against Pancho Villa. An officer of his rank and seniority should have been a shoo-in for a brigadier general's stars amidst the massive expansion of the military during World War I. However, his career was derailed when a white southern officer, Lieutenant Albert Dockery, wrote to Secretary of War Newton Baker to vehemently object to serving under a black man. Baker initially rejected his request for a transfer and told him to resign if he could not serve under Colonel Young, but Wilson undercut him when several southern senators complained. In a 1917 letter to Baker, the President of the United States threw his support behind Dockery, expressing a truly bizarre amount of sympathy for a junior officer refusing to follow orders from his superior on the grounds of his race. Wilson stated, "I am afraid from what I have learned that there may be some

⁶ "Pass for White and Join Navy Anyway," *The Chicago Defender*, 31 March 1917.

⁷ Regina T. Akers, "African Americans in General Service, 1942" (Naval Heritage and History Command, March 23, 2017).

serious and perhaps even tragical insubordination on Lieutenant Dockery's part if he is left under Colonel Young, who is a colored man. Is there or is there not some way of relieving this situation by transferring [sic] Lieutenant Dockery..."⁸

The intervention of the President in such a granular personnel matter was highly unusual, and within the context of Wilson's broader views and policies was likely read by Baker as a message to ensure no white officers served under Young. The Secretary of War apparently understood this subtext and told Wilson in a letter back that "The situation is, of course, very embarrassing, but I am endeavoring to meet it by using Colonel Young in connection with the training of colored officers for the new Army at Des Moines, Iowa."⁹ This assignment moved Young out of a combat posting and into a billet that did not require a general's rank. In addition, Baker wrote that the colonel was not in good health and would be examined to see if he could serve on active duty. In a suspicious turn of events, Young, a man who had ridden hundreds of miles through Mexico in pursuit of Pancho Villa in 1916, was found to supposedly be medically unfit due to high blood pressure.

Young fought the verdict desperately, pleading in a 1918 letter to Baker that "I feel as physically fit as I did during the hard service in Mexico...I believe myself wholly able to assume the work of organization, training, and leading troops in the field."¹⁰ His struggle even gained the support of Theodore Roosevelt, who offered him command of a regiment in the volunteer division that he planned to organize. The former President stated in a sympathetic letter to the beleaguered officer that "there is not another man who would be better fit to command such a regiment than you would be." Nonetheless, Colonel Charles Young was

⁸ Woodrow Wilson (WW) to Newton D. Baker (NB), 25 Jun. 1917, WWP1541, World War I Letters (WWIL), Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library & Museum, Staunton, Virginia (WWPLSV).

⁹ NB to WW, 26 Jun. 1917, WWP21549, WWPLSV

¹⁰ Charles Young (CY) to NB, 26 Apr. 1918, W.E.B Du Bois Papers (MS 312). Special Collections of University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries (SCUAUMA).

eventually forcibly retired from the Army without being promoted or fighting in World War I.¹¹ The impact from Wilson's sabotage of his career was significant for the broader military. As the Army's highest-ranking black officer and the only serving black graduate of West Point at the time of World War I, Young was a nationally known figure. Promoting him to general, or even allowing him to serve in Europe as a colonel, would have been a powerful argument in favor of black troops' equal worth and a challenge to the racist views of much of the officer corps. By not doing so, Wilson ensured that no African American would be promoted to general for another generation; Benjamin Davis Sr. finally became the first black man to achieve the rank in 1940. Despite the matter directly involving only one man, Wilson's sidelining of the army's highest-ranking black officer had repercussions for military race relations that reverberated for decades.

World War I necessitated an enormous expansion of the U.S. military, particularly among the officer corps. The number of officers in the military grew from 5,000 men in 1917 to 200,000 by 1918, a forty-fold increase.¹² This new generation of military leaders commissioned during World War I had no experience working with black troops in any capacity and would go on to have a profoundly negative impact on military race relations. African Americans served in the conflict in proportion to their share of the population, accounting for about nine percent of the U.S. population in the 1910 census and 380,000 of the four million people that served in the Army during World War I. However,

¹¹ *Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Charles Young*. Sagamore Hill National Historic Site. Roosevelt Digital Library. Dickinson State University.

