

MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD? THE BLACK PRESS AND THE END
OF RACIAL SEGREGATION IN THE U.S. MILITARY, 1948-1954

Mark Slagle

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication

Chapel Hill
2010

Approved by:

Dr. Barbara Friedman

Dr. Anne Johnston

Dr. Donald Shaw

Dr. Crystal Feimster

Dr. Richard Kohn

©2010
Mark Slagle
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

ABSTRACT

**MARK SLAGLE: Mightier Than The Sword? The Black Press
and the End of Racial Segregation in the U.S. Military, 1948-1954
(Under the Direction of Dr. Barbara Friedman)**

Although President Harry S. Truman ordered the integration of the U.S. military in 1948, the armed forces made limited progress in desegregating before the summer of 1950. The outbreak of war on the Korean peninsula that year forced the military to re-evaluate its policy of segregation and ultimately led the complete integration of all the armed forces.

This study analyzes how the largest and most influential black newspapers fought for military integration and how these publications reacted when it arrived. By examining how the black press sought to achieve its goals, this study illustrates the ways in which black newspapers did and did not operate as a dissident media source.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without the efforts of a number of people. Barbara Friedman shepherded this project from vague idea to finished product. Anne Johnston, Don Shaw, Richard Kohn, and Crystal Feimster all provided valuable suggestions and support throughout the process. Cori Dauber also offered advice when I was still trying to get a handle on what I wanted to do. Extra special thanks are due to Barbara Semonche for giving me free rein of the Park Library's resources and trusting me to lock up when I left. Finally, none of this would have been possible without the love and support of my parents, Dan and Evelyn.

“The Army is made up of individual citizens of the United States who have pronounced views with respect to the Negro just as they have individual ideas with respect to other matters in their daily walk of life. Military orders, fiat, or dicta will not change their viewpoints. The Army then cannot be made the means of engendering conflict among the mass of people because of a stand with respect to Negroes which is not compatible with the position attained by the Negro in civil life. . . .The Army is not a sociological laboratory; to be effective it must be organized and trained according to the 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.”

—Col. Eugene R. Householder, U.S. Army, 1941

“Salvation for a race, nation, or class must come from within. Freedom is never granted; it is won. Justice is never given; it is exacted.”

—A. Philip Randolph, 1972.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter

| | |
|---|----|
| I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND | 1 |
| Historical Context | 6 |
| Black Americans in the U.S. Military..... | 6 |
| The Black Press: Strategies of Protest | 17 |
| The <i>Chicago Defender</i> | 27 |
| The <i>Pittsburgh Courier</i> | 29 |
| The Baltimore <i>Afro-American</i> | 30 |
| Research on the Black Press and the Military | 31 |
| Theoretical Framework: The Role and Function of Alternative Media | 38 |
| The Significance of This Study..... | 42 |
| Research Questions | 43 |
| Method of Inquiry | 44 |
| Limitations of This Study | 47 |
| Chapter Breakdown | 47 |
| II. READY TO FIGHT | 50 |
| Truman and the Black Press | 51 |
| Butting Heads With the “Brass Hats” | 57 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| A. Philip Randolph Throws Down the Gauntlet..... | 60 |
| The Black Press and Communism | 64 |
| The National Conference on Negro Affairs..... | 70 |
| The Black Press and the 1948 Presidential Election..... | 75 |
| Executive Order 9981 | 82 |
| III. PRINCIPLES AND PRAGMATISM..... | 89 |
| John Sengstacke Goes to Work..... | 89 |
| Singing Their Praises | 93 |
| Mixed Blessings..... | 96 |
| Exit James Forrestal, Enter Louis Johnson | 99 |
| “Nuts to Mr. Robeson” | 105 |
| “A Score For Our Side” | 109 |
| Stalemate..... | 114 |
| Deception | 119 |
| Endgame | 122 |
| IV. NOW TO WAR | 126 |
| “Calling the Red Bluff” | 127 |
| Holding the Line | 132 |
| Victory | 136 |
| “The Only Solution” | 141 |
| Reversal of Fortune..... | 148 |
| “Looking for a Scapegoat” | 154 |
| “The Latest GI Smear” | 157 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| V. A PYRRHIC VICTORY? | 162 |
| “A Club To Beat Our Brains Out” | 163 |
| The Army Starts To Listen | 168 |
| On The Home Front | 171 |
| Ridgway Arrives, MacArthur Fades Away | 173 |
| Good News or Bad? | 178 |
| New Battles | 184 |
| Cease-fire | 190 |
| VI. WINNING THE BATTLE, LOSING THE WAR | 194 |
| Answering the Research Questions | 196 |
| Implications for Future Research..... | 207 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 210 |

Chapter One: Introduction and Background

A single headline dominated the front page of the July 8, 1950 edition of the *Chicago Defender*, one of America's largest and most influential black newspapers: "TAN GIs GO INTO ACTION!"¹ Two weeks earlier the North Korean People's Army had invaded South Korea, prompting President Harry S. Truman to authorize military action against the North Koreans. Among the first foot soldiers to engage the North Koreans in battle were members of the U.S. Army's all-black 24th Infantry Regiment. These troops, according to the *Defender*, were "playing leading roles in American participation in the clash."²

For the *Defender* and other black newspapers, the performance of black units such as the 24th Infantry Regiment was not only a source of pride, but also an opportunity. Black Americans had participated in every major military conflict since the Revolutionary War. Yet they were never treated as the equals of their white counterparts. The military kept its troops segregated, and black troops were often relegated to support roles. For decades the black press had urged the government to integrate its armed forces. Its efforts seemed to bear fruit in 1948 when President Truman issued Executive Order 9981, which mandated the desegregation of all branches of the military. The Army,

¹ "TAN GIs GO INTO ACTION!" *Chicago Defender*, July 8, 1950, 1.

² Ibid.

however, resisted this effort to integrate its ranks. By the time the Korean War began, it had made little substantive progress toward desegregation.³

The North Koreans' surprise attack, however, had caught the U.S. military flat-footed. The rapid demobilization following World War II had left the entire defense establishment, and the Army in particular, short of men and resources.⁴ Eighth Army, which was the first American unit to engage the North Koreans in ground combat, was in particularly dismal shape. Budget-cutting measures had forced the deactivation of one battalion in each of its twelve regiments, except for one: the all-black 24th Infantry Regiment of the 25th Division.

The Army's policy of racial segregation meant it had few places to put its black soldiers after World War II. Most of its black combat troops were therefore assigned to occupation duty in Japan with the 24th Regiment.⁵ Now the Army was forced to send these soldiers to the front lines in Korea. No longer relegated to the rear echelons, black troops were now in the thick of the fighting.⁶ For the black press, this turn of events meant that black service members would be given a chance to prove their worth as

³ Gerald Astor, *The Right to Fight: A History of African Americans in the Military* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1998), 321-322; 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), 37-38.

⁴ Clay Blair, *The Forgotten War: America in Korea, 1950-1953* (New York: Times Books, 1987), 36; William Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 54-55; John Toland, *In Mortal Combat: Korea, 1950-1953* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1991), 30.

⁵ Blair, 48.

⁶ Astor, 350-352; Bowers, Hammond, and MacGarrigle, 69-73.

fighting men. Black newspapers had pursued this goal for years.⁷ At last it was within sight. As one editorial in the *Defender* put it, “these Negro boys who have suffered all the indignities and limitations of arrogant racism at home have become heroes of whom every American regardless of color must be proud. Their prowess and manhood are the equal of any of America’s sons. Yet these are the boys whom Dixiecrat Congressmen would relegate to inferior positions.”⁸

The idea that black troops could earn equal treatment by demonstrating their abilities on the battlefield was not a new one. Its most immediate precedent was the “Double V” campaign launched by the *Pittsburgh Courier* during World War II. That war also saw the government asking black Americans to fight and sacrifice for a nation that still treated them as second-class citizens. Inspired by a letter written by a black factory worker, the *Courier* began to promote the idea of a double victory: victory abroad over fascism and victory at home over racism. Other black newspapers adopted the slogan, urging both black troops and black civilians to do their part for the war effort while fighting for civil rights at home. As one *Courier* columnist wrote, “when the war ends the colored American will be better off financially, spiritually and economically. War may be hell for some, but it bids fair to open up the portals of heaven for us.”⁹

The exigencies of the war did create opportunities for black servicemen. Black soldiers proved their worth as tankers and infantrymen, while the Tuskegee Airmen

⁷ Morris MacGregor Jr., *Integration of the Armed Forces, 1940-1965* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Military History, United States Army, 1981), 126; Patrick S. Washburn, *The African American Newspaper: Voice of Freedom* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2006), 143-153.

⁸ “Our Opinions: Our Boys Lead the Way,” *Chicago Defender*, July 29, 1950, 6.

⁹ Joseph D. Bibb, “We Gain by War,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, October 10, 1942, 13; quoted in Washburn, *The African American Newspaper*, 145.

earned fame as one of the most accomplished fighter escort groups in the Army Air Forces.¹⁰ Despite these achievements, however, the armed forces sought to return to the status quo ante immediately after the war. The black serviceman had fewer opportunities for training and advancement in 1946 than he did in 1945.¹¹ The black press, meanwhile, could do little but bitterly lament that the sacrifices made by black troops had not yet earned them equal treatment.

Nonetheless, when the Korean War began black newspapers once again embarked upon a similar strategy. They emphasized the accomplishments and sacrifices of black troops and voiced support for the war effort even as they demanded change within the military. In the early stages of the conflict especially, the pages of black newspapers were filled with news stories detailing the exploits of black soldiers and editorials bemoaning the Army's unwillingness to fully comply with Truman's executive order. The *Courier* went so far as to propose a second Double V campaign.¹² Just as in World War II, the black press was determined to make Korea the last war the United States would fight with a segregated military.

In the end, the black press got its wish. Changes in leadership and persistent problems in Korea eventually persuaded the Army to finally abandon its policy of racial segregation. On July 26, 1951 the Army announced that its all-black units, including the

¹⁰ Bernard C. Nalty, *Strength for the Fight: A History of Black Americans in the Military* (New York: The Free Press, 1986), 143-53. See also Robert B. Edgerton, *Hidden Heroism: Black Soldiers in America's Wars* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001); Jack D. Foner, *Blacks and the Military in American History: A New Perspective* (New York: Praeger, 1974); and Alan L. Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates: 1945-1964*, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998).

¹¹ Nalty, 218.

¹² Stanley Roberts, "Leaders Urge Revival of Courier 'Double V,'" *Pittsburgh Courier*, Aug. 5, 1950, 5.

24th Infantry Regiment, would be dissolved and that complete integration of all forces in Japan and Korea would be completed in six months. Integration of units stationed elsewhere would follow shortly thereafter.¹³ After decades of mistreatment and discrimination, black Americans had finally won the right to fight as equals.

The purpose of this study is to analyze how the black press covered the Korean War and the end of racial segregation in the U.S. military. For many black editors and publishers, the conflict provided them with an opportunity to again demonstrate that black Americans were worthy of equal rights. This study seeks to chart, describe, and analyze how three of the nation's largest black newspapers—the *Chicago Defender*, the *Pittsburgh Courier*, and the *Baltimore Afro-American*—used the war as a vehicle to advance the goal of complete racial integration within the military, what strategies these newspapers used, how their coverage did or did not fit conform to the typical roles of the alternative press, and how they reacted to their success.

This study also places the black newspapers' campaign for military integration within the larger context of an ongoing debate within the black press about how to best achieve its goals. In some respects, this campaign was the last major victory for the generation of black publishers and editors who had come of age before World War II. That experience had defined their goals and strategies as they used their papers to advocate for equal rights. The next generation of civil rights advocates, however, had a different plan. By examining how the largest and most influential black newspapers addressed the topic of military integration at this crucial moment, this study provides an

¹³ Richard M. Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces: Fighting on Two Fronts* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1969), 210-211; Foner, 191; MacGregor, 444.

important discussion of how the black press provided a forum for discussion among its readership.

Historical Context

To understand how the most influential black newspapers perceived and reacted to the end of military segregation during the Korean War, it is necessary to first understand the history of both black military service and the black press. Black Americans have long served in the nation's armed forces, yet for most of that time they were not allowed to serve alongside white troops. Often used in labor battalions, blacks were allowed to take up arms only out of military necessity or intense political pressure. When the crisis passed, the military usually returned black troops to their non-combat roles or removed them from the armed forces altogether.

The struggle for an integrated military had long been a goal of many black newspapers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Yet these newspapers did not always agree on how to best achieve this goal. The issue was inexorably intertwined with a larger debate within the black community about how to best win equal rights for black Americans. Some newspapers advocated a policy of accommodation with the white power structure, while others took a more militant stance. Yet all of them agreed that black Americans could contribute much to the armed forces if given a chance to participate as full citizens.

Black Americans in the U.S. Military

The history of black military service in the United States predates the creation of the nation itself. During the American Revolution black men served alongside whites at

the battles of Lexington and Bunker Hill, among others.¹⁴ Despite the efforts of these men on behalf of the rebellious colonies, Southern slaveholders were unsettled by the prospect of arming slaves and free blacks. At the Continental Congress in September 1775, Edward Rutledge of South Carolina attempted to bar all blacks, both free and slave, from serving. That effort failed, but one month later General George Washington and his officers acquiesced to the concerns of the slaveholders and banned all blacks from the Continental Army. Washington later relented and allowed black veterans of the fighting in New England to reenlist. The ban on new black recruits, however, remained in force.¹⁵

In the years after the Revolution, the fledgling armed forces of the new nation continued to exclude blacks from their ranks, at least officially. It was not until the Civil War that the United States military formally institutionalized black service. The process began in a piecemeal fashion, as Union Army commanders such as Ben Butler began freeing Southern slaves and incorporating them into their forces. The use of such “contrabands of war,” in Butler’s words, eventually became official policy within parts of the Union Army. The Union Navy soon followed suit.¹⁶ Following President Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation in early 1863, Congress authorized black enrollment in all of the armed forces.¹⁷ By the end of the war, 186,000 blacks had served in the Union Army, most as enlisted men although a few managed to earn officers’

¹⁴ Astor, 6-14; Edgerton, 16-17; Nalty, 10.

¹⁵ Nalty, 12-13.

¹⁶ Joseph T. Glatthaar, *Forged in Battle: The Civil War Alliance of Black Soldiers and White Officers* (New York: The Free Press, 1990), 4; Nalty, 32.

¹⁷ Martin Binkin and Mark J. Eitelberg with Alvin J. Schexnider and Marvin M. Smith, *Blacks and the Military* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1982), 13-14; Dalfiume, 6-7.

commissions.¹⁸ The performance of these men persuaded Congress to finally formalize the presence of black troops by mandating that the Army maintain six all-black units. After a re-organization of the Army in 1869, this number was reduced to four: the 24th Infantry (Colored), the 25th Infantry (Colored), the 9th Cavalry, and the 10th Cavalry.¹⁹

Although black troops had a poor reputation among their white counterparts and the public at large, the Army needed them. With the end of the Civil War, the nation's attention had turned westward, as white settlers pushed the frontier further toward the other side of the continent. This process inevitably brought them into conflict with local Native Americans, some of whom responded violently. In 1867, the Army dispatched the all-black 9th and 10th Cavalry to the frontier to protect the settlers.²⁰ Life on the frontier was little better for the cavalrymen than it had been back east. Living conditions were deplorable. Black troops received far less pay and rations than their white counterparts. The Army failed to provide suitable equipment or uniforms, forcing the men to scrounge for their supplies and giving them a rather motley appearance. Moreover, the local whites were rarely grateful for the protection the soldiers provided.²¹ Despite all these setbacks, the men of the 9th and 10th Cavalry performed ably during their service on the frontier.

¹⁸ Richard J. Stillman, *Integration of the Negro in the U.S. Armed Forces* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968), 10.

¹⁹ Dalfiume, 7; Nalty, 51.

²⁰ Astor, 44-45; Stillman, 11.

²¹ Astor, 46; Edgerton, 42.

They proved their worth as combatants in battles with various Native American tribes, and by around 1870 had earned the nickname “Buffalo Soldiers.”²²

When America went to war with Spain over Cuba in 1898, black troops faced a new challenge. Because all four of the black Army units included experienced veterans, and because many whites thought blacks were constitutionally suited to tropical warfare, the Army decided to put all of its black units into action.²³ The performance of the black troops made an impression on many of the white officers who witnessed their courage under fire. By the end of the war, five black soldiers and one black sailor had earned Medals of Honor.²⁴

Blacks also served in the Spanish-controlled Philippine Islands during and after the war, but under very different conditions. Although the U.S. military had hoped to make common cause with the local insurgents there much as it had in Cuba, the Filipinos quickly determined that America was more interested in gaining control of the islands than liberating them. The 1899 peace treaty with Spain placed the Philippines under American control; by that time Filipino insurgents were already attacking U.S. troops. To respond to the threat, President William McKinley authorized the creation of two new

²² Astor, 46-47. The etymology of the term remains unclear. Some accounts claim that the name came from the troops’ Native American opponents, who thought the color of their skin and the texture of their hair resembled that of the buffalo. Another derivation is based on the buffalo-skin coats the cavalymen wore during the winter. In any case, the name stuck. When the 10th Cavalry designed its regimental coat of arms, it incorporated the animal into the crest. Modern-day Army units that trace their lineage back to the 9th and 10th Cavalry still use the term “Buffalo Soldiers.”

²³ Marvin Fletcher, *The Black Soldier and Officer In the United States Army, 1891-1917* (Columbia, MO: The University of Missouri Press, 1974), 32.

²⁴ Ibid., 46.

black regiments, the 48th and 49th Volunteer Infantry. In 1900 these units joined the regular black units already on the islands.²⁵

Despite concerns from black civilian leaders and a Filipino propaganda campaign that chastised black troops for participating in a war of racial conquest, black soldiers continued to serve. Their actions earned them little gratitude, however, as demonstrated in 1906 when President Teddy Roosevelt ordered the dishonorable discharge of 167 black soldiers for their alleged participation in the so-called “Brownsville Raid.”²⁶ Although the Brownsville affair was damaging to the reputation of black soldiers in general, it was later eclipsed by another incident of racial unrest in Texas. In 1917 the 24th Infantry Regiment was sent to Camp Logan, on the outskirts of Houston. There the members of the unit encountered an openly hostile civilian populace and a local police force that treated them no differently than any other black man: that is, with contempt and sometimes violence. On the morning of August 23, 1917, one of the members of the regiment attempted to intervene when he witnessed a white police officer beating a black woman on the street. The officer responded by clubbing him over the head and arresting him. When a black military police officer inquired about the arrested man, the white officer clubbed him and shot at him. That incident touched off a two-hour rampage in

²⁵ Nalty, 74-75.

²⁶ Binkin et. al., 15-16; Fletcher, 119-151; Foner, 95-103. In that incident, three companies of the 25th Infantry were framed for a riot in Brownsville, Texas that left one man dead and several other people wounded. A subsequent Senate investigation turned up numerous inconsistencies in witnesses’ statements and other evidence, yet Roosevelt insisted on the culpability of the black soldiers. In 1972 President Richard Nixon ordered the Army to conduct a new investigation. That inquiry concluded all of the black soldiers were innocent and had been victims of a frame-up by white citizens in an effort to drive them out of town. President Roosevelt’s order was overturned, and the Nixon Administration reversed all of the men’s dishonorable discharges.

which about a hundred black soldiers marched through the streets of Houston shooting at police officers and other whites.²⁷

To the Army leadership, which was increasingly dominated by Southerners, events such as the Houston riot proved that black troops were largely unfit for military service. Although the Army continued to accept blacks into its ranks, it did so only in relatively small numbers. Moreover, the Army insisted that only Southern white officers should command black units, on the grounds that Southern whites had more experience interacting with blacks. This resulted in an increasing number of black units relegated to support units such as labor battalions. The trend of moving black soldiers away from combat duty might have persisted had it not been for the manpower shortage created by America's entry into World War I.²⁸

A new draft law passed in 1917 had brought tens of thousands of blacks into the Army. In August of that year, the Army approved a plan to organize sixteen new infantry regiments and a number of support units to absorb these new recruits. Because of the violence in Houston, however, the War Department approved only four regiments. These four regiments comprised the 92nd Division. A second black division, the 93rd Division (Provisional), was created to absorb mobilized black National Guard units from various

²⁷ Edgerton, 77; Foner, 113-115; Nalty, 101-104. In the end, fifteen whites were killed and twelve wounded. Four of the soldiers were killed during the riot. The Army convened a series of courts-martial and found 112 men guilty of various offenses. Nineteen men were sentenced to hang, 63 were ordered confined to hard labor for the remainder of their lives, and the remainder were given dishonorable discharges and prison terms of two to fifteen years.

²⁸ Foner, 111; Gerald Patton, *War and Race: The Black Officer in the American Military, 1915-1941* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), 91.

states.²⁹ The Army, however, was now forced to confront two conflicting forces: the logistics of organizing and supplying the newly created black divisions as well as the existing infantry and cavalry regiments, and the need to adhere to the mores of racial segregation. Black officers were therefore limited to the infantry, and certain commands permitted no black officers above the rank of second lieutenant. The Houston incident had also made the Army sensitive to Southern fears of large numbers of blacks in their communities. Most black troops were therefore stationed in the North and Midwest before being sent overseas.³⁰

The Army's efforts to maintain segregation, however, broke down when the black units arrived in France. In marked contrast to their own countrymen's treatment of them, black soldiers found French citizens to be welcoming. Despite the efforts of the military police to maintain a separation of the races, black soldiers mingled freely with French civilians.

Relationships between black soldiers and French women were a subject of particular ire for the Army leadership.³¹ The refusal of the French military to participate in the U.S.

²⁹ Foner, 116-117; Nalty, 108-112. The soldiers of the 92nd Division, most of whom were draftees, would receive only limited weapons training before being sent to Europe. In a concession to black leaders, however, the companies and platoons within the division would be led by graduates of a newly created training course for black junior-grade officers.

³⁰ Patton, 70.

³¹ Fraternization became more prevalent in World War II as far more American troops were sent overseas. For studies of fraternization between American troops and European women during and after World War II, see Barbara Friedman, *From the Battlefield to the Bridal Suite: Media Coverage of British War Brides, 1942-1946* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2007); Petra Goedde, *GIs and Germans: Culture, Gender, and Foreign Relations, 1945-1949* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003); Maria Höhn, *GIs and Frauleins: The German-American Encounter in 1950s West Germany* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); David Reynolds, *Rich Relations: The American Occupation of Britain, 1942-1945* (London: Phoenix, 2000); Elfrieda Berthiaume Shukert and Barbara Smith Scibetta, *War Brides of World War II* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1988).

Army's program of segregation created a situation of de facto integration in certain parts of France.³²

Emboldened by their performance abroad and their good relations with the French, many black soldiers returned home after the war with the hope that they had earned a modicum of respect from the country they had served. Instead, they found a populace gripped by a paralyzing fear of Communism and a resurgent Ku Klux Klan. White mobs throughout the South and Midwest lynched blacks by the hundreds. Black soldiers, whose uniforms offended Southern sensibilities, were a frequent target.³³ Within the military, the numbers of blacks in the Army dwindled as black soldiers demobilized and the War Department again limited the numbers of blacks eligible to enlist. Despite the inhospitable racial climate of the interwar years, there were some victories for black soldiers. The most notable of these was the approval of flight training for blacks in the Army Air Forces at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama.³⁴

When America went to war again in 1941, however, the armed forces remained strictly segregated. Although President Franklin D. Roosevelt had promised to improve the status of blacks in the military, the military of 1941 looked very much like the military of 1918. The Marines still had no black members, and the Navy continued to relegate its black sailors to the stewards' branch. The Army, meanwhile, again sacrificed efficiency for the sake of maintaining separate facilities for its black troops.³⁵ Even as the

³² Patton, 88-89.

³³ Astor, 125; Nalty, 126.

³⁴ Nalty, 144.

³⁵ Dalfiume, 58-62; MacGregor, 34.

Army was gripped by a severe manpower shortage, it wasted considerable amounts of time and money providing duplicate command structures.³⁶

For the first few years of the war, it seemed as though no black serviceman would ever see combat. The only exceptions were the fighter escort pilots of the 99th Fighter Squadron of the Army Air Forces, better known the Tuskegee Airmen.³⁷ The disenchantment of the black community, and its political implications, eventually compelled the War Department to reconsider its ban on blacks serving in ground combat roles. In early 1944 the Army dispatched the 93rd Infantry Division to the Pacific, while the 92nd Division was sent to Europe a few months later. The performance of both units was somewhat marred by mistrust between white officers and black soldiers, as well as the generally poor level of training and morale among the black troops. Nonetheless, elements of both divisions earned accolades as antiaircraft gunners, artillerymen, tank destroyers, and riflemen.³⁸

³⁶ In addition to the question of what to do with black servicemen, the military was also confronted with the issue of black women seeking to serve in the Women's Army Corps and the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service. The WACs officially followed the Army's initial policy of keeping the races separate, but the limited number of training and housing facilities for women meant that black and white WACs often worked and lived alongside one another. The WAVES, meanwhile, excluded black women from service until 1944, when they began to accept a limited number for training. The experience of black servicewomen during World War II remains largely unstudied; Brenda L. Moore's *To Serve My Country, To Serve My Race: The Story of the Only African American WACs Stationed Overseas During World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 1996) and Martha S. Putney's *When the Nation Was in Need: Blacks in the Women's Army Corps* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1992) are among the few scholarly studies of black WACs. Jean Ebbert's and Marie-Beth Hall's *Crossed Currents: Navy Women in a Century of Change* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 1999) provides a brief overview of the integration of the WAVES.

³⁷ Gropman, 7-10; Nalty, 149-153; Stillman, 26. These pilots had been trained at Tuskegee Airfield in Alabama and sent first to North Africa and then to Italy to provide ground support. The squadron earned a Distinguished Unit Citation for its performance in the invasion of Sicily, yet it was nearly disbanded when its white commander pronounced the project a failure and the pilots too cowardly to ever succeed. A hearing of the House Armed Services Committee was convened to determine if black pilots would be allowed to continue to fly. Only the intervention of an Air Corps colonel prevented the committee from recommending the squadron's disbandment.

³⁸ Binkin et. al., 18-25; MacGregor, 17-57; Nalty, 168-175.

Throughout the war in Europe, commanders had unofficially mingled black and white artillery battalions, tankers, and tank destroyer elements. By late 1944, the manpower shortage within the Army had become so severe that black replacements were sent to white rifle companies.³⁹ Faced with a lack of staffing options after the Battle of the Bulge, General Dwight Eisenhower's deputy for logistics, Lieutenant General John C.H. Lee, proposed that black soldiers who had received infantry training be integrated into white units fighting at the front.⁴⁰ Lee's proposal instantly ran into opposition from a number of commanders, including Lieutenant General George S. Patton Jr., commander of Third Army. In the end, Eisenhower did not insist that Patton accept black troops, and the volunteers went to other units instead. There they proved overwhelmingly successful, particularly in First Army.⁴¹

For all the accomplishments of black soldiers during World War II, many Army leaders refused to recognize that blacks could perform as well as whites on the battlefield.⁴² When black units performed poorly, many officials concluded that their race made them ill-suited for combat. Few thought to blame the poor training and leadership the Army provided these units.

³⁹ Dalfiume, 99; MacGregor, 43-45; Nalty, 176.

⁴⁰ Dalfiume, 99; MacGregor, 51-52.

⁴¹ Nalty, 176-178.

⁴² Black soldiers were also routinely passed over for medals and other commendations. A 1993 study commissioned by the Army concluded that institutional racism had prevented otherwise qualified soldiers from receiving medals, including the Medal of Honor. That study recommended that several black recipients of Distinguished Service Cross have their award upgraded to the Medal of Honor. In 1997 President Bill Clinton awarded seven Medals of Honor to black World War II veterans, though only one of the recipients was still living. See Elliott V. Converse III, Daniel K. Gibran, John A. Cash, Robert K. Griffith, Jr. and Richard H. Kohn, *The Exclusion of Black Soldiers from the Medal of Honor in World War II* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1997).

These attitudes meant that although the exigencies of the battlefield had allowed blacks to make limited gains, the Army remained committed to an official policy of segregation. After the war, the Army disbanded the 92nd and 93rd Divisions, leaving only a few smaller units, such as 24th Infantry Regiment. As the service sought to return to a policy of strict segregation, there were few options for blacks who remained in the Army. Unsure what to do with its black troops, the Army assigned many of them to occupation duty in Japan.⁴³

The glacial pace of progress was a source of great frustration to the black press. Now the war outside America's borders was won, but the one within it had scarcely been joined. Black troops returning home from Europe and the Pacific, including those who had been cited for their service, were still subjected to discrimination and physical violence. In one particularly notorious case, a black sergeant wearing his Army uniform was blinded by a South Carolina sheriff, an incident that received widespread coverage in the black press.⁴⁴ But despite the best efforts of black newspapers, there was little substantive progress toward military integration.

That changed on July 26, 1948, when Roosevelt's successor, Harry S. Truman, signed Executive Order 9981. The order, which was designed to ensure equal treatment in the military, read in part: "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

⁴³ Blair, 48; Astor, 347-348.

⁴⁴ Nalty, 204-205.

necessary changes without impairing efficiency or morale.”⁴⁵ The black press greeted the news with triumphant headlines. Yet the jubilation of the black press would soon give way to more frustration as it became apparent that the military was dragging its feet in ending segregation. It would take another war, this one fought in Korea, to finally integrate the American forces.

The Black Press: Strategies of Protest

Throughout its history, the black press has been an ardent advocate for the civil rights and improved conditions of black Americans. According to the Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal, by the mid-20th century no other institution within the black community was as powerful.⁴⁶ But black newspapers did not march in lockstep toward these goals. On the contrary, black newspapers frequently disagreed with one another, sometimes bitterly, as to whether to seek accommodation with the white power structure in hopes of earning equal rights or to confront it directly. Bernell Tripp’s *Origins of the Black Press: New York, 1827-1847* made clear that the first black newspapers were created in order to provide an outlet for black citizens who were either ignored or denigrated in the mainstream press.⁴⁷ Papers such as Samuel Cornish and John Russwurm’s *Freedom’s*

⁴⁵ Executive Order 9981, 26 July 1948, in *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces: Basic Documents Volume VIII: Segregation Under Siege*, Morris J. MacGregor and Bernard C. Nalty (Eds.) (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1977), 687.

⁴⁶ Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, vol. II (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1944), 924.

⁴⁷ Bernell Tripp, *Origins of the Black Press: New York, 1827-1847* (Northport, AL: Vision Press, 1992), 73-74.

Journal and Willis Hodges' *The Ram's Horn* protested the qualification tests and financial restrictions that barred free blacks in the North from participating in politics.⁴⁸

Despite these early voices of protest, however, many antebellum black newspapers preferred to emphasize the accomplishments of free blacks. Frankie Hutton's *The Early Black Press in America, 1827 to 1860* noted that "while avoiding a continuum of confrontation with white leaders on important issues and problems, the black press showcased the best of the race and kept hope alive."⁴⁹ These papers were targeted largely at middle class blacks in the North, as well as blacks who aspired to the middle class. Their publishers and editors stressed the importance of education and self-improvement, and "reasoned that coverage in their newspapers of the good times, good deeds, and successes of free blacks was sure to make an impression on those of influence in America."⁵⁰ During the Civil War the black press became somewhat more outspoken in its demands for more rights. It also encouraged and lauded the black troops who served in the segregated Union Army.

After the war, black newspapers pushed west toward the frontier and south into the states of the former Confederacy. In their sweeping *A History of the Black Press*, Armistead Pride and Clint Wilson noted that these new papers were similarly divided as to how best serve their readers. The *New Orleans Tribune*, a bilingual newspaper founded a year before the end of the war, published a list of demands in one of its early issues:

⁴⁸ Ibid., 76-77.

⁴⁹ Frankie Hutton, *The Early Black Press in America, 1827 to 1860* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), 157.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 157.

equal treatment for black and white soldiers in position and pay, the same for black and white ministers, the enrollment of black children in white schools, and voting rights for black men.⁵¹ The *Colored American* of Augusta, Georgia, by contrast, espoused a philosophy of interracial accord: “[the newspaper] is designed to be a vehicle for the diffusion of Religious, Political and General Intelligence. It will be devoted to the promotion of harmony and goodwill between the whites and colored people of the South, and untiring in its advocacy of Industry and Education among all classes; but particularly the class most in need of our agency.”⁵²

Pride and Wilson also noted that the end of the nineteenth century, which saw the U.S. Supreme Court affirm the constitutionality of the “separate but equal” doctrine in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, brought about an era in which the gulf between the advocates of accommodation and the advocates of confrontation widened: “Following the *Plessy* decision and into the twentieth century, the Black press largely divided into two—decidedly unequal—ideological camps: one supporting Booker T. Washington, the other supporting W.E.B. Du Bois.”⁵³ Washington and Du Bois became the symbols of black cooperation and black militancy, respectively. Their lives and writings would inspire decades of fractious infighting within the black press.

Washington, who was born into slavery in 1856, was the first president of the Tuskegee Institute. Created to provide both vocational training and a traditional education

⁵¹ Armistead S. Pride and Clint C. Wilson, *A History of the Black Press* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1997), 77.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 78.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 121.

to black Americans, the Institute became a vehicle for Washington's philosophy of self-reliance. Washington captured the essence of this idea in a speech at the 1895 Cotton States and Industrial Exposition in Atlanta. Known as "the Atlanta Compromise," Washington's speech addressed the nature of race relations in the United States and urged blacks to steer clear of "extremist folly." Instead, they should prove their worth as citizens through hard work. Proposing a tripartite alliance among Northern capitalists, Southern business leaders and blacks, Washington suggested blacks temporarily put aside their struggle for equality in exchange for an opportunity to share in the economic growth that would result from Northern investment. Washington neatly summed up this idea with a vivid metaphor: "In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress."⁵⁴

In addition to his skills as an educator and orator, Washington also possessed a canny sense of power and how to cultivate it. Under his leadership, the Tuskegee Institute became one of the wealthiest institutions of learning in the South. Supported by donations from wealthy philanthropists and boasting a large network of loyal graduates, Washington's school became the center of what became known as the Tuskegee Machine. The Tuskegee Machine also included a number of black newspapers that spread Washington's message of racial accommodation. Edgar A. Toppin described how the process worked: "Washington's 'Tuskegee Machine' influenced black newspapers and magazines. The Tuskegee news bureau, directed by Emmett J. Scott, sent out a flood of news releases and canned editorials. By placing or withholding ads, the well-endowed

⁵⁴ Louis R. Harlan, *Booker T. Washington: The Making of a Black Leader, 1856-1901* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 218.

Tuskegee clique persuaded many black editors, most of whose publications were in financial straits, to carry these materials favorable to Washington's views. Moreover, the Tuskegee cabal secretly purchased several black periodicals, controlling them unbeknownst to the public."⁵⁵

The newspaper most closely linked to Washington was T. Thomas Fortune's *New York Age*.⁵⁶ Fortune's *Age* had begun life as the *Rumor*, a 12-page tabloid that billed itself as "A Representative Colored American Newspaper."⁵⁷ Fortune joined the staff of the newspaper in 1879, and by 1891 was editor of what was now called the *Age*. Not long afterwards, he became friends with Washington. Although Fortune personally believed in the necessity of more direct forms of social protest, his close friendship with Washington led him to use his newspaper to defend Washington's philosophy of interracial cooperation.⁵⁸

Washington's most passionate opponent, W.E.B. Du Bois, also used the black press to publicize his own solution to segregation and political disenfranchisement. Du Bois, a Harvard-educated sociologist and criminologist, learned the power of the press early in life. Born in 1868, by the age of sixteen he had become a correspondent, ironically, for the forerunner of Fortune's *Age*, the *New York Globe*.⁵⁹ By early

⁵⁵ Edgar A. Toppin, *Blacks in America: Then and Now* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1969), 46.

⁵⁶ Harlan, *The Making of a Black Leader*, 192-193.

⁵⁷ Pride and Wilson, 121.

⁵⁸ Louis R. Harlan, *Booker T. Washington: The Wizard of Tuskegee, 1901-1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 16.

⁵⁹ Francis L. Broderick, "The Search for a Career," in *W.E.B. Du Bois: A Profile*, ed. Rayford W. Logan, 5, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1971).

adulthood, however, Du Bois had become convinced that real change could only come about through agitation and protest. In his 1903 book *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois argued that Washington's strategy of cooperation would consign the black race to eternal servitude. Two years later, Du Bois helped found the Niagara Movement, an organization that existed primarily to refute Washington's message of accommodation. Another member of the Niagara Movement was William Monroe Trotter, who had become one of the most forceful voices for Du Bois' ideas in the black press. Trotter's Boston *Guardian*, which he founded in 1901 with George Forbes, repeatedly attacked Washington's policies on its editorial page.⁶⁰ Richard Digby-Junger observed that "Washington's other detractors, even W. E. B. DuBois, moderated their public criticisms before Trotter."⁶¹ Du Bois also cultivated relationships with other journalists and influential individuals outside of the Niagara Movement, most notably the anti-lynching activist Ida B. Wells. Wells, like Du Bois, was an ardent opponent of Washington's policies, and the two leaders were among the most vocal advocates of radical change.⁶²

Du Bois did not rely on others to communicate his message of social protest, however. Historian Roland Wolseley noted that Du Bois "founded five magazines. . . was a correspondent for four newspapers, columnist for numerous both black and white papers, and contributor of articles to many general as well as scholarly periodicals, black

⁶⁰ Pride and Wilson, 123.

⁶¹ Richard Digby-Junger, "The *Guardian*, *Crisis*, *Messenger*, and *Negro World*: The Early 20th-Century Black Press" *The Howard Journal of Communications* 9, no. 3 (1998): 275.

⁶² Paula J. Giddings, *Ida: A Sword Among Lions: Ida B. Wells and the Campaign Against Lynching* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008), 414, 441-43. Although Du Bois and Wells were intellectually and politically aligned, their relationship was strained by Wells' patronizing treatment of the younger Du Bois and Du Bois' neglect of the role of black women in the equal rights movement.

and white.”⁶³ The most significant of these publications was the *Crisis*, founded by Du Bois in 1910 as the house organ for the newly created National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Du Bois stayed at the *Crisis* for more than 20 years; during that time, according to Wolseley, he “made the magazine a vigorous critic of any national policy or event which resulted in harm to the black people—whether it was discrimination in the military services or the wartime lynchings of the 1914-1919 conflict.”⁶⁴

However, it was during this same period that Du Bois published his most infamous and atypically accommodationist editorial. Entitled “Close Ranks,” it ran in the July 1918 issue of the *Crisis* and was the result of an unusual investigation by the federal government. The criticism of the more militant black newspapers had attracted the attention of federal investigators, who feared such rhetoric might damage the war effort. In June, Du Bois and number of other black journalists and activists were invited to a conference in Washington, D.C. hosted by the War Department and the Committee on Public Information. As Patrick Washburn wrote in *The African American Newspaper*, “the meeting was suggested by two blacks in the government who felt that the black press was in danger of being suppressed and needed to meet face to face with government officials, who perhaps could abolish some of the injustices facing blacks. At the same time, they hoped that the editors would become boosters of the war effort; thus the conference would stress ‘the fact that we are at war that that Negro public opinion should

⁶³ Roland Wolseley, *The Black Press U.S.A.: A Detailed and Understanding Report On What The Black Press Is And How It Came To Be* (Ames, IA: The Iowa State University Press, 1971), 41.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

be led along helpful lines rather than along lines that make for discontentment and unrest.”⁶⁵

Although Du Bois had been highly critical of the American government following its declaration of war in 1917, after the Washington conference he reversed his policy toward the war effort. In “Close Ranks,” he wrote: “We of the colored race have no ordinary interest in the outcome. That which the German power represents today spells death to the aspirations of Negroes and all darker races for equality, freedom and democracy. Let us not hesitate. Let us, while the war lasts, forget our special grievances and close our ranks shoulder to shoulder with our white fellow citizens and the allied nations that are fighting for democracy. We make no ordinary sacrifice, but we make it gladly and willingly, with our eyes lifted to the hills.”⁶⁶

This was an extraordinary reversal for Du Bois, and one that he later came to regret. As historian Manning Marable wrote, “Du Bois’s 1917-1918 strategy was based upon two assumptions: that loyal participation by American Negroes in the conflict would lead to expanded democratic rights and a lessening of social injustices and lynchings in the postwar era, and that the war would promote the independence of the former German African colonies. Both assumptions proved tragically incorrect.”⁶⁷

When the end of the war brought no real change for black Americans, a chastened Du Bois rejoined his allies in pressing for real change. Despite the embarrassment surrounding his “Close Ranks” editorial, Du Bois’s philosophy of social protest was

⁶⁵ Washburn, *The African American Newspaper*, 106.