¹² Arthur S. Link, *Woodrow Wilson and The Progressive Era 1910-1917* (University Digital Library: Harper & Brothers, 1954), 188; Edwin L Kennedy Jr., "Mass-Producing Leaders: WWI Army Needed a Lot of Officers—Quickly," *Association of the United States Army*, 19 Jun. 2017, <https://www.ausea.org/articles/mass-producing-leaders-wwi>.

they were severely underrepresented in the upper ranks.¹³ ¹⁴ Out of the 200,000 officers recruited, a total of 1,353, or about one half of one percent, were black.¹⁵ While this was a far greater amount of African-Americans than had ever previously held commissions, their numbers were too small to make an impression on the racist culture of the rest of the military, and they were generally segregated from the rest of the military, limiting their encounters with their white peers. As a result, the racism nearly universal among white officers of their generation went largely unchallenged.

Surprisingly, anti-blackness was actually less common among older, pre-World War I officers because many of them had actually commanded African American soldiers themselves. Four regiments of the pre-war U.S. Army, the 9th and 10th Cavalry and the 24th and 25th Infantry, were staffed by black enlisted men nicknamed "Buffalo Soldiers," who in turn were commanded by mostly-white officers. They served on the western frontier and were well-regarded, with a posting to one of the regiments being considered an honor for a young officer. While there had always been racists in uniform who despised their presence, commanders who saw their discipline, motivation, and competence firsthand gained a respect for them that is recorded in many of their letters, reports, and diaries. One example was Chaplain George G. Mullins, a white officer who served in the 25th Infantry Regiment. As part of his duties, he was charged with writing reports to the Army Adjutant General assessing the discipline, morale, and competence of the unit. He spoke of the black enlisted men in glowing terms within these documents, recording in January 1877 that despite the brutal conditions of the Texas frontier town they

¹³ Campbell Gibson and Kay Jung, "Historical Census Statistics on Population Totals by Race, 1970 to 1970, and by Hispanic Origin, 1970-1990, for the United States Regions, Divisions, and States" (Washington D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau, September 2002), 19.

¹⁴ Richard Goldenberg, "African-American Troops Fought to Fight in World War I" (U.S. Department of Defense, 1 Feb. 2018) www.defense.gov.

¹⁵ Jami L. Bryan, "Fighting for Respect: African-American Soldiers in WWI" *National Museum of the U.S. Army* (Washington D.C.: n.d.) <https://armyhistory.org>.

were posted in, his men “present the appearance of being as thoroughly drilled and disciplined as the circumstances will permit” despite “having had to really learn ‘arts military’ under trying difficulties.”¹⁶ Mullins further praised in the letter how “at the beginning of last month, of the whole number of enlisted men (325) in the 25th regiment only three were under arrest or in confinement.”

The lack of desertion or crimes that Mullins praised made a particular impression on other white officers who worked with the unit. Easily available liquor and the desolation of postings in the American West, coupled with the ease of desertion given its vast expanses, meant that many units on the frontier often had severe problems with discipline and retention. The segregated regiments, however, were better than most. Colonel George Andrews, the commander of the 25th Infantry Regiment, noted in an 1880 report to his superiors that in his unit, “during the last five years, there have been fewer desertions, fewer men in confinement, and less court martial cases than in any other regiment serving in the Department.”¹⁷

Beyond just their discipline, the courage and skill that the Buffalo Soldiers displayed under fire was revered even by white southern soldiers during the Spanish-American War. One such man, when interviewed by a war correspondent from the *New York Evening Post*, remarked that, “If it had not been for the Negro Calvary the Rough Riders would have been exterminated. I am not a Negro lover. My father fought with Mosby's Rangers, and I was born in the South, but the Negroes saved that fight...”¹⁸ Even more incredibly given the attitudes of the time, their performance in Cuba stood out enough to spark public support from white

¹⁶ George G. Mullins (GM) to Adjutant General (AG), 1 Jan. 1877, Fort Davis, Texas. Quoted in Frank N. Schubert, *Voices of the Buffalo Soldiers* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2003), 86.