⁶⁶ “Close Ranks,” *The Crisis*, July 1918, 111.

⁶⁷ Manning Marable, *W.E.B. Du Bois: Black Radical Democrat* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986), 97.

becoming more popular within the black press and the black community at large. The war, which had brought black people from different classes and backgrounds together for a single cause, had created the foundation for “a large-scale social movement to carry out the black cause.”⁶⁸ Perhaps just as importantly, Washington had died in 1915. With his passing, the Tuskegee Machine lost its grip on the black press, and more newspapers began to identify openly with Du Bois’s Niagara Movement.⁶⁹

Yet even as Washington and Du Bois and their partisans fought to control the direction of the struggle for equal rights, there were many black Americans who sought to reconcile the differences between the two, or transcend them completely. Despite the outsize influence of Washington and Du Bois, the black community writ large was never a monolithic institution dominated by a single individual or idea. Differences in class, gender, and socioeconomic status meant that numerous factions among black Americans embodied philosophies of social change that could not be classified easily as either accommodationist or confrontational. The middle-class Women’s Convention of the black National Baptist Convention, for example, espoused a “politics of respectability” that contained an implicit message of assimilation with the white community.⁷⁰ This fundamentally Washingtonian message of self-improvement, however, “also provided the platform from which black church women came to demand full equality with white

⁶⁸ Charlotte G. O’Kelly, “Black Newspapers and the Black Protest Movement: Their Historical Relationship,” *Phylon* 43, no. 1 (Spring 1984): 5.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁷⁰ Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women’s Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 195.

America.”⁷¹ Similarly, many of the black intelligentsia of the early twentieth century espoused a philosophy of “racial uplift” that sought to undermine culturally dominant depictions of black Americans even as they embraced white-dominated notions of middle-class life.⁷²

The intellectual tumult engendered by these coexisting and sometimes conflicting notions of how to achieve true equality was a boon to black newspapers, which became the primary forum for these debates. The black press was also benefiting from the mass exodus of Southern blacks to the North. Known as “The Great Migration,” this movement was fueled by the harsh living conditions of the Jim Crow South and the promise of work in the factories of the North. These migrants flooded into the industrial centers of the North. New York City’s black population grew from 91,709 in 1910 to 152,465 in 1920; Detroit’s black community of 5,741 in 1910 swelled to 44,838 in ten years; and Chicago’s black population grew from 44,103 in 1910 to 109,458 in 1920.⁷³ This influx of blacks into the cities expanded the readership of black newspapers and thus made them more profitable. It also made these papers much more important to the communities they served, as recent arrivals depended on the black press to familiarize them with their new surroundings.

Emboldened by their growing economic power, many black newspapers demonstrated a growing willingness to participate or even lead forms of social protest.

⁷¹ Ibid., 221.

⁷² Kevin K. Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 14-17.

⁷³ James Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners and the Great Migration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 4.

One such example was a 1929 campaign by the *New York Amsterdam News* called “Don’t Buy Where You Can’t Work.” Designed to exert pressure on merchants who refused to hire blacks, the campaign succeeded in changing the hiring practices of a number of local business. It was also hugely popular with the *News*’ readers.⁷⁴ The *News*’ campaign was emblematic of a trend toward more strident calls for racial justice within the black press. One notable target of black newspapers’ ire in the early twentieth century was segregation within the military. Foremost among the black newspapers leading the charge for equal rights within and without the armed forces were three of the nation’s largest and most influential: the *Chicago Defender*, the *Pittsburgh Courier*, and the Baltimore *Afro-American*.

The *Chicago Defender*

Founded by Robert Sengstacke Abbott in 1905, the *Defender* appeared in a crowded market for black newspapers. Chicago already had three black papers when Abbott started his weekly. His original aim, as he later wrote, was to “create an organ that mirror the needs, opinions, and aspirations of my race.”⁷⁵ The *Defender* quickly became popular among blacks for its blend of sensational reporting and scathing indictments of Jim Crow and Southern racism.⁷⁶ During and after World War I, Abbott used his paper to encourage the migration of Southern blacks to Northern cities such as Chicago.⁷⁷ Abbott

⁷⁴ Herman D. Bloch, “The Employment Status of the New York Negro in Retrospect,” *The Phylon Quarterly*, 20, no. 4 (Winter 1959): 329.

⁷⁵ Roi Ottley, *The Lonely Warrior: The Life and Times of Robert S. Abbott* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1955), 81.

⁷⁶ Pride and Wilson, 136-37.

⁷⁷ Alan D. DeSantis, “Selling the American Dream Myth to Black Southerners: The *Chicago Defender* and the Great Migration of 1915-1919,” *Western Journal of Communication* 62, no. 4 (Fall 1998): 503.

and his newspaper benefited greatly from the large numbers of blacks moving to Chicago. In 1915, the newspaper reached its peak circulation of about 230,000, although because Pullman porters circulated the newspaper on railroads, its actual readership may have surpassed one million.⁷⁸ By 1916 it was the largest selling black newspaper in the nation.⁷⁹ Many of the *Defender*'s readers lived below the Mason-Dixon line; the newspaper was distributed throughout the South in both large cities and small towns.⁸⁰

After World War I, however, the newspaper began a long slow decline in readership. By the early 1930s it had shrunk to around 73,000. By the late 1930s, Abbott was nearing the end of his life and increasingly focused on ensuring an orderly transition after his death. He had already chosen John H. Sengstacke, his brother's son, as his successor. Abbott had paid close attention to Sengstacke's rearing and education for years, and upon the younger man's graduation from the Hampton Institute (now Hampton University) in Virginia, steered him toward the Chicago School of Printing. Sengstacke studied his uncle's trade there while taking business classes at Northwestern University. In 1934, Abbott hired Sengstacke as vice president and treasurer of the Robert S. Abbott Publishing Company. One year later he promoted him to general manager. Almost every stage of Sengstacke's early career was carefully guided by Abbott.⁸¹ In 1938, Abbott turned control of day-to-day operations of the *Defender* over to Sengstacke. Abbott's death two years later placed Sengstacke in total control of the newspaper. The younger

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 478.

⁸⁰ Grossman, 79.

⁸¹ Ottley, 336.

man was almost immediately presented with a series of problems, including sagging circulation figures, a federal investigation of the *Defender's* coverage of the American government's activities during World War II, and stiff competition from the *Defender's* primary rival, the *Pittsburgh Courier*.

The Pittsburgh Courier

The *Courier* began life in 1910 as a weekly founded by Nathaniel Harleston, a security guard who dabbled in poetry.⁸² It was another man, however, who would transform the two-page publication into one of the most influential black newspapers of the twentieth century. Robert Vann was a lawyer who had contributed articles and poetry to the *Courier*; he later became the newspaper's legal counsel.⁸³ When the *Courier's* editor quit, Vann quickly took his place. Over the next thirty years, Vann transformed the struggling paper into a financially successful publication with a strong reputation among both blacks and whites. By the mid-1930s, the *Courier* had become the largest black newspaper in the nation, with a circulation of about 250,000.⁸⁴ Following Vann's death in October 1940, his wife Jessie assumed control of the *Courier*. Ira Lewis, who had worked at the paper since 1914 as a sports writer and eventually managing editor, and whom Vann had hand-picked as his successor, became editor. Under his leadership the *Courier* reached its highest circulation, and gained even greater popularity. By 1947, the *Courier* was bringing in two million dollars annually and its circulation had grown to about 330,000. The paper operated twelve branch offices, published fourteen editions around

⁸² Pride and Wilson, 137-138.

⁸³ Washburn, *The African American Newspaper*, 129-135.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

the country, and employed 165 workers.⁸⁵ When Lewis died in 1948, P.L. Prattis and William Nunn Sr. took over daily operations.⁸⁶

Taking its cues from the *Defender*, the *Courier* offered its readers an equal mixture of sensationalism and advocacy. The *Courier* was a vocal opponent of Jim Crow, leading public campaigns against segregation in public facilities. The paper was also known for its efforts to integrate professional sports; the *Courier* gave considerable coverage to Jackie Robinson and Joe Louis early in their careers. The newspaper's editorial tone earned it the affection and loyalty of readers far beyond Pittsburgh. Like the *Defender*, it had a national audience.⁸⁷ The only other paper with so large a reach was the Baltimore *Afro-American*.

The Baltimore *Afro-American*

The *Afro-American* began life as three different church newspapers: the *Afro-American*, the *Sunday School Helper*, and the *Ledger*. In 1892 the *Helper*'s publisher, John H. Murphy Sr., bought the other two papers and named his new publication the *Afro-American Ledger* and later just the *Afro-American*. Murphy, an ex-Union Army sergeant, was also the Sunday School superintendent at the St. John A.M.E. Church. His new paper soon earned a reputation for probity and moderation that matched that of its owner: Murphy refused to accept advertising from alcoholic beverage companies or political organizations. The *Afro-American* was a stalwart advocate of equal rights for

⁸⁵ Andrew Buni, *Robert L. Vann of the Pittsburgh Courier* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1974), 325.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Wolseley, 49.

black citizens. It editorialized for years against unequal pay for black and white teachers and the absence of black officers on the Baltimore police force. Murphy also used his own money to fund a lawsuit seeking to end segregation aboard Southbound trains.⁸⁸

After Murphy's death in 1922, control of the *Afro-American* fell to his son, Carl Murphy. By that point the newspaper had already become a national publication. The younger Murphy continued the tradition of his father, avoiding alliances with political factions while remaining committed to the equal treatment of black Americans. That philosophy is embodied in a creed written by John Murphy Sr.: "A newspaper succeeds because its management believes in itself, in God and in the present generation. It must always ask itself—Whether it has kept the faith with the common people; Whether it has no other goal except to see that their liberties are preserved and their future assured; Whether it is fighting to get rid of slums, to provide jobs for everybody; Whether it stays out of politics except to expose corruption and condemn injustice, race prejudice and the cowardice of compromise."⁸⁹ The paper's contempt for the "cowardice of compromise" would be put to the test during the Korean War as black soldiers continued to struggle for equal treatment.

Research on the Black Press and the Military

Given the relative paucity of scholarship devoted to either the black press or the Korean War, it is unsurprising that there are no studies of how the black press covered that conflict. As David Halberstam wrote in his final book, "the true brutality of the war never really penetrated the American cultural consciousness. . . . When servicemen

⁸⁸ Pride and Wilson, 133-134.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 135. Those words still appear on the editorial page of every issue of the *Afro-American*.

returned from their tours, they found their neighbors generally not very interested in what they had seen and done. The subject of the war was quickly dispensed with in conversation.”⁹⁰ Similarly, the Korean War is absent from most general histories of the black press, which often skip from its heyday during and immediately after World War II to its sudden decline in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Armistead Pride and Clint Wilson’s *A History of the Black Press* claimed that “the numerous peaks reached in the 1940s became an orchestrated crescendo just before the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*” but makes no mention of black newspapers’ role in fighting for military integration during the Korean War.⁹¹ In *The Black Press U.S.A.*, another widely cited history of black newspapers and magazines, Roland Wolseley concluded that “in the late 1940s storms were clearly ahead for the American black press,” but failed to mention how its struggle for desegregation in the military might have affected the difficulties it faced later in the century.⁹² *Perspectives of the Black Press: 1974*, a collection of essays by scholars and journalists, included several entries on how black newspapers covered World War II and the issues confronting the black press of the 1970s. It did not contain any discussion about the Korean War, or even more curiously, the then still-ongoing Vietnam conflict.⁹³ Even the most recent works on the history of the black press continue to omit the Korean conflict from their pages.

⁹⁰ David Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter: America and the Korean War* (New York: Hyperion, 2007), 4.

⁹¹ Pride and Wilson, 156.

⁹² Wolsely, 321.

⁹³ Henry G. La Brie III, ed., *Perspectives of the Black Press: 1974* (Kennebunkport, ME: Mercer House Press, 1974).

Patrick Washburn's *The African American Newspaper* made reference to the economic and political difficulties facing black newspapers in the early 1950s but not to the war.⁹⁴

There are, however, several studies that analyzed how black newspapers have covered other wars. William Jordan's *Black Newspapers and America's War for Democracy, 1914-1920* chronicled the struggles of the black press during the First World War. In it, Jordan noted that despite the threat of investigation, newspapers such as Abbott's *Defender* continued to assail the government's racist policies. Although pressure from the government may have led some newspapers to moderate their coverage, they did not abandon their goal of racial equality.⁹⁵ Given the obstacles confronting them, black newspapers were at least somewhat successful in achieving their goals. They avoided the kind of suppression that drove the socialist press and German-language press to the brink of extinction during the same period. Moreover, their editorializing helped the growth of a national anti-lynching movement at a time when racialized violence permeated the South and Midwest. Above all, Jordan concluded, the publishers and editors of the leading black newspapers of that time were pragmatists who communicated their message as effectively as they could in the face of intense government scrutiny and societal pressure.⁹⁶

The black press would confront many of the same issues during World War II. Once again, the black press came under scrutiny from the federal government, a process

⁹⁴ Washburn, *The African American Newspaper*.

⁹⁵ William G. Jordan, *Black Newspapers and America's War for Democracy, 1914-1920* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 164.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 166-168.

detailed at length in Patrick Washburn's *A Question of Sedition*.⁹⁷ Washburn noted that the war effort required the participation of large numbers of black Americans in both the military and civilian industry. But even after the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 thrust America into the war and unified much of the nation against the Axis threat, the black press criticized the Roosevelt administration for not doing more to guarantee equal treatment for black Americans.⁹⁸ Why should black soldiers fight for freedom abroad, black writers and editors reasoned, if they were denied it at home? Roosevelt, concerned about maintaining public support, eventually directed Attorney General Francis Biddle to investigate the black press and other critics for violations of the World War I-era Espionage and Sedition Acts. Biddle met with John Sengstacke in June 1942 to discuss Roosevelt's concerns.⁹⁹ Sengstacke persuaded Biddle that he and other African-American newspaper publishers would gladly support the war effort in exchange for better access to government officials. According to Washburn, Biddle agreed to this arrangement. Shortly thereafter, many black newspapers began reporting more favorably on the war effort, and the Justice Department turned its attention to other matters.¹⁰⁰

Despite Roosevelt's concerns, the black press in general never offered more than muted criticism of the American government during the war, Washburn argued. Even as the newspaper took issue with the military's treatment of black military personnel, it strove to convince the government that it remained loyal to the country. Just weeks after

⁹⁷ Patrick S. Washburn, *A Question of Sedition: The Federal Government's Investigation of the Black Press During World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

⁹⁸ Washburn, *A Question of Sedition*, 54-56.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 80-81.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 131-35.

Pearl Harbor, the *Defender* published an editorial insisting that the newspaper would continue its crusade for civil rights even as it pledged its loyalty to a nation that had done little to protect those rights. In trying to reconcile these notions, the editorialists argued that equal rights for black Americans would help the country “save democracy.” This was an appeal based not on the notion of the equality of all races, but on the practical advantages of desegregation.¹⁰¹

The fight for racial justice in the Second World War was not limited to the reporters and editors who remained on the homefront. Jinx Broussard and John Maxwell Hamilton’s “Covering a Two-Front War: Three African-American Foreign Correspondents During World War II” described how black journalists who reported on the war from Italy, France, and Great Britain used their coverage to highlight the achievements of black soldiers, which were generally ignored by the mainstream press. Broussard and Hamilton wrote: “Many of the articles [the correspondents] filed used glowing terms such as “daring” and “brilliant” to describe feats by African Americans on the battlefield. Glorification of military personnel and patriotism generally was common among all correspondents. The difference for the black media was that black patriotism could not be assumed. To recount black heroism was to make a powerful political statement that ran counter to racial attitudes at home.”¹⁰² Echoing Washburn’s work, Broussard and Hamilton noted that for these correspondents, the achievements of black soldiers provided an opportunity to advance the argument of racial equality.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 63-64.

¹⁰² Jinx Broussard and John Maxwell Hamilton, “Covering a Two-Front War: Three African-American Foreign Correspondents During World War II,” *American Journalism* 22, no. 3 (Summer 2005): 48.

Lee Finkle, however, took a dim view of the black press' activities during this time period. In his book *Forum for Protest*, Finkle concluded that the Double V campaign was merely a "pseudo-militant stance" taken to appease black audiences.¹⁰³ Black newspapers, he argued, had abrogated their tradition of protest by appeasing the government with a pro-war message. This was a step backward toward the philosophy of Washington and his Tuskegee Machine. As Finkle put it:

With the outbreak of war the black press adopted a position that black people should insist upon the right to fight because their wartime performance would determine the postwar status of blacks in the country. The press, therefore, had reverted to an old idea that black leaders had embraced in the Civil War and World War I. Since the position of the press reflected the views of most of the black leadership during the war, one can conclude that black leaders took a conservative course rooted in the past. Despite the stirring of the black masses and the militant rhetoric of the black leaders, the war years cannot be considered the beginning of the "black revolution." It would be more accurate to describe these years as the last effort of the old order.¹⁰⁴

In place of innovative direction, he argued, black editors and other leaders offered only stale rhetoric. True change would not come until a new generation of black leaders eclipsed the men who ran the black press. To date, however, no mass media scholar has produced a comprehensive account of how the "new order" reacted to black newspapers' coverage of the Korean conflict and the last throes of segregation in the armed forces.

Researchers seeking any information about the role of the black press during this period are better advised to consult the histories of black troops in the United States military. Many of these studies make some reference to the reaction of black newspapers

¹⁰³ Lee Finkle, *Forum for Protest: The Black Press During World War II* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, Inc., 1975).

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 222.

to military integration, although rarely in any depth. Bernard Nalty's *Strength for the Fight* provided one of the most extensive accounts of *Chicago Defender* publisher John Sengstacke's participation in the Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Forces, which was created by President Truman to help implement his executive order desegregating the military.¹⁰⁵ It makes little reference, however, to how Sengstacke's paper or other black publications reacted to the aftermath of this decision, or to the end of segregation during the war. Gerald Astor's *The Right to Fight* relied primarily on interviews with black and white Korean War veterans in constructing its account of black troops during that conflict, but it also drew on contemporaneous accounts taken from black newspapers such as the *Courier*.¹⁰⁶ Morris MacGregor's *Integration of the Armed Forces, 1940-1965* noted that "the black press was spokesman for the widespread demand for equality in the armed forces" but provided few examples of these claims.¹⁰⁷

Black Soldier, White Army, a history of the all-black 24th Infantry Regiment in Korea written by William Bowers, William Hammond, and George MacGarrigle, made passing reference to the foreign correspondents of the *Courier*, the *Defender*, and the *Afro-American*.¹⁰⁸ Its discussion of these men and their exploits in Korea, however, was limited to these newspapers' coverage of the 24th Infantry Regiment. Moreover, many of these references were taken from Richard Dalfiume's *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed*

¹⁰⁵ Nalty, 242-254.

¹⁰⁶ Astor, 374.

¹⁰⁷ MacGregor, 126.

¹⁰⁸ Bowers, Hammond, and MacGarrigle, 19, 93, 133, 188-189, 216, 229-230, 262.

Forces. Dalfiume's book, although it quoted papers such as the *Courier*, did so infrequently and provided little insight as to how these publications covered the war and desegregation over time, or whether the nature of that coverage changed over time.¹⁰⁹ In short, there is no comprehensive analysis of how the black press covered the Korean War and the end of segregation in the U.S. military. This study is intended in part to fill that void.

Theoretical Framework: The Role and Function of Alternative Media

For an analysis of the response of the black press to the Korean War and the end of military segregation, this study refers to the alternative (or dissident) media model. Comprising ethnic, immigrant, and other minority publications, alternative media represent a varied assortment of groups and philosophies but are united by a number of shared traits. According to Lauren Kessler, these media

[W]ere the underdogs of their time. All held views or believed in ideas that diverged from the mainstream political, economic, social, and cultural climate of their times. All wanted, to some degree, to effect social change. All wanted access to the popular media marketplace for their ideas, or sometimes merely for their existence as a group. All were excluded from the conventional marketplace, although the extent and type of exclusion (denial of access) varied from group to group and over time. In response to this exclusion—and because the groups wanted to disseminate their ideas to a larger public—they started media marketplaces of their own.¹¹⁰

As Kessler noted, black Americans were among the first minority group to create their own media system, independent of the mainstream media market.¹¹¹ As black literacy

¹⁰⁹ Dalfiume, 205-207, 209, 212, 216.

¹¹⁰ Lauren Kessler, *The Dissident Press: Alternative Journalism in American History* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1984), 16.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 21-22.

increased and more black newspapers came into existence, they served an increasingly important purpose to the black community. Jane Rhodes wrote that the nineteenth-century black press “played a crucial role in community building, and was an influential forum for the assertion and dissemination of African Americans’ ideas.”¹¹² The black press continued to play this role well into the next century. In his study of the immigrant and ethnic presses in the early twentieth century, Robert Park concluded that such media were essential to constructing a sense of community within an increasingly urbanized and heterogeneous America.¹¹³ The community-building role of the alternative press was also emphasized by Stephen Harold Riggins, who stated that “if minority media did not contribute to ethnic cohesion and cultural maintenance. . . there would be little reason for their existence.”¹¹⁴

However, the alternative media have additional functions beyond the community-building one. One of them is the promotion of change within the larger society in which alternative media exist. In Rodger Streitmatter’s formulation, the alternative media are “proactive agents of change” who are passionate about their chosen cause.¹¹⁵ Indeed, the earliest historians of the black press characterized it as a “fighting press” that existed to

¹¹² Jane Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary: The Black Press and Protest in the Nineteenth Century* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998), xii.

¹¹³ Robert E. Park, *The Immigrant Press and Its Control* (New York, Harper and Brothers, 1922), 70.

¹¹⁴ Stephen Harold Riggins, *Ethnic Minority Media: An International Perspective* (Newbury Park, NJ: Sage Publications, 1992), 3.

¹¹⁵ Rodger Streitmatter, *Voices of Revolution: The Dissident Press in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 56.

effect positive change for its community.¹¹⁶ In this role, black newspapers demanded equal rights, protested racial injustice, challenged ideas of black inferiority, presented positive images of black Americans, and insisted that white America fulfill the nation's promise of liberty and equality for all.

Minority publications also provide a forum for debate and discussion within marginalized communities. Todd Vogel noted that "the articles of the [black] press amount to verbal exchanges between community members over crucial questions, such as the Missouri Compromise, but also over less plangent but important questions such as economic oppression of blacks in the 1970s."¹¹⁷ Because the concerns of minorities are routinely ignored or downplayed in the mainstream press, alternative press systems are a crucial vehicle for these discussions. Without them, the ability of these communities to address and resolve issues of importance to their members is impaired.

Alternative media also allow minorities to craft their image for the larger society. Although these publications are created primarily for the benefit of a particular minority, they also provide a window into these communities. Frankie Hutton noted that many nineteenth century black newspapers espoused a fervent belief in the supremacy of democratic governance, thus demonstrating their patriotism and loyalty to the larger white society.¹¹⁸ Because many minority groups were excluded almost completely from

¹¹⁶ Frederick G. Detweiler, *The Negro Press in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1922), 131-132, 136, 144; Myrdal, 908-910; Vishnu Oak, *The Negro Newspaper* (Yellow Springs, OH: Antioch Press, 1948), 20-21.

¹¹⁷ Todd Vogel, "Introduction," in *The Black Press: New Literary and Historical Essays*, ed. Todd Vogel (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 4-5.

¹¹⁸ Frankie Hutton, "Democratic Idealism in the Black Press," in *Outsiders in 19th-Century Press History: Multicultural Perspectives*, ed. Frankie Hutton and Barbara Straus Reed, 17 (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1995.)

the mainstream press, alternative media might be the only source of information about these minorities to non-community members.

Finally, alternative media define a group's identity to the group members themselves. Several scholars have explored this function of the black press in particular depth. E. Franklin Frazier argued that the major function of the black press was to provide psychological compensation for the black bourgeoisie's inferiority complex by publishing white praise of blacks and exaggerated accounts of black achievement.¹¹⁹ In a more positive vein, Martin Dann argued that by defining the controversies and concerns of black Americans, the early black press helped define the nature of black identity for a people transitioning from slavery to freedom.¹²⁰

By analyzing how black newspapers responded to the Korean War and the end of segregation in the military, this study aims to see which roles these newspapers emphasized and which ones were downplayed. The different roles that the *Defender*, the *Courier*, and the *Afro-American* chose to embrace can suggest whether these newspapers opted to pursue a policy of confrontation or accommodation in pursuing their goal of equal treatment for black troops. This in turn can provide additional insight into how many of the most influential voices in the black community sought to achieve a longstanding goal during a time when that community was still divided over questions of strategy. Depending on the path each newspaper chose, these publications could have been harbingers of the kind of change that would produce genuine change in the coming decade, or the last spokesmen of the old order.

¹¹⁹ E. Franklin Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie* (New York, Free Press, 1957).

¹²⁰ Martin Dann, ed., *The Black Press 1827-1890: The Quest for National Identity* (New York: Putnam and Sons, 1971), 3.

The Significance of This Study

The black press of the early twentieth century was both the driving force and the vehicle for a vigorous discussion among black leaders about the most appropriate way to advance the cause of equal rights and racial justice for black Americans. Some papers supported a policy of accommodation, believing that blacks could “earn” equal treatment from the white power structure through hard work. Other papers took a more militant stance, suggesting a more forceful approach to the problem. Some of these newspapers changed their positions over time, or sought to chart a middle course between these two paths. All of them remained committed to the same goals: an end to segregation and the acceptance of blacks as full citizens, complete with all the rights and privileges accorded to whites.

The status of black Americans in the armed forces was a frequent topic in the black press at this time. For many black newspapers, military service was an avenue to higher status in a segregated society. Although blacks could not serve alongside whites, they could nonetheless prove their ability to fight and their devotion to their country. Other papers questioned why blacks should fight and die in the name of freedom when they lived a second-class existence in their own nation. In recent years a number of scholars have analyzed how this debate affected the black press’ coverage of the First and Second World Wars. However, no study has examined how the black press covered the last battlefield of military segregation, the Korean War.

This study attempts to provide a deeper understanding of how the nation’s major black newspapers covered the period of 1948-1954, when the last barriers to the integration of the armed forces began to crumble before collapsing entirely. More

specifically, this study examines what kind of editorial strategies these newspapers used in their campaign to finally make the integration of the American military a reality. The strategies embraced by these newspapers at this critical juncture in the history of race relations in America can perhaps shed light on how one of the most influential institutions in the black community participated in the fight for civil rights.

In the previous two wars, the black press' ability to criticize the government or the military was constrained by the interference of various federal agencies. No federal investigation of the black press occurred during the Korean War, nor were black newspapers ever threatened with one. Yet that conflict took place during a time of fervent anti-Communism and intense suspicion of government critics. This study examines how this atmosphere of paranoia affected black newspapers' coverage. It also examines how the black press confronted the sacrifice required in its quest for racial integration and equal treatment. For centuries the segregation that had kept black troops from serving with whites had bred resentment, but also pride. The exploits of the Buffalo Soldiers, the black doughboys of World War I, and the Tuskegee Airmen had provided a source of intense racial pride to a community that had been given few opportunities to excel in American society. The coming of integration also brought about the disappearance of these all-black units.

Research Questions

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

- What kinds of strategies did the black press employ in pressing for full equality in the armed forces? How do these strategies relate to the traditional roles of the

alternative and minority press? Did the black press' coverage conform to, or depart from, the traditional model of the alternative press as outlined above?

- How did the black press portray black military personnel?
- How did the black press portray America's entry into the Korean War, and its prosecution of it? Did that coverage change over time? If so, how?
- How did the black press react to the end of military segregation and the demise of all-black units?
- What, if anything, does the black press' coverage of the end of military segregation reveal about its role in the larger struggle for civil rights for all black Americans?

Method of Inquiry

This study employs the traditional method of historical inquiry, which Louis Gottschalk defined as "the process of critically examining and analyzing the records and survivals of the past."¹²¹ James Startt and David Sloan divided this process into three distinct elements: evidence, interpretation, and narrative.¹²² The first element, evidence, provides the basis for all historical studies. It comprises the record of what past peoples and societies did and did not do. The beginning of every historical study includes a careful examination of all available evidence, to ensure as much accuracy as is possible. This task is complicated by the fact that the record is almost always incomplete, to a greater or lesser degree. Even when an abundance of evidence is available to the

¹²¹ Louis Gottschalk, *Understanding History: A Primer of Historical Research* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980), 48.

¹²² James D. Startt and David Sloan, *Historical Methods in Mass Communication*, rev. ed. (Northport, AL: Vision Press, 2003), 3.

historical researcher, it is still insufficient to answer every question that can be posed about a particular subject. Information can be lost or destroyed, or never recorded in the first place. Thus the researcher must rely upon the second element of the historical process, interpretation.¹²³

Interpretation is a critical tool for historical analysis. Evidence alone cannot illuminate the past, or explain its relationship to the present. The researcher must make judgments based upon the evidence available to him or her. Such judgments are necessarily somewhat subjective in nature. As Startt and Sloan noted, “history is a study in which fact and opinion are bound together in more ways than one might suppose. Historians select the evidence as they assemble it into their accounts and finally offer a general interpretation by way of shaping an overall understanding of the subject.”¹²⁴

The final element of the historical study is narration. Unlike the social sciences, history depends upon a narrative component. This component is a mixture of “explanation based on evidence and intuitive reasoning,” as Startt and Sloan described it.¹²⁵ Like fiction, it contains stories about people and events, usually arranged in a chronological fashion. However, historical narration is not merely an anodyne recitation of facts. It includes an analytic component as well. Together, the narrative and analytical components produce a unified account of a particular time and place that deepens readers’ understanding of that era and their connection to it. In this study, these elements can not only recreate an important period in black press history, but provide a deeper

¹²³ Ibid., 3.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 5.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 212.

understanding of how these newspapers chose to react to a milestone in the civil rights struggle.

This study comprises a historical examination of secondary literature, black newspaper articles, and other primary source documents. More specifically, this study analyzes coverage of three major black newspapers: the *Chicago Defender*, the *Pittsburgh Courier*, and the *Baltimore Afro-American*. These newspapers were selected because they were the most widely circulated black papers during period under investigation (1948-1954). All three newspapers published national editions, which are the editions examined in this study.

The time period studied begins in 1948 with President Truman's executive order announcing the desegregation of the military and ends in 1954 with the Army's deactivation of its last all-black unit. The process of integration was a slow and halting one, with many notable events along the way. These include the participation of *Defender* publisher John Sengstacke on President Truman's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Forces (also known as the Fahy Committee); the 24th Infantry's victory over the North Korean People's Army in the tiny hamlet of Yechon; Truman's firing of Gen. Douglas MacArthur and the ascension of his replacement, Gen. Matthew Ridgway; and the Army's announcement that it would finally deactivate its all-black units and fully integrate. All of these events, and the newspapers' coverage of them, are discussed within this study.

For this study, I examined every issue of the *Defender*, the *Courier*, and the *Afro-American* published between January 1, 1948, and December 31, 1954. This study includes all news stories, columns, house editorials, and editorial cartoons appearing in

these issues. For the purposes of this study, news stories were defined as all non-advertising product appearing in the publication being examined. Advertising content was not included in this study. Neither were non-editorial cartoons, which black newspapers such as the *Courier* often published. This study also included an examination of select government documents, most notably the complete records of the Fahy Committee.

Limitations of This Study

Beyond the limits of time and money, the most significant limitation this study faces is a lack of primary sources beyond the newspapers themselves. All of the principal figures in this study, including John Sengstacke, Jessie Vann, Ira Lewis, P.L. Prattis, William Nunn Sr., and Carl Murphy, are deceased. Jessie Vann's personal correspondence was destroyed after her death. Most of the personal records of the Murphy family have similarly been lost to time. In part because of these limitations, this study focuses primarily on coverage within the newspapers themselves and changes in that coverage over time.

Chapter Breakdown

This study is organized chronologically, as it is an examination of black newspapers' coverage of the Korean War and military integration over time.

- Chapter One: Introduction and Background. Introduction, background, and overview of the history of black Americans in the armed forces, a history of the black press from its inception through the defining controversies of the early twentieth century and up to the Korean War, a discussion of the theoretical

models of alternative American media, a summary of the methods used, and mention of the limitations of this study.

- Chapter Two: Ready to Fight. An analysis of the black press' efforts on behalf of military integration in the months leading up to and immediately after President's Truman's July 1948 executive order desegregating the armed forces.
- Chapter Three: Principles and Pragmatism. A discussion of black newspapers' coverage of the Fahy Committee, from its first meeting with President Truman in January 1949 to the completion of its final report in May 1950. This chapter will focus closely on the work of John Sengstacke, *Chicago Defender* publisher and member of the committee.
- Chapter Four: Now to War. An examination of how black newspapers covered the outbreak of the Korean War and the participation of black troops in the early months of the conflict. This chapter covers the beginning of the war in June 1950, the Chinese counterattack in October 1950, and the stalemate between UN and Communist forces that began in the spring of 1951.
- Chapter Five: A Pyrrhic Victory? A discussion of how the black press reacted to the U.S. Army's announcement that it would integrate all of its units in the Far East. This chapter will also analyze closely how black newspapers reacted to Gen. MacArthur's dismissal in April 1951. It will also study how the war and issue of military integration faded from the pages of these newspapers as the war dragged on and the 1952 presidential election began to dominate the news cycle. This chapter covers the period from June 1951 to the deactivation of the last all-black unit in October 1954.

- Chapter Six: Winning the Battle, Losing the War. Conclusion and final thoughts.

Chapter Two: Ready to Fight

The end of racial segregation in the U.S. military did not occur all at once. Its demise was the result of many factors and many people working over a period of time. The year 1948, however, was an important one for the black press in its campaign to rid the armed forces of Jim Crow. This was an election year, and President Harry S. Truman found himself deeply unpopular with the public and facing serious splits within his own Democratic Party. This fracturing was fueled in part by the president's record on civil rights for black Americans. On the left Truman was confronted by former vice president Henry Wallace, whose newly formed Progressive Party decried what Wallace described as the president's go-slow approach on racial issues. On the right Truman faced South Carolina Governor Strom Thurmond and his Democratic States' Rights Party, better known as the Dixiecrats. Thurmond's group opposed any change to the decades-old system of racial segregation that still prevailed within the South. Although neither Wallace nor Thurmond stood a serious chance of winning the election, their candidacies threatened to drain crucial votes away from Truman. To win, Truman would have to focus on winning the votes of the Democratic Party's core constituencies, including black Americans.¹²⁶ But black voters, and black newspapers in particular, would want something in exchange for their support. They wanted, among other things, the desegregation of the armed forces. And they wanted it sooner rather than later.

¹²⁶ David McCullough, *Truman* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 645-646.

Truman and the Black Press

Truman had already made significant inroads with many of the most important voices in the black press. On June 29, 1947 he became the first president to address the annual conference of the NAACP. In his speech, delivered on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, Truman had vowed to “make the federal government a friendly, vigilant defender of the rights and equalities of all Americans. And again I mean all Americans.”¹²⁷ The leading black newspapers greeted Truman’s speech with enthusiasm, noting that it was the first time a U.S. president had committed himself firmly and publicly to equal rights for black Americans. An *Afro-American* editorial praised Truman for acknowledging the gap between the nation’s democratic ideals and its discriminatory practices.¹²⁸ The *Defender* described his speech as “a fitting climax” to the NAACP conference.¹²⁹

Truman also endeared himself to many black editors and publishers when he established the President’s Committee on Civil Rights to examine the condition of civil rights in the nation and make recommendations to improve them. Truman carefully picked the fifteen members of the committee, which included two blacks, Sadie T.M. Alexander, an attorney, and Channing H. Tobias, a philanthropist.¹³⁰ In late 1947, the committee released its 178-page report, *To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President’s Committee on Civil Rights*. In it, the committee’s

¹²⁷ Michael R. Gardner, *Harry Truman and Civil Rights: Moral Courage and Political Risks* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002), 28.

¹²⁸ “Civil Rights, Human Freedom,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 5 July 1947, 4.

¹²⁹ “Truman Asks Action ‘Now’ on Racism,” *Chicago Defender*, 5 July 1947, 1.

¹³⁰ Nalty, 237. The other members included Dartmouth College President John Dickey, ACLU cofounder Morris Ernst, Rabbi Roland B. Gittelsohn, University of North Carolina President Frank P. Graham, Reverend Francis J. Haas, Lever Brothers President Charles Luckman, future Secretary of the Navy Francis P. Matthews, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr., Reverend Henry Knox Sherrill, Boris Shishkin of the American Federation of Labor, Methodist laywoman Dorothy Tilly, and General Electric CEO Charles Wilson.

members called for the establishment of a civil rights commission, the creation of a civil rights division within the Department of Justice, the passage of federal anti-lynching laws, and the abolishment of poll taxes. The document also addressed the issue of segregation within the armed forces. “When an individual enters the service of the country, he necessarily surrenders some of the rights and privileges which inhere in American citizenship,” the report noted, but added that “the government in return undertakes to protect his integrity as an individual and the dignity of his profession.”¹³¹ To that end, the report recommended the immediate and complete integration of every branch of the armed forces. Once again, the *Afro-American* and the *Defender* voiced their support of the report and its conclusions.¹³²

Truman’s efforts on behalf of black Americans stemmed from a mixture of genuine concern and political savvy. Raised in rural Missouri in the early 1900s, Truman inherited the prejudices that were endemic among people of his time and place. He used racial slurs in everyday conversation and once admitted in a letter that “I am strongly of the opinion that negroes ought to be in Africa, yellow men in Asia and white men in Europe and America.”¹³³ Despite these attitudes, he had declared his belief in 1940 that, “I believe in the brotherhood of man; not merely white men, but the brotherhood of all men before the law. . . If any class or race can be permanently set apart from or pushed down below the rest in political and civil rights, so many any other class or race when it shall incur the displeasure of its more powerful associations, and we may say farewell to the principles on which we count our safety.”¹³⁴

¹³¹ Ibid., 205.

¹³² Baltimore *Afro-American*, 4 November 1947; *Chicago Defender*, 8 November 1947.

¹³³ McCullough, 86.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 247.

Truman also opposed the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II, and he was particularly horrified by a 1946 incident in which a black Army sergeant in uniform had been taken off a bus in South Carolina and beaten by a local sheriff until he was blind. “My God,” Truman told NAACP Executive Secretary Walter White, “I had no idea it was as terrible as that. We’ve got to do something.”¹³⁵

Truman’s moral discomfort with the ugly realities of segregation existed alongside his pragmatic view of politics. After the Republicans took control of both houses of Congress in the 1946 midterm elections, Truman and his advisors began planning in earnest for the 1948 election. As part of that planning, Truman aide Clark Clifford produced a 43-page memorandum outlining the administration’s election strategy. The document predicted that Congressional Republicans would introduce a series of civil rights bills in an effort to return the black vote to the GOP. If Truman did not preempt this effort, the Republicans could siphon off black votes in key states such as New York, California, and Illinois.¹³⁶ Truman’s efforts to win the allegiance of black voters took on added urgency as it became evident early in the year that Henry Wallace would form a new party. Wallace, who had been fired from his position as Secretary of Commerce when he denounced Truman’s foreign policy toward the Soviet Union, promised to end segregation and ensure equal voting rights for all black Americans. Wallace’s campaign included many blacks, and he refused to appear before segregated audiences, eat in segregated

¹³⁵ Nalty, 204-205.

¹³⁶ Richard M. Yon and Tom Landsford, “Political Pragmatism and Civil Rights Policy: Truman and Integration of the Military,” in *The Civil Rights Legacy of Harry S. Truman*, ed. Raymond H. Geselbracht (Kirkville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2007), 109.

restaurants, or stay in segregated hotels. Hostile crowds in the South pelted Wallace with eggs and rotten tomatoes, yet he refused to moderate his message of racial harmony.¹³⁷

Despite Wallace's brave stance on civil rights, the black press tended to treat his candidacy as a quixotic scheme at best. The *Defender*, one of Truman's most vocal supporters among either the black or mainstream press, commended Wallace's commitment to civil rights but declared he had no chance of winning the election. The paper expressed its hopes that "the Negro leadership, despite its admiration for Mr. Wallace's stand on racism, will refuse to follow left-wingers up a blind alley."¹³⁸ The *Afro-American* denounced the violence that met the Wallace campaign even as it acknowledged his Progressive Party stood no chance in November.¹³⁹ The real value of the Progressive Party, the newspaper's editors concluded, lay in the party's ability to propagate ideas rather than elect candidates.¹⁴⁰ The *Courier* barely mentioned Wallace's candidacy, and when it did so it usually emphasized the odds against him.¹⁴¹

With the major black papers treating Wallace as more of a curiosity than a viable candidate, the question then became which of the two major party candidates for president would do the most to advance the cause of civil rights. The *Defender* continued to voice its support for Truman on its editorial pages, applauding his February message to Congress. That message, a

¹³⁷ McCullough, 667.

¹³⁸ "No Third Party," *Chicago Defender*, 3 January 1948, p. 12. At least one member of the "Negro leadership," W.E.B. DuBois, refused to take the *Defender's* advice; he endorsed Wallace's candidacy in a March 20 column on the *Defender's* own editorial page.

¹³⁹ "Let Henry Wallace Speak," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 17 April 1948, p. 4.

¹⁴⁰ "What Are Wallace's Chances?" *Baltimore Afro-American*, 29 May 1948, p. 4.

¹⁴¹ See for example, Joseph D. Bibb, "Voters Ponder," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 10 July 1948, p. 18.

ten-point proposal that echoed many of the recommendations made by the President's Committee on Civil Rights, succeeded in preventing the Republicans from advancing their own civil rights agenda in Congress. However, it also enraged the Southern wing of the Democratic Party and all but guaranteed their defection at the party's national convention that summer.¹⁴² For his efforts, the *Defender's* editorial cartoonist depicted the president grasping his civil rights plan in his hand while the ghosts of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Frederick Douglass looked down approvingly. In an accompanying editorial, the newspaper described Truman's speech to Congress as "a courageous attack upon racism in America and a noble re-declaration of principles which distinguish our democracy from all other political systems."¹⁴³

The *Afro-American*, if less effusive in its praise of Truman, applauded his civil rights program and kept up a steady barrage of criticism directed toward the president's opponents in Congress. *Afro* publisher Carl Murphy went so far as to berate the president's usual allies on the left, such as the Urban League and American Federation of Labor, for not throwing the full weight of their organizations behind the civil rights agenda.¹⁴⁴ The *Afro* was also willing to criticize the president, as it did when Truman failed to include civil rights when outlining his legislative priorities to Congress.¹⁴⁵ For much of 1948, however, its coverage of the president was generally positive.

The *Courier*, however, was altogether less enamored of the president, despite his efforts on behalf of black Americans. The paper's enmity toward Truman had less to do with his actions

¹⁴² Gardner, 79-82.

¹⁴³ "Truman Acts," *Chicago Defender*, 14 February 1948, p. 14.

¹⁴⁴ Carl Murphy, "'Liberal' Groups Not Vocal on Civil Rights," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 17 April 1948, p. 1.

¹⁴⁵ "Was This An Oversight?" *Baltimore Afro-American*, 26 June 1948, p. 4.

in office than an ongoing ideological opposition to the Democratic Party. Robert Vann, the paper's longtime publisher, had been a stalwart Republican with connections to Pittsburgh's Republican political machine. Under his leadership, the *Courier* had been a reliable voice for Republicans in both local and national races. Vann's efforts to ingratiate himself to Republican leaders, however, never brought about the recognition he desired. These personal setbacks, coupled with the onset of the Great Depression, drove Vann and his newspaper into the arms of Roosevelt and the Democratic Party.¹⁴⁶ Unlike many black Americans however, who were from hereafter a major constituency of the Democrats, Vann did not stay with his new party. Once again he was passed over for political positions he believed he had earned. Moreover, Vann had become increasingly disenchanted with Roosevelt's failure to deliver on his promises of civil rights for black Americans. The inability or unwillingness of the Roosevelt administration to make any substantive progress toward military integration was a particular sticking point for Vann, whose newspaper had taken up the cause in the late 1930s. In the 1940 presidential election, Vann once again switched horses, backing the Republican candidate Wendell Willkie.¹⁴⁷

Vann died that year before the election was held, but the *Courier* continued to espouse a politically conservative viewpoint in the years after his death. Roland Wolseley attributed the *Courier*'s conservatism in the 1940s and 1950s to the growing influence of the novelist and

¹⁴⁶ Vann's defection was part of a larger trend; economic hardship and Roosevelt's promises for greater racial equality spurred many black Americans to reject the party of Lincoln and side with the Democrats in the 1930s. For a more in-depth account of black Americans' shift from the Republicans to the Democrats, see Nancy Weiss, *Farewell to the Party of Lincoln: Black Politics in the Age of FDR* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983).

¹⁴⁷ Buni, 89-95; 187-194; 290-298; 316-321.

journalist George Schuyler, who had written for the newspaper since 1924.¹⁴⁸ An ardent critic of Roosevelt, Schuyler became increasingly conservative in the postwar years, using his weekly column to denounce Truman and the Democrats for their timidity on civil rights issues. One such column took the president to task for failing to follow through on his promises to integrate the military: “Consider, for instance, the various Federal bureaus and departments, including the Army, Navy, and Air Force, which the president bosses. Are they free of color discrimination and segregation which Mr. Truman allegedly abhors? If they are not, why does he not do something to make them truly egalitarian?”¹⁴⁹ Throughout 1948 the *Courier*’s editorials and news articles continued to hammer the president for not using the full power of his office to ban military segregation immediately.¹⁵⁰

Butting Heads With the “Brass Hats”

If not all of the major black newspapers shared a single opinion about the president’s commitment to civil rights, they were united in their contempt for the military officials who were attempting to thwart all efforts to integrate the services. In February, both the *Defender* and the *Afro-American* pilloried Army Secretary Kenneth Royall for refusing to press for the integration of all National Guard units even after the governor of New Jersey ordered his own state’s units to desegregate. “This is the type of discrimination which Mr. Royall orders continued in every State except New Jersey, despite the instructions of the Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy to the Secretary of Defense to eliminate discrimination in the armed services,” one *Afro-American*

¹⁴⁸ Wolseley, 78.

¹⁴⁹ George Schulyer, “Views and Reviews,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 17 January 1948, p. 7.

¹⁵⁰ See for example, “The President’s Powers,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 8 May 1948, p. 6; “Jim Crow and the Draft,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 29 May 1948, p. 6.

article read.¹⁵¹ Royall was a Southerner, and reputed to be considering a run for governor in his native North Carolina. The rumors surrounding his political ambitions did not escape the black press, which frequently portrayed him as the major obstacle to complete integration within the armed forces.

The *Afro-American* in particular sought to combat military segregation on every possible front. In addition to its calls for the integration of both regular military and National Guard units, the paper also launched a campaign in early 1948 to establish Army Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) units at black land-grant universities. In a series of articles running over several months, the *Afro-American* revealed that twelve out of seventeen black land-grant schools in the South had no ROTC units, even though federal law required all such institutions to provide them.¹⁵² Although the presidents of these schools had petitioned the Army for years to establish ROTC units on their campuses, their requests were routinely denied. The Army, together with the connivance of state education officials, was giving black colleges “the run-around,” according to the paper.¹⁵³ Such a policy made no sense, according to the *Afro*, because the Army had acknowledged publicly that it was suffering from a paucity of junior officers. In blasting the Army’s policy, the newspaper struck a familiar theme: “The AFRO believes that the U.S. Army, which is chronically complaining about its inability to enlist a sufficient number of qualified men, is overlooking one of its best bets when it turns a consistent deaf ear to college presidents

¹⁵¹ Louis Lautier, “Reason Royall Refuses to Change Guard Policy,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 21 February 1948, p. 1.

¹⁵² “Army Nixes 12 Schools,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 21 February 1948, p. 1.

¹⁵³ “How Our Schools Are Denied ROTC’s,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 28 February 1948, p. 1.

who want an ROTC unit at their institutions.”¹⁵⁴ In other words, the Army’s continued support for Jim Crow was not merely morally indefensible, it was impractical and damaging to the service’s military readiness.

Meanwhile, the *Afro* was also monitoring closely an effort by the NAACP to eliminate racial discrimination in the WAVES and WACS. This particular campaign centered on an amendment to a bill establishing female military auxiliaries as permanent units of their respective services. The amendment, which would have expressly forbid racial segregation in any female military unit, was voted down by the Senate Armed Services subcommittee.¹⁵⁵ When the subcommittee’s counterpart in the House appeared to be heading in a similar direction, Rev. Adam Clayton Powell Jr., at the time one of only two black Congressmen, delivered a harshly critical speech on the House floor. The *Afro* quoted the Congressman’s speech at length, including Powell’s observation that “the President has clearly laid down a policy advocating abolition of segregation.”¹⁵⁶ Here again the black press emphasized that the push for racial integration in the services had come from the president himself. The efforts of the armed services (and their allies in Congress) to thwart these efforts were evidence of disloyalty in the eyes of black editors.

No issue highlighted the stark differences of opinion between the president and the military more than the universal military training bill that Congress had taken up in late 1947.

¹⁵⁴ “Army Should Push ROTC,” Baltimore *Afro-American*, 21 February 1948, p. 4. The paper also noted that Navy did not provide ROTC instruction at any black schools. See “Naval ROTC Study Denied All Colleges,” 20 March 1948, p. 1.

¹⁵⁵ “Senate Groups Votes to Continue Segregation of Service Women,” Baltimore *Afro-American*, 6 March 1948, p. 11.

¹⁵⁶ “Powell Asks Fairness in Women’s Army as Aid to Allegiances,” Baltimore *Afro-American*, 13 March 1948, p. 10.

The World War II-era draft had expired that year and the president, concerned about future military conflicts with the Soviet Union, was attempting to revive it. The original bill had included a provision explicitly forbidding racial segregation in the armed services, but the vocal opposition of the Army compelled its allies in Congress to remove the offending clause before the bill was introduced formally.¹⁵⁷ To the *Courier*, this was a clear sign that military officials intended to keep the ranks racially segregated despite the president's directives. The paper took military leaders to task on its editorial pages, concluding that "the brass hats are determined that colored youth will be segregated in the armed forces as they were before and during World War II, and as they are today."¹⁵⁸

A. Philip Randolph Throws Down the Gauntlet

While the *Courier*'s editors bemoaned the probable passage of a bill that seemed likely to keep Jim Crow alive in the military, other black leaders chose to adopt a more provocative stance. Foremost among these leaders was civil rights advocate A. Philip Randolph. Although Randolph was now a veteran of the fight for equal rights, he retained the pugnacity of a brash upstart. In 1917 he had founded a monthly magazine called *The Messenger*, which styled itself as a radical alternative to the NAACP's *Crisis*.¹⁵⁹ Randolph used his new publication to disseminate his socialist beliefs, campaign for anti-lynching laws, and oppose America's entry into World War I.¹⁶⁰ In 1925 he organized the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters to lobby the powerful Pullman Company on behalf of the company's mostly black employees. The BSCP's tireless

¹⁵⁷ Dalfiume, 155.

¹⁵⁸ "Brass Hats and Jim Crow," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 10 January 1948, p. 6.

¹⁵⁹ Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2008), 34.

¹⁶⁰ David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race, 1868-1919* (New York: Henry Holt, 1993), 531.

efforts to gain better working conditions for its members, and its eventual recognition by the American Federation of Labor, made Randolph one of the most effective and well-known civil rights advocates by the end of the 1930s.¹⁶¹ By 1941 Randolph wielded enough power to compel President Roosevelt to issue an executive order prohibiting racial discrimination in the defense industry. Randolph accomplished this by threatening to lead a massive march of union members on Washington.¹⁶²

Roosevelt issued the order and the planned march never materialized, but Randolph remained a thorn in the side of the federal government for years to come. Even as groups like the NAACP and the Urban League continued to press for equal rights through legal challenges, legislation, and moral suasion, Randolph embraced a much more aggressive philosophy. In the words of historian Morris MacGregor:

[T]here was another facet to the American reform tradition, one that stressed mass action and civil disobedience. . . . The articulate leaders of the prewar struggle were still active, and in fact would make their greatest contribution in the fight that led to the Supreme Court's pronouncement on school segregation in 1954. But their quiet methods were already being challenged by A. Philip Randolph and others who launched a sustained demand for equal treatment and opportunity in the armed forces during the early postwar period. Randolph and leaders of his persuasion relied not so much on legal eloquence in their representations to the federal government as on an understanding of bloc voting in key districts and the implicit threat of civil disobedience. The civil rights campaign, at least in the effort to end segregation in the armed forces, had the appearance of a mass movement a full decade before a weary Rosa Parks boarded a Montgomery bus and set off the all-embracing crusade of Martin Luther King, Jr.¹⁶³

Concerned that the bill for universal military training under consideration by Congress would make it more difficult to integrate the armed forces, Randolph and clergyman Grant Reynolds

¹⁶¹ Gilmore, 52.

¹⁶² Gardner, 59.

¹⁶³ MacGregor, 124.

founded the Committee Against Jim Crow in Military Service and Training in 1947.¹⁶⁴ Backed by a number of powerful black leaders and activists, the Committee immediately directed its efforts at derailing the universal military training bill. In March, committee members met privately with the president and suggested that blacks might not be willing to fight again for a segregated society.¹⁶⁵ Within a few days, Randolph made a much more public and explicit threat. Appearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Randolph vowed that he would

[O]penly counsel, aid, and abet youth, both white and Negro, to quarantine any Jim Crow conscription system, whether it bear the label of universal military training or selective service. . . . From coast to coast in my travels I shall call upon all Negro veterans to join this civil disobedience movement and to recruit their younger brothers in an organized refusal to register and be drafted. . . . I shall appeal to the Negro parents to lend their moral support to their sons, to stand behind them as they march with heads held high to Federal prisons as a telling demonstration to the world that Negroes have reached the limit of human endurance, that, in the words of the spiritual, we will be buried in our graves before we will be slaves.¹⁶⁶

Truman K. Gibson, the only black member of the president's civilian commission on universal military training, also appeared before the committee. Although his commission had recommended the immediate end of racial segregation in the armed services, he expressed "shock and dismay" at Randolph's suggestion.¹⁶⁷

The leading black newspapers tried to walk a fine line in their responses to Randolph's suggestion. For the most part they refused to endorse his plan of civil disobedience, but neither did they repudiate it. The *Defender* ran two separate stories about Randolph's proposal, one focused primarily on Randolph's arguments for such a campaign, the other on Gibson's

¹⁶⁴ Foner, 179, MacGregor, 300.

¹⁶⁵ "Race's Attitude in Next War Pondered By Truman," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 27 March 1948, p. 14.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 303.

¹⁶⁷ MacGregor, 304.

opposition to it.¹⁶⁸ It published no editorials either in favor of or opposed to the Randolph plan. The *Defender's* coverage reflected the divided opinion among other black leaders. According to another story, “no one here in a position of leadership would either wholly condemn or praise Randolph’s stand.”¹⁶⁹ The *Afro-American* quoted a statement from the national office of the NAACP which read, “We are not urging colored people to refuse to defend their country in time of danger but—there is sympathy in many hearts for the point of view expressed by Mr. Randolph.”¹⁷⁰ The *Afro-American's* front-page editorial concluded only that no one “should condemn Mr. Randolph too harshly.”¹⁷¹ Only the staunchly conservative *Courier*, whose editors had little taste for Randolph’s socialism and pacifism, came out definitively against his proposal. In its own editorial about the controversy, the paper noted that “the Pittsburgh Courier was one of the earliest advocates of erasure of the color line in the armed forces and will continue to maintain that position, but it is unalterably opposed to the advocacy of any extremist policy which would certainly boomerang against all of our people with unfortunate promptitude.”¹⁷² Yet the same editorial also acknowledged the frustration that fueled Randolph’s crusade, describing blacks as “unquestionably bitter about the useless and unnecessary jim-crow [sic] policy which the armed forces persist in perpetuating even in the face of a global war of unprecedented intensity and extent.”¹⁷³

¹⁶⁸ “Randolph Asks Civil Disobedience Unless Military Ends Bias,” *Chicago Defender*, 10 April 1948, p. 2; “Gibson Explains Why He Backs Universal Military Training,” *Chicago Defender*, 10 April 1948, p. 12.

¹⁶⁹ “Walter White, Dr. Tobias Juggle Hot Potato Of Civil Disobedience,” *Chicago Defender*, 10 April 1948, p. 1.

¹⁷⁰ “Randolph Won’t Fight,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 10 April 1948, p.1.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² “Segregation in the Armed Services,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 10 April 1948, p. 6.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

The editorial noted that such bitterness was not sufficient to induce black Americans to turn against their country: “Alone among the various elements constituting the American nation, the Negro has never produced any traitors and we do not believe he ever will.”¹⁷⁴ What the editorial did not say—what it did not need to say—was that America’s shoddy treatment of its racial minorities had long been a cudgel that the Soviet Union and other Communist nations used to beat their geopolitical adversary. That the United States would champion the values of freedom and democracy abroad while trampling on them at home was to the Soviets evidence of America’s rank hypocrisy. The Soviet Union’s ideological allies in the West, meanwhile, had long sought to make common cause with blacks who were searching for true equality. It was this longstanding and often complicated relationship between black civil rights activists and Communists that led many white Americans to look upon black citizens as a potential fifth column in their midst. Randolph’s vow of civil disobedience had now brought the question of black Americans’ loyalties to the fore. In such a charged atmosphere, the black press would have to tread carefully as it reported and commented on these matters.

The Black Press and Communism

Randolph’s claim that blacks would be unwilling to “shoulder a gun to fight for democracy abroad until they have democracy at home” was an old refrain, one that harked back to the *Courier*’s Double V campaign of World War II and Du Bois’ “Close Ranks” editorial during World War I.¹⁷⁵ What had changed was the political context of his claim. America was entering a period of intense anti-Communist fervor. Although waves of anti-Communist hysteria had swept the nation before, in the period during and immediately after the First World War, the

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ “Truman Irked When Told Race Wants Democracy Here First,” *Chicago Defender*, 3 April 1948, p. 1.

dawn of the nuclear age and the new postwar international order made Communism seem far more menacing than it had in the past. As historian Ellen Schrecker wrote, “with the advent of the Cold War, Communists, once viewed as a political problem, now became a threat to the United States. A new, more demonized image of Communism took hold along with a heightened sense of the danger that it posed.”¹⁷⁶ When Randolph warned the president that “any failure to prescribe broad, unequivocal anti-segregation and civil rights safeguards would ‘form a beach-head’ for Communism in America,” or stated that “discrimination and segregation in the armed services are the most powerful weapons in the hands of the Communists,” he was wielding the most powerful rhetorical weapon in American political discourse.¹⁷⁷ That weapon, however, was a double-edged sword, as many black leaders and black newspapers were vulnerable to charges of Communist sympathies.

During World War II, many black newspapers had expressed admiration for the Soviet Union, where racial discrimination ostensibly did not exist. Although the United States was allied with Soviet Union at the time, concerns over a deepening of the alliance between blacks and white leftists contributed to the FBI’s investigation of the black press. In the course of its investigation, the bureau compiled a list of many black journalists and editors believed to harbor Communist sympathies. That list was never made public, but some groups and individuals were willing to voice their suspicions that black journalists were secret Communist sympathizers. Foremost among them was archconservative newspaper columnist Westbrook Pegler, who

¹⁷⁶ Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 119-120.

¹⁷⁷ “Truman Irked,” *Chicago Defender*.

accused black newspapers of glorifying “Negro Communists and fellow-travelers.”¹⁷⁸ For the most part, black newspapers simply shrugged off such claims. In some cases the accusations were wildly wrong-headed (as in the case of the solidly conservative, staunchly anti-Communist *Courier*), in others they were exaggerated (as in the case of the *Defender*, which never identified itself as a Communist organ but welcomed the contributions of the CPUSA and other leftist groups to the fight for equal rights.)¹⁷⁹

By 1948, however, it was no longer possible to simply dismiss these accusations as false or politically motivated. The merest suggestion of Communist influence could be devastating to a black newspaper. The dangers of such rumors were illustrated most starkly by the fate of Charlotta Bass, editor and owner of the *California Eagle*, one of the oldest black newspapers west of the Mississippi. Bass had been an staunch Republican prior to the 1930s, but the rise of Hitler convinced her that the Soviet Union represented the best bulwark against encroaching fascism. Although she never joined the CPUSA, her impassioned editorials on behalf of oppressed people throughout the world, coupled with her association with trade union leaders, resulted in an FBI investigation in the mid-1940s. Bass was never charged with any crime, but in the mid-1940s she had become a target of political persecution by local politicians and rivals in the black press. By 1951, Bass was forced to sell the *Eagle* and leave the publishing world.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁸ Gerald Horne, *Black Liberation/Red Scare: Ben Davis and the Communist Party* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1994), 88. Pegler, whose views were so conservative they eventually led to his ejection from the John Birch Society, remained a frequent sparring partner of many black editorialists until his death in 1969.

¹⁷⁹ For a full account of the *Defender*'s relationship to the Communist Party during the 1930s and 1940s, see Bill Mullen, *Popular Fronts: Chicago and African-American Cultural Politics, 1935-1946* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

¹⁸⁰ Washburn, *The African American Newspaper*, 188-189. Bass, who was an enthusiastic supporter of Henry Wallace in the 1948 election, later ran as the Vice-Presidential candidate on the Progressive Party ticket in 1952. She was the first black woman to run for national office.

Reading the prevailing political winds, black newspapers adjusted their editorial stances accordingly. In the case of the *Courier*, that simply meant emphasizing the anti-Communist message it had trumpeted for decades. For the *Defender* and the *Afro-American*, the change was more significant. Both papers renounced their previous words of support for the CPUSA, which by now was under intense scrutiny from the federal government and mired in internecine squabbles. Global Communism gradually replaced European colonialism as the newspapers' primary foe outside of the Jim Crow South.¹⁸¹ Communism, which had once provided succor for many civil rights advocates in the 1930s and early 1940s, was now something to guard against.

The *Defender's* shift to anti-Communism was so complete by 1948 that the executive secretary of the Illinois Communist Party wrote a lengthy letter to the editor complaining about the paper's coverage.¹⁸² Meanwhile, the *Defender* was using the specter of Communist infiltration to argue against the continued segregation of the military. The perpetuation of racial discrimination within the armed forces, the paper contended, would further alienate black Americans and drive them into the arms of the Communists. It would do the same to foreign nations repelled by the gulf between the nation's rhetoric of freedom and its anti-democratic practices at home. Typical of such arguments was the *Defender's* April 24 editorial decrying the segregation of American troops stationed overseas:

The rigid separation of troops according to skin color in lands where such separation is unthinkable serves to discredit our country and the democratic ideals for which it stands. This is fertile [sic] ground for Communist [sic], who never miss an opportunity to embarrass our government, only have to point [sic] to the two U.S. armies, one black and the other white, to convince many Europeans that our professed love for democracy is sheer hypocrisy. . . . The millions of Latin

¹⁸¹ James Roark, "American Black Leaders: The Response to Colonialism and the Cold War, 1943-1953," *African Historical Studies* 4(1) (1971): 267-268.

¹⁸² Claude Lightfoot, "What the People Say," *Chicago Defender*, 27 August 1948, p. 6.

America, Asia, Africa and in Europe who want to believe in the promises of our democratic system are being driven into the arms of Communism by the blind bigotry so manifest in the leadership of our Army.¹⁸³

The United States could not credibly present itself as the defender of democracy in the postwar era, the *Defender* argued, so long as its military remained segregated.

Like the *Defender*, the *Afro-American* had flirted with Communism in the 1930s but by 1948 the newspaper had embraced free enterprise as a better vehicle for the advancement of black Americans. Despite this, the newspaper never embraced anti-Communism as fervently as some of its competitors and often railed against the government's crackdown on the Communist Party.¹⁸⁴ Yet its editors also thought a war with the Soviet Union was likely and noted that a segregated military would handicap the United States in any future conflict with the Soviet Union.¹⁸⁵ The *Courier's* editors, although they took an even harder line against Communism than either the *Defender* or the *Afro-American*, did not believe that military segregation would lead to the widespread embrace of Communism by black Americans. If the Cold War should suddenly turn hot, *Courier* columnist Joseph Bibb wrote, black Americans would fight against Communism. But they would demand equal treatment in the military as the price of their service.¹⁸⁶

In addition to the threat of federal investigation, there was another reason for black newspapers to be cautious about discussing Communism on their pages. National advertising in

¹⁸³ "Where It Hurts," *Chicago Defender*, 24 April 1948, p. 14.

¹⁸⁴ Hayward Farrar, *The Baltimore Afro-American, 1892-1950* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998), 152-153.

¹⁸⁵ Harry Keelan, "Voice in the Wilderness," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 10 April 1948, p. 4; Charles W. Houston, "The Highway," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 17 April 1948, p. 4. Cliff MacKay, "Tan Yanks in Vienna Let Alone By Russians," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 24 April 1948, p. 13.

¹⁸⁶ Joseph D. Bibb, "If War Comes," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 3 April 1948, p. 7.

black newspapers increased markedly during World War II. An Internal Revenue Service ruling on allowable advertising deductions on the wartime excess profits tax left companies with the choice of buying more advertisements or letting their surplus income be taxed by the federal government. As a result, many white-owned businesses chose to advertise in black newspapers for the first time. Although black publishers feared that these businesses would cease advertising in the black community once the tax incentives disappeared after the war, companies found that they were able to reach a previously untapped market by running ads in black newspapers. Flush with cash from these new advertisers, black publishers now had to worry about keeping them. Local black businesses might not have been concerned with positive statements about Communism, but national corporations were unlikely to continue advertising with a publication that voiced any support for Communism.¹⁸⁷

A. Philip Randolph and Grant Reynolds were not Communists. In fact, their proposed civil disobedience campaign was denounced by New York City Councilman Ben Davis, one of the nation's most prominent black Communists.¹⁸⁸ Nonetheless, the suggestion that large numbers of blacks would refuse to serve in the armed forces once again created doubts about the true allegiances of black Americans. These concerns were exaggerated by white supremacists who were beginning to find anti-Communism a more respectable platform to advance their racist agenda.¹⁸⁹ The black press and its allies would have to proceed carefully as they tried to dismantle Jim Crow in the military.

¹⁸⁷ Washburn, *The African American Newspaper*, 180-181.

¹⁸⁸ "Ben Davis Raps Randolph Plan," *Chicago Defender*, 17 April 1948, p. 5.

¹⁸⁹ Schrecker, 391.

The National Conference on Negro Affairs

Randolph delivered his ultimatum just as Secretary of Defense James Forrestal was wrestling with the issue of how to reconcile the president's desire for integration with the individual services' reluctance to change. As the first man to lead the newly created National Military Establishment (soon to be renamed the Department of Defense), Forrestal was concerned about his ability to impose his will on military services that often resembled independent fiefdoms rather than sub-units of a single, unified bureaucracy. As such, he adopted a cautious approach toward integrating the military, preferring to suggest or nudge even as others wished he would order or shove. "I have gone somewhat slowly," he wrote in 1947, "because I believe in the theory of having things to talk about as having been done rather than having to predict them, and. . . morale and confidence are easy to destroy but not easy to rebuild. In other words, I want to be sure that any changes we make are changes that accomplish something and not merely for the sake of change."¹⁹⁰

Shortly before Randolph issued his ultimatum, Forrestal met with members of the National Negro Publishers Association, a trade association of the nation's leading black newspapers.¹⁹¹ A group of publishers and editors was preparing to embark on a tour of European Army bases. The tour had been designed as a public relations exercise by the military. Before their departure, Forrestal met with group to explain why desegregation was proceeding so slowly in the services. Morris MacGregor described the scene:

¹⁹⁰ MacGregor, 301.

¹⁹¹ Wolseley, 269. The organization was founded by John Sengstacke in 1940. Besides the *Defender*, its members included the *Courier*, the *Afro-American*, the *Kansas City Call*, the *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, and the *Atlanta World*.

[Forrestal] found himself listening to an impassioned demand for immediate change. Ira F. Lewis, president of the Pittsburgh *Courier* and spokesman for the group, told the secretary that the black community did not expect the services to be a laboratory or clearinghouse for processing the social ills of the nation, but it wanted to warn the man responsible for military preparedness that the United States could not afford another war with one-tenth of its population lacking the spirit to fight. The problem of segregation could best be solved by the policymakers. “The colored people of the country have a high regard for you, Mr. Secretary, as a square shooter,” Lewis concluded. And from Forrestal they expected action.¹⁹²

Forrestal now found himself pressured from all sides: the president, the black press, and the armed forces.

In an effort to both accommodate black leaders and assist the armed forces in their halting efforts to desegregate, Forrestal and Lester Granger of the Urban League had organized what they called a “National Conference on Negro Affairs.” Sixteen black leaders would meet with Forrestal and leaders of the Army, Navy, and Air Force to discuss how to proceed with further plans for integration.¹⁹³ The men had planned the conference before Randolph’s testimony before the Armed Services Committee, but now the uproar over his appearance overshadowed the news of the conference. When the conference took place on April 26, Randolph was not among the leaders invited, but his threatened campaign of civil disobedience shaped the entire discussion.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² MacGregor, 302.

¹⁹³ Dalfiume, 165; MacGregor, 302. The sixteen leaders who attended the conference included Truman Gibson; Dr. Channing Tobias; Dr. Sadie T.M. Alexander; Ira Lewis of the *Pittsburgh Courier*; Dr. John W. Davis of West Virginia State College; Dr. Benjamin E. Mays of Morehouse College; Dr. Mordecai Johnson of Howard University; P.B. Young Jr.; of the *Norfolk Journal and Guide*; George L.P. Weaver of the United Transport Service Employees; Rev. John H. Johnson of New York; Roy Wilkins of the NAACP; Hobson E. Reynolds of the International Order of Elks; Bishop J.W. Gregg of Kansas City; Loren Miller of Los Angeles; and Charles Houston of Washington, D.C. Lester Granger acted as chairman for the conferees.

¹⁹⁴ MacGregor, 302.

Even before the meeting took place, the *Afro-American* declared that “any colored person who accepts appointment on [Forrestal’s] proposed jim-crow [sic] committee, will not only stultify himself but will render a disservice to the strengthening of civil rights in this country.”¹⁹⁵ The *Defender*’s editorialists were only slightly more moderate in tone, writing that “while we do not question the sincerity of Mr. Forrestal and company in their efforts to arrive at a ‘solution’ to the so-called ‘problem,’ the time has come to build an American army and not a Confederate army. The time has come to stop appeasing the forces of evil.”¹⁹⁶ The *Courier* published no editorial on the conference, probably because Ira Lewis was one of the participants. However, a front-page story about the conference in the May 1 issue of the paper contained a warning from Randolph that “any ‘sell out’ on racial discrimination in the armed forces would result in an immediate intensification of his proposed civil disobedience movement.”¹⁹⁷

In the end, the newspapers’ fears that the conference participants would “sell out” to the military proved to be unfounded. Just as the black press had refrained from endorsing Randolph’s civil disobedience plan while acknowledging the anger behind it, the conferees told Forrestal that although they could not support Randolph’s position, they sympathized with his motives. Any chance of the conference participants signing on to Forrestal’s approach to desegregation was dashed after they heard from Secretary of the Army Royall. Royall told the black delegation that the Army believed that segregation could exist without discrimination, and that the General Staff had recommended that the service maintain its policy of racial segregation.

¹⁹⁵ Louis Lautier, “Secretary Forrestal’s Advisory Committee Plan Opposed,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 24 April 1948, p. 3.

¹⁹⁶ “Mr. Forrestal and Company,” *Chicago Defender*, 8 May 1948, p. 14.

¹⁹⁷ “Fight on Army Bias Spreading,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1 May 1948, p. 1.

“But,” Royall added, “even if my general staff had not recommended segregation, I would have continued it as a policy.”¹⁹⁸ Angered, the black members of the conference informed Forrestal that they would refuse to advise the Defense Department so long as the services remained segregated.¹⁹⁹ They also made their displeasure known to the black press, which voiced its approval of their refusal. “Defense Advisors Angered Over Attitude of Officials” read one headline in the *Afro-American*.²⁰⁰ Venice Spraggs of the *Defender* wrote that “It will be a mistake for the Army to assume that any group of Negro leaders will work with it on a program within a segregated military setup.”²⁰¹ Marjorie McKenzie, an editorial columnist for the *Courier*, voiced her approval of the delegation’s refusal to participate further: “When pragmatism fails, one is justified in taking a moral stand, no matter what the practical losses.”²⁰²

Despite the controversy Randolph’s proposal had stirred up among black leaders and within the black press, his threatened campaign of civil disobedience had little or no effect on its intended targets: Congress and the president. Most members of Congress simply ignored Randolph’s threat. Truman, who was preparing for what promised to be a bruising election, had already stated his desire for integration but was wary of picking a fight with the armed services. Moreover, he was convinced of the necessity of a new draft law and did not want to jeopardize its chances in Congress by antagonizing the already restive Southern wing of his own political party. In the end, the president made no concerted effort to include a civil rights provision in the

¹⁹⁸ Dalfiume, 166.

¹⁹⁹ MacGregor, 305. The delegation did, however, submit a formal report to the Defense Department outlining possible strategies for eliminating Jim Crow in the armed forces.

²⁰⁰ “Defense Advisors Angered Over Attitude of Officials,” Baltimore *Afro-American*, 1 May 1948, p. 1.

²⁰¹ Venice Spraggs, “Must ‘Blot Out’ Jim Crow in Army,” *Chicago Defender*, 8 May 1948, p. 1.

²⁰² Marjorie McKenzie, “Pursuit of Democracy,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 8 May 1948, p. 6.

proposed bill. In June 1948, the bill passed Congress without any racial provisions.²⁰³ Shortly thereafter, Congress adjourned for its summer recess.

Truman had gotten his draft law, but otherwise the president had little success in pushing his legislative agenda through the Republican-controlled Congress. His displeasure with the legislative branch led him to dub the 80th Congress the “Do-Nothing” Congress.²⁰⁴ The black press, whose own agenda had been ignored by Congress, quickly took up the name as well. Although Southern Democrats had long been the *bête noir* of all the major black newspapers, the *Defender*, the *Afro-American*, and even the conservative *Courier* soon turned their sights on Republican leaders as the party gathered in Philadelphia for its national convention.²⁰⁵ Walter White, writing in the *Defender*, described the civil rights record of the 80th Congress as “one of worst in recent American history.”²⁰⁶ The *Courier* noted that, “the Republican-dominated eightieth Congress closed shop early Sunday morning without passing a single piece of civil rights legislation—despite the party’s platform pledges of 1940 and 1944, and which at this moment are piously being rewritten into the 1948 GOP platform.”²⁰⁷ Undeterred, *Courier* president Ira Lewis sent a letter to Sen. Henry Cabot Lodge Jr., head of the Platform Committee of the Republican party. The letter, which the paper reproduced on its front page, contained a list of civil rights measures that Lewis urged to party to adopt. The very first item on Lewis’ list was a request to “abolish all forms of segregation or racial discrimination in the armed forces of the

²⁰³ MacGregor, 304-308.

²⁰⁴ McCullough, 652.

²⁰⁵ “The Elephant’s Bad Memory,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 26 June 1948, p. 4

²⁰⁶ Walter White, “People Places and Politics,” *Chicago Defender*, 26 June 1948, p. 15.

²⁰⁷ Lem Graves, Jr., “‘Do-Nothing’ Congress Closes,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 26 June 1948, p. 1.

United States.”²⁰⁸ It was an election year, and the black press was determined to make military integration an issue in the race.

The Black Press and the 1948 Presidential Campaign

Black newspapers had cause for cautious optimism in the summer of 1948. At their convention in Philadelphia, the Republicans had nominated New York Governor Thomas Dewey. The governor, who made a strong showing against Roosevelt in the 1944 election, led his party’s liberal eastern wing.²⁰⁹ As such, Dewey was generally opposed to the conservative elements of his party that controlled Congress and had so disappointed the editorialists of the black press. Even the Democratic-leaning *Afro-American* was convinced that his nomination represented a victory for civil rights. “In selecting Dewey as their standard bearer,” read an editorial in the *Afro-American*, “the GOP chose not only the ablest man available, but the man with soundest views on civil rights.”²¹⁰ The anonymous writer was also pleased that Dewey had selected the relatively liberal Governor Earl Warren of California to be his running mate.²¹¹ The *Defender*’s reaction was more subdued, although it noted that once again the GOP’s platform had committed the party and its candidates to ending racial segregation within the armed forces.²¹² The *Courier* proclaimed coolly that it “reserves an expression of its position in the 1948 campaign” even as it acknowledged that “the Republicans could scarcely have done better

²⁰⁸ William G. Nunn, “Courier Offers Race Platform,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 26 June 1948, p. 1.

²⁰⁹ McCullough, 629.

²¹⁰ “The Republican Nominees,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 3 July 1948, p. 4.

²¹¹ *Ibid.* As Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Warren later wrote the landmark 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.

²¹² “Responsibility of the Republicans,” *Chicago Defender*, 3 July 1948, p. 14.

at Philadelphia.”²¹³ Columnist Marjorie McKenzie was more direct when she predicted that under a Dewey administration, blacks could expect the beginning of the elimination of Jim Crow in the military.²¹⁴

At the time, a Dewey administration appeared far more likely than a second term of the Truman administration. By mid-1948, Truman was besieged by low poll numbers and insurgent Democrats who wanted to replace him on the ticket. Henry Wallace had already lured a number of liberal Democrats to his Progressive Party, and now a number of party officials sought to get rid of Truman before his unpopularity cost them more voters and perhaps the election. At the time, most of the speculation surrounding a Truman surrogate swirled around the wildly popular General Dwight D. Eisenhower. Eisenhower’s political allegiances remained a mystery, which is perhaps why rumors of his candidacy excited both Hubert Humphrey, the liberal mayor of Minneapolis, and Strom Thurmond, the segregationist governor of South Carolina. In Eisenhower, the Democrats would have a candidate who could keep the badly fractured Democratic coalition together for at least a while longer.²¹⁵

The black press was far less enamored of the general, largely because of his attitude toward blacks in the military. Eisenhower had appeared before the Armed Services Committee of the Senate as it debated Truman’s universal military training bill. Discussing the possibility of adding a racial integration provision to the proposed bill, he told the senators, “I do believe that if we attempt merely by passing a lot of laws to force someone to like someone else, we are just

²¹³ “The Republicans: Platform and Candidates,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 3 July 1948, p. 18.