¹⁷ George Andrews (GA) to Assistant Adjutant General (AAG), 22 Mar. 1880, San Antonio, Texas. Quoted in Schubert, *Voices*, 110.

¹⁸ Edward Jewitt Wheeler et al., “The Negro as a Soldier,” *Literary Digest* 17 (1898), 248.

generals for the widespread commissioning of black officers. In a letter to the *New York Independent*, General Thomas J. Morgan simply said that, “If the negroes are competent, they should be commissioned. If they are incompetent, I believe they should not be trusted with the grave responsibilities attaching to official position. I believe they are competent.”¹⁹

Further plaudits for their accomplishments came from none other than John “Black Jack” Pershing, the commander of all U.S. forces in France during World War One and a former cavalry troop leader in the segregated 10th Cavalry Regiment. Pershing’s nickname was originally “N—r Jack,” an epithet given to him by racist cadets at the Virginia Military Institute for his outspoken praise of the black men he commanded and later softened by the media when he became famous.²⁰ He would speak fondly of his time in the 10th throughout his life and credit it for his later success, stating in the foreword of a regimental history published in 1921 that, “as I look back I can but feel that the association with the splendid officers and men of the 10th Cavalry were of the greatest value to me.”²¹ The influence of these officers was sufficient in the pre-World War I era to gain their men respect from the military and to preserve their right to serve in combat units where promotions and conditions were about as good as in comparable white units.

The new generation of World War I-era officers, however, made their sharply different feelings clear in the documents, interviews, and letters that they left behind. They had never worked with black troops. As a result, they never had the prejudice they brought with them from contemporary American society challenged, nor saw a need to reconsider their views since

¹⁹ Thomas J. Morgan (TJM) to the New York Independent (NYI), 1898. Quoted in “The Negro as a Soldier,” *Literary Digest*, volume 17 (Lafayette Place, New York: Funk & Wagnalls Co., 1898), 248.

²⁰ Richard O’Connor, “‘Black Jack’ Of The 10th” *American Heritage* 18, no. 2 (February 1967).

²¹ Edward L. N. Glass, *The History of the Tenth Cavalry, 1866-1921* (1921), Foreword.

they never had any experiences that could have chipped away at them. A man who would become notorious to history as one of the most racist officers in the U.S. Army, Edward Almond, was an excellent example of how this group of leaders viewed African American soldiers. He began his military career in 1916 and viewed them with contempt for his entire time in uniform. In a taped interview given in 1953 after he had retired as a lieutenant general, Almond stated his belief that, “the white man... is willing to die for patriotic reasons. The Negro is not. No white man wants to be accused of leaving the battle line. The Negro doesn’t care...People think that being from the South we don’t like Negroes. Not at all. But we understand his capabilities. And we don’t want to sit at the table with them.”²² Sadly, he was far from alone in his worldview.

In 1925, the Army War College published a study titled *The Use of Negro Manpower in War* that purported to be based on objective reviews (by all-white officers) of African-American performance in combat. It found that, “the Negro does not perform his share of civil duties in time of peace in proportion to his population. He has no leaders in industrial or commercial life. He takes no part in government. Compared to the white man he is admittedly of inferior mentality. He is inherently weak in character.”²³ The author of this report, then-Major Brehon B. Somervell, entered the Army in 1914.²⁴ Like Edward Almond, he retired as a general and spent his career turning his prejudices into Army policy. *The Use of Negro Manpower in War* would define the Army’s official view of black troops until well into World War II.

²² Edward Almond (EA) to Lee Nichols (LN), Nov. 1953. Quoted in Solace Wales, “Racist 92nd Performance Report.”

²³ H.F. Fly (HFF), to Chief of Staff (CS), 10 Nov. 1925. Quoted in *The Use of Negro Manpower in War* (U.S. Army War College, 1925), 2.

²⁴ Hank H. Cox, *The General Who Wore Six Stars* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2018), 189.