²¹⁴ Marjorie McKenzie, “Pursuit of Democracy,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 3 July 1948, p. 18.

²¹⁵ McCullough, 632-635.

going to get into trouble.”²¹⁶ The general’s comments produced a wave of criticism from the black press. “We reject General Eisenhower’s opinion on the Negro as negative, undemocratic, basically wrong in fact and intent, and against the president’s civil rights program,” the *New York Amsterdam News* opined bluntly.²¹⁷ Eisenhower was also excoriated by the *Defender*, which derided him as “just another brass hat with a glib tongue and a ready smile.”²¹⁸ At the height of the “draft Eisenhower” movement, the *Afro-American* scorned the hopes of its backers as a “Dixie-inspired boomlet” fueled by “wishful thinking” while the *Courier* called it “an insult to Negroes. . . a repudiation of the progressive principles of the Democratic party.”²¹⁹ In the end, however, the black press would not have to worry about an Eisenhower candidacy for another four years. Despite the entreaties of some of the Democrats’ most influential leaders, Eisenhower refused to run on their ticket.²²⁰

Although Eisenhower’s demurral cleared one major obstacle in the president’s quest for his party’s nomination, Truman’s success was still far from guaranteed. As the Democrats converged on Philadelphia in July for their party’s convention, Truman and his allies were nervous. The president had already alienated most of the states of the old Confederacy with his civil rights message to Congress in February 1948. Yet he still hoped to avoid a full-scale revolt among the Southern states by inserting a vaguely worded civil rights plank in the party’s

²¹⁶ Dalfiume, 167. Eisenhower’s statement would come back to haunt him in his subsequent presidential campaigns.

²¹⁷ “General Eisenhower is Wrong,” *The New York Amsterdam News*, 17 April 1948, p. 10.

²¹⁸ “Eisenhower Flunks,” *The Chicago Defender*, 24 April 1948, p. 14.

²¹⁹ “Truman or Eisenhower?” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 10 July 1948, p. 4; John L. Clark, “Shift to Ike Blow to Negro,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 10 July 1948, p. 1. See also “No Eisenhower For President,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 17 April 1948, p. 4.

²²⁰ McCullough, 635.

platform. Even the modest language in Truman's plank, however, made it clear that Congress should take the lead in guaranteeing civil rights for all of the nation's citizens.²²¹

This was too much for the states' rights advocates of the South, who immediately proposed an alternate plank that unequivocally stated that civil rights was an issue that should be left to the states. That proposal, known as the Moody plank, sparked a reaction from the liberal wing of the party, which had already been unhappy with the milquetoast language of Truman's original plank. Under the guidance of Hubert Humphrey, the liberals proposed a third civil rights plank. This proposal, called the Biemiller plank, was far more explicit than Truman's. It called for Congress to enact legislation guaranteeing blacks equal participation in the political process, equal employment opportunities, and protection from violence. It also demanded the immediate and complete integration of the United States military.²²²

The battle over these dueling civil rights proposals threw the Democratic Party into a state of civil war, which reached a head on July 14 when the Democratic delegates voted to reject the Moody plank and accept the liberal Biemiller plank. As expected, a large number of Southern delegates walked out of the convention in response.²²³ Despite the revolt of the Southerners, Truman easily won the nomination by a margin of more than 900 delegates. He had hoped to keep the Southern states in the fold, but once they left, he was no longer compelled to distance himself from his own civil rights record. He enthusiastically embraced the newly adopted

²²¹ Gardner, 96-97.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Gardner, 96-97; McCullough, 640-646. Most of the Southerners who remained refused to back Truman's nomination as the party's candidate, instead throwing their support to the segregationist Senator Richard Russell of Georgia.

Biemiller plank. Once again, Truman had committed himself to improved civil rights for black Americans, and more specifically, to the end of segregation in the armed forces.²²⁴

The black press was uniformly pleased with the developments in Philadelphia. Not only had the Democrats firmly and specifically outlined their commitment to a civil rights program even bolder than the Republicans', they had also rid themselves of many of the most reactionary and racist elements within their party. The front page of the July 21 *Defender* featured an editorial entitled "We March Forward—with Truman." On the same page was a cartoon depicting the stern-faced president steering the ship of state through crashing waves labeled "Bigotry," "Race Hatred," and "Man's Inhumanity to Man." Another cartoon on the editorial page showed an anthropomorphized version the president's civil rights agenda in a boxing ring, standing victorious over a defeated fighter labeled "The South."²²⁵ The *Afro-American* mocked the "Dixiecrats" who had left the party and nominated Strom Thurmond to be their standard bearer in the November election: "No one outside of their own ranks seems to be taking the rebel Democrats seriously," its editorial concluded.²²⁶ The *Courier* refrained from praising Truman but welcomed the departure of the Dixiecrats, claiming that "in Philadelphia, the Nation as a whole won a victory over its worse self."²²⁷

If Democratic-leaning papers such as the *Defender* and the *Afro-American* were pleased by Truman's victory, they were even more enthused by the announcement he made during his

²²⁴Gardner, 98-99.

²²⁵ "We March Forward—with Truman," *Chicago Defender*, 21 July 1948, p. 1; "Sail On, Sail On," *Chicago Defender*, 21 July 1948, p. 1; "The Winner!" *Chicago Defender*, 21 July 1948, p. 14.

²²⁶ "Sound and Fury From Dixie," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 24 July 1948, p. 4.

²²⁷ "Faith in the South," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 24 July 1948, p. 18.

acceptance speech. At two o'clock in the morning on July 15, inside a sweltering hot arena, Truman took the stage. As he described the speech in his memoirs,

I listed in detail the failures of the Republican-controlled Congress and I did no pull any punches. Then, toward the end of the speech, I played my trump card. I announced: "On the twenty-sixth day of July, which out in Missouri we call 'Turnip Day,' I am going to call Congress back and ask them to pass laws to halt rising prices, to meet the housing crisis—which they are saying they are for in their platform. At the same time, I shall ask them to act upon other vitally needed measures, such as...civil rights legislation, which they say they are for....Now my friends, if there is any reality behind that Republican platform, we ought to get some action from a short session of the Eightieth Congress. They can do this job in fifteen days, if they want to do it." . . . Of course I knew that the special session would produce no results in the way of legislation. But I felt justified in calling the Congress back to Washington to prove to the people whether the Republican platform really meant anything or not.²²⁸

The president's ultimatum had put the ball back in the Republicans' court. "It is clear that the president intends to put the Republicans on the spot," the *Defender* noted approvingly in its editorial.²²⁹

While the president was trying to score political points at the expense of his Republican opponents in Congress, the leading black newspapers were trying to keep military integration at the top of the national agenda. Even as black newspapers devoted much of their coverage in the spring and summer of 1948 to the upcoming presidential election, they had continued to press forward their campaign for the end of segregation in the armed forces. A. Philip Randolph had failed to win an integration provision in the new draft law, but he still vowed that he would encourage black youth to avoid military service until Jim Crow was eliminated in the services.

²²⁸ Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman: Volume Two: Years of Trial and Hope, 1946-1952* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1956), 207-208.

²²⁹ "Truman Is Triumphant," *Chicago Defender*, 24 July 1948, p. 14.

The black press again declined to endorse his plan, but they kept it on the front pages for several months.²³⁰

Meanwhile, black newspapers continued to publicize their own efforts to rid the military of Jim Crow. The *Afro-American*'s Ollie Stewart filed a series of articles from West Germany, where he reported on conditions at segregated Army bases. There he found a shortage of black officers and disgruntled soldiers who chafed under the treatment of their white superiors.²³¹ The paper also kept up its campaign to win more ROTC units for black land grant colleges, an effort that paid off in early July when Truman ordered Secretary of the Army Royall to establish three such units.²³² *Courier* columnist George Schuyler made his own case for immediate integration by making a tour of several Latin American nations and investigating the state of their militaries. Integration in these armies, he concluded, had allowed soldiers of all colors to serve together without any appreciable tension or degradation in military readiness.²³³

Almost every issue of the *Defender*, *Courier*, and *Afro-American* in the early summer of 1948 contained an article or editorial arguing for military integration. The front page of the June

²³⁰ "Students Back Randolph Stand," *Chicago Defender*, 5 June 1948, p.1; "Randolph May Picket Confabs," *Chicago Defender*, 12 June 1948, p. 1; Lem Graves, Jr., "Powell Plans 1-Man Strike," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 19 June 1948, p. 1; Ted Stanford, "Hurl New Blow at Army Bias; Randolph Opens Up," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 3 July 1948, p. 1; Lem Graves, Jr., "3,000 Monthly Face Draft; Ask Truman Ban Bias," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 10 July 1948, p. 1; Theodore Stanford, "Randolph Invites Arrest," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 24 July 1948, p. 1; James L. Hicks, "Randolph Tells White Youth to Shun JC Army," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 24 July 1948, p. 1.

²³¹ Ollie Stewart, "Tension High at 'Perfect' U.S. Camp in German Zone," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 12 June 1948, p. 1; Ollie Stewart, "Work of Occupation Troops in Germany Affected by Lack of Officers, Racial Bars," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 26 June 1948, p. 1; Ollie Stewart, "Segregation Hurts Army," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 17 July 1948, p. 1.

²³² "3 More ROTC's," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 3 July 1948, p. 1. The three schools that received the new units were Morgan State College, Southern University, and Florida A+M.

²³³ George S. Schuyler, "Racial Integration Works in Cuba's Army," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 17 July 1948, p. 1; George S. Schuyler, "No Segregation in Venezuela," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 24 July 1948, p. 1.

12 issue of the *Afro-American* featured four different stories about the subject.²³⁴ Even as black publishers and editors had been heartened by Truman's embrace of a strong civil rights program at the Democratic convention and his decision to call Congress back into session, they recognized that they faced an uphill battle. Truman's antagonistic relationship with Congress and Secretary Forrestal's hesitancy to seize the reins meant that Jim Crow supporters had been able to resist any significant change. The opponents of segregation needed a more powerful tool. Soon they would get it.

Executive Order 9981

The Truman team had always planned to make black voters a cornerstone of their campaign strategy, as Clark Clifford advised in his 1947 memo to the president. However, it had not anticipated how incendiary the issue of civil rights would become at the national convention. Truman himself admitted to Forrestal that "he had himself not wanted to go as far as the Democratic platform went on the civil rights issue."²³⁵ Nevertheless, he took the platform seriously, and was determined to run on it. Moreover, the defection of the Dixiecrats meant it was no longer necessary to placate the most reactionary and racist elements of the Democratic base. Capturing the black vote was now even more important to the Truman campaign. Having cast himself as a forceful advocate for civil rights, however, meant that he was now expected to do something about the issue. Truman had made it abundantly clear that he expected no progress

²³⁴ Stewart, "Tension High"; "Army May Act on ROTC Issue," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 12 June 1948, p. 1; "Gallant One-Man Battle Staged By Sen. Langer," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 12 June 1948, p. 1; "Minn. Guard Fight Joined by Devitt," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 12 June 1948, pg. 1. Sen. William Langer, a North Dakota Republican, led the ultimately futile effort to insert a provision prohibiting racial discrimination into the draft bill. Rep. Edward Devitt, a Minnesota Republican, had joined Minnesota Governor Luther Youngdahl in petitioning Army Secretary Royall to reverse his position and allow racial integration in the state's National Guard.

²³⁵ MacGregor, 310.

from Congress. The pressure would now be on the president to deliver on the promises he had made in Philadelphia.²³⁶

Truman's advisers had discussed the idea of an executive order mandating racial integration in the federal government and the armed services as early as October 1947.²³⁷ That idea had also been advanced by a number of black leaders, most notably A. Philip Randolph. In a letter to the president, Randolph and Grant Reynolds wrote: "Because the 1948 Republican platform expressed its disapproval of army segregation and because the recently adopted platform of your own party in essence called for the abolition of racial distinctions within the military establishment, we feel that you now have a bi-partisan mandate to end military segregation forthwith by the issuance of an Executive Order."²³⁸ Sensing an opportunity to marry politics to principle, Truman ordered his advisers to draft such an order. Before releasing it, the Truman camp showed a draft to Randolph and Walter White, who both voiced their approval. Forrestal also signed off on the document but suggested that Army Secretary Royall might disapprove. Despite Forrestal's concerns and his own stated preferences, however, Royall pledged that he would execute the order.²³⁹

On July 26, 1948—the "Turnip Day" when the 80th Congress was scheduled to reconvene—Truman signed Executive Order 9981. In addition to ending racial segregation within all of the U.S. armed forces, the order also called for the creation of a committee that would examine the state of integration within each of the services and advise them as they

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Letter, Grant Reynolds and A. Philip Randolph to Truman, 15 July 1948; in *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces: Basic Documents Volume VIII: Segregation Under Siege*, 684.

²³⁹ Nalty, 242.

moved toward the complete eradication of Jim Crow. Tellingly, the order did not mention segregation or integration. Instead, it spoke of equal treatment and opportunity, language that mirrored that of the Democratic platform. The vagueness of the order was a deliberate effort by Truman's advisers to minimize conflict with the armed forces. They hoped that each service would conclude that equal treatment and opportunity were not possible in a bureaucracy segregated by race.²⁴⁰ Truman himself, however, was adamant that the order put an end to the military's policy of professing equality while maintaining racial segregation. When the president was asked during a press conference if the order meant the eventual end of discrimination in the armed forces, Truman replied with a simple, unequivocal, "Yes."²⁴¹

The response of the black press was mixed. The *Defender*, Truman's staunchest ally among the leading black papers, viewed the order as the decisive blow to military segregation that the black community had long been waiting for. It stamped its July 31 front page with the words, "Save This Paper It Marks History."²⁴² An editorial published the following week read:

No week in modern history has been more significant for Negroes than last week when the President of the United States struck several mighty blows for freedom. . . . In the two executive orders Mr. Truman attacked racism within the framework of the military establishment, and discrimination in federal employment. In both instances he set up machinery which can and will eventually eliminate Jim Crowism and the vicious anti-Negro practices which serve to deny equal opportunity to one-tenth of America. . . . There is no question about the course which Mr. Truman has chosen to steer the ship of state. He is determined to move forward toward a fuller realization of the high ideals of our democratic system. Mr. Truman is, without question, ready and willing to use the full power of his office to eliminate the evils that confront us. No president in modern history

²⁴⁰ MacGregor, 310-311.

²⁴¹ Foner, 184; Nalty, 242.

²⁴² *Chicago Defender*, 31 July 1948, p. 1.

has shown more courage and more determination in the face of great controversy.²⁴³

Real change, the newspaper concluded, had finally arrived.

The *Courier*, by contrast, described the order as a half-measure that was insufficient to produce real change within the military. While admitting that the executive orders demonstrated significant political courage on the part of the president, the paper's editorial noted that as commander-in-chief Truman was empowered to desegregate instantly all units within the armed forces. Using language similar to the *Defender's* editorial, the *Courier's* response concluded that "the time has long passed for half-way measures. . . . It is up to those who hold the helm of the Ship of State to steer its course courageously and constructively to the safe haven of true democracy and not waste time cruising the dangerous waters of expediency."²⁴⁴ *Courier* columnist Marjorie McKenzie was even more critical of Truman's order; she described it as "pure political chicanery."²⁴⁵ The *Afro-American's* editorial was less vehement but also concluded that the executive order would probably not be enough to produce real change within the armed forces.²⁴⁶ An editorial cartoon in the same issue showed the president blasting away at Jim Crow with a double-barreled shotgun named after his executive orders. Underneath it the caption read, "Scorched Him, But the Old Bird's Still There."²⁴⁷ This wary tone did not change in September, when the president announced the formation of his Committee on Equality of

²⁴³ "Mr. Truman Makes History," *Chicago Defender*, 7 August 1948, p. 14.

²⁴⁴ "The Order Mr. Truman Did Not Issue," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 7 August 1948, p. 18.

²⁴⁵ Marjorie McKenzie, "Pursuit of Democracy," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 7 August 1948, p. 19.

²⁴⁶ "Executive Order Won't Stop Randolph's Opposition to Jim Crow Army," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 7 August 1948, sec. 2, p. 4.

²⁴⁷ "Scorched Him, But the Old Bird's Still There," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 7 August 1948, p. 4.

Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Forces. Two of the committee's seven members — *Defender* publisher John Sengstacke and Urban League president Lester Granger—were black, but even the appointment of Sengstacke did not produce any words of optimism from the *Courier* or the *Afro-American*.²⁴⁸ The *Defender* itself reported on Sengstacke's appointment and noted that not only were Sengstacke and Granger "intimately familiar with the delicate problems which result from racial discrimination" but that the paper was "very much encouraged by the calibre of the white members of the committee."²⁴⁹

As election day crept closer, the *Defender* was alone among the major black newspapers to throw its support to Truman.²⁵⁰ Among the reasons the paper cited for its endorsement of the unpopular president was a report that Dewey was not yet prepared to support unconditionally the immediate desegregation of the armed forces.²⁵¹ The *Courier*, by contrast, endorsed Dewey and again scorned Truman for not acting more decisively in ending Jim Crow in the military.²⁵² The *Afro-American*, although it admitted Truman's record on civil rights had improved markedly

²⁴⁸ Nalty, 245-246. "Sengstacke, Granger Will Study Army," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 25 August 1948, p. 1; "7-Man Group to Advise on Military Equality," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 25 August 1948, p. 1. The other members of the committee were Charles Fahy, former solicitor general; Adolphus Donohue, an industrialist; Charles Luckman, president of Lever Brothers; Dwight Palmer, an executive of the General Cable Corporation; and William Stevenson, president of Oberlin College. Donohue and Luckman were not active participants in the committee's activities because of illness and the press of business, respectively.

²⁴⁹ "Names Sengstacke, Granger to Military Board," *Chicago Defender*, 25 August 1948, p. 1; "Sengstacke, Granger Will Study Army," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 25 August 1948, p. 1; "7-Man Group to Advise on Military Equality," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 25 August 1948, p. 1; "Brass Tacks," *Chicago Defender*, 9 October 1948, p. 14.

²⁵⁰ Jack M. Bloom, *Class, Race, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987), 82.

²⁵¹ "Deal for Jim Crow Army Part of Dewey Sell-out to Dixie," *Chicago Defender*, 23 October 1948, p. 1.

²⁵² "Courier Throws Full Support to Gov. Dewey," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 25 September 1948, p. 1; "'By Their Fruits Ye Shall Know Them' (The Democratic Side)," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 16 October 1948, p. 1.

since his days as a Congressman, concluded that Dewey was the better candidate for black Americans.²⁵³

Truman had gambled that his civil rights record would win over the black voters he needed to triumph in on election day. But if papers such as the *Courier* and the *Afro-American* appreciated his efforts, they also considered them insufficient. Moreover, the president seemed destined to lose on election day. In late September the *Afro-American* published the results of a Roper Poll that showed Truman losing to Dewey by a landslide.²⁵⁴ The black press accordingly placed its trust in Dewey. When Truman pulled off one of the most incredible upsets in American political history, the *Defender* alone was able to crow “We Told You So!” on its front page.²⁵⁵ “These are the Chicago Defender’s principles; these are President Truman’s principles,” John Sengstacke wrote in his post-election day editorial. Among the principles he listed was “the right of equal treatment in the service of our nation.”²⁵⁶ Sengstacke and the *Defender* remained committed to the president and his civil rights program.

The other leading black papers treated Truman’s surprise victory with a mixture of self-effacement and grudging respect. The *Afro-American* acknowledged that it had expected the president to lose but also noted that black voters had been instrumental in securing Truman’s win.²⁵⁷ The *Courier* stuck by its belief that Dewey would have made a better president, but it also pointed out the debt that Truman owed the blacks who had helped him keep his office. It

²⁵³ “Is Truman the Equal of Dewey On the Civil Rights Question?” Baltimore *Afro-American*, 9 October 1948, p. 1.

²⁵⁴ “The Polls Say Dewey Will Win,” Baltimore *Afro-American*, 25 September 1948, p. 4.

²⁵⁵ *Chicago Defender*, 13 November 1948, p. 1.

²⁵⁶ John Sengstacke, “The People Were Right,” *Chicago Defender*, 13 November 1948, p. 1.

²⁵⁷ “The Real Significance of the Truman Victory,” Baltimore *Afro-American*, 13 November 1948, p. 1.

again noted that “as for racial segregation in the armed forces (which he vowed to eliminate) he has every opportunity to end it immediately, because he enjoys absolute control and cannot blame a Republican-controlled Congress for hampering him.”²⁵⁸ Regardless of which candidate they had supported during the campaign, all of the major black newspapers expected substantive progress on the issue of military integration.

²⁵⁸ “Election Outlawed Alibis,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 13 November 1948, p. 16.

Chapter Three: Principles and Pragmatism

As 1948 gave way to 1949, the black press continued to pay careful attention to the issue of segregation within the military. Despite President Truman's executive order and the appointment of *Defender* publisher John Sengstacke to the Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Forces, black newspapers were not convinced that victory was yet in sight. The black press kept up its pressure on the military establishment in general and the Army in particular. Black editors and journalists were convinced that the service would resist Truman's directive in any way it could. The Army's continued segregation was decried by *Courier* columnist Joseph Bibb, who issued a call for black Americans to "work and fight to make this democratic principle a living, breathing reality."²⁵⁹ "Forty-nine will favor fighters," he wrote, "not appeasers, compromisers, nor opportunists."²⁶⁰ While his colleagues continued to hurl brickbats at the military establishment, however, Sengstacke was attempting to effect change from within the target of their abuse.

John Sengstacke Goes to Work

The President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Forces (also known as the Fahy Committee for its chairman, former Solicitor General Charles Fahy) met for the first time on January 12, 1949, six months after Truman issued Executive

²⁵⁹ Joseph D. Bibb, "Facing Forty-Nine," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1 January 1949, p. 15.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

Order 9981.²⁶¹ Truman's brief discussion with the committee at its first meeting was heralded in a page one *Defender* story that noted that the president expected the group to "ultimately bring about the end of racial segregation in the military."²⁶² Bold proclamations notwithstanding, much of the committee's first meeting was taken up with logistical matters, such as the appointment of Sengstacke as the committee's temporary executive secretary.²⁶³ The real work of the committee would begin the next day, when representatives from the Army, Navy, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense briefed the group on their efforts to comply with Truman's order. The tone of the meeting was one of strained civility, as the committee members pressed the military officials on the armed forces' lack of progress and the officials in turn attempted to explain away the slow pace of desegregation or shift the blame elsewhere. An exchange between Sengstacke and Major General John E. Dahlquist of the Army about the integration of National Guard units illustrated the officers' resistance to change:

MR. SENGSTACKE: . . . I have four Negroes in a little town in Iowa, Illinois who are anxious to enlist at the present time and they were told that they could not enlist, that they would have to go to some other spot to enlist in the Army, and, of course, they are anxious to do it and would like to know what the procedure is they should follow to get in....

MAJOR GENERAL DAHLQUIST: So far as the Guard is concerned, that is a matter for the State of Illinois. So far as Federal recognition is concerned, they will not be Federally recognized in that unit.

MR. SENGSTACKE: They'll not be?

²⁶¹ Sherie Mershon and Steven Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines: Desegregating the U.S. Armed Forces* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 190.

²⁶² "Truman To Meet Committee On Bias In Armed Forces," *Chicago Defender*, 8 Jan. 1949, p. 1.

²⁶³ Fahy Committee, The President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services, afternoon session, January 12, 1949; in MacGregor and Nalty, *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces: Basic Documents, Vol. IX: The Fahy Committee*, 13-32. The committee's first meeting also included a discussion about where the committee should meet. Granger pointed out that if it continued to meet in the White House, he and Sengstacke would be unable to eat at any of the segregated downtown Washington, D.C. restaurants during lunch breaks.

MAJOR GENERAL DAHLQUIST: No, not at the present time.²⁶⁴

The remainder of the committee's conversation with the other services' representatives were similarly frustrating.²⁶⁵

The military's attempts to adhere to the letter of Truman's order while ignoring the spirit of it seem to have motivated Sengstacke, at the committee's next meeting, to formulate a statement that would affirm the committee's interpretation of Truman's order as an unambiguous directive to end all racial segregation in the armed forces. It read in part:

MR. SENGSTACKE: . . . Those persons who interpret Executive Order 9981 as not outlawing segregation in the armed forces are the same persons who warn that the only solution rests in educating the people over a period of time. They explain that hatreds cannot be ordered or legislated out of existence. It will be wrong for the Committee established by the President's order to approach its task with a pre-disposition toward this idea.²⁶⁶

Sengstacke then explained his reason for wanting such a statement:

MR. SENGSTACKE: . . . I think we ought to understand this among ourselves so that in the future we may not be raising questions from time to time as to the interpretation of the order in view of the fact, as I said before, that I have heard it discussed in a number of ways and a lot of people interpreted it differently. I think we ought to have an official interpretation.²⁶⁷

Although Fahy and other members of the committee indicated they were inclined to agree with Sengstacke's reasoning, they decided to put off any decision until their next meeting.

²⁶⁴ Fahy Committee, The President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services, morning session, January 13, 1949; in MacGregor and Nalty, *Basic Documents*, Vol. IX, 86-87.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 90-167.

²⁶⁶ Fahy Committee, The President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services, morning session, February 21, 1949, in MacGregor and Nalty, *Basic Documents*, Vol. IX, 236.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 245, 246.

While Sengstacke and his colleagues were dealing with uncooperative military officers and wrestling with the vagaries of Truman's executive order, coverage of the Fahy Committee in the black press was relatively sparse throughout the winter and spring of 1949. Although all of the major black newspapers reported on the Committee's first meeting, by the end of the month they had turned their attention elsewhere.²⁶⁸ There was no mention of the group in the *Defender* until February 19. On that day, the *Defender* ran a short article about the resignation of Second Lieutenant John Earl Rudder, the first and only black commissioned officer in the Marine Corps.²⁶⁹ Most of the subsequent articles about the committee in the *Defender* focused on the individuals associated with it, rather than the direction of the discussions. The next mention of the group was a short article in March announcing the appointments of journalist E.W. Kentworthy as executive secretary and former Farm Security Administration official Joseph H.B. Evans as associate secretary to the Committee. The article made no reference to the substance of the committee's ongoing discussions with the military.²⁷⁰ In May, the *Defender* reported that Captain Fred Stickney of the Navy, who had often served as an unofficial spokesman on matters of integration, had been removed from the Navy's Planning and Control section. Again, there was no mention of the committee's deliberations.²⁷¹

The *Courier* and *Afro* had even less coverage of the Fahy Committee, perhaps because they had less access than Sengstacke and the *Defender*. A February 5 *Courier* article reported

²⁶⁸ Lem Graves Jr., "Army Bias Probe Starts; It Can End Segregation—Will It?" *Pittsburgh Courier*, 15 January 1949, p. 1; "Fahy Group Session Nears on Armed Forces Policy," *Baltimore Afro-American* 15 January 1949, p. 1; "Committee Begins Work on Ending Service Bias," *Pittsburgh Courier* 22 January 1949, p. 3.

²⁶⁹ "'First' Marine Officer Quits," *Chicago Defender*, 19 Feb. 1949, p. 1.

²⁷⁰ "J.H.B. Evans to Fahy Panel," *Chicago Defender*, 5 March 1949, p. 1.

²⁷¹ "Self-Professed 'Authority on Negro' Ousted," *Chicago Defender*, 21 May 1949, p. 26.

that the committee had received a confidential plan for Air Force integration but provided no details about the committee's work.²⁷² The *Afro* offered few substantive reports or editorials about the committee for several months. The dearth of information about the president's committee and its work, however, did not mean that the black press had abandoned the cause of military integration. On the contrary, it would continue to focus on the issue with unwavering intensity.

Singing Their Praises

While the Fahy Committee's work was taking place mostly out of view of the black press, the *Defender*, the *Courier*, and the *Afro-American* focused on the ongoing injustices and problems of military segregation while simultaneously highlighting the achievements of black troops. All of the major black newspapers kept close tabs on the progress of black soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen. Although white-dominated dailies often reported on the accomplishments of local military personnel, black newspapers filled their pages with briefs about black troops from all over the country—especially commissioned officers. Short articles such as "Army Promotes Four Officers" and "Army, Navy Commission Five More Doctors" served two purposes.²⁷³ First, they kept their national audiences apprised of the achievements of their friends and relatives in the military. Second, and more importantly, they provided an ongoing rebuttal to the arguments of Jim Crow proponents who contended that blacks were inherently less qualified than whites to serve in the armed forces.

Although the accomplishments of black troops during World War II had convinced many former skeptics that a black soldier was every bit the equal of his white counterpart, others

²⁷² Lem Graves, Jr., "Integrated Air Force Stymied," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 5 February 1949, p. 1.

²⁷³ "Army Promotes Four Officers," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 1 January 1949, sec. 2, p. 1; "Army, Navy Commission Five More Doctors," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 February 1949, p. 5.

within and without the military establishment remained fixed in their old prejudices. Integration, they believed, would inexorably damage the effectiveness of the U.S. military as a fighting force. Their views were exemplified in the person of Major General Edward “Ned” Almond, who had commanded the ill-starred 92nd Infantry Division during World War II. Once a favorite of George Marshall, Almond proved to be a poor division commander and found his heretofore rapid ascent up the ranks arrested. He blamed his misfortunes on the troops under his command, convinced that their poor performance had damaged his career. After the war Almond said that the “initiative and determination [of black soldiers] are low by white standards, so was responsibility. Negro troops are easily led and with enough supervision can accomplish anything. Without supervision they will disappear. Negroes are afraid at night. They lack confidence in each other and they lack leadership.”²⁷⁴ Almond was hardly alone in his beliefs. Secretary of the Army Royall remained convinced that black troops were better qualified for manual labor than combat duty, a belief shared by many of the officers under his command.²⁷⁵

This was the attitude that black newspapers had been combating since World War I, when the prevailing pseudoscientific attitudes of the era led the military to conclude that blacks lacked the intelligence and initiative to truly succeed as leaders.²⁷⁶ For this reason, black newspapers paid close attention to the small number of blacks who had earned commissions as officers in the armed services. In 1949, two men were singled out for their accomplishments: Wesley Brown, who was about to become the first black graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, and Jesse Brown (no relation), who had become the Navy’s first black aviator the previous

²⁷⁴ Astor, 310.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 328.

²⁷⁶ Binkin et. al., 28; Dalfiume, 189; MacGregor, 24, 104, 137-140.

year.²⁷⁷ *Defender* columnist Alfred E. Smith, who wrote under the pen name Charley Cherokee, described the intense media scrutiny surrounding Wesley Brown's graduation months before the event: "Presently, the Commandant at the Academy is aghast at the number and pressure of requests from Negro Press, white and Negro published magazines, etc., who want to follow Brown about the campus and get exclusive pictures and story."²⁷⁸ Brown's actual graduation produced an abundance of coverage in the form of articles, pictures, and congratulatory columns.²⁷⁹ Jesse Brown's commission as an ensign that spring also attracted the attention of the *Defender*, while earlier in the year the *Afro* published a front-page picture of Jesse Brown in the cockpit of his airplane with the headline, "Something New in the Air Force of the U.S. Navy."²⁸⁰ The prospect of a black pilot in the formerly all-white world of naval aviation was clearly a source of delight for black newspapers; black Americans now had another example of military prowess to hold up for the world to see.

The coverage of Jesse Brown, Wesley Brown, and other black officers also demonstrated how the black press was still deeply affected by the experience of World War II. During that conflict black newspapers had embraced the Double V campaign in the belief that black troops would be able to earn equal treatment by proving their worth on the battlefield.²⁸¹ Just a few years later, other voices in the black community, such as A. Philip Randolph, were beginning to

²⁷⁷ Astor, 326, 340-343; Nalty, 220.

²⁷⁸ Charley Cherokee, "National Grapevine," *Chicago Defender*, 5 February 1949, p. 6.

²⁷⁹ "1st Midshipman in Choice Spot," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 2 April 1949, p. 3; "Annapolis Turns Out 1st Negro Graduate," *Chicago Defender*, 28 May 1949, p. 12; "First Negro!" *Pittsburgh Courier*, 28 May 1949, p. 13; Lem Graves Jr., "Naval Academy Graduate 'Average Joe' (He Says)," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 4 June 1949, p. 1; "Naval Academy Grad Says Staff Impartial," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 4 June 1949, p. 1.

²⁸⁰ Charley Cherokee, "National Grapevine," *Chicago Defender*, 30 April 1949, p. 6; "Something New in the Air Force of the U.S. Navy," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 26 February 1949, p. 1.

²⁸¹ Washburn, *The African American Newspaper*, 145.

openly challenge that assertion. Rights were not something to be earned, they were inherent, Randolph and his allies averred. In any case, black Americans had won no concessions from the military or political establishment for their service in the war. Yet the laurels for Wesley Brown and Jesse Brown in the pages of the black press, while serving as a rebuttal to foes like Royall and Almond, also allowed the segregationists to establish the terms of the debate. Why should it be incumbent on black Americans to prove their worth? Why did the burden of proof not rest on the men who continued to keep black troops from being treated as the equal of whites? Although Randolph's now-defunct civil disobedience campaign suggested new avenues of protest, such ideas were not yet in the mainstream of the black press.

Mixed Blessings

As spring wore on, Sengstacke and the rest of the Fahy Committee continued to spar with the Army over its attempts at integration. Again, the committee's frustration with the Army was downplayed in the black press. However, black newspapers noted that the committee had a much better working relationship with the newest of the armed services, the Air Force. Even before Truman issued Executive Order 9981, Secretary of the Air Force Stuart Symington had advocated complete integration of the fledgling service.²⁸² Symington's efforts, however, had been complicated by his rocky relationship with Secretary of Defense James Forrestal. Forrestal's cautious and gradual approach to integration was very different from the kind of sweeping change Symington suggested.²⁸³

Truman's executive order and the creation of the Fahy Committee created an opportunity for Symington to advance his plan despite Forrestal's reluctance. At the committee's second

²⁸² Gropman, 65-67; Mershon and Schlossman, 193.

²⁸³ Nalty, 249-50.

meeting in January, the Air Force presented the plan for integration that Symington had presented to the Secretary of Defense.²⁸⁴ That plan was greeted with great enthusiasm by the *Defender*, which endorsed it even before the Fahy Committee could formulate its official response to the proposal:

An auspicious beginning has been made in the new drive to broaden the democratic base of our armed services and we believe that the abolition of the double-standard of merits and rewards in the military establishment will surely follow, sooner than some of us at one time believed. . . . The President's Committee may run up against stiff opposition from several quarters, including some elements in the military hierarchy itself, but we believe that the time is at hand when the government recognizes the importance of democratic action as well as democratic talk.²⁸⁵

In truth, Symington's plan was not nearly as audacious as the *Defender* made it sound. It was bolder than what Forrestal might have preferred, but the plan still fell short of what many civil rights activists, including those in the black press, had demanded. The plan banned racial and ethnic quotas and specified that all promotions and assignments would be based solely on merit. However, it also acknowledged that some all-black units would continue to exist, at least in the short term.²⁸⁶

While the Fahy Committee weighed the merits of Symington's plan, the black press was intensely focused on the fate of the 332nd Fighter Wing, a black fighter air wing based at Lockbourne Air Base in Ohio. The press' interest in this particular unit stemmed from its illustrious history: the 332nd was the successor unit to the 332nd Fighter Group, one of the units of

²⁸⁴ Fahy Committee, The President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services, afternoon session, January 13, 1949, in MacGregor and Nalty, *Basic Documents*, Vol. IX, 188-222.

²⁸⁵ "End of Military Jim Crow," *Chicago Defender*, 12 Feb. 1949, p. 6.

²⁸⁶ Gropman, 67-69; Nalty, 249.

the Tuskegee Airmen. During the war it was commanded by Col. Benjamin Davis, Jr., son of the first black U.S. Army general and a highly respected leader in his own right.²⁸⁷

As the Air Force presented its plan first to Forrestal and then to the Fahy Committee, the black press focused on what it might mean for the men stationed at Lockbourne. The *Afro-American*'s story on the Air Force plan led with rumors of the unit's demise. Toward the end of the article the unnamed author claimed, per unnamed sources within the service, that "the plan was not worked out because of any altruism on the part of the Air Force but because of 'budgetary considerations.'"²⁸⁸ The *Courier*'s coverage followed a similar pattern, failing to note that although the 332nd might be organized out of existence, other all-black units were permitted to remain under Symington's plan.²⁸⁹ The *Defender*'s own Charley Cherokee noted that there was disagreement among black officers at Lockbourne as to whether the Air Force's plan would help or hinder their prospects for promotion.²⁹⁰ Their ambiguous feelings were mirrored in the black press. The exploits of Col. Davis and the 332nd had been a source of pride for black Americans during and after the war. Now newspapers that had trumpeted the achievements of the Tuskegee Airmen for years were confronted with an unintended consequence of their drive for integration: the disappearance of such storied all-black units as the 332nd.

At least some civil rights activists were suspicious of the plan. The *Afro* reported that a group of Lockbourne pilots called the National Negro Military Service Committee had gone on

²⁸⁷ Gropman, 7; MacGregor, 341.

²⁸⁸ "Deny Rumors of 477th Breakup," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 22 January 1949, p. 2.

²⁸⁹ "Only Race-Manned Air Base to Close in Six Months," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 22 January 1949, p. 4.

²⁹⁰ Charley Cherokee, "National Grapevine," *Chicago Defender*, 19 February 1949, p. 6.

record as opposing the plan as a ploy by the Air Force to get rid of its black pilots.²⁹¹ *Afro* columnist Charles Houston acknowledged the sacrifice that was required of these pilots and those who cheered their exploits but it was, he concluded, a necessary one. Better to struggle in an integrated world than “vegetate” in a segregated one, he wrote.²⁹² Houston was one of the few writers in any of the papers to weigh the gains and losses of the plan so openly. Most of the other leading editorialists and columnists of the black press seemed content to sit on the fence a while longer. In the end, the Air Force’s proposal was accepted with minimal changes by the Defense Department after consultation with the Fahy Committee. The newspapers confirmed that the 332nd was to be deactivated, but otherwise made little comment about the Air Force plan.²⁹³ The lack of coverage suggests that many black editors and journalists might have been unsure whether the goal of an integrated military was worth giving up units such as the 332nd.

Exit James Forrestal, Enter Louis Johnson

Something neither the black press nor the Fahy Committee could have expected was the sudden resignation of Secretary of Defense Forrestal in March 1949. Forrestal had generally supported the committee and its goals, but his cautious approach had frustrated advocates for immediate change within the armed forces.²⁹⁴ The black press had also been dissatisfied with his reluctance to press the services more forcefully. His departure occasioned little comment from the major black newspapers. Forrestal was replaced by Louis Johnson, who had served as

²⁹¹ “Air Force to End Segregation,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 9 April 1949, p. 2.

²⁹² Charles H. Houston, “Our Civil Rights,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 16 April 1949, p. 4.

²⁹³ “Air Force to End Segregation,” *Baltimore Afro-American*; “Integration to Dissolve 332nd Unit,” 16 April 1949, p. 1; “Armed Forces Integration Hopes Hinge On Committee,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 16 April 1949, p. 5.

²⁹⁴ Nalty, 249-50. Forrestal’s departure was occasioned not only by political differences with Truman but also by his increasingly serious mental health problems. Not long after his resignation, he committed suicide by leaping from the 16th floor of Bethesda Naval Hospital, where he was receiving treatment.

Assistant Secretary of War under Franklin Roosevelt before World War II. Johnson's appointment was treated with wariness by the *Defender*, which noted that his opinions on military integration were largely unknown: "Resignation of Secretary of Defense Forrestal and appointment of Louis Johnson hasn't excited anybody. Johnson is uncommitted on racial attitudes. . . ." ²⁹⁵ Columns and articles in the *Afro* were somewhat more enthusiastic, although exactly how Johnson would measure up to Forrestal remained unclear to everyone. ²⁹⁶

However, Johnson soon proved to be a much more forceful proponent of integration than his predecessor. Not long after his appointment, he announced a deadline of May 1, 1949 for the armed services to present formally their plans for integration. Johnson's announcement was motivated in part by a desire to upstage the Fahy Committee, gain the support of black leaders and consolidate his position within the Defense Department. ²⁹⁷ But whatever the reasons for Johnson's deadline, it was greeted rapturously by the *Defender*. "Defense Chief Cracks Down On Jim Crow," read a page-one headline shortly after Johnson's announcement. ²⁹⁸ The attached story described Johnson's proposal and acknowledged it was in part a reaction to the work of Sengstacke and the Fahy Committee: "Johnson's directive. . . is said to have been issued in anticipation of forward-looking recommendations which are expected to be made by President Truman's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services headed

²⁹⁵ Charley Cherokee, "National Grapevine: Background and Background," *Chicago Defender*, 12 March 1949, p. 6.

²⁹⁶ Louis Lautier, "Capital Spotlight," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 23 April 1949, p. 4; Cardell W. McVickers, "Signs of Progress," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 23 April 1949, p. 4; "Johnson Studying Full Integration," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 23 April 1949, p. 1.

²⁹⁷ Keith D. McFarland and David L. Roll, *Louis Johnson and the Arming of America: The Roosevelt and Truman Years* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005), 164-165; Nalty, 250.

²⁹⁸ "Defense Chief Cracks Down On Jim Crow," *Chicago Defender*, 30 April 1949, p.1.

by Charles Fahy, and of which DEFENDER publisher John H. Sengstacke is one of the two appointed Negro members.”²⁹⁹

If Sengstacke or his editors resented Johnson’s attempt to steal the limelight from the committee, it was not apparent in the *Defender*’s reporting or editorials. In an editorial entitled “Mr. Johnson Cracks the Whip,” the newspaper praised the Secretary of Defense for his tough-mindedness: “The Defense chief is apparently allergic to red tape. . . . The sunlight of democracy is shining through this crack in the wall of Jim Crow.”³⁰⁰ The *Defender* also noted, however, that Johnson’s announcement alone would not bring about the immediate end of segregation, writing that “although the forthright directive of Secretary Johnson is a step forward, the brass hats in the military establishment, who have shown a remarkable resistance to integration, can be depended upon to exploit any loopholes which may be found in the new order. They are not going to give up their racial views without a struggle.”³⁰¹ The *Defender*’s prediction that military leaders would continue to resist all serious efforts to integrate would soon be proven correct. But there would also be more victories for the advocates of desegregation.

The *Courier*, as usual, cloaked its approval for the plan in criticism of the Truman administration. Washington correspondent Lem Graves, Jr. described Johnson’s plan as “the first move which had the appearance of a genuine administration effort to make good on a civil rights promise since the Truman inaugural.”³⁰² On the whole, however, Graves’ coverage of the plan was quite flattering to Johnson, whom Graves described as “hard-hitting.” Although the *Courier*

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ “Mr. Johnson Cracks The Whip,” *Chicago Defender*, 7 May 1949, p. 6.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² “Lem Graves, Jr., “First Move! Three Armed Services Told to Wipe Out Bias,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 30 April 1949, p. 1.

writer noted that Johnson's move "severely undercut" the work of the Fahy Committee, which had expected to have several more months to prepare its formal report to the president, he also wrote that "general consensus among Washington observers is that Secretary Johnson's move is a good one, if the words of the directive mean what they say."³⁰³

Of the three major black newspapers, only the *Afro-American* refused to endorse unreservedly the Johnson plan. In an April 30 editorial, the *Afro*'s editors wrote that the directive differed little from the president's executive order of the previous year.³⁰⁴ While acknowledging that the Secretary's deadline might induce the services to move at a more rapid pace in their preparations for integration, the newspaper declared that it would withhold judgment until the services submitted their individual plans. Talk, after all, was cheap. Black troops and their supporters wanted action.

They soon got it in the form of Kenneth Royall's resignation. The Secretary of the Army had been black newspapers' primary antagonist in their campaign for military integration. While the other services had made at least halting, uneven efforts to integrate their ranks in the years after World War II, the Army under Royall had resisted all efforts to desegregate. Royall's resistance to change was evident in his often-combative appearances before the Fahy Committee in early 1949. In a lengthy opening statement at his first appearance before the committee in March, he argued that although racial integration of the Army was desirable from a moral and administrative standpoint, there were too many reasons why it could not be achieved. To begin with, the Army was not a laboratory for sociological experiments.

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ "Another Report Requested," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 30 April 1949, p. 4.

SECRETARY ROYALL: Specifically the Army is not an instrument for social evolution. It is not the Army's job either to favor or to impede social doctrines, no matter how progressive they may be—it is not for us to lead or to lag behind the civilian procession except to the extent that the national defense is affected.³⁰⁵

Moreover, he said, black soldiers were not suited for many of the roles within the Army.

SECRETARY ROYALL: However, there are other considerations. One of these is the differing average qualifications of the troops of the two races for performing specific duties. In the past—for reasons that are perhaps at least semi-political—there has been a hesitancy to discuss this problem frankly. But such hesitancy is not in my opinion conducive to reaching that solution which is best for a sound national defense. The history of two wars has demonstrated that in general Negro troops have been less qualified than white troops for the performance of certain types of military service, for example service with the infantry or with other units requiring troops to. . . “close with the enemy.”³⁰⁶

Finally, Royall argued that integration would ultimately undermine morale and discipline among white troops.

SECRETARY ROYALL: We must remember that soldiers are not mere bodies that can be moved and handled as trucks and guns. They are individuals who came from civilian life and often return thereto—plan to return thereto. They are subject to all the emotions, prejudices, ideals, ambitions and inhibitions that encumber our civil population throughout the country. . . . A total abandonment of—or a substantial and sudden change in—the Army's partial segregation policy would in my opinion adversely affect enlistments and reenlistment not only from the South but from many other parts of the country, probably making peacetime selective service again necessary.³⁰⁷

³⁰⁵ Fahy Committee, The President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services, morning session, March 28, 1949, in MacGregor and Nalty, *Basic Documents*, Vol. IX, 503-504.

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 504-505.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 506-507.

Royall presented a forceful case for maintaining segregation, but the committee members challenged him on several points. Sengstacke in particular attempted to get Royall to admit that the Army had taken no serious steps to comply with Truman's executive order.

MR. SENGSTACKE: In other words, there has been practically no action or follow-up in regard to [Executive Order 9981]?

SECRETARY ROYALL: I don't understand what you mean by that.

MR. SENGSTACKE: I look at the order as an order to Secretaries to eliminate what I consider to be segregation and discrimination and give equality of opportunity within the armed services—an order from the President. I was wondering whether or not any action had been taken.

SECRETARY ROYALL: We think we do that, and we did it before the President's order was issued.³⁰⁸

Royall's protestations notwithstanding, the fact was that Army had neither complied with Executive Order 9981 nor Johnson's deadline. Even though Royall had assented grudgingly to President Truman's executive order, he never embraced the spirit behind it. Ultimately, the differences between the Commander-in-Chief and his Secretary of the Army became too profound to bridge, and Royall was forced to announce his retirement in April 1949.³⁰⁹

Although Royall's resignation removed a major obstacle to integration, it received sparse coverage in the major black newspapers. The *Defender* noted that Royall had refused to declare an end to racial segregation in his branch of service but also noted that an internal report described modest gains in the number of black officers in the reserves and regular Army.³¹⁰ The *Afro-American* also reported on the "comparatively small" achievement.³¹¹ Yet the editorial boards of the black newspapers that had railed against Royall's stubbornness did not comment on

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 550.

³⁰⁹ Edgerton, 165; Astor, 338.

³¹⁰ Venice Spraggs, "Royall Quits, Gains Cited," *Chicago Defender*, 30 April 1949, p. 1.

³¹¹ "Slight Progress Made in Army Under Royall," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 7 May 1949, p. 12.

his departure from the Defense Department. Although black editors could have taken the opportunity to boast at the expense of a defeated foe, they were still fighting many other battles. That spring, the black press was again compelled to address the issue of black Americans' loyalty. This time, however, the controversy was sparked not by a politician but an actor.

“Nuts to Mr. Robeson”

The occasion for this latest media frenzy was a statement made by the black actor Paul Robeson in Paris. By the 1940s Robeson was internationally renown for both his artistic accomplishments and his political activism. During his career he championed the cause of labor unions, the International Brigades of the Spanish Civil War, anti-colonist movements, as well as civil rights activists in his own country. Robeson's willingness to speak out against oppression anywhere, and his association with Communists and other leftists dating back to the 1930s, had made him a flashpoint for controversy in both the mainstream press and black publications. Robeson's April 1949 trip to France would engender even more discussion and argument in the media, and complicate the efforts of those who were attempting to win military integration through official channels.³¹²

Robeson had travelled to Paris to attend the Congress of the Partisans of World Peace, an international organization devoted to global cooperation and disarmament. Alleged by the U.S. government to be a front organization for Soviet-aligned Communist parties, the Congress nonetheless attracted a number of distinguished delegates from around the world; W.E.B. Du Bois led the American delegation. At the conference, Robeson sang before the gathering and then made some brief remarks. According to an Associated Press dispatch, Robeson told the assembly: “We colonial people have contributed to the building of the United States and are

³¹² Martin Duberman, *Paul Robeson* (New York: The New Press, 1996).

determined to share in its wealth. We denounce the policy of the United States government, which is similar to Hitler and Goebbels. . . . It is unthinkable that American Negroes would go to war on behalf of those who have oppressed us for generations against a country [the Soviet Union] which in one generation has raised our people to the full dignity of mankind. . . .”³¹³

In fact, Robeson had not spoken the words that the AP story ascribed to him.³¹⁴ Yet the story was published across the world as fact, and Robeson found himself at the center of a maelstrom of criticism. That a man whom many in America considered the exemplar of black achievement would suggest that black Americans would not fight in a war with the Soviet Union—a war many at the time thought inevitable—was considered traitorous. Robeson attempted to set the record straight, with little success. The outcry was immediate and vicious.³¹⁵

The *Courier*, which had needled Robeson and derided his activism for years, pounced on the AP report. “This was a pathetic statement,” read the newspaper’s editorial, “because Mr. Robeson, who belongs to more than a half hundred Communist-front organizations (while denying he is a Communist) cannot conceivably speak for American Negroes.”³¹⁶ The writer went on to provide a truncated history of black participation in American military history from the Revolutionary War up to World War II before suggesting that Robeson himself was a coward for not serving in either of the World Wars. Even in the Spanish Civil War, he noted, Robeson had preferred to sing in the trenches rather than fight.³¹⁷ The *Afro-American*’s response was more

³¹³ Ibid. 341-342.

³¹⁴ Ibid., 342.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ “Mr. Robeson Goes to Town...,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 30 April 1949, p. 14.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

restrained in its tone and less contemptuous of Robeson, but made the same point: Robeson misrepresented the beliefs of most black Americans.³¹⁸

The *Defender's* account of the reaction among NAACP officials, black educators, and black clergy dripped with scorn for Robeson's participation at the "so-called World Peace Congress."³¹⁹ Walter White, Channing Tobias, and Bishop William Jacob Walls of A.M.E. Zion all went on record to distance themselves from what Tobias described as "a striking example of disloyalty."³²⁰ These fixtures of the black middle class again took pains to point out that Robeson did not speak for all black Americans and that black soldiers would certainly fight for America in any conflict with the Soviets. The *Defender's* own editorial board did not pull any punches in its response to the Robeson flap. In an editorial headlined "Nuts to Mr. Robeson," the newspaper criticized Robeson for playing into the hands of the Soviet Union: "The responsible Negro leadership and every one of our great national mass-membership organizations are anti-Communist. They are all concerned primarily with one over-all objective and that is to make our democracy work. To assume that because we squawk about our grievances and raise hell about our second-class citizenship, that we are therefore anxious to embrace the thugs who boss the Kremlin is the height of folly."³²¹ The "responsible Negro leadership" described in the editorial included not only organizations such as the NAACP but, by implication, the black press itself. These institutions had steered the movement for equal rights for decades, and they did not intend

³¹⁸ "Paul Can't Speak For Us," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 30 April 1949, p. 4.

³¹⁹ "Robeson Blasted For Paris Speech," *Chicago Defender*, 30 April 1949, p. 1.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*

³²¹ "Nuts to Mr. Robeson," *Chicago Defender*, 30 April 1949, p. 6.

to have their work jeopardized by the loose talk of a Communist-affiliated entertainer at a time when even an accusation of Communist sympathies could destroy careers or worse.

The hyperbolic reaction in the black press to Robeson's alleged statement was in some respects puzzling. For one thing, the vow that black soldiers would refuse to fight in a segregated military was nearly identical to the one A. Philip Randolph had made almost exactly one year earlier. Yet that statement, if not endorsed universally, had been treated in the black press with a considerable amount of sympathy. The indignation of black editors and columnists was also unusual because Robeson had made a similar statement before Congress in 1948, while testifying on a bill that would require all Communist and "Communist-front" organizations to register with the federal government. During his testimony, Robeson was asked if he would fight for America if the nation went to war with the Soviet Union. Robeson responded, "I would like to say that I would be on the American side to have peace. I would struggle for peace at all points. . . . If the American government would be a Fascist government, I would not support it."³²² The response of the black press to his testimony was muted.

Courier columnist Marjorie McKenzie came closest to identifying why the latest Robeson story produced such sound and fury: "I think the vitality of Paul's remark lives on because it suggests, though it does not articulate, a deeper question. . . . He is saying, in effect, that he himself has come to some conclusions about the future of the Negro people in this country as things now stand. He must see the present political and economic context as an impossible vehicle for Negro aspirations. Else he would not advocate that Negroes should nor predict that they will behave in so drastic a fashion."³²³ She continued:

³²² Duberman, 328, 687.

³²³ Marjorie McKenzie, "Pursuit of Democracy," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 25 June 1949, p. 14.

If you believe, as Walter White does, that the democratic process has not been wrung dry of victories for minority people, then Paul's talk is not just revolutionary; it is foolish. But before we can condemn or criticize Paul Robeson, we have to think straight about our fundamental philosophies. . . . The fact is that a lot of anti-Communist liberals are not happy about the way this Congress has fouled up the civil rights program. Its inaction creates a fertile ground of discontent and political disloyalty, whether overt or concealed. The Government [sic] ought to regard the exaggerated response to Paul's statement as a storm signal.³²⁴

McKenzie had identified a growing fault line among black Americans between those who had faith in the ability of American institutions to reform themselves and those who were convinced that such institutions could never be redeemed from within. The black press, along with the NAACP and other moderate civil rights organizations, were committed to working within the government to achieve integration.

The words that an AP reporter had put in Robeson's mouth had created new doubts about black Americans loyalties and possibly threatened the modest gains that had already been won. Black newspapers, having cast themselves in the role of the loyal opposition, had little choice but to denounce Robeson and continue to press the military and political establishment for real change. Yet the fault line McKenzie had described was not going to disappear. Indeed, in the years to come it would grow even larger, with significant consequences for the black press.

"A Score For Our Side"

Even as the furor over Robeson occupied the black press for months, Sengstacke and the rest of the Fahy Committee continued to hold meetings. With the Air Force plan approved by the Secretary of Defense, the committee's focus turned to the Army and Navy. Although the Navy had been theoretically in favor of full racial integration since the end of World War II, in practice black sailors remained a small and marginalized minority within the service. In the course of its

³²⁴ Ibid.

investigation, the Fahy Committee learned that black sailors comprised only about five percent of all active-duty naval personnel. Most of these men served in ancillary positions, such as stewards.³²⁵ The committee learned quickly that the Navy's rhetoric and its practices were at odds. As Sengstacke put it during one meeting of the committee in April:

MR. SENGSTACKE:. . . . It seems to me, as you say, nothing has been done, and since the Navy knows the general impression among Negroes is that they can only serve in the messman's branch, I take it silence is exclusion in itself. That is, by doing nothing and knowing the reason they aren't coming into the Navy is because of the past situation and nothing is being done about it. . . . That is one reason why you don't have any progress in there, and it could be possibly that you aren't interested to that extent, knowing all those facts and having those facts before you.³²⁶

The Navy's representatives attempted to defend the service's policy on integration, but Sengstacke's arrow had struck its mark.

For years the Navy had espoused a policy of equality while making minimal efforts to achieve it. When Secretary Johnson announced his deadline for the services' integration plans, the Navy simply submitted an outline of its current plans. Johnson, however, condemned the service for its "lack of any response" to his directive and demanded a new plan.³²⁷ Goaded to action by the Air Force's plan, Johnson's deadline, and the Fahy Committee's own inquiries, the Navy found itself compelled to develop a serious proposal to integrate itself. Under the leadership of Acting Secretary of the Navy Dan A. Kimball, the service finally submitted a second, more comprehensive, plan for integration in late May. It included most of the measures that the Fahy Committee had been urging upon Kimball. These included a concerted effort to

³²⁵ Mershon and Schlossman, 199; Stillman, 46.

³²⁶ Fahy Committee, The President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services, afternoon session, April 26, 1949; in MacGregor and Nalty, *Basic Documents, Vol. X: The Fahy Committee*, 1164.

³²⁷ MacGregor, 347, 359.

attract more black recruits and officer candidates, a complete overhaul of the stewards' branch, and the opening of more opportunities within the service for black sailors. The Marine Corps would also begin to integrate its training of recruits. That policy was ratified by Kimball's successor, Francis P. Matthews, on June 23 and accepted by Johnson on July 7.³²⁸

Despite the significant changes included in the Navy's second plan, the announcement of its approval met with only modest acclaim in the black press. The *Defender's* Charley Cherokee devoted just two lines to it in his weekly column: "The navy [sic] release report is approved by the Defense Secretary Johnson and altho' it contains little new it does include most of the things recommended by Lester Granger. . . . It's a score for our side."³²⁹ The *Afro-American* went a little further, describing the plan as a far-reaching step that would be applauded by "right-thinking citizens the nation over."³³⁰ However, the approval of the Navy plan was overshadowed by two other events. The first was the graduation of Ensign Wesley Brown from Annapolis, which received extensive coverage in all the major black newspapers.³³¹ The second was the announcement, simultaneous with that of the Navy's success, that the Secretary Johnson had swatted down the Army's second plan for integration. Whatever excitement was generated by the Navy's plan was tempered by the knowledge that the most difficult task still lay ahead.

³²⁸ Dalfiume, 187; Nalty, 250.

³²⁹ Charley Cherokee, "National Grapevine," *Chicago Defender*, 18 June 1949, p. 6.

³³⁰ "Judgment Day For the Army," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 18 June 1949, p. 4.

³³¹ Rufus Wells, "Wesley Brown Gets Naval Commission Before 7,000," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 11 June 1949, p. 7; "Navy Finally Comes Through," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 11 June 1949, p. 4; Lem Graves Jr., "Happy U.S. Ensign 'Glad It's All Over,'" *Pittsburgh Courier*, 11 June 1949, p. 2; Albert Barnett, "Negro Graduates of Annapolis, West Point," *Chicago Defender*, 11 June 1949, p. 7; "'Happiest Moment,' Ensign's Mother Says," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 18 June 1949, p. 6; "Color Secondary, Ensign Says in Annapolis Story," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 25 June 1949, sec. 2, p. 7.

Everyone involved in the fight for military integration always knew that the Army was going to be the real obstacle to significant progress. There were various reasons why the Army was proving to be much more difficult to integrate than the other branches of the armed forces. One factor was simply the size of the organization. With far more members, and far more black members, than any other service, the Army would have much more difficulty integrating its ranks. The Army had also not made any serious preparations for integration before Truman issued his executive order. The closest the service had come to addressing the issue was a 1946 study on the utilization of black troops authorized by the Secretary of War. Chaired by Lieutenant Alvan Gillem, Jr., the committee responsible for conducting the study spent just six weeks interviewing witnesses and analyzing documents before it delivered its final report. The conclusions of the Gillem Board, as the committee was known, ostensibly established a new racial policy for the postwar Army. In reality the Gillem Report suggested only modest changes in Army policy, such as shrinking the size of all-black units, and largely sidestepped the fundamental issue of segregation within the service.³³² The Army refrained from embracing even these meager steps, meaning that in terms of racial integration the service had made almost no progress since the end of World War II. It was effectively starting at square one.³³³

Perhaps the biggest barrier to integrating the Army, however, was the institutional philosophy of the generals in charge. The Army's officer corps had traditionally been dominated by white Southerners who often reflected the racial biases of their region. Even officers who agreed with the idea of integration thought it unlikely that it could ever be successfully achieved. The Army was too large and contained too many individuals with divergent racial attitudes, they

³³² Nalty, 214-217; Stillman, 35-36.

³³³ Mershon and Schlossman, 205.

reasoned. The service could never maintain discipline on its bases if Northern blacks were barracked with Southern whites.³³⁴ All of these factors contributed the Army's determination to resist any and all efforts to change.

Like the Navy, the service had responded to Secretary Johnson's deadline by submitting a description of its current policies. Unlike the Navy, the Army persisted in its defense of these policies, submitting a second plan that differed little from the first one. Johnson, acting on the recommendation of Fahy, once again shot it down.³³⁵ The black press ridiculed the Army for refusing to move forward even as the other services were making definite (if uneven) progress. A June 11 *Defender* article by Washington correspondent Venice Spraggs was headlined "Report New Navy Integration Plan Ready," but most of the story focused on the Army's ongoing failure to design an acceptable integration plan.³³⁶ In a longer June 18 article headlined "Gives Army 3rd Chance To End Jim Crow," Spraggs noted that the Army was becoming increasingly isolated in its insistence on slowing down the pace of integration: "Seasoned observers argue that the Army hasn't a leg to stand on in the face of the action to end segregation already taken by the Navy and the Air Force. For the second time within a month, the Defense Secretary rejected the Army's equality proposal, stating that "it still fails to meet the basic intent" of President Truman's Executive Order banning discrimination, which Mr. Truman himself stated envisioned the end of racial segregation in the armed services."³³⁷ The *Afro-American* and the *Courier* also highlighted the continuing resistance of the Army, suggesting the service was acting in defiance not only of

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Dalfiume, 189; MacGregor, 360-361.

³³⁶ Venice Spraggs, "Report Navy Integration Plan Ready," *Chicago Defender*, 11 June 1949, p. 1.

³³⁷ Venice Spraggs, "Gives Army 3rd Chance To End Jim Crow," *Chicago Defender*, 18 June 1949, p. 1.

Johnson but also the Fahy Committee and the President.³³⁸ The Army, the *Afro*'s editorial board opined, "must either put up or shut up."³³⁹

Stalemate

In fact, the Army leadership opted to dig in its heels. Although Royall was gone, his replacement, lawyer and fellow North Carolinian Gordon Gray, proved to be no more inclined to speed the process of integration. Segregation, he argued, was necessary to give black soldiers an opportunity to develop leadership skills without the "competition" from presumably superior white soldiers. To press forward too quickly with integration would damage the combat efficiency of the Army to a dangerous degree, Gray charged.³⁴⁰ Sengstacke and the rest of the Fahy Committee remained unconvinced. Much of the summer and early fall was taken up with proposals and counterproposals from each side, yet neither the Army nor the committee demonstrated a willingness to compromise.³⁴¹

The Fahy Committee, however, was aided by growing public pressure on the Army. Although black newspapers such as the *Courier* and the *Defender* had been in the vanguard of seeking equality in the armed services, an increasing number of mainstream newspapers had joined the crusade. The *New York Times*, for example, accused the Army of defying the wishes of the Commander-in-Chief and engaging in a "private insurrection." According the nation's paper of record, the service was attempting to "preserve a pattern of bigotry which caricatures

³³⁸ "End JC Now, Army Told," Baltimore *Afro-American*, 18 June 1949, p. 1; "Navy Race Plan OK; Army Plan Is Rebuked," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 18 June 1949, p. 1.

³³⁹ "Judgment Day For the Army."

³⁴⁰ MacGregor, 360.

³⁴¹ Dalfiume, 190-191; MacGregor, 362-363.

the democratic cause in every corner of the world.”³⁴² The black press, meanwhile, also continued to keep its eyes on the issue.³⁴³ Fahy was optimistic that the Army would eventually bow to the demands of Truman, Johnson, and the public and finally put forth a workable scheme. “It is the Committee’s expectation that it will be able within a few weeks to make a formal report to you on a complete list of changes in Army policy and practices,” he wrote in a letter to Truman.³⁴⁴

With all eyes on the Army, Secretary Gray submitted a third proposal for desegregation to Johnson on September 30. This proposal opened all military occupational specialties to any qualified man, abolished racial quotas in Army schools, and ended racially segregated promotion systems and standards. However, it also retained racial quotas on enlistments and failed to open up assignments for black specialists. These last two items had been major sticking points in the ongoing negotiations between the Army and the Fahy Committee. Johnson realized that the prospect of getting the Army to agree to a plan acceptable to the committee was unlikely. Frustrated by what he viewed as a lack of urgency on the part of the Fahy Committee and acutely aware of the fact that his own professional reputation was now linked to the success of the Army’s plan, he opted to move forward.³⁴⁵ Without consulting the Fahy Committee or the president, Secretary Johnson approved the plan in late September.³⁴⁶

³⁴² MacGregor, 363.

³⁴³ “Truman May Have to Act to End Jim Crow in Army,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 23 June 1949, p. 1; “Army Still Deaf to Mixing ‘Em Up,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 30 June 1949, p. 3.

³⁴⁴ Letter, Charles Fahy to President Harry S. Truman, 21 September 1949, in Nalty and MacGregor, *Basic Documents*, Vol. XI: *The Fahy Committee*, 1322.

³⁴⁵ Mershon and Schlossman, 211-12.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

The decision made the front pages of the *Defender*, the *Courier*, and the *Afro-American*, and all three papers were unanimous in their disdain. The *Defender* derided the proposal, outlining exactly how the approved plan failed to achieve any of the objectives that advocates of military integration had sought for so long. The Army policy, Venice Spraggs wrote, “not only fails to end racial segregation, but also maintains the 10 per cent racial quota established by the Gillem Board, which has been long and bitterly opposed. Essentially, the new policy represents no appreciable departure from the Gillem Board’s recommendation for the utilization of Negro manpower made in 1946. This would seem to indicate that the Army has made no noticeable gains in its racial philosophy during that three-year period.”³⁴⁷ The *Courier* and the *Afro* identified the Army as the main culprit, concluding quite correctly that the service had never taken Truman’s executive order or the suggestions of the Fahy Committee particularly seriously.³⁴⁸ The *Afro* also accused the Army of attempting to smuggle their latest plan past the eyes of the public in the hopes of avoiding exactly the kind of uproar that the black press had produced.³⁴⁹

Curiously, Johnson himself was let off the hook by all of the newspapers, which focused their scorn on the Army. There was even some speculation in the *Afro-American*’s report that the Secretary of Defense, like the Fahy Committee, had not actually seen the proposal at all. James C. Evans, civilian adviser to Secretary Johnson, was quoted in an *Afro* article as saying that his office had never seen the plan, even though it should have been submitted for his approval. The

³⁴⁷ Venice Spraggs, “Military Order Shakes Color Bar,” *Chicago Defender*, 8 Oct. 1949, p. 1.

³⁴⁸ “Army’s ‘Integration’ Attacked by Critics,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 8 October 1949, p.1; “Army Thumbs Nose at Truman,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 8 October 1949, p. 1.

³⁴⁹ “The Army Hasn’t Changed,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 8 October 1949, p. 4.

Afro's story suggested that there were "implications" within the Pentagon that Johnson had never seen the plan and that one of his subordinates had approved it without the Secretary's knowledge.³⁵⁰ Louis Lautier repeated the allegation one week later, as did *Defender* columnist Charley Cherokee the next month.³⁵¹

Johnson, of course, had seen the Army's proposal, and had bypassed the Fahy Committee and the president in a futile effort to burnish his reputation. In doing so, Johnson had gambled that he would be able to dictate the nature and pace of the president's desegregation plan. It proved to be a spectacularly poor decision. Angered by Johnson's transparent attempt to undercut his authority, Charles Fahy went to Truman and told the president that neither he nor any of the other committee members could endorse Johnson's decision. Truman responded by making a very public affirmation of the committee's work. At a press conference on October 13, Truman described the Army's latest proposal as merely a "progress report" and implied that a more substantial and far-reaching document was in the works. He also privately pressured Secretary Johnson to withdraw his support for the Army's proposal.³⁵² Johnson recognized that the Fahy Committee had the full support of the President, which he could not overcome. Moreover, the Secretary was increasingly occupied in a bureaucratic war with the senior uniformed military chiefs over a number of other issues. Johnson largely withdrew from the ongoing discussions with the Army, affirming the Fahy Committee's dominance as the president's instrument of military integration.³⁵³

³⁵⁰ "Army Thumbs Nose at Truman."

³⁵¹ Louis Lautier, "The Capital Spotlight," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 15 October 1949, p. 4; Charley Cherokee, "National Grapevine," *Chicago Defender*, 5 November 1949, p. 6.

³⁵² Dalfiume, 194; Mershon and Schlossman, 212.

³⁵³ McFarland and Roll, 164-165.

The black press responded to Truman's announcement not with praise for his desire for substantive change but derision for his inability to do more. They were not alone in their dissatisfaction with the increasingly beleaguered president. The *Courier* and the *Afro-American* reported that a number of groups were petitioning Truman to take more decisive action on the issue, including Americans for Democratic Action, the American Council on Human Rights, and A. Philip Randolph's Committee Against Jim Crow in Military Service and Training.³⁵⁴ The *Afro* registered its own impatience with the president in an October 29 editorial: "As Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces President Truman is in a position to have his will obeyed. He can fire as well as hire. We hope that he will tolerate no further delays now that there are ample precedents that democracy can be made to work where our fighting men are concerned."³⁵⁵

The *Defender's* Charley Cherokee, who had followed the military integration process perhaps more closely than any other black reporter or columnist, contrasted the president's bold words with the sluggish pace of change and wondered why Truman had not done more. "Well come on, Harry, what's holding you?" he asked.³⁵⁶ The fact that the *Defender*, one of Truman's most stalwart defenders in- or outside of the black press, had become more willing to criticize the president publicly was a reflection of black editors' impatience with the Army's continued obfuscations and Truman's increasingly precarious political situation. In April, Mao-Tse-tung's Communist army crossed the Yangtze River and completed its takeover of China. Then in September, the American intelligence services confirmed that the Soviet Union had detonated an

³⁵⁴ "Pressure to End Army J-C," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 15 October 1949, p.1; "Truman On Defensive About Army Plan Regarding Integration of Personnel," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 15 October 1949, p. 1.

³⁵⁵ "The Recalcitrant Army," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 29 October 1949, p. 4.

³⁵⁶ Charley Cherokee, "National Grapevine," *Chicago Defender*, 15 October 1949, p. 6.

atomic bomb. Both of these events, coupled with the growing anti-Communist hysteria in Washington, lead to accusations that the president had weakened the nation's security and threatened the United States' dominance in global politics.³⁵⁷ Within a few months, these accusations would contribute to Truman's decision to confront global Communism more directly. For now, however, the president was castigated by the black press as incompetent and weak. Even as the *Defender* and other newspapers called on him to expend more political capital in the fight for military integration, it was clear to any astute political observer that Truman was too weakened politically to do much more. He had sidelined Johnson, but now it was largely up to the Fahy Committee to wrangle a real plan for change out of the Army.

Deception

The prospects for winning a workable plan did not appear demonstrably better than they had a few months earlier, however. Despite the rejection of the Army's first two desegregation plans and Truman's repudiation of its third, the service still remained extremely resistant to change. By now the black press frequently portrayed the Army as out of sync with its sister services, which had demonstrated a certain willingness to desegregate. Typical of such portrayals was the *Afro-American's* editorial cartoon of October 15, which depicted an Army officer driving the wrong way down a one-way street labeled "One Way to Democracy" while a Navy officer and Air Force officer cruised toward progress. The growing public frustration with the nation's largest uniformed service was personified by an onlooker labeled as "The Public," shouting at the offender.³⁵⁸ The lengths to which certain elements within the Army would go to

³⁵⁷ McCullough, 743-751.

³⁵⁸ "Still Going in the Wrong Direction," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 15 October 1949, p. 4.

maintain segregation became clear to the members of the Fahy Committee in late 1949, when they uncovered a scheme within the personnel and training divisions of the service.

In early October the Army sent a series of new regulations to its field commanders, including one that opened all military specialties to black soldiers. Many of the officers, oblivious to the bureaucratic wrangling taking place in Washington, took the orders at face value and began to assign black specialists for former all-white units. Officials at the personnel and training divisions were appalled, as they had not expected the new regulations to be put into practice. In response they issued an order that forbade the placement of black soldiers in white units, an order that not only violated Truman's executive order but also existing Army policy. The illegal order was issued without the knowledge or approval of Secretary of the Army Gray.³⁵⁹

The Fahy Committee might not have learned of the deception had it not been for the foresight of Executive Secretary Kenworthy. Recognizing that certain officers might attempt to actively sabotage the work of the committee, he let it be known the committee's office in the Pentagon was always left unlocked at night. Black personnel who worked in the building were thus able to provide the committee with information subtly and anonymously. It was by this method that a copy of the Army's illegal order found its way to the committee. Kenworthy, who had a number of contacts in the media, took the story to the *Washington Post*.³⁶⁰ The newspaper ran with the story, and its editorial page took the opportunity to chastise the Army for such a flagrant attempt to thwart even the most modest advances toward integration.³⁶¹

³⁵⁹ Mershon and Schlossman, 212.

³⁶⁰ Ibid., 212-213.

³⁶¹ "Army Runaround," *The Washington Post*, 3 November 1949, p. 8.

The black newspapers were even less charitable. The *Courier* painted the Army's actions as a "Revolt of the Generals," comparable to the then-ongoing Revolt of the Admirals.³⁶² An enraged Gordon Gray rescinded the illegal order and reiterated publicly his promise to the Fahy Committee that qualified black specialists would be assigned to certain white units.³⁶³ The black press, although still unconvinced that Gray shared their commitment to integration, treated the announcement as a qualified victory.³⁶⁴ The *Courier*, with characteristic bombast, applauded itself for exposing the revolt, although credit for that more properly belonged to the *Post*.³⁶⁵ Still, the paper could be forgiven for engaging in a bit of self-congratulation. The campaign that the *Courier* and other black newspapers had waged for years was finally coming to fruition. By the end of the year, the Air Force had completely integrated, and the Navy was moving more quickly in the same direction.³⁶⁶ The bad publicity the Army received from both the black and mainstream press in the wake of its illegal regulations had weakened the hand of the segregationists within the service and nudged the Secretary of the Army toward total integration.

³⁶² Lem Graves, Jr., "Army Brass Defies Integration Order," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 November 1949, p.1. The Revolt of the Admirals was a public disagreement between senior Navy officials and Louis Johnson over the Secretary of Defense's strategic vision for the services. Unhappiness within the Navy over Johnson's ideas contributed to Johnson's weakened position within the military establishment. For further information, see McFarland and Roll, *Louis Johnson and the Arming of America*.

³⁶³ Dalfiume, 193; Mershon and Schlossman, 213; MacGregor, 368.

³⁶⁴ Lem Graves, Jr., "Army Brass Defies Integration Order"; "Drops Bars in Army For Specialists," *Chicago Defender*, 12 November 1949, p. 1; Charley Cherokee, "National Grapevine," *Chicago Defender*, 12 November 1949, p. 6; "Army Secretary Slaps Down New JC Directive," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 12 November 1949, p. 1.

³⁶⁵ Lem Graves, Jr., "Army Brass Defies Integration Order"; "A Sizable Crack in the Army Door," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 November 1949, p. 14.

³⁶⁶ Lucius C. Harper, "Has the Navy Licked Jim Crow?," *Chicago Defender*, 3 December 1949, p. 2; "Last of Separate Units Gone Under New Air Force Policy," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 10 December 1949, p. 17; Charley Cherokee, "National Grapevine," *Chicago Defender*, 31 December 1949, p. 6.

As the year ended, it seemed that at least a partial victory was within sight for the black press and its allies.

Endgame

In the end, it was committee chairman Charles Fahy who delivered the coup de grâce to the Army's campaign of resistance to integration. Exasperated by the foot-dragging and deception on the part of the Army, Fahy informed the White House in early December that the committee intended to issue a press release about its dispute with the service. The Truman administration, eager to avoid further negative publicity, proposed that instead the committee produce a document outlining what steps it believed the Army needed to take to comply with Truman's order. Such a statement, with the imprimatur of approval from the White House, would leave the Army with little choice but to acquiesce. In addition, Fahy met personally with Secretary Gray and the Army Chief of Staff to emphasize the necessity of the committee's recommendations.³⁶⁷

The pressure proved to be too much for the Army to resist. In January 1950 the service issued a new directive regarding racial policy within its ranks. It stated that all soldiers would be assigned specialties regardless of their race and that it was effectively abandoning existing racial quotas.³⁶⁸ These were modest steps, but the *Defender* portrayed them as a great victory for both the Fahy Committee and all the advocates of racial integration. "Mix Units In U.S. Army" read the large headline above the story announcing the decision. "The strongest barriers to a fully integrated army were dissolved Monday by Department of the Army Secretary Gordon Gray,"

³⁶⁷ MacGregor, 369-371; Mershon and Schlossman, 213.

³⁶⁸ Department of Defense Office of Public Information, "Army Revises Policy Governing Utilization of Negro Manpower," January 16, 1950, in MacGregor and Nalty, *Basic Documents*, Vol. XI, 1339-41.

read the *Defender*'s article, "with an order implementing the policy set forth by President Truman's Executive Order, which provided for equality of treatment and opportunity without regard to race, color, creed or national origin in the armed services."³⁶⁹ The news story was accompanied by a brief editorial that gave grudging credit to the Army for finally moving forward and also recognized the efforts of the *Defender*'s publisher to ensure that the policy would represent a real change: "Like we predicted here last week, Army took a plea in its racial segregation policy. While reported policy changes don't let down flood gates to racial integration, Army mules are at least headed in the right direction. Fahy Committee at meeting last Saturday microscoped new assignment policy language with members Palmer and Sengstacke holding out for word changes. Final pronouncement may not be too bad."³⁷⁰

The *Afro-American*'s coverage was more skeptical of the prospects for real change; even as it called the Army's announcement "a major step" toward integration, it questioned the service's sincerity.³⁷¹ The newspaper once again called attention to the Army's sluggish pace in an editorial cartoon: the Army brass was depicted as a tortoise finally catching up to the hare of the 1946 Gillem Report, while an Air Force eagle watched from just past the "integration" finish line.³⁷² The *Courier* editorial board, for its part, again trumpeted its own role in fighting military segregation, including the Double V campaign. The newspaper, however, also noted that "we would be the last to contend that this was a Negro victory in the sense that Negroes alone brought it about. Actually it was an interracial job, with white and black men of good-will

³⁶⁹ "Mix Units in U.S. Army," *Chicago Defender*, 21 Jan. 1950, p. 1.

³⁷⁰ "Army's Trying," *Chicago Defender*, 21 Jan. 1950, p. 6.

³⁷¹ "Equality of Treatment and Opportunity Ordered by Army Dept. as New Policy," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 21 January 1950, p. 1; "Is the Army Really Sincere?" *Baltimore Afro-American*, 28 January 1950, p. 4.