Further demonstrating that the racist beliefs of most white officers commissioned during World War I came from lack of experience with black troops is the fact that one subset of those officers championed their cause: the minority that actually commanded them. Hamilton Fish III, the scion of a New York political dynasty and a cousin of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's, was one such leader. Commissioned into the National Guard as a captain in 1917, Fish received command of a company of the 369th Infantry Regiment in France, known to history as the Harlem Hellfighters.²⁵ Fish wrote to his father in April 1918 that he was deeply impressed by his regiment and the African American men that he commanded. He wrote, "I am a great believer in the fighting quality of the educated American Negro, provided he is well led. If the regiment does not make a splendid record, it will be the fault of the officers."²⁶ Despite the paternalism of his statement, it is worth noting that the officers he spoke of were largely white, the implication being that he considered the performance of the black enlisted men to be excellent. Fish would serve with distinction, earning the Silver Star in France, and he would carry his respect for the black soldiers he commanded with him for his entire life. While in Congress during World War II, he would play a key role in helping to desegregate the military, the opposite of men like Edward Almond and Brehon B. Somervell, who never served with black soldiers in such a capacity.

Colonel Arthur W. Little shared Fish's sentiments. He was a white officer who entered the military in 1917 and served in the 369th as a battalion commander with the rank of major.²⁷ In his 1936 regimental history *From Harlem to the Rhine*, he recorded the unit's feats in France and praised the African American men

²⁵ Accession No. 13721-83, Adjutant General's Office, Abstracts of National Guard Service in World War I, 1917-1919, Box 12, Volume 39, Fish, Hamilton, Jr. <https://digitalcollections.archives.nysed.gov/index.php/Detail/objects/38291>.

²⁶ Hamilton Fish III (HFIII) to Hamilton Fish II (HFII), 1917-1919, France, accessed 8 Apr. 2018, New York State Archives (NYSA).

²⁷ Arthur West Little, *From Harlem to the Rhine* (Covici, Friede; First Edition, 1 Jan. 1936), 1.

that he commanded. In its foreword, he proclaimed that, “A regiment of colored men, properly organized and officered, is a great regiment—for fighting or for any duty.”²⁸ While Little and Fish were only two examples, there were many others who agreed with them on the fitness of African Americans for service in combat. Most white officers with the common experience of commanding black soldiers in combat seem to have come away from the experience with an undying respect for their accomplishments and worth, even if they were in the predominantly bigoted class of officers commissioned during the 1914-1918 period. In this, they were similar to the older generations of officers who had led Buffalo Soldiers in the American West and in Cuba. When contrasted, the very different attitudes of commanders who led units like the Harlem Hellfighters show that the bigotry of most World War I-era new officers was caused by ignorance that in turn stemmed from lack of experience with black soldiers.

Sadly, despite the efforts of men like Little and Fish, African Americans were with few exceptions removed from combat units after World War I because of persistent racist beliefs about their fitness for combat that were written into policy by prejudiced officers like Somervell and Almond. While the integration of the military stopped actively going backward in 1939 as World War II loomed, black soldiers were relegated mainly to logistical and support roles in that conflict. Casualty figures show the thoroughness of the segregation that they implemented. Out of the 407,316 Americans killed in World War II, only 708 were African American.^{29 30} While none would disagree that it would have been better had both figures been zero, the wide disparity nonetheless

²⁸ Ibid, xi.

²⁹ "Research Starters: US Military by the Numbers." *National WWII Museum*. <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/>; Micheal Clodfelter. *Warfare and Armed Conflicts: A Statistical Reference to Casualty and Other Figures, 1500-2000* (University of Michigan: McFarland, 2002), 584.

demonstrates how completely the military resegregated during this period.