³⁷² "The Tortoise Finally Catches Up With the Hare," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 28 January 1950, p. 4.

battling side by side for the just and decent thing.”³⁷³ Not all of the *Courier*’s writers shared this sanguine view, however. Columnist Horace Cayton described the Army’s latest announcement as a “gimmick” and raised the now-familiar question of why Truman and Johnson did not simply force integration through executive fiat.³⁷⁴

In May 1950 the Fahy Committee released its final report, entitled *Freedom to Serve*. In it, the committee offered a refutation of the most commonly espoused rationales for segregation and affirmed its commitment to a multiracial society that offered the same opportunities to all Americans. Perhaps most importantly, the report included a blistering critique of the Army’s policy of racial segregation. The Army had long defended its policy on the grounds of military efficiency; the Fahy Committee’s report demonstrated that such a system was in fact wildly *inefficient*: the political imperatives of segregation had led the service to create duplicate structures for both black and white soldiers.³⁷⁵ The practical effects of this unwieldy system would become apparent to the Army brass within a few short months.

The black press responded to the report much as it had to the Army’s announcement a few months earlier. The *Defender* announced that it was “a job well done” and claimed that “the most stubborn brass hats have been put on notice and the new orders now in effect are bearing fruit in every branch of the military establishment.”³⁷⁶ The *Afro-American*, while acknowledging that the Navy and the Air Force had made significant progress since the Fahy Committee began

³⁷³ “The Army: Victory After 12 Years,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 28 January 1950, p. 14.

³⁷⁴ Horace Cayton, “Believes That Truman Wants Civil Rights—But, There’s That Jim Crow Army!” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 28 January 1950.

³⁷⁵ The Fahy Committee, “Freedom to Serve,” May 22, 1950, in MacGregor and Nalty, *Basic Documents*, Vol. XI, 1355-1427.

³⁷⁶ “A Job Well Done,” *Chicago Defender*, 3 June 1950, p. 6.

its work, pointed out that the Army still had a long way to go in guaranteeing equal treatment for its black soldiers.³⁷⁷ The *Courier* voiced concern that the committee's report on military integration was more concerned with "the machinery set up for that purpose than goals attained."³⁷⁸ It also expressed impatience with the slow pace of change within the Defense Department.

In sum, the response of the leading black newspapers was decidedly mixed. The fact that one paper was optimistic (the *Defender*) while another skeptical (the *Afro-American*) and another both (the *Courier*) illustrated their opinion of the bureaucratic process through which integration was actually occurring. With its publisher serving a vital role in that bureaucracy, it was natural that the *Defender* would be far more hopeful about the possibility of successful change than outsiders such as the *Afro* and the *Courier*. All of these newspapers, however, shared a belief that change could only come through official channels. The idea of mass protest or civil disobedience as espoused by the likes of A. Philip Randolph and Paul Robeson was misguided at best or counterproductive at worst. For good or ill, the leaders of the black press remained convinced that the ultimate power to end segregation rested with those who possessed political power, men like Johnson and Truman. The black press believed that its best course of action was to call on the better angels of such individuals. Real change, however, would ultimately arrive not through the intercession of politicians or the efforts of the black press, but by the stark realities of combat.

³⁷⁷ "The Army's Out of Step," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 3 June 1950, p. 4; "Weakest Link in Nation's Defense Chain," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 3 June 1950, p. 4.

³⁷⁸ "Equality in Services," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 3 June 1950, p. 6.

Chapter Four: Now to War

By the time President Truman dismissed the Fahy Committee on July 6, 1950, the Navy and Air Force had made significant progress in desegregating. The Army, however, continued to lag behind. A year of protracted negotiations with the committee had produced certain agreements, such as the opening of all military specialties to all soldiers regardless of race and the end of racial quotas. The Army, though, had done little to actually fulfill these promises. In terms of racial segregation, little had changed. Yet it would be a mistake to conclude that the Fahy Committee had not accomplished its goals. By compelling the service to agree to an end to quotas, the committee had made it much more difficult for the Army to control the number of black enlistees. More importantly, the committee's experiences with the Air Force and Navy had established that racial integration could succeed.³⁷⁹

The Army, however, was determined to resist change for as long as it could. Many senior officers still thought little of black soldiers' intelligence and bravery. Once again, black troops would need to prove their worth on the battlefield. They would not have to wait long. On June 25, 1950, North Korean troops poured across the 38th Parallel and into South Korea, taking the world by surprise. The Army, unprepared to mount a coordinated defense, was forced to thrust still-segregated black units into the heat of battle. Some of these units performed capably, others proved to be ill-prepared for combat. Black newspapers would follow all of their exploits closely, using their victories as proof of black military prowess and their failures as evidence of

³⁷⁹ Dalfiume, 199-200; Mershon and Schlossman, 218-219.

how segregation damaged military efficiency. These publications recognized that their crusade for complete equality in the armed forces was at stake. If military segregation was truly to be a thing of the past, then the black press could not allow the segregationists use the war as a pretext to roll back the advances it had made.

“Calling the Red Bluff”

The invasion had surprised President Truman and his advisers. The chaos of the first few days prevented the White House and the Pentagon from obtaining a clear picture of what was happening. At first Truman authorized only naval and air support for the beleaguered South Korean troops, believing this would be sufficient to repel the North Korean advance. By June 30, however, it became apparent that South Korean forces were not up to the task. After consulting with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the president authorized General Douglas MacArthur, commander in chief of all American naval, air, and ground forces in the Far East, to use all resources at his command to defend South Korea. Truman opted not to ask Congress for a formal declaration of war and tried to downplay the significance of his decision by describing the conflict taking place in Korea as a “police action.”³⁸⁰ The mainstream press was not fooled, however; the next day’s *New York Times* appeared with the banner headline “US TROOPS LAND IN SOUTH KOREA.”³⁸¹

³⁸⁰ Blair, 65-69, 79-85. Immediately after the invasion, the United Nations Security Council passed UNSC Resolution 82, which condemned the North Korean aggression, and UNSC 83, which committed the UN’s member nations to provide military and other assistance to South Korea. These resolutions passed only because the Soviet Union, which as a member of the Security Council possessed veto power, was boycotting council meetings because of the organization’s refusal to replace the Republic of China (Taiwan)’s council seat with the (mainland) People’s Republic of China. The defense of South Korea was therefore a multinational endeavor taken under the aegis of the UN, although the United States provided most of the personnel, resources, and leadership. See Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History*.

³⁸¹ *The New York Times*, 1 July 1950, p. 1.

The black press, for its part, was generally supportive of Truman's actions. In a July 8 editorial entitled "Calling the Red Bluff," the *Defender* argued that Truman's decision was "the only action possible under the circumstances."³⁸² Moreover, the editorial noted that "the Red-inspired Koreans are clearly the aggressors. They started the shooting and there is every reason to believe that they acted upon the advice of Russia."³⁸³ The *Courier* followed suit, proclaiming that the United States had acted responsibly (while delicately omitting any mention of Truman, who had of course made the decision to react militarily.)³⁸⁴ The *Afro-American*, always wary of the excesses of anti-Communist hysteria, made a remarkably coolheaded assessment of the situation: "Actually, Korea, 7,000 miles away, is awkward to defend and, on top of that, it is of questionable strategic value. . . . What makes matter worse is the fact that the South Koreans actually do not have their hearts in the struggle and consequently are of questionable value as allies. For this, the U.S. is partly to blame."³⁸⁵ Even as it questioned the merits of American intervention, the *Afro* concluded in the same editorial that "we cannot fail in Korea."³⁸⁶ Whatever the risks involved, the paper's editorial board concluded, the Communist threat must be confronted.

The nature of that threat, however, was poorly understood by a number of people, including the president, who tended to view global Communism as a monolithic entity controlled

³⁸² "Calling the Red Bluff," *Chicago Defender*, 8 July 1950, p.6.

³⁸³ Ibid.

³⁸⁴ "Korea, United Nations, Peace," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 8 July 1940, p. 14.

³⁸⁵ "What We Face in Korea," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 15 July 1950, p. 4.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

by Moscow.³⁸⁷ That perspective was shared by many in traditional media as well as the black press. In another editorial in mid-July, the *Defender* again placed the blame for the war squarely on the Soviet Union and its allies: “Joe Stalin, who is the biggest dictator of our time, and his puppets know the value of the big lie. They also know how to throw a rock and hide their hands.”³⁸⁸ Although North Korea was indeed a client state of the Soviet Union at that time, the relationship between the two nations was considerably more complicated than the *Defender*’s portrayal suggested. Nonetheless, Soviet leader Joseph Stalin had given North Korea’s Kim Il-Sung the green light to invade South Korea and had provided the NKPA with considerable amounts of weapons and other military equipment.³⁸⁹ Just as importantly, the Soviet Union had mounted a robust propaganda campaign on behalf of its North Korean ally. This campaign included frequent denunciations of the United States as a racist, imperial power.³⁹⁰ Intended to drive a wedge between white and nonwhite members of the United Nations coalition that had come together to oppose the North Koreans’ aggression, the Soviet propaganda might also have resonated with black Americans who were once again expected to fight for a country that continued to treat them as second-class citizens.

The black press, however, remained resolute in its support of American intervention. “The Reds are trying to make the Asiatics believe that the United Nations defense of South Korea is ‘white imperialism,’” wrote one *Defender* editorialist. “This strategy seeks to destroy

³⁸⁷ Blair, 65.

³⁸⁸ “The Big Lie,” *Chicago Defender*, 15 July 1950, p. 6.

³⁸⁹ Halberstam, 47-52.

³⁹⁰ Walter L. Hixon, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 87.

whatever goodwill America may have among the darker peoples.”³⁹¹ The *Defender* argued that the best way to counter this propaganda was with improved treatment of black Americans, particularly those in the military. In a page one editorial, the newspaper noted that “the Reds in North Korea are using racial propaganda as effectively as they are using Russian tanks, planes, and other weapons of war. . . . Russian propagandists have built up anti-American sentiment throughout Asia by exploiting the actions of white supremacists in the United States. The Red propaganda should be off-set by deeds as well as words. The assignment of a Negro general to the staff of the supreme commander of United Nations forces should be accompanied by complete integration in the military establishment which has been advocated by President Truman and his Committee on Equality in the Armed Forces.”³⁹² Even as black newspapers called for change within the armed forces, however, they made it clear that black Americans would stand and fight in Korea no matter what. Walter White used one of his columns in the *Defender* to proclaim that whatever problems America had with regard to race relations, black Americans would still fight against “an aggressive totalitarianism.”³⁹³

The *Courier*’s response was similarly vehement. Turning the Soviet argument on its head, the newspaper’s editorialists linked Communist aggression with the worst depredations of the slave trade in the last century. “In the interest of national survival,” read one *Courier* editorial, “the United States must oppose the new slavery of totalitarianism just as it fought the

³⁹¹ “A Negro General,” *Chicago Defender*, 22 July 1950, p. 6.

³⁹² “Negro General for M’Arthur,” *Chicago Defender*, 15 July 1950, p 1.

³⁹³ Walter White, “Remember June 25, 1950; Date May Prove Important to All Negroes,” *Chicago Defender*, 9 September 1950, p. 7.

old slave traffic and drowned the slave system in blood on its own soil.”³⁹⁴ The newspaper’s editorial board was joined by the *Courier*’s columnists, who were unanimous in their rejection of Communist propaganda and their confidence in the loyalty of black Americans. Marjorie McKenzie proclaimed that “almost nothing could give Negroes a greater sense of belonging to this nation than the right to die for it on a basis of equality and dignity,” while her fellow columnist Joseph Bibb made a similar point, arguing that Communism was not the solution to the persistent racism in America or elsewhere.³⁹⁵

The *Afro-American* continued to use more moderate language in its editorials even as its position on Communism and the war was similar to the *Defender*’s and the *Courier*’s.³⁹⁶ The newspaper’s editors also expressed an anxiety that the language of American troops in Korea could play into the hands of the Soviet propagandists:

Already from the Korean battlefield has come a new derogatory word—“Gook,” something coined to indicate utter contempt for the North Korean enemy, not for the Russians who may be backing them, but for the little brown men alone. . . . America has gone to great extremes in an effort to prove that there is nothing racial about this present war. At present, this particular word is not being applied to South Korean forces. They are our allies. But one day, we fear, the South Koreans will wake up to the fact that their brothers to the north are being disparaged, and we do not think they will like it.³⁹⁷

Despite the *Afro*’s concerns, the newspaper did not waver in its support of the war effort in Korea. Like the other major black newspapers, it affirmed its belief in the necessity of American military intervention and expressed confidence that black troops would again prove their loyalty

³⁹⁴ “KOREA: Background of the War,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 August 1950, p. 14.

³⁹⁵ Marjorie McKenzie, “Pursuit of Democracy,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 15 July 1950, p. 14; Joseph D. Bibb, “The Colonies!” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 5 August 1950, p. 15.

³⁹⁶ “Korea Comes Closer,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 19 August 1950, p. 4.

³⁹⁷ “Koreans Won’t Like This,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 26 August 1950, p. 4.

to their country. The next major controversy surrounding these troops, however, would center not on their loyalties but their competence.

Holding the Line

While the black press was decrying Soviet propaganda, American troops and their allies were moving into South Korea in an effort to beat back the invasion. From an American perspective, the timing of the war was terrible. After World War II, the United States had withdrawn its occupation troops from the Korean peninsula in the belief that Western Europe would be the flashpoint for the next confrontation between the democratic West and the Communist East. Responsibility for the defense of the fledgling country was delegated to the poorly trained and ill-equipped soldiers of the Republic of Korea Army, or ROKs, as they were known. The American military presence in South Korea was reduced to an “advisory” group that comprised about 500 officers and enlisted men.³⁹⁸

Meanwhile, President Truman and Secretary of Defense Johnson had embarked on a cost-cutting program in an attempt to curb defense spending. The end result of their efforts was a drastic reduction in American military effectiveness, particularly that of the Army. By June 1950, the Army had a total strength of 591,000 men, far below its previously authorized strength of 677,000. The men that the Army did have were not particularly ready for combat, either. Many had joined in peacetime in the belief that another global conflict was unlikely in the nuclear age. Those who had been inducted into the service during the peacetime drafts of 1948-1950 were often actively hostile to the Army. Readiness was another problem; the length of basic training had been cut after World War II. Johnson’s austerity program had also resulted in a shortage of up-to-date equipment; stockpiles of World War II-vintage vehicles and weapons

³⁹⁸ Blair, 24-25, 37-46.

were deteriorating and little investment had been made in new technologies and equipment.³⁹⁹ The most notorious example was the World War II-era bazooka issued to American troops in Korea; its rockets bounced harmlessly off the Russian-supplied tanks used by the North Koreans.⁴⁰⁰

The dismal state of the American Army and the ROKs stood in stark contrast to the NKPA. The NKPA's Soviet sponsors had been far more generous with military assistance than the United States had been with the ROKs. As a consequence, when the North Koreans began their invasion on June 25, they rolled easily over the South Korean forces. The first American units to engage the NKPA in battle in mid-July fared little better. By the end of the month, the North Koreans had pushed the Americans and South Koreans into the southeast corner of the peninsula, the so-called "Pusan Perimeter."⁴⁰¹

In the early days of the war, black newspapers tried to put a positive gloss on the disastrous performance of both white and black Army troops on the Korean peninsula. The participation of black troops in the first major military action since World War II was touted on the front pages of the *Afro-American* and the *Defender* as a particular point of pride.⁴⁰² These stories were not always in line with the facts. One *Defender* story noted hopefully that "so far no Negroes have been identified among the Air Force and Army casualties which still are at a

³⁹⁹ Ibid., 27-29.

⁴⁰⁰ Halberstam, 18.

⁴⁰¹ Blair, 119-175.

⁴⁰² "Tan Yanks Land," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 8 July 1950, p.1; "Tan GI's See Action on Korea Front," *Chicago Defender*, 8 July 1950, p. 1.

minimum. The tide of the invasion is expected to change as soon as American military equipment is thrown into the fight.”⁴⁰³

The *Courier*, meanwhile, emphasized the role of the fully integrated Air Force in the early bombing campaigns against the advancing North Koreans: “While Negro aviators fly with the Thirteenth Air Force, now lending support to forces in South Korea waged in battle against the advancing North Koreans, thousands of colored troops stand nearby awaiting the call to action.”⁴⁰⁴ This support, the newspaper noted, was not limited to the kinds of logistical operations to which black soldiers had been confined in the last war: “Flying speedy jets. . . serving with bomber crews. . . directing activity from the ground. . . Negro airmen are serving in many capacities with the Thirteenth Air Force.”⁴⁰⁵ Perhaps even more importantly, the Air Force had successfully integrated not only the rank and file, but also its officer corps. The *Courier* kept a careful count of the number of black officers assigned to Korea, and noted approvingly that at least one major was among them.⁴⁰⁶ The Air Force’s progressive racial attitudes were paying off, according to the *Courier*. “Negro youths,” the newspaper reported, “increasingly aware of the fact that racial barriers are being done away with particularly in the Air Forces with the Navy running close behind, are leading the way to the recruiting offices as the number of volunteers for service is stepping up since the outbreak of the Korean war.”⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰³ “More Negro Troops Into Korean War,” *Chicago Defender*, 15 July 1950, p. 1.

⁴⁰⁴ “Over Korea: Ex-members of 332nd See Action,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 8 July 1950, p. 1.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ “25 Negro Fliers Now Over Korea,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 15 July 1950, p. 1.

⁴⁰⁷ “4-to-10 Ratio Exists: 25,000 Negroes Face Draft ; Thousands of Others Volunteering,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 22 July 1950, p. 1.

Even as the *Courier* upheld the Air Force as a model of how integration could work, it continued to lament the Army's reluctance to integrate its units or even give black soldiers an opportunity to prove themselves in battle. The newspaper frequently made the comparison explicit in its early stories. Whereas the Air Force "made no hesitation in using top Negro officers in responsible positions," one reporter wrote, Army forces moving into Korea kept black troops away from the front lines.⁴⁰⁸ Racism, the *Courier* implied, was the only reason for the Army to keep black soldiers away from the battlefield at a time when American forces were desperately needed to repulse the North Korean invasion. The Army had no shortage of black troops who could be utilized at this time.

Soon enough the *Courier*'s writers would get their wish. With American troops heavily outnumbered on the Korean peninsula, the Army had little choice but to throw its all-black units into action. Among the first American troops to confront the North Koreans were the members of the all-black 24th Infantry Regiment. Of the four traditionally all-black regiments in the Army, the 24th was the only one that still existed and was the largest all-black unit in the Korean theater.⁴⁰⁹ It owed its continued existence to Ned Almond, now MacArthur's chief of staff, who used it to absorb the large number of black soldiers serving as occupation troops in Japan.⁴¹⁰ Given little to do by leaders who would have preferred to forget about them entirely, the members of the 24th grew indolent. When the war began many of these troops were in

⁴⁰⁸ "Tan Airmen Engaged in Air Battle," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 15 July 1950, p. 1.

⁴⁰⁹ Nalty, 260. In 1950 Congress repealed the 1869 law that required the Army to maintain four all-black units.

⁴¹⁰ Blair, 150-151.

substandard physical condition. Even more importantly, their units lacked the heavy armor and weaponry that had not been needed in Japan but were essential for major combat operations.⁴¹¹

Although white units suffered from similar problems and performed just as poorly, the troops of the “deuce-four” became the focal point of a long-running controversy regarding the fighting ability of black soldiers. What often went unnoticed was that the poor performance of black troops was largely due to the Army’s policy of segregation. Whereas officers and enlisted men could be transferred in and out of white units to weed out incompetents and replace them with skilled troops, only blacks could replace the black troops of the 24th. With few black trained non-commissioned officers and weapons specialists available either in the Far East or in the United States, the 24th found itself saddled with a large number of dispirited and poorly trained troops.⁴¹²

Victory

Despite the Twenty-fourth’s problems, the unit would provide the Army with its first decisive victory in the conflict. In late July 1950 the 24th seized control of the strategic town of Yechon, driving out the NKPA troops that occupied it.⁴¹³ With little other good news for Americans arriving from Korea, the Twenty-fourth’s victory made headlines in both the mainstream media and the black press. Several days after the battle, the *Defender* ran a photo collage of front pages from mainstream newspapers such as the *Charlotte Observer*, the *Chicago*

⁴¹¹ Bowers, Hammond and MacGarrigle, 64-65; Nalty, 255.

⁴¹² Ibid.

⁴¹³ Astor, 352-357; Bowers, Hammond and MacGarrigle, 84-94. What actually transpired at Yechon remains a matter of dispute. Contemporary newspaper reports described the 24th as taking the town by force. The official Army history, however, states that no firefight occurred and that the North Korean army fled before the troops entered the town. A subsequent investigation by the Office of the Chief of Military History decades after the incident was unable to shed additional light on the matter.

Daily News, and the *Richmond-Times Dispatch*. The headlines could have come from the *Defender*: “Negro Troops Capture Key City,” “Negroes Gain Korea Victory,” “Negro Troops Win 16-Hour Battle.”⁴¹⁴ The *Defender*’s own story struck a similarly celebratory tone. The article described how “crack Negro infantrymen” had occupied the strategic city after “a fierce and bloody 16-hour battle.”⁴¹⁵

After Yechon, the *Defender* could now use the most recent fighting to prove that black servicemen could fight just as well as whites. Indeed, in the days and weeks after the battle, the *Defender* would note that just as “our boys” had repelled the North Koreans at Yechon, they continued to push back Communist attacks.⁴¹⁶ While emphasizing the successes of black units, the newspaper’s articles also highlighted the actions of individual black officers or enlisted men. The *Defender* frequently reported on awards and citations presented to black troops, ranging from the Army’s Distinguished Service Cross (recommended to a lieutenant who repelled a North Korean attack) to the Combat Infantry Badge (awarded to 154 black soldiers for service in Korea, all of whom the *Defender* listed individually.)⁴¹⁷ The newspaper highlighted not only the victories of black troops, but also their sacrifices. In an obituary for a slain black corporal,

⁴¹⁴ *Chicago Defender*, 29 July 1950.

⁴¹⁵ “How Our Boys Took Yechon in First Major Victory of Korean War,” *Chicago Defender*, 29 July 1950, p. 1.

⁴¹⁶ “Holding That Line,” *Chicago Defender*, 5 August 1950, p. 6; L. Alex Wilson, “Along the Korean War Front,” *Chicago Defender*, 26 August 1950, p. 2; L. Alex Wilson, “Tan Sailors Raid Korea,” *Chicago Defender*, 2 September 1950, p. 1.

⁴¹⁷ L. Alex Wilson, “Chicago GI Saves Seven In Enemy Trap,” *Chicago Defender*, 23 September 1950, p. 4; L. Alex Wilson, “Cite 154 Tan Fighters For Action In Korea,” *Chicago Defender*, 23 September 1950, p. 4.

Defender correspondent L. Alex Wilson described how the soldier was killed by enemy fire when he attempted to rescue several wounded comrades.⁴¹⁸

The *Courier*'s coverage followed a similar pattern, emphasizing both the 24th Infantry Regiment's accomplishment and the sacrifices the unit's troops had made: "Brown-skinned doughboys became spattered with blood. Some of it was their own. But most of it was that of slant-eyed North Korean Reds who found themselves in hand-to-hand combat facing America's oldest and most battle-tested and proved Negro infantry outfit."⁴¹⁹ The achievements of the 24th at Yechon served as an inspiration not only to black Americans on the homefront, but also to other black soldiers in Korea, the newspaper reported.⁴²⁰ The performance of the troops of the 24th, the *Courier*'s reported, was proof that they were capable of serving as equals alongside their white counterparts. It was also evidence that for all their grievances against American segregation, black troops were still willing to fight and die for their country: "The GI sees that this much talked about democracy is workable. . . and worth protecting, even at the cost of one's life. . . . Recognizing this, and appreciating the life he has lived in Japan, the Tan GI is still ready to go, recognizing the fact that he is an American, moving forward again to take his place among

⁴¹⁸ L. Alex Wilson, "Front Line Grapevine," *Chicago Defender*, Sept. 2, 1950. Combat was not a new experience for Wilson. Born in Florida, he had studied journalism before serving in the Marines during World War II. After a short stint as a teacher and principal after the war, Wilson put his earlier studies to use as a reporter for a number of black newspapers. By the time he arrived at the *Defender*, his writing and serious demeanor had earned him reputation as a talented reporter. Wilson would later win the Wendell Wilkie Award, black journalism's highest honor, for his coverage of Korea. Later he would cover the integration of Little Rock High School as general manager of the Sengstacke-owned *Tri-State Defender*. While reporting on this story, Wilson was set upon by a white mob and beaten nearly to death. He died in 1960 of Parkinson's disease, though his wife and friends maintained that his condition had been exacerbated by the beating. See Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff, *The Race Beat: The Press, The Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation* (New York: Random House, 2006).

⁴¹⁹ "Negro GIs First Heroes: 24th Takes City In Bloody Battle," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 29 July 1950, p.1.

⁴²⁰ "Yank Back From Korea, Tells of War," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 29 July 1950, p 4.

other Americans. He realizes that in facing an uncertain future that America must win. All else. . . his gripes, his pleasures. . . becomes unimportant.”⁴²¹ Here the fortunes of black Americans were clearly linked to the success of the American mission in Korea. By fighting for democracy abroad, black troops could finally win it at home.

This subtle echo of the *Courier*’s earlier wartime campaign became explicit in the next week’s edition of the newspaper, which reported that “a revival of The Pittsburgh Courier’s World War II ‘Double V’ program is being urged by strong voices in the nation’s capital.”⁴²² Among those voices was A. Philip Randolph, who had evidently reconsidered his earlier views on serving in a segregated military. Randolph’s change of heart was occasioned by a political calculation that blacks had more to gain from fighting in Korea than opposing the war. Now that the United States was in a shooting war with Communists, black Americans whose loyalties had already been in question could not risk any association with the enemy. As Randolph told the *Courier*: “While our boys are fighting and dying to establish a beachhead in Korea for liberty and peace, let no man or woman of America fall to so vile and so low an estate as to lend his support to the sordid and unmoral [sic] business of propaganda guerilla warfare here at home, from which our Russian Communist enemies may reap benefit and advantage.”⁴²³ Randolph was now firmly in line with the black publishers and editors who had always embraced military service as a path to true equality. While the soldiers of the 24th were fighting Communism abroad, black leaders inside and outside of the black press were coming together to affirm their opposition to Communism at home.

⁴²¹ “Morale of Race GIs High,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 29 July 29 1950, p 1.

⁴²² Stanley Roberts, “Leaders Urge Revival of Courier ‘Double V,’” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 5 August 1950, p 5.

⁴²³ Ibid.

The *Afro-American* was also part of this united front, and its coverage of Yechon and its aftermath closely mirrored that of the *Defender* and the *Courier*. The newspaper boasted of the Twenty-fourth's victory, highlighting the speed and skill with which the unit defeated its opponents.⁴²⁴ "We can be pardonably proud," read one editorial, "of the part our troops have played in bringing about the change."⁴²⁵ The *Afro* also noted that the Twenty-fourth's success provided a convincing rebuttal to the Communist propaganda that portrayed the conflict as a war between white imperialists and the nonwhite denizens of East Asia.⁴²⁶ In an exclusive interview with the *Afro*, the South Korean consul general made the same point: "This is not a race war. It is a war for liberty from oppression. Colored soldiers of America, who are fighting so gallantly, furnish a powerful proof that the love of freedom is not racial—but human."⁴²⁷

Despite the victory at Yechon, American forces were still on the defensive, and units such as the 24th Infantry Regiment continued to take heavy casualties. The *Afro-American* emphasized the hardship experienced by the troops of the 24th. Headlines such as "Situation Very Grave in Korean Fighting" and "Tan Lads in 14 Days of Continuous Battle" reminded readers of the danger and difficulties faced by black soldiers.⁴²⁸ The battlefield could be dangerous for reporters as well; Albert Hinton, an associate editor at the *Norfolk Journal and Guide* and a correspondent for the National Negro Press Association whose articles appeared in the *Afro*, was

⁴²⁴ "24th Infantry Takes Yechon in 16 Hours," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 29 July 1950, p.1; "Tan Yanks Still Holding Yechon," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 29 July 1950, p. 1; "D.C. Man Leads 24th Inf. Bn.," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 29 July 1950, p. 1.

⁴²⁵ "AFRO Cover War in Korea," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 29 July 1950, p. 4.

⁴²⁶ "24th Infantry Takes Yechon in 16 Hours," *Baltimore Afro-American*.

⁴²⁷ "Consul Refutes Charge Korea Battle Race War," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 29 July 1950, p. 19.

⁴²⁸ James L. Hicks, "Situation Very Grave in Korean Fighting," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 5 August 1950, p. 1; James L. Hicks, "Tan Lads in 14 Days of Continuous Fighting," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 5 August 1950, p. 1.

killed in a plane crash off the coast of Japan.⁴²⁹ James Hicks, the *Afro*'s most prolific correspondent in Korea, only narrowly missed being on the same fatal flight as Hinton. Despite the tragedy, Hicks kept up a steady stream of articles about the 24th Infantry Regiment and other black units in Korea.⁴³⁰ Although some of his articles featured the accomplishments of black troops, much of the news was increasingly grim. "24th in Tatters, Hicks Says Casualties Staggering!!" read one August headline.⁴³¹ The *Afro*, along with every other major black newspaper, had urged blacks to give their full support to the war effort in the belief that the success of black troops would be the most effective strategy for achieving racial equality in the military. Yet it now appeared that the success of black troops at Yechon had been a fluke. As the Pusan Perimeter threatened to collapse entirely and the U.S. Army was on the verge of being thrown into the Sea of Japan, the black press decided to change tacks. Now black newspapers would argue that military integration was necessary not because black troops fought well, but because segregation made them fight poorly.

"The Only Solution"

As North Korean troops continued to ride roughshod over black and white troops alike, black reporters and editors drew attention to a fact the Army was slowly beginning to recognize: segregation made for an inefficient fighting force. In an August 26 *Defender* editorial, an anonymous writer argued that "everybody goes in this fight and the color line is in the way. The

⁴²⁹ James L. Hicks, "AFRO Man One of 25 Missing," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 5 August 1950, p. 1; "Hinton's Plane Explodes in Air," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 5 August 1950, p. 1. Hinton was the first black journalist to die in any American war.

⁴³⁰ James L. Hicks, "8 Artillery Men Hurt as Reds Get Range," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 12 August 1950, p. 1; James L. Hicks, "24th Soldiers Do Impossible," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 12 August 1950, p. 1; James L. Hicks, "Eight With 24th Promoted On Field," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 12 August 1950, p.1; James L. Hicks, "Engineer Units Morale High," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 12 August 1950, p. 1.

⁴³¹ James L. Hicks, "24th Hit Hard," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 19 August 1950, p. 1.

time has come to cut out the comedy errors and make use of every man according to his skills at home as well as in Korea.”⁴³² A few weeks later another editorial claimed that “the business of maintaining lily-white units on the one hand and Jim Crow units on the other is becoming impractical if not impossible.”⁴³³

As bad news continued to trickle out of Korea, the *Defender* increasingly made strategic and pragmatic arguments for the integration of the Army. In an article about integrated sailors aboard a Navy aircraft carrier, Alex Wilson noted that, “if the interracial policy will work—and it is doing that—aboard the close quarters of a Navy ship during war-time, then Jim Crow in any other branch of the armed service is just so much dead weight. It is thwarting an united America and impairing the efficiency of our forces against the enemy.”⁴³⁴ Much as it had during the Fahy Committee’s deliberations, the *Defender* used the examples of the Navy and Air Force to demonstrate that there was no practical reason for the Army to continue to resist complete integration. The integration of the two smaller branches, Wilson argued, had been accomplished without generating racial animosity among either the officers or the enlisted men. It was the bigoted attitudes of the Army leadership, the *Defender* contended, that were the real roadblock to integration. In formerly all-white units where black replacements had begun to appear, there was remarkably little racial tension, at least in the *Defender*’s coverage. The newspaper ran numerous stories about black and white officers and enlisted men working together without apparent

⁴³² “Cut Out the Comedy,” *Chicago Defender*, 26 August 1950 , p 6.

⁴³³ “Jim Crow Fades,” *Chicago Defender*, 16 September 1950, p. 6.

⁴³⁴ L. Alex Wilson, “Wilson Finds Sailors Fighting, Living Together Aboard Vessels” *Chicago Defender*, 16 September 1950, p. 5.

animosity. The tone of these stories was summed up in the headline of one of them: “Integration Welcomed By Combat Infantry.”⁴³⁵

The *Defender* also ran numerous stories about formerly prejudiced white soldiers who were impressed by the performance of black troops. Typical of this type of story was a front page article from the October 7, 1950 edition of the newspaper. In it the *Defender* correspondent related the tale of Sgt. 1st Class Jodie Garrett of Mississippi, a white man. Imprisoned by the North Koreans, Sgt. Garrett reconsidered his views on race after he and his fellow prisoners of war were liberated by an all-black unit: “The Southern sergeant said, ‘We are all Americans. I shall never forget that. I saw one Negro sergeant stand up there with his machine gun and shoot 30 Reds. It was not just being freed by colored people though. A man does a lot of thinking in this war about race prejudice.’”⁴³⁶ These “conversion” articles made frequent appearances in the newspaper throughout the first few months of the war, as the *Defender* continued to emphasize not only the competence of black soldiers, but also their ability to work alongside white soldiers, particularly Southerners.⁴³⁷ In doing so, the newspaper chipped away at another long-held assumption of the Army leadership—that racial tension would prevent black and white soldiers from working together.

While the *Defender* railed against the inefficiency of segregated Army units, the *Courier* emphasized the hardships experienced by black GIs and the psychic toll of unceasing combat.

⁴³⁵ L. Alex Wilson, “Integration Welcomed By Combat Infantry,” *Chicago Defender*, 7 October 1950 p. 13.

⁴³⁶ L. Alex Wilson, “Freed By Tan Yanks, Dixie GI Raps Bias,” *Chicago Defender*, 7 October 1950, p. 1.

⁴³⁷ “Marine Laud Negro Troops For Aid,” *Chicago Defender*, 21 October 1950, p. 4; L. Alex Wilson, “Wilson Tells Story Of A Decision To Bring Democracy To Battlefield,” *Chicago Defender*, 28 October 1950, p. 4; L. Alex Wilson, “Praise Tan GIs For ‘Shangri-La’ Convoy,” *Chicago Defender*, 4 November 1950, p. 3; L. Alex Wilson, “Front Line Grapevine,” *Chicago Defender*, 25 November 1950, p. 19.

The attitude of many black soldiers was summed up in one headline: “‘Let’s Get This Mess Over and Go Home.’”⁴³⁸ With fewer victories for the *Courier* to trumpet, the focus of its coverage in early fall focused on the sacrifices made by black soldiers. Black troops were described as “mud-soaked and weary after weeks of constant Red attacks.”⁴³⁹ Under pressure from “ceaseless Red thrusts,” many of these units were forced to withdraw.⁴⁴⁰ But even as units such as the 24th suffered heavy casualties, the *Courier* maintained that the troops’ willingness to fight remained unwavering. In a dispatch filed from the main Army hospital in Tokyo, correspondent Frank Whisonant asserted that wounded black soldiers were eager to return to the battlefield: “Mute evidence that the Negro soldier has given all that was expected of him is the number of wounded lying in the Tokyo General Hospital. . . . The Negro soldier, however, has taught the North Koreans to treat him with respect on the field of battle.”⁴⁴¹

Ironically, the defeats inflicted upon units such as the 24th were actually speeding the process of integration. As white and black soldiers alike were killed, wounded, or otherwise incapacitated, it was vital that replacement troops were rushed to the battlefield as quickly as possible. However, matching white replacements to white units and black replacements to black units proved to be extremely difficult under wartime conditions. Faced with no alternative, the

⁴³⁸ Bradford Laws, “‘Let’s Get This Mess Over and Go Home,’” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 5 August 1950, p 5.

⁴³⁹ Bradford Laws, “Tired 24th Holding On, Heavy Blows Hit GIs,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 August 1950, p 1.

⁴⁴⁰ Bradford Laws, “Red Troops Flee, ‘Eagles’ Halt Dawn Attack,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 August 1950, p 1.

⁴⁴¹ Frank Whisonant, “Wounded Tan GIs Await Second Crack at ‘Reds,’ Eager to Return To Korean Front,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 26 August 1950, p. 1.

Pentagon began to quietly integrate some of the formerly segregated units in Korea, including the 24th.⁴⁴² The pace of change, however, was slow.

Once the *Courier*'s correspondents discovered this, they proclaimed it a harbinger of the inevitability of complete integration. According to the *Courier*'s articles, white and black soldiers alike recognized the logic of complete integration. One such article contained an interview with a white officer, who declared that integration was "'the only solution' to the Army's biggest personnel puzzle."⁴⁴³ When word arrived that the Army had sent three white riflemen as replacements to the 24th Infantry Regiment, the *Courier* again noted that "the problem of replacements has become a serious one for the Twenty-fourth is now well below half its normal strength."⁴⁴⁴ Complete integration now appeared inevitable, but the Army was still not moving quickly enough for the *Courier*'s editorialists. The newspaper continued to criticize the halting and haphazard nature of the desegregation process.

Its editors were particularly incensed by the news that South Koreans were serving alongside white American soldiers. This development galled the *Courier*'s editorialists because they considered race relations between Koreans and whites even worse than those between blacks and whites. One editorial noted that "the South Koreans have won integration into the United States Army before black Americans. . . . Americans don't like Koreans and Koreans don't like Americans."⁴⁴⁵ Nonetheless, the presence of the South Koreans was proof enough for

⁴⁴² Bowers, Hammond and MacGarrigle, 160; Nalty, 262-63.

⁴⁴³ "4th Infantry Wipes Out Segregation," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 26 August 1950, p 1.

⁴⁴⁴ Frank Whisonant, "24th Bombed By Mistake, White GIs Join All-Negro Unit," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 9 September 1950, p.1.

⁴⁴⁵ "An Insult In Korea," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 2 September 1950, p 1.

the *Courier*'s writers that there was no longer any acceptable justification for segregated units. In an editorial headlined "Abolish 'Negro' Units," one writer proclaimed that "if there was any sound reason for continuing this segregation among those defending their common country and flag, it vanished with the reports from Korea that South Koreans were being integrated into white American units. . . . The only thing a South Korean has in common with a white American is their common struggle against the Communist-directed and –supplied North Koreans, whereas white and colored American lads have everything in common except color."⁴⁴⁶ Like the *Defender*, the *Courier* insisted that integration must come because its logic was now irrefutable. "A new day for minorities has dawned in America," wrote columnist Joseph Bibb.⁴⁴⁷ "Wherever race prejudice arises and racial friction crops out, colored Americans may well point to Korea."⁴⁴⁸

While the *Defender* or the *Courier* stressed the irrationality of a segregated military, the *Afro-American* continued to emphasize the achievements of black troops even as there were fewer achievements to report. In an effort to locate a silver lining in otherwise depressing reports from the front lines, the *Afro* highlighted such events as the rescue of a stranded platoon and the escape of a wounded lieutenant through enemy lines.⁴⁴⁹ The newspaper also lauded the destruction of Yechon by black combat engineers. After the 24th Infantry Regiment captured the town, they were ordered to withdraw and leave it to the Communists. Without a trace of irony, the *Afro* praised the work of the Twenty-fourth's engineers who demolished the town their

⁴⁴⁶ "Abolish 'Negro' Units," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 9 September 1950, p. 6.

⁴⁴⁷ Joseph D. Bibb, "Tan Fighters," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 9 September 1950, p. 7.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁹ James L. Hicks, "Dead Men Return," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 2 September 1950, p. 1; "Cofield Hit During Patrol," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 2 September 1950, p. 14.

colleagues had fought so hard to capture.⁴⁵⁰ The *Afro* was upfront about its reasons for continuing to praise the beleaguered troops of the 24th and other black units. “Ordinarily we do not call particular attention to the color of an individual about whom we publish news,” read a September 9 editorial.⁴⁵¹ It continued:

But there are special circumstances in the Korean crisis which make it important for the whole world to know that Americans with dark skin are helping put down Communist aggression in Korea. The Communists are trying to take over Asia and win control of the colored peoples by portraying the United Nations effort in Korea as a case of whites fighting colored peoples. This is a propaganda technique the Communists have used with considerable success for many years They do not know that colored Americans fight for free institutions and the rule of law as gallantly and willingly as white Americans. So a Communist propaganda weapon was refuted in making known the role of the 24th Infantry on the East Korean front and the fact that colored men are fighting in other combat groups in Korea.⁴⁵²

The *Afro* continued to extol black troops throughout the early fall, even as these troops continued to suffer terribly.⁴⁵³ Good news, however, was on the way, and black newspapers such as the *Afro* would no longer have to look so hard to find causes for celebration.

⁴⁵⁰ James L. Hicks, “Death of a City,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 2 September 1950, p. 13.

⁴⁵¹ “Let’s Tell the World,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 9 September 1950, p. 4.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*

⁴⁵³ James L. Hicks, “159th Sharpshooters Slay 650,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 12 September 1950, p. 12; “3 Get Highest Army Awards, Truman Directs Bestowal of DSCs,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 16 September 1950, p. 1; “Combat Engineers’ Unit Well Decorated,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 16 September 1950, p. 1; James L. Hicks, “New 24th Colonel Calls His Men ‘Tops,’” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 16 September 1950, p. 1; James L. Hicks, “Heroic Five Kill 125,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 23 September 1950, p. 1; James L. Hicks, “Boys Go Into Battle, Come Out As Men,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 23 September 1950, p. 9; James L. Hicks, “159th Guns Locate Target 6 Miles Away,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 23 September 1950, p. 9; James L. Hicks, “Facing Reds, Bussey Saves Guns Again,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 23 September 1950, p. 12.

Reversal of Fortune

United Nations forces, after an initially dismal performance on the Korean peninsula, were slowly regaining the initiative against their foe. American bombers flew dozens of sorties each day, destroying crucial North Korean military and industrial targets. Meanwhile, American and allied reinforcements continued to stream into South Korea. The North Koreans now found themselves outmanned and without the logistical and technological advantages of the UN forces.⁴⁵⁴ Meanwhile, MacArthur launched an amphibious invasion behind North Korean lines that he had planned for months. Code-named Operation Chromite, the invasion involved a joint Army-Marines-ROK force attacking the heavily defended port of Inchon. On September 15, 1950, a flotilla of Navy ships landed men and armor on the seawalls at Inchon, catching the North Koreans by surprise. MacArthur's forces achieved their immediate objectives and by September 19 had established a secure lodgment. The success at Inchon allowed MacArthur's forces to recapture the South Korean capital of Seoul by the end of September. Shortly thereafter, American forces led a breakout from the Pusan Perimeter, trapping a large number of enemy troops and driving the remaining NKPA forces back into North Korea.⁴⁵⁵

Black soldiers played a major role in these operations. The 24th Infantry Regiment, still the focus of the black press' coverage of the war, participated in Eighth Army's breakout from Pusan and the pursuit of North Korean troops across the border.⁴⁵⁶ Black newspapers, presented with the first unambiguously positive development since the fall of Yechon, used the opportunity to again trumpet the fighting skills of the 24th. This time, however, they were able to point to

⁴⁵⁴ Bevin Alexander, *Korea: The First War We Lost* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 2000), 144-47.

⁴⁵⁵ Blair, 267-321.

⁴⁵⁶ Bowers, Hammond and MacGarrigle, 179-185.

some of the recently mixed Army units as further evidence of integration's merits. *Defender* correspondent Alex Wilson noted that integrated elements of the 25th Infantry Division (the Twenty-fourth's parent division) had participated in some of the heaviest fighting.⁴⁵⁷ The newspaper's editorial board, meanwhile, used the opportunity to continue to push for a black general in the armed forces. Such an appointment was desirable not for "political or sociological reasons," read the editorial, but because "Jim Crow breeds inefficiency."⁴⁵⁸ The *Defender's* coverage of the drive into North Korea backed up this argument, as the newspaper's articles demonstrated that both all-black and newly mixed units could perform just as well as all-white units.⁴⁵⁹ The *Courier* and the *Afro* also gave considerable space to both all-black and partially integrated units participating in the offensive.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁷ L. Alex Wilson, "Tank Yanks in Invasion," *Chicago Defender*, 23 September 1950, p. 1.

⁴⁵⁸ "A Memo to the Brass," *Chicago Defender*, 23 September 1950, p. 6.

⁴⁵⁹ L. Alex Wilson, "Heroism of Wounded GI Saves Lives of Four," *Chicago Defender*, 30 September 1950, p. 1; "6 Cited on Korea Front," *Chicago Defender*, 30 September 1950, p. 2; L. Alex Wilson, "Tan Yanks Recapture Korea's 'Battle Mountain,'" *Chicago Defender*, 30 September 1950, p. 4; L. Alex Wilson, "Negro Yanks of Ninth Infantry Shoot For Second Big Victory," *Chicago Defender*, 7 October 1950, p. 2; L. Alex Wilson, "Tan Yank Engineer Unit Lauded By General For Breaking Record Feat," *Chicago Defender*, 14 October 1950, p. 19;

⁴⁶⁰ William A. Fowlkes, "Georgia GI in Korea Mows Down 55 Reds," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 30 September 1950, p. 1; Frank Whisonant, "24th Gains Six Miles," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 30 September 1950, p. 1; Frank Whisonant, "One GI Mops Up Four Koreans," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 7 October 1950, p. 5; Frank Whisonant, "Tan GIs Race 200 Miles Across Korea," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 14 October 1950, p. 1; Frank Whisonant, "Mix Tan GIs in 'White' Units," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 14 October 1950, p. 10; "Tan GIs Pack Wounded List," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 21 October 1950, p. 3; "Lt. Cited for Action in Battle," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 28 October 1950, p. 2; James L. Hicks, "Mixed Chutists Land in Korea," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 30 September 1950, p. 1; James L. Hicks, "24th Advances, Captures and Burns City of Tundok," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 30 September 1950, p. 1; James L. Hicks, "Invasion of North Spurs 24th to Mounta in Drive," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 30 September 1950, p. 12; James L. Hicks, "Short of Troops, Generals Mix All U.S. Troops," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 30 September 1950, p. 13; James L. Hicks, "24th Races to the Sea, 80 Prisoners Freed in Drive," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 7 October 1950, p. 1; James L. Hicks, "Just Promoted 'Loeey' Captures Four Reds," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 7 October 1950, p. 4; Bradford Laws, "Officer Rescues Three Tank Crews," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 7 October 1950, p. 13; James L. Hicks, "22 Recruits From States Sent to Mixed Regiment," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 7 October 1950, p. 13; James L. Hicks, "MacArthur Lauds 24th, General Praises Valor of Our Men in Korea," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 14 October 1950, p. 1; "Artillery Unit Wins High Praise in Korea," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 14 October 1950, p. 13; James L. Hicks, "Navy Bomber Hits, Jesse Brown Lashes Five Railroad Cars," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 21 October 1950, p. 1.

It seemed as though the black press was about to achieve the kind of double victory it had been unable to in World War II: victory over the North Korean enemy and, at long last, the integration of the Army. Military success seemed a foregone conclusion to black newspapers. Events were transpiring too fast for journalists to keep up with them. “As this is written,” read an October 7 *Defender* editorial, “our boys are mopping Korea [sic] and the end of this Communist inspired war seems to be in sight.”⁴⁶¹ On the same day, *Courier* editor P.L. Prattis noted, “The Korean War seems about over as this is written.”⁴⁶² Meanwhile, the success of the units the Army had mixed on an ad-hoc basis seemed to point the way to further integration; Army leaders could no longer point to racial tensions as a reason for keeping units racially segregated. “A more democratic spirit is sweeping the armed forces,” the *Defender* editorial board pronounced.⁴⁶³ Total integration was inevitable, wrote a *Defender* columnist.⁴⁶⁴ From the battlefield, *Afro-American* correspondent James Hicks reported that “At this writing, integration of colored and white soldiers on the front line is already under way here.”⁴⁶⁵ There were positive developments in Washington as well; the *Afro* reported that the new Secretary of the Army, Frank Pace, was considering a new directive to speed up the process of integration throughout the service.⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁶¹ “Victory in Korea,” *Chicago Defender*, 7 October 1950, p. 6.

⁴⁶² P.L. Prattis, “The Horizon,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 7 October 1950, p. 6.

⁴⁶³ “A Memo To The Brass,” *Chicago Defender*.

⁴⁶⁴ “National Grapevine,” *Chicago Defender*, 23 September 1950, p. 6.

⁴⁶⁵ Hicks, “Short of Troops, Generals Mix All U.S. Troops.”

⁴⁶⁶ “Army Equality Directives to Be Strengthened Soon,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 28 October 1950, p. 1. According to the *Afro*, Pace had at least the tacit support of George Marshall, the former Army Chief of Staff and Secretary of State who had succeeded Louis Johnson as Secretary of Defense. The military’s initially dismal performance in Korea led Truman to ask for Johnson’s resignation, which he gave in late September.

The optimism of the black press proved to be premature, however. Two separate developments threatened both the success of the American military in Korea and the integration of the Army. The first was the American decision to pursue the retreating NKPA past the 38th Parallel and into North Korea. On October 7, American forces crossed the border; on October 19 American and South Korean soldiers entered the North Korean capital of Pyongyang; by October 26 the Americans had reached the Yalu River, on the border between North Korea and China.⁴⁶⁷ The presence of a large, hostile army on China's doorstep persuaded Mao Tse-tung to send Chinese soldiers into Korea. In October 1950, hundreds of thousands of men from the Chinese People's Volunteer Army moved across China's southern border and into North Korea to confront the UN force.⁴⁶⁸ The arrival of the Chinese radically altered the course of the war, and would have profound consequences for the black soldiers who thought the fighting was almost over.

Chinese troops began moving into North Korea in mid-October, but their skill at camouflage and the errors of American military intelligence allowed them to penetrate hundreds of miles into the country before the UN military leadership realized what was happening. The entrance of an enormous, well-trained enemy force came as a shock to American troops, who first encountered the Chinese in late October.⁴⁶⁹ The dispiriting effect of the Chinese offensive on American morale was made clear in the *Defender's* stories. "The effect on the troops was like dashing a pail of ice-cold water on a bridegroom who has just walked away from the altar,"

⁴⁶⁷ Blair, 325-372.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid., 375-404.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid.

wrote Wilson in one of his more colorful articles.⁴⁷⁰ As American units wilted under increasingly deadly Chinese attacks, tales of successful attacks against the Communists became less common. Instead, the *Defender* described how black units “stemmed the surging tide of Chinese Reds,” making it possible for other units to escape.⁴⁷¹ The newspaper also highlighted stories of black soldiers who rescued their comrades from danger, as in the case of a corporal who crawled into a ravine to pull wounded soldiers to safety, or black soldiers who served in logistical or support units.⁴⁷² The *Defender* also placed the blame for the recent setbacks squarely on the shoulders of the military’s top officials: “There must be something radically wrong with our intelligence services if the reports from the war fronts can be believed. Our information on what the enemy is doing from the very beginning of the Korean incident to the present has been frightfully muddled and incomplete. We seem to be continually caught by surprise in one spot or another.”⁴⁷³ The implicit message in the *Defender*’s editorial was clear. The white leadership had failed the men in the field, white and black, who were doing their best to battle an implacable enemy.

The *Afro-American* missed the story of the Chinese invasion altogether, as James Hicks had returned to the United States. By the time the newspaper was able to get dispatches from NNPA correspondent Milton Smith in early December, the situation had become dire. “The 24th Infantry Regiment of the 24th Division [sic] is suffering heavy losses; absorbing punishment

⁴⁷⁰ L. Alex Wilson, “Quick Victory Fades As China Reds Attack,” *Chicago Defender*, 11 November 1950, p. 1.

⁴⁷¹ “9th, 24th Slow Up Reds,” *Chicago Defender*, 9 December 1950, p. 1.

⁴⁷² Milton Smith, “Finds You Can’t Tell A Hero By His Looks,” *Chicago Defender*, 9 December 1950, p. 19; Milton Smith, “Lt. Albert Brooks Bosses Big Army Warehouse, Feeds 15,000 In Korea,” *Chicago Defender*, 9 December 1950, p. 19; L. Alex Wilson, “Front Line Grapevine,” *Chicago Defender*, 16 December 1950, p. 6.

⁴⁷³ “Such Intelligence,” *Chicago Defender*, 9 December 1950, p. 6.

from the advancing Chinese Reds and the vicious weather,” Smith reported.⁴⁷⁴ The next week’s issue of the *Afro* proclaimed “We’ve Been Licked.”⁴⁷⁵ In it, Smith painted a grim picture of American troops hurriedly evacuating the city of Pyongyang as the Chinese pressed closer: “The faces of these wounded soldiers are faces one will never forget. Colored and white, they were covered with grime from the miserable, fecal earth of Korea. There are faces of deep lines and eyes that are dazed. The wounds are bandaged with bright white cotton, which blobs of blood have stained not red but a dirty-looking brown. I shall never forget the stumbling, pain-wracked men—colored and white who dumbbly [sic] followed their leaders up or down the gangplanks.”⁴⁷⁶ As the black press had earlier in the war, the *Afro* sought a silver lining in the bad news emerging from the battlefield. Among the chaos of the retreat south, Smith found that the horrors of combat had bonded white and black soldiers together in blood. “I have seen dark-skinned wounded men helping broken-up white men,” he wrote, “and I have seen white ones helping the colored GI’s who have been torn by steel fragments.”⁴⁷⁷

One particular example of interracial camaraderie made the headlines in every major black newspaper, although it was a bittersweet one. Jesse Brown, the first black Navy aviator whose exploits the black press had trumpeted, was shot down near the Chosin Reservoir on December 4. Other pilots circling over his crash site could see that Brown was still alive, but the fuselage of his jet was engulfed in flames. Lt. Thomas Hudner, a white pilot, crash-landed his

⁴⁷⁴ Milton Smith, “24th Losses Heavy,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 9 December 1950, p. 1. This is either a typo or an error on Smith’s part; the 24th Infantry Regiment belonged the 25th Infantry Division, not the 24th Infantry Division.

⁴⁷⁵ Milton Smith, “We’ve Been Licked, Defeat in Korea Stunning to Yanks,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 16 December 1950, p. 1.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

own jet near Brown's and attempted to free him from the wreckage.⁴⁷⁸ Hudner's valiant effort to save his fellow pilot, although unsuccessful, was held up by black newspapers as evidence that the racial prejudices that held sway in America were irrelevant in Korea.⁴⁷⁹

The *Courier*, like the *Afro*, had sent its Korea correspondent elsewhere during the Chinese invasion and so missed the story. Unlike the *Afro*, however, the *Courier* did not rush to catch up with story; readers without any other source of news would have been unaware of the scale of the disaster facing American troops in Korea. The *Courier*'s reporting on the Chinese offensive during the last months of the year was limited to a six-paragraph story on page 13 of its December 16 issue.⁴⁸⁰ Instead, the *Courier* was devoting its front pages to another story from Korea it had been following since late summer. It involved the fate of the entire 24th Infantry Regiment.

“Looking for a Scapegoat”

The 24th had scored a major victory at Yechon, and in the weeks following there were many instances of individual heroism that the black press seized upon. Private First Class William Thompson became the first American soldier to earn the Medal of Honor in Korea when he gave his life defending his fellow soldiers from advancing North Koreans. Sergeant Cornelius H. Charlton would earn the same award in 1951 when he led three assaults on an enemy-held ridgeline despite being mortally wounded.⁴⁸¹ Yet even before the Chinese offensive of October

⁴⁷⁸ Nalty, 265. Hudner was awarded the Medal of Honor for his attempt to save Brown, and Brown was awarded a posthumous Distinguished Service Cross.

⁴⁷⁹ “1st Tan Navy Flier Dies in Korea Crash,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 16 December 1950, p. 1; “First Negro Navy Flier Dies a Hero,” *Chicago Defender*, 16 December 1950, p. 1; Robert Taylor, “Navy Flier Killed in Korea,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 16 December 1950, p. 1.

⁴⁸⁰ “Red Blows Hit Tan GIs,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 16 December 1950, p. 13.

⁴⁸¹ Nalty, 257.

the unit as whole had fallen into disrepute among American soldiers on the peninsula. By the end of August, the unit had earned a reputation for breaking under fire, or “bugging out.” Major General William B. Kean, commander of the regiment’s parent division, concluded that the 24th was “untrustworthy and incapable of carrying out missions expected of an Infantry Regiment.”⁴⁸² He even recommended that the unit be deactivated on the grounds that it jeopardized the war effort.⁴⁸³

Courier correspondent Frank Whisonant was among the first black journalists to pick up the story of the Twenty-fourth’s dismal reputation among Army officers and enlisted men. “It all began,” Whisonant wrote, “when several people here in the war area told their friends that they had heard that the Twenty-fourth’s men were cowards and were afraid to fight, that they had a history of running away from the battlefield.”⁴⁸⁴ To Whisonant, these accusations were evidence not of the poor performance of black troops, but the incompetence of their white officers. As he saw it, “the biggest trouble with the Twenty-fourth is that officers have made their promotions already, and not wanting to fight a war anyway, lay their discontentment on Negro troops.”⁴⁸⁵ To be sure, many white officers had no qualms about expressing their racism openly. Whisonant interviewed a white chaplain who freely told the reporter that he considered black soldiers inferior to their white counterparts: “When asked if his feelings were in accordance with the

⁴⁸² Mershon and Schlossman, 220.

⁴⁸³ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁴ Frank Whisonant, “Charge Discontent Riddling ‘Fighting 24th,’” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 2 September 1950, p. 5.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid.

Bible, the Colonel admitted they were not, but stated they were his own and that he intended to keep them.”⁴⁸⁶

Despite the negative rumors surrounding the 24th, the *Courier* was still able to find white commanders who still supported the unit. The newspaper publicized statements by senior officers who announced that they were aware of no evidence to support the accusations against the unit.⁴⁸⁷ But the *Courier* also recognized that many officers within the military were eager to place the blame for the Americans’ setbacks on the battlefield solely on all-black units: “Rumors have it that the Eighth Army is looking for a ‘scapegoat’ to put the blame on for the enemy breakthrough of Sept. 1.”⁴⁸⁸ Certainly, the 24th had experienced several disastrous defeats. But the *Courier* argued—correctly—that the unit’s performance was no worse than that of all-white units. Moreover, the newspaper argued, the 24th had suffered from limited supplies and flawed leadership: “At the same time the combat efficiency of the once crack twenty-fourth Infantry Regiment has been reduced by about 45 or 50 per cent within the last three weeks due to the questionable tactics of the Twenty-fourth Division heads.”⁴⁸⁹ This, the article concluded, had seriously undermined the morale of the unit. Meanwhile, the regiment’s purported tendency to break under enemy fire had become common knowledge among both white and black troops serving in Korea. A popular song began called “The Bugout Boogie” began making the rounds of other American units. Described as “the official song of the 24th Infantry,” its lyrics went:

⁴⁸⁶ Frank Whisonant, “Chaplain in Korea Admits Race Prejudice,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 9 September 1950, p. 5.

⁴⁸⁷ “Washington Hints 24th Rumors True,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 16 September 1950, p. 1.

⁴⁸⁸ Frank Whisonant, “24th ‘Framed’? Is Army Attempting to Make Tan Unit Scapegoat of War?” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 23 September 1950, p. 1.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid.

“When them Chinese mortars begins to thud/the old Deuce-four begin to bug.”⁴⁹⁰ Frustrated by the negative reputation of the 24th and other all-black units, the *Courier* continued to emphasize the sacrifices made by black soldiers. There was no shortage of these. As a *Courier* editorial put it: “While Negroes in the States are gearing themselves to give all they have for the benefit of Americans of all classes and colors fighting in Korea, the news from that battlefield about the Twenty-fourth Infantry Regiment is distinctly disquieting. . . . There is not a single American unit in Korea which has not run, whether they called it a retreat or not.”⁴⁹¹ Despite the rumors surrounding the unit, however, the *Courier* reported that the soldiers of the 24th remained resolute in their desire to finish the fight.⁴⁹²

“The Latest GI Smear”

As allegations of cowardice continued to dog the 24th Infantry Regiment, one of the unit’s junior officers was about to become the focal point for the ongoing debate about black soldiers’ ability to fight. Leon Gilbert was a first lieutenant in the 24th who had been tried and convicted of insubordination and cowardice when he refused to retake a location overrun by North Korean troops. An Army court martial convicted him and sentenced him to death.⁴⁹³ The *Courier* quickly turned Gilbert into the public face of the maligned regiment. It published

⁴⁹⁰ Bowers, Hammond, and MacGarrigle, 216. Bowers, Hammond, and MacGarrigle’s research indicated that different versions of “The Bugout Boogie” were sung in Korea about a number of units, sometimes by the units themselves as a self-deprecating joke or as a jab at rival units.

⁴⁹¹ “What Gives In Korea?” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 23 September 1950, p. 1.

⁴⁹² Frank Whisonant, “Dead, Wounded Stream Down Big Mountain,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 23 September 1950, p. 3.

⁴⁹³ Astor, 359-62; Bowers, Hammond, and MacGarrigle, 186.

numerous interviews with his relatives and promoted efforts by activists around the country to obtain a presidential pardon.⁴⁹⁴

The newspaper's involvement with the Gilbert case went beyond merely publicizing it, however. The *Courier* had known of Gilbert's conviction in early September but, according to the newspaper, military officials had ordered its Korea correspondents not to publish it.⁴⁹⁵ Unable to act publicly, the newspaper maneuvered behind the scenes to obtain Gilbert's release. After the military lifted the embargo on the story, the *Courier* described its efforts: "We had the story. We could not print it at the time. But we had already put our extensive machinery in motion to help Lieutenant Gilbert — if we could. The Courier appealed to the White House!"⁴⁹⁶ The newspaper had now taken its advocacy for racial equality in the military to a new level.

For more than a month, the *Courier* kept the Gilbert case on its front pages, publishing numerous articles and editorials arguing that the military had made the lieutenant and the entire 24th Infantry Regiment scapegoats for the poor performance of the entire Army.⁴⁹⁷ The newspaper's efforts on behalf of Gilbert, coupled with those of civil rights organizations and sympathetic politicians, finally forced President Truman to intervene in late November and

⁴⁹⁴ Revella Clay, "'Don't Let My Son Die!' Mother of Condemned Combat Officer Appeals to Truman," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 30 September 1950, p. 1.

⁴⁹⁵ Frank Whisonant, "Courier Had Story; Couldn't Break It," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 30 September 1950, p. 1.

⁴⁹⁶ Trezzvant W. Anderson, "Appeal to Truman: Spare Lieutenant," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 30 September 1950, p. 1.

⁴⁹⁷ "Final Argument Against Segregation," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 30 September 1950, p. 6; "Doomed 24th Lieutenant Writes Dramatic Letter to Wife in Pa.," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 7 October 1950, p. 1; Stanley Roberts, "Condemned Man's Lawyer Charges Army Is Making 'Example' Of Him," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 7 October 1950, p. 1; "Mother In New Plea For Doomed Negro," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 14 October 1950, p. 1; Frank Whisonant, "'I'm Not A Coward,' Lieut. Gilbert Cries," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 21 October 1951, p. 1; Stanley Roberts, "Hearings In Doomed Officer's Case Set For Next Tuesday," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 21 October 1950, p. 1; Horace Cayton, "Facts In Gilbert Case Warrant Intervention By President On Basis Of Common Justice," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 21 October 1950, p. 6; "Army Hears Wife's Plea," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 28 October 1950, p. 1; Stanley Roberts, "May Take Case Of Lieut. Gilbert To High Court," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 4 November 1950, p. 1.

reduce the lieutenant's sentence to twenty years in prison.⁴⁹⁸ But there was little time for the *Courier* to celebrate even this small victory. In the weeks after the Gilbert case, the Army began mass courts-martial against dozens of other members of the 24th for supposed acts of cowardice.⁴⁹⁹ The *Courier* followed these cases closely, again arguing that black soldiers were being made to pay for the shortcomings of the entire U.S. Army. In an editorial entitled, "The Latest GI Smear," the newspaper noted that "Aside from the notorious case of Lieutenant Gilbert, it is reported that dozens of Negro soldiers of the Twenty-fourth Infantry Combat Team have been arrested and court-martialed for "misconduct before the enemy" and sentenced to long terms. It is very significant that there is only a sprinkling of white soldiers so accused, convicted and imprisoned, although the record of the Negro soldiers has been better than that of the whites."⁵⁰⁰ Throughout the rest of the year, the newspaper continued to devote much of its coverage to the plight of the 24th. When the NAACP announced that its chief legal counsel, Thurgood Marshall, would be traveling to Korea to investigate, the story dominated the *Courier's* front page.⁵⁰¹

The *Afro-American* and the *Defender* were slower than the *Courier* to grab the story of the 24th and Lieutenant Gilbert. Although the *Afro* did highlight the case of Gilbert and called for his life to be spared, the newspaper devoted relatively little coverage to the rumors surrounding

⁴⁹⁸ Astor, 362, Bowers, Hammond, and MacGarrigle, 186.

⁴⁹⁹ Bowers, Hammond and MacGarrigle, 185-189; Nalty, 257-58.

⁵⁰⁰ "The Latest GI Smear," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 18 November 1950, p. 6.

⁵⁰¹ Stanley Roberts, "Marshall Flying to Tokyo to Defend Imprisoned GIs," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 9 December 1950, p. 1.

the other members of the 24th Infantry Regiment.⁵⁰² Correspondent James Hicks mentioned the unit's negative reputation only briefly in an open letter to President Truman recommending the regiment for a Presidential Unit Citation.⁵⁰³ The mass court-martials that began late in 1950 generated some additional coverage, but the *Afro* never took up the plight of the 24th as an editorial crusade in the manner that the *Courier* did.⁵⁰⁴ The *Defender* also gave considerable space to the Gilbert case without touching on the larger issue of the Twenty-fourth's battle-readiness.⁵⁰⁵ The newspaper did cover Marshall's planned trip, and the reason for it. One editorial described the courts-martial of the black soldiers as an effort "designed to discredit the heroic performance of Negro soldiers in Korea."⁵⁰⁶ Both Marshall and the *Defender* latched onto the fact that there was an obvious inconsistency in the courts-martial. Twice as many blacks as whites were brought up on charges even though fewer than one soldier in six was black.⁵⁰⁷ The paper again noted that although some black units might have performed poorly in the early days

⁵⁰² "Army Reviewing Death Sentence," Baltimore *Afro-American*, 14 October 1950, p. 1; James L. Hicks, "MacArthur Did Not Pass On Gilbert," Baltimore *Afro-American*, 21 October 1950, p. 1; "Spare Lt. Gilbert," Baltimore *Afro-American*, 21 October 1950, p. 4; "Lt. Gilbert May Not Die," Baltimore *Afro-American*, 21 October 1950, p. 13; "Lt. Gilbert Thinks He Was In Right," Baltimore *Afro-American*, 21 October 1950, p. 13; James L. Hicks, "Court-Martial Of Lt. Gilbert Kept Secret," Baltimore *Afro-American*, 25 November 1950, p. 1; Milton Smith, "Condemned Officer Not Afraid To Die," Baltimore *Afro-American*, 25 November 1950, p. 1; "Lt. Gilbert Gets 20 Years," Baltimore *Afro-American*, 2 December 1950, p. 1

⁵⁰³ James L. Hicks, "Afro Asks President To Honor 24th," Baltimore *Afro-American*, 14 October 1950, p. 13.

⁵⁰⁴ James L. Hicks, "Army Convicts 11," Baltimore *Afro-American*, 4 November 1950, p. 1; "GI's Arrests Challenged," Baltimore *Afro-American*, 18 November 1950, p. 12; "Convicted GI's Ask For Help," Baltimore *Afro-American*, 25 November 1950, p. 1; "Defense Of Convicted GI's In Korea NAACP'S No. 1 Task," Baltimore *Afro-American*, 2 December 1950, p. 1; "Marshall Is Tokyo Bound To Aid GI's," Baltimore *Afro-American*, 9 December 1950, p. 1; "NAACP Takes 4 New Cases Of Courts Martial," Baltimore *Afro-American*, 23 December 1950, p.19.

⁵⁰⁵ "Doomed GI In Plea For Life," *Chicago Defender*, 30 September 1950, p. 1; "Blames War Hysteria In Gilbert Case," *Chicago Defender*, 7 October 1950, p. 1; "Expect Lt. Gilbert To Beat Rap," *Chicago Defender*, 14 October 1950, p. 1; Venice Spraggs, "Legion Launches Probe On Lt. Gilbert's Case," *Chicago Defender*, 4 November 1950, p. 1.

⁵⁰⁶ "National Grapevine," *Chicago Defender*, 18 November 1950, p. 6.

⁵⁰⁷ Nalty, 258.

of the war, they were hardly alone. “‘It should not be forgotten,’ [Marshall] continued, ‘that throughout the early phases of the war, American troops, white as well as Negro, were retreating precipitously before the onslaught of the North Koreans.’”⁵⁰⁸

As the year drew to a close, the black press had little to celebrate. American forces were in full retreat from the Chinese onslaught and although white and black troops continued to intermingle on the battlefield, the pall hanging over the 24th Infantry Regiment seemed to threaten the prospect of black soldiers ever being treated as equals. “If anyone tells you that segregation and discrimination have ended in the Army, tell them they are lying and you can prove it,” James Hicks proclaimed after returning from Korea.⁵⁰⁹ Yet black newspapers continued to commend the men of the 24th and other black soldiers.⁵¹⁰ “Victory abroad, then victory at home,” had been the mantra of the Double V campaign in the last war. The black press had embraced this idea again for this new conflict, either explicitly (as the *Courier* did) or implicitly (as did the *Afro* and the *Defender*.) But what if there was no victory abroad? If black newspapers’ campaign for military equality was predicated on the ability of black soldiers to vanquish their opponents, what happened when these soldiers were unable to achieve this goal? If these questions occurred to black journalists and editors, they found no expression on the pages of their newspapers. Complete integration, they reasoned, could only be bought, either with victories or with blood.

⁵⁰⁸ “NAACP Alarmed By Smears On Negro Troops,” *Chicago Defender*, 18 November 1950, p. 12.

⁵⁰⁹ James L. Hicks, “Army Clings To Jim Crow,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 23 December 1950, p. 1.

⁵¹⁰ Milton Smith, “MacArthur Praises GI’s,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 30 December 1950, p. 1; “Mixed Second Division Units’ Bravery Lauded,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 30 December 1950, p. 1; Alex M. Rivera Jr., “Lieut. Wynn’s Action Called ‘Unequaled in U.S. History,’” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 30 December 1950, p. 1; “Bronx Lieutenant Commands Heroic ‘Last Ditch’ Stand,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 30 December 1950, p. 1; “GI Valor Stuns Red Foe,” *Chicago Defender*, 30 December 1950, p. 1; “Mixed Unit Sets High Battle Mark,” *Chicago Defender*, 30 December 1950, p. 1.

Chapter Five: A Pyrrhic Victory?

As 1951 dawned, the war continued to go poorly for the Americans. As historian Clay Blair wrote, “To this point the war had not been well fought. Most of the large mistakes had been MacArthur’s. . . . As a result, some 60,000 American soldiers and Marines and probably five times that number of ROK soldiers were dead, wounded, or missing.”⁵¹¹ There would be little respite for those troops who had survived the initial Chinese assault, either: On New Year’s Eve 1950, Chinese forces launched another massive offensive across the 38th Parallel into South Korea. In the bitter cold of the Korean winter, UN forces evacuated the South Korean capital of Seoul and withdrew to the south.⁵¹² It was another ignominious defeat for the already profoundly demoralized American troops.

For the black press, and its allies in the quest for military integration, there was more bad news. The reputation of the 24th Infantry Regiment had reached its nadir as dozens of its troops were brought before courts-martial for various offenses, including desertion.⁵¹³ Many white officers continued to openly question the value of black soldiers.⁵¹⁴ The idea of an integrated Army, it seemed, was literally on trial. In response, black newspapers turned the tables: they put segregation on trial. Laying out the evidence in numerous articles, editorials, and columns, the *Defender*, the *Courier*, and the *Afro-American* methodically and forcefully demolished the myths

⁵¹¹ Blair, 554.

⁵¹² Blair, 592-602; Steuck, 129.

⁵¹³ Bowers, Hammond, and MacGarrigle, 185-188.

⁵¹⁴ Nalty, 257-258; Stillman, 50-52

and prejudices that underlay Jim Crow. But despite the logical and moral force of their arguments, they failed to persuade Army officials to abide by the spirit of President Truman's executive order and completely integrate. In the end, events far beyond the control of black editors and publishers would deliver the victory for which black newspapers had fought so long.

“A Club To Beat Our Brains Out”

Early in 1951, the major black newspapers followed a two-part strategy in their campaign against the ongoing segregation in the Army: they vigorously defended the accused soldiers of the 24th Infantry Regiment against charges of cowardice and desertion while continuing to highlight the accomplishments of other black troops. Thus the front page of the January 6 edition of the *Courier* included one article urging the Pentagon to award the Medal of Honor to two black officers and another article reporting on Thurgood Marshall's impending visit to Japan to investigate the case of the accused soldiers of the 24th.⁵¹⁵ *Courier* Columnist Horace Cayton wrote that Marshall's investigation was necessary because “what we have read gives us a queer feeling that is not on the up and up.”⁵¹⁶ Nonetheless, he wrote, all he and the Twenty-fourth's defenders desired was an unbiased examination of the available evidence.⁵¹⁷ Cayton's claim was echoed by the *Defender*, which noted that black soldiers were asking only for fair treatment.⁵¹⁸ Another *Courier* columnist, J.A. Rogers, also backed Marshall's trip while noting that despite ongoing injustices, black troops remained loyal. “The Negro's dogged faith in continuing to fight

⁵¹⁵ “Seek Highest Honor For Heroes of Korea,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 6 January 1951, p. 1; “Marshall To Leave For Japan on Jan. 11,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 6 January 1951, p. 1.

⁵¹⁶ Horace Cayton, “MacArthur Reversed Decision on Marshall's Visit To Korea; Did Orders Come From Him?” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 6 January 1951, p. 6.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁸ “MacArthur Opens The Door,” *Chicago Defender*, 6 January 1951, p. 6.

for this country in the face of his treatment sometimes looks like a miracle to me,” Rogers wrote.⁵¹⁹ “And I hope he will continue. Constancy will one day be rewarded and retribution will as surely overtake the conscienceless and the unjust.”⁵²⁰

Marshall himself, however, was considerably less sanguine than Rogers that faithfulness alone would win black soldiers their equality. When Marshall arrived in Korea in February, he learned that the military’s double standard for white and black soldiers was even worse than he previously thought. After conducting interviews and making a careful review of the available court-martial records, Marshall learned that not only were black soldiers far more likely to face court-martial than white soldiers, but black officers rarely sat as members of courts-martial and black defendants often received harsher penalties than whites convicted of the same crimes. Marshall was particularly appalled by the case of a black enlisted man who had been tried, convicted, and sentenced to life in 42 minutes. In his final report to the NAACP Marshall wrote, “Even in Mississippi a Negro will get a trial longer than 42 minutes, if he is fortunate enough to be brought to trial.”⁵²¹

The discrepancies in the treatment of black and white defendants, Marshall concluded, were the result of a culture of racial discrimination that permeated not only the front lines but all of Far East Command.⁵²² Marshall reported his findings in a February 15 memorandum to MacArthur. Far East Command conducted an investigation of its own in response to Marshall’s report, but the investigators concluded that Marshall’s accusations were baseless. Although

⁵¹⁹J.A. Rogers, “Rogers Says,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 13 January 1951, p. 7.

⁵²⁰ Ibid.

⁵²¹ Nalty, 258.

⁵²² Ibid.

several of the convictions had been set aside and many of the sentences had been reduced after a review by higher authorities, Far East Command said it found no evidence of bias.⁵²³ MacArthur and his staff had allowed Marshall to come to Japan and South Korea to conduct his inquiry, but they were far less willing to admit any fault on the part of the Army leadership.⁵²⁴

The black press followed Marshall's visit and investigation with great interest. All of the major black newspapers detailed every stage of his trip, from his visit to Far East Command Headquarters in Tokyo, to his arrival in Korea, to his return to America.⁵²⁵ The *Courier* and the *Defender* also endorsed his conclusion that many of the court-martials of the Twenty-fourth's infantrymen were racially motivated. (The *Afro-American*, though it had devoted many pages to Marshall's investigation, offered no editorial opinion on its conclusion.) The *Courier* congratulated Marshall on a job well done while endorsing the legal strategy that he and the NAACP had employed to begin to dismantle the infrastructure of segregation (and that would reach its acme three years later in *Brown v. Board of Education*.)⁵²⁶ The *Defender's* editorial board lauded Marshall's efforts, but it also used the opportunity to hurl a rhetorical hand grenade at the Army. "Racial armies in our democracy are utterly asinine and the wily Communists have

⁵²³ Bowers, Hammond, and MacGarrigle, 187.

⁵²⁴ Bowers, Hammond, and MacGarrigle, 187, Nalty, 258.

⁵²⁵ "Thurgood Marshall Arrives In Japan," *Chicago Defender*, 20 January 1951, p. 1; Milton Smith, "Marshall Probing GI's Cases At Front," Baltimore *Afro-American*, 3 February 1951, p. 1; "Marshall Ends Preliminary Probe In Japan," *Chicago Defender*, 3 February 1951, p. 1; "Marshall Heads For Korean Front," Baltimore *Afro-American*, 10 February 1951, p. 1; "Marshall Goes To Frontlines In Korea," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 10 February 1951, p. 18; "Marshall's Trip Home Is Delayed," Baltimore *Afro-American*, 17 February 1951, p. 19; "Courts-Martial Hasty-Marshall," Baltimore *Afro-American*, 24 February 1951, p. 1; "Marshall Says Korea Trials Unfair," *Chicago Defender*, 24 February 1951, p. 2; "GI Sentences In Korea Cut," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 24 February 1951, p. 1; "Marshall Hits GI Prejudice," Baltimore *Afro-American*, 3 March 1951, p. 5; Chester Washington, "MacArthur Can End Army Bias!" *Pittsburgh Courier*, 3 March 1951, p. 1; "Marshall Gets \$5,000 Check," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 3 March 1951, p. 1; L.F. Palmer, Jr., "NAACP's Marshall, Defender War Newsman Cite GI's Plight In Korea," *Chicago Defender*, 10 March 1951, p. 4.