A final and hugely significant factor in the resegregation of the military was white society's fear of black veterans. During World War I, there was widespread fear among white Americans that African Americans with military training would use it to violently oppose the system of white supremacy they faced at home, and that it would convince them they had earned the right to advocate for their equality. Senator James K. Vardaman from Mississippi made this case on the Senate floor in remarks reported in his publication *Vardaman's Weekly* in 1919. He warned, "Impress the Negro with the fact that he is defending the flag, inflate his untutored soul with military airs, teach him that it is his duty to keep the emblem of the nation flying triumphantly in the air—it is but a short step to the conclusion that his political rights must be respected."³¹ His sentiments were widely shared, and they manifested a year after the war ended in a campaign of anti-black violence and lynchings meant to reassert white supremacy, which would become known as the Red Summer of 1919. A typical example of the abhorrent actions that defined this period can be found in a newspaper report from Gadsden, Alabama describing the lynching of three black men that took place in September of 1919. The article in *The Gadsden Times* matter-of-factly reports that Miles Phifer and Robert Croskey, "negro ex-soldiers, were taken from three deputies by a small band of masked men and lynched at 4 o'clock Monday afternoon about four miles from Montgomery." It further states that "Phifer was dressed in the regulation uniform of the United States army."³² The two men were accused of attacking white women, an accusation often falsely deployed against black men in the south, and the fact that "masked men" kidnapped them strongly implies the murders were

³¹ James K. Vardaman, *Vardaman's Weekly* 11, No. 33, 24 Apr. 1919 (Jackson, Mississippi).

³² Associated Press, "Three Negroes Are Lynched in Montgomery" 30 Sep. 1919, (Gadsden, Alabama: Gadsden Press).

committed by the Ku Klux Klan, which enjoyed a national resurgence in the late 1910s and 1920s.

These fears did not solely affect black veterans who had separated from the military, but also ones who remained on active duty as well. In the wake of World War I, the new generation of officers commissioned in 1914-1918 whose racism is previously discussed increasingly came to believe that having black people in the military in any capacity was a mistake, particularly in any combat capacity.³³ As a result, in addition to the insult of African-American troops who remained being relegated to menial, non-combat roles, many found themselves simply pushed out of the military or prevented from joining at all. The Navy ended new enlistments of black sailors and received political authorization to begin recruiting Filipino sailors, who were not even American citizens, to fill the messman positions that they had previously held.³⁴ The Army, too, pared down black enlistments with the exception of the old Buffalo Soldier regiments, which were downsized and assigned non-combat duties. By 1941, out of 1.8 million troops on active duty, fewer than 4,000 were African American.³⁵ ³⁶ Only universal conscription with the outbreak of World War II ended their shunning.

In all of American history, few examples as the U.S. military in the interwar period demonstrate quite so clearly how hard-won civil rights gains can be lost again. Progress is neither linear nor inevitable. While it may be easy to blame Woodrow Wilson's policies for the resegregation of the armed forces that took place from 1913 to 1939, he was not the sole cause. Racism gained new power at every level in the United States during this time as forces of white supremacy suppressed temporarily by Reconstruction and

³³ H.F. Fly (HFF) to Chief of Staff (CS), 10 Nov. 1925, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum (FDRPLM).

³⁴ Charles Hughes Williams III., 83.

³⁵ "Research Starters: US Military by the Numbers" and "African Americans in World War II." National WWII Museum, www.nationalww2museum.org.

memories of the civil war regained their full power. A new and virulently racist generation of new officers commissioned in the 1914-1918 years who lacked any experience working with black troops wrote racism against them into military policy, completely failing to appreciate the contributions and valor of prior generations of black veterans like the Buffalo Soldiers and African Americans who served in the Civil War. And societal paranoia that returning black soldiers would use the training and pride they took from their military service to challenge the oppression of the deeply unjust society they lived in led to both horrific campaigns of violence against them and the military's decision to largely end their enlistment. In the end, the valor of African American troops and the ceaseless efforts of generations of activists succeeded in creating a military where black people serve equally and with distinction at all levels. However, the resegregation of the U.S. military that began in 1913 when Woodrow Wilson became President and continued until 1939 when World War II began still serves as a cautionary tale that it is not enough merely to win civil liberties. They must be actively and strenuously defended as well.

Author Bio:

Louis Sheridan graduated in 2021 after double-majoring in History and Economics. His research frequently focuses on the Cold War, world wars, and 20th century African and Middle Eastern history.