⁵²⁶ "Mission Accomplished," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 24 February 1951, p. 6.

exploited this racial nonsense to their own advantage,” the *Defender*’s editorialist wrote.⁵²⁷ “The Army should stop giving such aid and comfort to our enemies. Why give our adversaries a club to beat our brains out?”⁵²⁸

For the *Defender*, Marshall’s report was another piece of evidence in the newspaper’s ongoing case against military segregation. Even as Marshall was gathering evidence, the *Defender* continued to blast the Army for its unjust and illogical policy. In a January 13 editorial, the *Defender* stated that “the American people as a whole should know the facts. Our boys are a credit to themselves and America.”⁵²⁹ As for poor reputation of the 24th Infantry Regiment among other soldiers, the newspaper again claimed that the unit’s problems stemmed directly from segregation. As the newspaper explained it, if the unit had been integrated, “the regiment would have had its proper share, according to supply and availability, of automatic weapons, which it didn’t have at one time; that the morale of the Negro fighters would have been even higher, if they were not a Jim Crow outfit; and that the outfit would not have had to await the arrival of colored troops for replacement.”⁵³⁰

Although the *Defender* was perhaps the most vehement and persistent opponent of Jim Crow in the Army, its sentiments were most definitely shared by the *Courier* and the *Afro-American*. Both newspapers continued to publish articles about any kind of successes achieved

⁵²⁷ “Jim Crowism In The Army,” *Chicago Defender*, 24 March 1951, p. 6.

⁵²⁸ Ibid.

⁵²⁹ “The Facts Are Eloquent,” *Chicago Defender*, 13 January 1951, p. 6.

⁵³⁰ L. Alex Wilson, “General Traces High Casualties Among Troops To Army Jim Crow,” *Chicago Defender*, 10 February 1951, p. 1.

by black soldiers in Korea, no matter how modest.⁵³¹ The *Courier* also continued to emphasize the idea of “democracy abroad and democracy at home,” though the paper’s plans for an official sequel to the Double V campaign never came to fruition. “We need everything we can get to win this war,” advised columnist Benjamin Mays.⁵³² The *Courier*’s editorial board, meanwhile, railed against the idea that “fighting anti-Negro segregation and discrimination is somehow disloyal.”⁵³³

Yet while many black soldiers continued to distinguish themselves on the battlefield and the black press continued to extol the ethical and practical benefits of complete integration, a tone of fatalism crept into the newspapers’ coverage during the winter and early spring of 1951. The Chinese offensive had ended all hopes of an early victory, and Marshall’s investigation suggested that serious obstacles would have to be surmounted before complete integration could become a reality. Even the progress that had been made since the beginning of the conflict was not guaranteed to last, as Alex Wilson acknowledged in a *Defender* article headlined, “Question: Can We Hold Interracial Gains In Army When Shooting Over?”⁵³⁴ The *Courier* once again

⁵³¹ For example, “U.S. Artillery Stupefies Reds,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 10 February 1951, p. 1; “Second Highest Army Decoration For 2 More GIs,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 10 February 1951, p. 12; “GI Killed In Korea Awarded Silver Medal,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 17 February 1951, p. 1; “Tan Tank Men Butcher Reds,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 17 February 1951, p. 1; “45 Army Officers Promoted In Last Six Months Of 1950,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 17 February 1951, p. 12; Milton Smith, “Major Woods Guides Top War Operation,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 24 February 1951, p. 1; “Army Moves Forty-Five Up To Field Grade Rank,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 24 February 1951, p. 5; “Tan GIs Take Key Area,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 10 March 1951, p. 5.

⁵³² Benjamin E. Mays, “We Must Spell Out D-e-m-o-c-r-a-c-y At Home As Well As Abroad For Victory Over Reds,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 3 February 1951, p. 7.

⁵³³ “Cong. Powell’s Decision,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 10 February 1951, p. 6.

⁵³⁴ L. Alex Wilson, “Question: Can We Hold Interracial Gains In Army When Shooting Over?” *Chicago Defender*, 10 March 1951, p. 2.

chastised Truman for not doing more to shove the Army in the right direction, asking “Why, then, does the Commander-in-Chief allow the Army to flout his will?”⁵³⁵

The Army Starts To Listen

Even as the outcome of both the war and integration appeared to be in doubt, important changes in Korea and Washington were underway. As Thurgood Marshall’s investigation of the court-martialed troops of the 24th Infantry Regiment dominated the headlines of black newspapers, another, arguably more important, inquiry was taking place in Korea. Spurred by the complaints of the commander of the 25th Infantry Division, General William Kean, Eighth Army had begun a study of the general’s recommendation that the 24th be disbanded.⁵³⁶ Among other things, the Eighth Army investigators studied the opinions of three black reporters: Alex Wilson of the *Defender*, Frank Whisonant of the *Courier*, and James Hicks of the *Afro-American*. All three correspondents acknowledged that there were problems within the 24th, but the Eighth Army report noted that the journalists ascribed these to “lack of leadership, esprit-de-corps, and close relationship between officers and men; discrimination against negro [sic] officers; and poor quality of replacements. Their opinions were that complete integration was the solution, and Mr. Hicks stated that 75 percent of the men in the regiment favored such action.”⁵³⁷ The report ultimately concluded that although integration was the most practical solution to most of the unit’s problems, it was not administratively feasible at present. Nonetheless, the Eighth Army report demonstrated that not only was the Army leadership increasingly aware that true

⁵³⁵ “Commander-In-Chief Or Not?” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 17 March 1951, p. 6.

⁵³⁶ Bowers, Hammond, and MacGarrigle, 188-89.

⁵³⁷ Ibid.

integration could solve many of its problems, but Army officials were also relying on the black press to gauge the attitudes of its own troops.⁵³⁸

The Army was also increasingly concerned about the ability of the black press to sway the opinions of its readers back home. Black newspapers had blamed the Twenty-fourth's bad reputation in part on the poor performance of its white commanders and indeed, the unit's first two commanders had done little to distinguish themselves since arriving in Korea. The first, Colonel Horton White, had never commanded troops in combat and considered himself too old for the job.⁵³⁹ He had been relieved of command after the Twenty-fourth's disastrous performance during the battle for the Pusan Perimeter in early August 1950. His replacement, Colonel Arthur "Art" Champeny, was widely reviled by his men as a bigot and by his fellow officers as incompetent.⁵⁴⁰ His racist attitudes had not escaped the attention of black correspondents, who criticized his leadership in a number of their dispatches.⁵⁴¹ Champeny did not last long as the Twenty-fourth's CO, however. On September 6, he was wounded by a sniper and evacuated.⁵⁴² He was replaced by a 36-year old lieutenant colonel named John Corley. General Kean gave him a battlefield promotion to full colonel and named him commander of the 24th. Corley was now the youngest regimental commander in Korea.⁵⁴³

⁵³⁸ Ibid.

⁵³⁹ Blair, 151.

⁵⁴⁰ Blair, 192; Bowers, Hammond, and MacGarrigle, 132-134.

⁵⁴¹ James L. Hicks, "Army Passes Buck," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 26 August 1950, p. 1; L. Alex Wilson, "Racial Slur Angers Men In 24th Reg.," *Chicago Defender*, 26 August 1950, p. 1; James L. Hicks, "New Colonel Gets Off On Wrong Foot," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 2 September 1950, p. 1; Frank Whisonant, "Charge Discontent Riddling 'Fighting 24th,'" *Pittsburgh Courier*, 2 September 1950, p. 5.

⁵⁴² Blair, 244; Bowers, Hammond, and MacGarrigle, 171.

⁵⁴³ Ibid.

Corley's first week as the Twenty-fourth's commander began inauspiciously when he got into an argument with a black lieutenant and threatened the man with his gun. The incident took place in sight of Alex Wilson of the *Defender* and Frank Whisonant of the *Courier*, who both wrote articles critical of the colonel.⁵⁴⁴ Eventually, however, Corley proved himself to be a competent leader who won the affection of both his men and the black press. When the *Saturday Evening Post* published an unflattering account of the 24th Infantry's ignominious performance during the retreat south in late 1950, Whisonant turned to Corley to rebut the allegations.⁵⁴⁵ Wilson also came to respect Corley, describing his replacement of Champeny: "Thus vigorous, liberal able youth replaced what the fellows called 'granddaddy rocking chair military leadership.'"⁵⁴⁶ Coverage of the colonel in the *Afro* and the *Courier* was similarly favorable.⁵⁴⁷

Unfortunately for Corley, he was not as popular with Brigadier General J. Sladen Bradley, who replaced Bill Kean as commander of the 25th Infantry Division in mid-February.⁵⁴⁸ A disagreement over the regiment's defensive positions escalated into a heated argument between the two men, and ended with Bradley relieving Corley.⁵⁴⁹ Corley's departure presented a public relations problem for Bradley and his superiors. As William Bowers, William

⁵⁴⁴ L. Alex Wilson, "Officers In Scrap On Korea Front," *Chicago Defender*, 26 August 1950, p. 1; Frank Whisonant, "Col. Faces Charges Of Tan Officer," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 9 September 1950, p. 1.

⁵⁴⁵ Bowers, Hammond, and MacGarrigle, 216-17; Frank Whisonant, "The Truth About The 24th Inf.," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 30 June 1951, p. 1.

⁵⁴⁶ L. Alex Wilson, "General Traces High Casualties Among Troops To Army Jim Crow," *Chicago Defender*, 10 February 1951, p. 1.

⁵⁴⁷ James L. Hicks, "New 24th Colonel Calls His Men 'Tops,'" *Baltimore Afro-American*, 16 September 1950, p. 1; "What Gives In Korea?" *Pittsburgh Courier*, 23 September 1950, p. 1.

⁵⁴⁸ Bowers, Hammond, and MacGarrigle, 223.

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 228-29. Corley was replaced temporarily by Lt. Col. Paul F. Roberts, the unit's executive officer. The next month Col. Henry C. Britt took charge of the regiment.

Hammond, and George MacGarrigle wrote in their history of the 24th Infantry Regiment in Korea,

[Corley] was revered by the men of the 24th, almost all of whom stood in awe of him. That he should have been disciplined could only have harmed their confidence in the division's command. At the same time black newspaper reporters who covered the 24th Infantry also thought highly of the colonel. They would have inevitably scrutinized the reasons for his relief and might well have sided with him in print. Although it is difficult to say how the black community would have responded, some sort of outcry might have developed. The effect would inevitably highlight the Army's policy of segregation and the service's continued intolerance for the black soldier.⁵⁵⁰

In the end, the reasons for Corley's departure were hushed up and the black press took little notice.⁵⁵¹ The incident, however, illustrated that many officers were increasingly aware that the Army's racial policies were increasingly a liability, and that the service could not afford to antagonize the black press.

On the Home Front

Although the debate over military segregation was focused primarily on Army units in Korea, the black press was also fighting a rearguard action against segregationists at home who were attempting to roll back the modest gains that civil rights advocates had already made. Foremost among their domestic opponents was Rep. Arthur Winstead, a Dixiecrat from Mississippi. In March Winstead had inserted an amendment into a universal military training bill, which was once again under consideration by Congress. The Winstead Amendment would

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid., 229.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid.

have permitted American servicemen to opt out of racially integrated units. The amendment prompted a fierce counterattack by the NAACP, the black press, and their allies in Congress.⁵⁵²

The *Afro-American* urged its readers to contact their congressmen to register their disapproval.⁵⁵³ The newspaper also heaped scorn on the Dixiecrats and Republicans on the House Armed Services Committee who had voted for the amendment. An editorial cartoon published Easter week showed Uncle Sam turning away from a black man hunched over while Jim Crow sat on his back. The caption read, “Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me?”⁵⁵⁴ The *Courier* and the *Defender* also made ardent pleas on their editorial pages for the defeat of the Winstead Amendment.⁵⁵⁵ After intense lobbying from the NAACP, the full House voted to strip the Winstead Amendment out of the bill.⁵⁵⁶ Although the black press celebrated the victory, it also found itself enmeshed in an internecine struggle between the NAACP and two black Congressmen.

Once again, the debate centered on what strategy would best serve the goal of total integration in the armed forces. *Afro* political columnist Louis Lautier summed up the controversy in his April 7 column:

The NAACP wants Rep. Adam Clayton Powell (Dem., N.Y.) to lead the fight to strike the Winstead amendment out of the military manpower (draft and universal military training bill). . . . Of his own volition, the Rev. Mr. Powell told the House that he would not offer during the fighting in Korea any anti-segregation amendment to any armed services bill. He can deny that statement until he gets

⁵⁵² Clarence Mitchell, “The People vs. Winstead of Mississippi,” *The Crisis*, vol. 58, no. 4, 1951, p. 307-316.

⁵⁵³ “Clip Out This List,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 31 March 1951, p. 4

⁵⁵⁴ “Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me?” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 24 March 1951, p. 4.

⁵⁵⁵ “Funny Business With UMT,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 7 April 1951, p. 6; “Cunning Little Blockheads,” *Chicago Defender*, 31 March 1951, p. 6;

⁵⁵⁶ Mitchell, “The People vs. Winstead of Mississippi.”

blue in the face, but that is what the Congressional Record said he said—and he had a chance to edit his remarks in any way he saw fit before they were put into print. . . . Why the NAACP shuns Representative Bill Dawson just doesn't make sense. He's one of the most influential men in the House. When he takes a position on any issue, it's a signal to the entire Democratic delegation from Illinois of how to vote. Besides, there are a lotta Southerners who'll vote with Dawson, but won't vote with Powell.⁵⁵⁷

Powell's statement that he would not press for full integration during wartime echoed W.E.B. Du Bois' notorious "Close Ranks" editorial of World War I, which Du Bois himself later repudiated. It was perhaps for that reason that Powell later attempted to distance himself from it.⁵⁵⁸

Despite Powell's backtracking and his avowed commitment to the defeat of the Winstead Amendment, all of the major black newspapers gave credit for the victory to Rep. Dawson, who won over his colleagues with what the *Defender* described as "dramatic eloquence, sincerity and unassailable logic."⁵⁵⁹ Dawson received similar encomiums in the *Courier* and *Afro*.⁵⁶⁰ Bitter experience had taught black newspapers that they could not set aside the cause of equality during wartime. They were attracted to allies like Dawson, who would press for change even as he committed himself to the United States' military aims in Korea.

Ridgway Arrives, MacArthur Fades Away

Dawson was a useful ally for the black press to have, but he was still only one congressman among many. The black editors who were pushing for military integration were about to receive a far more powerful one, though they did not yet know it. Lt. Gen. Matthew

⁵⁵⁷ Louis Lautier, "Capital Spotlight," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 7 April 1951, p. 4.

⁵⁵⁸ "Powell Clarifies Policy; Will Oppose JC In Army," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 10 February 1951, p. 7.

⁵⁵⁹ "Dawson Brings Down The House," *Chicago Defender*, 21 April 1951, p. 6.

⁵⁶⁰ "Dawson's Finest Hour," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 21 April 1951, p. 6; Louis Lautier, "House Votes 138-123, To Kill Winstead Clause," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 21 April 1951, p. 1.

Ridgway had arrived in Korea in December 1950 to replace Eighth Army commander Walton “Johnnie” Walker, who had been killed in a jeep accident. Ridgway arrived just as Eighth Army was at its lowest point, battered by the Chinese offensive and suffering from poor morale and leadership. Ridgway immediately undertook a series of drastic changes designed to reverse Eighth Army’s fortunes. He sacked officers he deemed insufficiently aggressive and replaced them with men he believed were focused on attack rather than defense. Under Ridgway’s leadership, the Chinese offensive was finally halted in late January and morale began to improve.⁵⁶¹

Among Ridgway’s many problems as Eighth Army commander was the issue of what to do with still-segregated units, most notably the 24th Infantry Regiment. Although de facto integration had begun in the 24th and other units, the Army still maintained an official policy of racial segregation. This was a source of great frustration to Ridgway, whose command was in constant need of replacement troops even as black infantrymen idled away in Japan because many white units refused to accept them.⁵⁶² MacArthur, however, was the only man in Far East Command who could force the issue, and he had shown little interest in doing so. In the meanwhile, Ridgway would have to make do with racially segregated units. Having stemmed the Chinese tide, Ridgway ordered a series of counterattacks beginning in late January. While other units participated these assaults, the 24th Infantry Regiment was given time to rest. By early February it was nearly back to full strength for the first time in months.⁵⁶³ Along with the rest of

⁵⁶¹ Blair, 559-587; Halberstam, 486, 494-502.

⁵⁶² Nalty, 259.

⁵⁶³ Bowers, Hammond, and MacGarrigle, 225.

Eighth Army, the 24th fought its way north, aiding in the recapture of Seoul and advancing to the 38th Parallel by the end of March.⁵⁶⁴

Ridgway's transformation of Eighth Army from a demoralized and battered unit into an aggressive and accomplished fighting force made the general an international celebrity. Featured on the cover of *Time* magazine, Ridgway also found himself the toast of Washington as military and civilian officials publically voiced their approval of his leadership.⁵⁶⁵ The black press, however, had little to say about Eighth Army's leader. Ridgway's replacement of Walton Walker had occasioned no comment from the major black newspapers, and even the successful outcome of Eighth Army's spring offensive generated no coverage in their pages. Despite the accolades he received elsewhere, Ridgway was initially a non-entity to the black press.

Ridgway's star was definitely rising, even if the black press chose to ignore it. MacArthur's fortunes, on the other hand, were headed in the opposite direction. Although the general was still highly popular with the public, his relationship with President Truman had reached its breaking point. Truman had never trusted MacArthur, whose military genius was inextricably linked with his mercurial personality. MacArthur had taken the war to the Chinese border despite the warnings of officials in Washington. Even more galling to Truman was the general's repeated insubordination. In early April, MacArthur replied to a letter sent by Republican House Minority Leader Joe Martin. MacArthur's response, which Martin read on the floor of the House, directly criticized the president's policy of limiting the war in Korea to avoid a direct confrontation with China. MacArthur, Truman decided, was attempting to thwart the

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid., 230-238.

⁵⁶⁵ Blair, 751.

constitutional principle of civilian control of the military.⁵⁶⁶ On April 11, Truman relieved MacArthur of his command, replacing him with Ridgway.⁵⁶⁷

The president's decision created a firestorm of controversy. "Seldom has a more unpopular man fired a more popular one," wrote *Time* magazine, one of MacArthur's most ardent supporters.⁵⁶⁸ Truman's foes in Congress called for his impeachment.⁵⁶⁹ The reaction of the black press was mixed. The *Defender* quoted Thurgood Marshall's assessment of the general, in which the civil rights attorney blamed MacArthur for the atmosphere of racial prejudice in Far East Command that led to the courts-martial of so many soldiers of the 24th Infantry Regiment.⁵⁷⁰ The newspaper's editorial board wrote, "We do not believe that the President who is, according to the Constitution, commander-in-chief of the armed forces can be pushed around and ignored by an Army general and still maintain the respect due the presidential office."⁵⁷¹

The *Afro-American* also supported Truman's action, but the paper's editors voiced greater concern about MacArthur's racial attitudes than his insubordination. "MacArthur Backer of JC, Segregation Allowed Under His Command," was the headline on the April 21 issue of the *Afro*.⁵⁷² Former Korea correspondent James Hicks wrote that, "just about any colored person you talk to in the Far East will tell you. . . that General MacArthur has always permitted racial

⁵⁶⁶ Halberstam, 600-601.

⁵⁶⁷ Blair, 783-788, 794-797; Halberstam, 605-606; Stueck, 178-182.

⁵⁶⁸ Halberstam, 607.

⁵⁶⁹ Halberstam, 607; McCullough, 844.

⁵⁷⁰ L. Alex Wilson, "GIs Split On MacArthur, Ridgway Urged To Ban Jim Crow," *Chicago Defender*, 21 April 1951, p. 1.

⁵⁷¹ "General Douglas MacArthur," *Chicago Defender*, 21 April 1951, p. 6.

⁵⁷² *Baltimore Afro-American*, 21 April 1951.

discrimination to exist in his command.”⁵⁷³ The *Afro*’s editorial board chimed in with an editorial bluntly titled, “We Shed No Tears.”⁵⁷⁴ Only political correspondent Louis Lautier offered any defense of the general, contending that a “loophole” in Truman’s executive order prevented the general from fully integrating all the units of Far East Command.⁵⁷⁵

The *Courier*’s editors, although they had little love for Truman, were not particularly fond of MacArthur, either. Before the war, *Courier* managing editor P.L. Prattis derided the general as an “emperor” obsessed with the absolute power he wielded as the Supreme Commander of Allied Powers in Japan.⁵⁷⁶ During the conflict, columnist Horace Cayton had voiced his concern that MacArthur would “get us into a large scale war with all of China and her allies.”⁵⁷⁷ Nonetheless, the newspaper’s editorial board could not quite bring itself to endorse Truman’s decision; instead it demanded that the president fire any other Army officer who was obstructing the integration of the service.⁵⁷⁸ In June MacArthur gave a series of lengthy interviews to the *Courier*. In them, he defended his record on segregation: “‘I have one criticism of Negro troops,’ [MacArthur] said sternly. His face relaxed: ‘They didn’t send me enough of them!’”⁵⁷⁹ The problems, he argued, were caused by his superiors in the Pentagon who sent him

⁵⁷³ James L. Hicks, “MacArthur Backer of JC,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 21 April 1951, p. 1.

⁵⁷⁴ “We Shed No Tears,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 21 April 1951, p. 1.

⁵⁷⁵ Louis Lautier, “Lautier Says Gen. MacArthur Not To Blame For Jim Crow Policies,” *Baltimore Afro-American* 28 April 1951, p. 5.

⁵⁷⁶ P.L. Prattis, “The Horizon,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 February 1949, p. 14.

⁵⁷⁷ Horace Cayton, “President Truman Seen Making Great Error In Leaving Korean Decision Up To Gen. MacArthur,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 24 February 1951, p. 6.

⁵⁷⁸ “How About Ousting Some Others?” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 21 April 1951, p. 6.

⁵⁷⁹ Stanley Roberts, “MacArthur Talks!” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 2 June 1951, p. 1; Stanley Roberts, “MacArthur Feared Global Race War,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 9 June 1951, p. 1.

racially segregated units. The *Courier*'s editorial board accepted MacArthur's self-serving version of events without question, blasting "irresponsible, pro-Administration and Left-wing Negro editors and commentators" for "accusing the deposed commander as prejudiced against colored people."⁵⁸⁰

While black editors and columnists debated whether MacArthur was friend or foe of integration, his replacement remained something of an enigma to them. "We do not know the racial attitudes of General Matthew B. Ridgway," wrote the *Defender*'s editorialists, "but we hope that he will act with more dispatch than MacArthur did in abolishing the lingering Jim Crow practices which continue to cripple our fighting forces."⁵⁸¹ The *Afro-American*'s Korea correspondent Bradford Laws wrote a rather glowing profile of Ridgway in early May, noting that the "tough commander" spoke with "sincerity and straight-forwardness."⁵⁸² There was no mention in Laws' story, however, about Ridgway's intentions vis-à-vis the ongoing issue of segregation. Ridgway's plans for black units in Korea were still mystery, although not for much longer.

Good News Or Bad?

Soon after Ridgway was installed as MacArthur's replacement he asked the Department of Defense for permission to integrate all military units under his command.⁵⁸³ Ridgway's

⁵⁸⁰ "What's Truman's Answer, Now?" *Pittsburgh Courier*, 9 June 1951, p. 6.

⁵⁸¹ "General Douglas MacArthur."

⁵⁸² Bradford Laws, "Gen. Ridgway Says Men Have Greater Poise," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 5 May 1951, p. 1.

⁵⁸³ Dalfiume, 210-211; Blair, 868. As Ridgway later wrote, "It was my conviction. . . that only in this way could we assure the sort of *esprit* a fighting army needs, where each soldier stands proudly on his own feet, knowing himself to be as good as the next fellow and better than the enemy. Besides it had always seemed to me both un-American and un-Christian for free citizens to be taught to downgrade themselves in this way, as if they were unfit to associate with their fellows or to accept leadership themselves."

request was backed by a number of important civilian and military officials, including new Secretary of Defense George Marshall and Eighth Army's new commander, General James Van Fleet. There were also a number of officers who continued to oppose integration, including Ned Almond.⁵⁸⁴ Ridgway and his allies, however, had a powerful tool at their disposal. In March 1951 the Army had quietly contracted researchers at Johns Hopkins University to conduct a study of the efficacy of complete integration within the service. Known as Project Clear, the study comprised a wide range of surveys and interviews with black and white soldiers in America, Korea, and Japan.⁵⁸⁵ In July the researchers issued a preliminary report indicating that the integration of select units was an unqualified success and advising the Army to proceed with complete desegregation. The Department of Defense granted Ridgway's request, and on July 26 the Army announced that its all-black units stationed in the Far East, including the 24th Infantry Regiment, would be dissolved and that complete integration of all forces in Japan and Korea would be completed in six months.⁵⁸⁶

All of these developments had taken place out of sight of the media. Ridgway's views were not well known outside of the Army, and the existence of Project Clear had been classified as secret.⁵⁸⁷ The Army's announcement, therefore, came as a surprise to black newspapers. Perhaps this accounts for the *Defender's* initially understated reaction to the news. The newspaper devoted just four sentences to the announcement in its July 28 edition:

⁵⁸⁴ Blair, 868. Almond, who died in 1979, continued to denounce racial integration in the military for the rest of his life.

⁵⁸⁵ Leo Bogart, *Project Clear: Social Research and the Desegregation of the United States Army* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1992), xxxi-xlv.

⁵⁸⁶ Dalfiume, 211, MacGregor, 444.

⁵⁸⁷ Bogart, xlv-xlvii. Project Clear was not declassified until 1966, long after the Army had integrated.

Recommendations by top U.S. Army officers in Korea has led policy making brass in Washington to bring racial segregation in the army closer to an end by disbanding the only remaining all-Negro regiment, the 24th. It was revealed here last week that Negro troops of the 24th Infantry Regiment will be integrated into other divisions now in Korea. The 24th is famous for its battle exploits in the Korean conflict and in numerous other engagements. Its greatest victory in Korea came during the early stages of the war when the outfit captured Yechon for the first major victory secured by allied forces.⁵⁸⁸

A somewhat more substantive article appeared in the next week's edition, which noted that Ridgway's order was "without precedent."⁵⁸⁹ According to the article, the decision had been made "not necessarily on the grounds of a moral belief in racial equality, but simply on the grounds of making each man an efficient battle soldier."⁵⁹⁰

On Aug. 11 the *Defender's* editorialists finally made their feelings about Ridgway's plan known in an opinion piece headlined, "General Ridgway Steps Forward." In it, they wrote: "The beginning of the end of segregation in the armed forces of the United States is at hand. The experimenting with mixed units is over and the verdict of the battlefield has been heard. Segregation has been shown to be impractical, inefficient, ineffective and injurious in building a modern fighting force today. Jim Crowism simply will not work."⁵⁹¹ In other words, the military had finally accepted the argument the *Defender* had advanced since the darkest days of the war: segregation made for a woefully inefficient fighting force.

⁵⁸⁸ "Kill 24th To End Army Segregation," *Chicago Defender*, 28 July 1951, p. 1.

⁵⁸⁹ "Ridgway Ends J.C. In All Units," *Chicago Defender*, 4 August 1951, p. 1.

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁹¹ "General Ridgway Steps Forward," *Chicago Defender*, 11 August 1951, p. 6.

The *Courier*'s first story about the Army's announcement was also brief; just four paragraphs.⁵⁹² As the newspaper followed the story for the next few weeks, its coverage evinced a more ambiguous opinion of the news than the *Defender*'s triumphalism. Although Ridgway's decision meant complete integration was probably not far off, it also meant the end of the storied 24th Infantry Regiment. Hence the almost elegiac tone of the *Courier*'s brief article: "A piece of good news, which also may be classed as bad news (depends upon which way you look at it) came out of the nation's capital here last week. . . . On one hand the integration of Negroes and whites in the armed forces is what Negroes throughout the country have been clamoring for. But it's a case of either having your cake or eating it, for with integration comes to end [sic] of a colorful all-Negro unit which was responsible for many of the daring sagas that repose on the pages of America's military history."⁵⁹³ The newspaper's editorialists voiced these sentiments in their editorial of August 4, writing that although the *Courier* had campaigned for this change since the 1930s, they could not help but observe it "with a twinge of regret."⁵⁹⁴

The *Courier* editors' mixed feelings about the demise of the 24th, however, were in competition with their relentless instinct for self-promotion. In an article headlined "Courier Articles Influenced Army," the newspaper argued that its recent investigation of integration at military facilities and its interview with MacArthur had contributed to the Pentagon's decision to accede to Ridgway's request: "Quite a furor was created in the Pentagon in May when the *Courier* quoted General MacArthur as saying that 'Jim Crow units were created in Washington,' and it was up to Washington to integrate them. Also, it is known that Army officials have been

⁵⁹² "Unit Disbanded: Famed 24th Is No More," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 28 July 1951, p. 1.

⁵⁹³ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁴ "Farewell To The 24th," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 4 August 1951, p. 6.

carefully studying the *Courier*'s current series of articles on conditions in American Army camps."⁵⁹⁵ Although Jim Crow units were "created in Washington," MacArthur unquestionably had the power to desegregate them once they arrived in the Far East, a fact the *Defender* had noted.⁵⁹⁶ As for the *Courier*'s claims that the Army had studied the newspaper's investigation of Army bases, these were attributed only to anonymous "high Pentagon officials."⁵⁹⁷

Like their counterparts at the *Defender* and the *Courier*, the *Afro-American* editors were happy to see Jim Crow kicked out of Far East Command, even at the cost of the 24th Infantry Regiment. "For years," they wrote, "we have been pointing out how contradictory was America's ideological position in fighting two world wars for democracy with armed forces undemocratically divided on the superficial accident of color."⁵⁹⁸ Yet the *Afro*'s coverage also questioned what Ridgway's order would mean for black soldiers stationed stateside, or in commands outside of the Far East. *Afro* correspondent Ralph Matthews interviewed troops in Korea, who wondered if they would be permitted to stay with newly integrated units when they returned to bases in the South.⁵⁹⁹

It was a valid question. As the *Afro* noted, the demands of military inefficiency and not moral arguments had finally brought about the collapse of segregation in the Far East.⁶⁰⁰ Although the *Defender* and the *Courier* seemed sure that racial barriers throughout the military

⁵⁹⁵ "Courier Articles Influenced Army," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 4 August 1951, p. 1.

⁵⁹⁶ "National Grapevine," *Chicago Defender*, 11 August 1951, p. 6.

⁵⁹⁷ "Courier Articles Influenced Army."

⁵⁹⁸ "Army Finally Learns," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 4 August 1951, p. 4.

⁵⁹⁹ Ralph Matthews, "Supreme Commander Hails End Of Barriers In Far East," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 4 August 1951, p. 1.

⁶⁰⁰ "Need For Combat Men Speeded Integration," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 28 July 1951, p. 2.

would soon come tumbling down, base commanders in Europe and the United States were not faced with the kinds of pressures that had killed Jim Crow in Korea. Even as the *Afro* heralded integration abroad, former Korea correspondent James Hicks was conducting an investigation of living conditions for black troops on military installations in America, similar to the one the *Courier* launched a few months earlier. Like the *Courier* investigation, Hicks' inquiry discovered that despite President Truman's executive order, the recommendation of the Fahy Committee, and Ridgway's desegregation of Far East Command, racial segregation was still a fact of life on a number of bases at home.

Although Hicks found that some facilities such as New Jersey's Fort Dix had successfully and completely integrated their troops, other Army, Navy, and Air Force bases remained mired in the past.⁶⁰¹ Not all of these bases were located south of the Mason-Dixon Line, either. Hicks reported that Massachusetts' Camp Edwards was "worse than Dixie" while Virginia's Camp Pickett had successfully integrated most of the units located there.⁶⁰² At the same time Hicks was examining the state of integration on military bases at home, the *Afro*'s Ollie Stewart was making his second tour of U.S. military bases in Europe. He too, found evidence of ongoing segregation and heightened racial tensions at the bases he visited.⁶⁰³ The problem, both Hicks and Stewart concluded, was that the level of integration at each base depended entirely on its commanding officer. Whatever the official policy of the White House or the Department of Defense, the prejudices of individual officers still held sway at many bases.

⁶⁰¹ James L. Hicks, "Ft. Dix Rated Best," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 11 August 1951, p. 1.

⁶⁰² James L. Hicks, "Camp Edwards In Mass. 'Disgrace' Worse Than Dixie," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 18 August 1951, p. 1; James L. Hicks, "Camp Pickett, Va. Obeys Truman Order," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 25 August 1951, p. 1. Both camps were Army facilities.

⁶⁰³ Ollie Stewart, "Find Racism Mounting; Nursed By White Soldiers," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 22 September 1951, p. 1; Ollie Stewart, "Finds GIs In Mannheim From All Over America," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 29 September 1951, p. 1.

Despite the proclamations of the president and senior military officers, racial segregation was still very much a reality at these bases.

New Battles

Black newspapers' increased focus on civil rights at home came in part because by the summer of 1951 the conflict in Korea had settled into an uneasy stalemate. The Chinese had launched another major offensive in the spring, but although it resulted in many casualties on both sides it failed to win any significant benefits for the Communists. The two sides continued to fight just above the 38th Parallel, where the front line had come to rest and stubbornly refused to move. There would be no more significant shifts of territory, only a series of costly and ultimately futile battles. Neither the Americans nor the Chinese possessed the resources or political will to knock their opponent out of the war.⁶⁰⁴ It became clear to the American troops in Korea that there would be no grand victory as there had been in World War II; the phrase "die for a tie" soon became a popular refrain among them.⁶⁰⁵

Even as the fighting continued, peace talks had begun in July 1951 at Kaesong and were later moved to Panmunjom. Negotiations proceeded slowly, complicated by the fierce enmity between the two Koreas and the malign influence of Soviet leader Joseph Stalin. Stalin was pleased to find his two major rivals locked in a costly struggle with one another, and privately counseled the Chinese to take a hard line in the negotiations.⁶⁰⁶ With the peace talks proceeding slowly and little military action to report, Korea gradually faded from the pages of black

⁶⁰⁴ Halberstam, 624-25; Stueck, 169.

⁶⁰⁵ Halberstam, 5.

⁶⁰⁶ Halberstam, 625; Stueck, 221. Although the Sino-Soviet split would not reach a definitive breaking point for several more years, both the Soviet Union and China were already jockeying for leadership of the global Communist movement.

newspapers. Even the dissolution of the 24th Infantry Regiment in early October attracted only minimal attention from the black press. *Afro* war correspondent Ralph Matthews was the only black journalist in Korea to observe the unit's deactivation. The news earned just four paragraphs in the October 13 edition of the *Afro*.⁶⁰⁷ Back home, the *Defender*'s Alex Wilson interviewed an officer who served with the 24th, who hoped that the Army's project of integration would "save the lives of many men who go to Korea."⁶⁰⁸ The *Courier*, which had covered the travails of the 24th Infantry Regiment so closely just a few months earlier, made no note of its demise. By December 1951, the *Afro*'s Matthews was the only accredited black journalist still in Korea.⁶⁰⁹ He covered the gradual and occasionally tense integration of Army units on the front line before returning to the United States at the end of the month.⁶¹⁰ Black editors and journalists were moving on to different battlefields in the war for civil rights.

As 1952 dawned, coverage of Korea in the black press had all but disappeared. The *Courier* had shifted its focus away from the Far East to U.S. military installations in Europe. In March, its "expert on military affairs" Collins George began yet another series of investigative reports examining the state of integration at European military facilities, much as the *Afro*'s Ollie Stewart had done just a few months earlier. George's first few articles found that the Army continued to lag behind the Air Force in integration, but by mid-April the Army's European Command assured him that integration was now official EUCOM policy and complete

⁶⁰⁷ Ralph Matthews, "24th Ends Army Career In Glory," Baltimore *Afro-American*, 13 October 1951, p. 1.

⁶⁰⁸ L. Alex Wilson, "Hero Points Out Flaws In Army Integration," *Chicago Defender*, 13 October 1951, p. 2.

⁶⁰⁹ Ralph Matthews, "War Not Over In Korea Yet," Baltimore *Afro-American*, 8 December 1951, p. 1.

⁶¹⁰ Ralph Matthews, "GIs Welcome Integration; Don't Like Army Method," Baltimore *Afro-American*, 8 December 1951, p. 14; Ralph Matthews, "Colored Personnel In All Units Of Service In Korea," Baltimore *Afro-American*, 15 December 1951, p. 3; "Matthews Back From Korea," Baltimore *Afro-American*, 29 December 1951, p. 1; Ralph Matthews, "White Soldiers Pleased With Korean Integration," Baltimore *Afro-American*, 29 December 1951, p. 14.

integration would proceed immediately.⁶¹¹ George's report was confirmed by the *Defender* the next month, which added that its sources within the Pentagon claimed that all European facilities would be integrated within two years.⁶¹² Just as the newspaper had predicted, the desegregation of Far East Command appeared to have triggered a slow but inexorable change throughout the Army.

Although this news might have heartened the editors and reporters who had been nudging the Army in this direction for years, the fight for an integrated military no longer dominated the front pages of the major black newspapers as it had for the past four years. There were two factors contributing to this change. First, the stalemate in Korea gave black newspapers little occasion to continue to report on the state of integration there. Second, 1952 was an election year and the black press had a vested interest in its outcome. Military integration was an important issue to black newspapers, but it was not the only one. The newspapers had taken up a number of causes that required federal action, including the passage of a federal fair employment law, anti-lynching legislation, and the guarantee of voting rights for Southern blacks. The next president would have the power to either advance or frustrate their agenda.

President Truman, who had proven to be a valuable ally in the fight for civil rights, had taken himself out of the running. Highly unpopular with the American public, not least because of the seemingly endless turmoil in Korea, Truman decided he would not accept his party's

⁶¹¹ Collins C. George, "'Ike's' Aide 'Passes Buck' On Army Bias," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 8 March 1952, p. 1; Collins C. George, "Army Times Sees End Of Segregation," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 15 March 1952, p. 1; Collins C. George, "Fear Negroes In Command Of White Officers In Army," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 22 March 1952, p. 1; Collins C. George, "U.S. Army In Berlin Failing To Show Real Democracy," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 29 March 1952, p. 1; Collins C. George, "Army Removes Colonel Accused Of Railroading Negro Officers," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 5 April 1952, p. 1; Collins C. George, "Air Force Integration Shames Army In Europe," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 5 April 1952, p. 13; Collins C. George, "Jim Crow-Army In Germany Outlawed By Official Order," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 April 1952, p. 1.

⁶¹² "End Jim Crow Army In Europe," *Chicago Defender*, 31 May 1952, p. 1.

nomination for another term as president. Announcing his decision in a speech in late March, the president said, “I do not feel it is my duty to spend another four years in the White House.”⁶¹³

The *Defender*’s editorialists voiced their appreciation for the president’s achievements, writing that, “Mr. Truman has become the symbol of everything the diehard white supremacists hate most. Their opposition to him is, in our view, the finest tribute that can be paid Mr. Truman.”⁶¹⁴

The *Afro-American* declared that he would “go down in history as one of the greatest champions of civil rights who has ever sat in the White House.”⁶¹⁵ The *Courier*’s editorial board ventured no opinion about Truman’s decision, though before the president’s announcement it admitted that, “The president has kept alive the inflammatory issue of civil rights as has no chief executive in history. For that we must all be deeply grateful.”⁶¹⁶

As the newspapers discussed Truman’s legacy, they also began to speculate who would gain each party’s nomination. Conventional wisdom had settled on Illinois Governor Adlai Stevenson as the Democratic nominee despite Stevenson’s protestations that he would prefer to run for re-election as governor.⁶¹⁷ The *Defender* approved of Stevenson, who had earned a reputation as a liberal governor and a reliable supporter of civil rights. “The Democrats could hardly do better,” the *Defender* opined.⁶¹⁸ The *Courier*, however, considered Stevenson a

⁶¹³ McCullough, 893.

⁶¹⁴ “Where Are The Democrats Going?” *Chicago Defender*, 12 April 1952, p. 10.

⁶¹⁵ “A Great President,” *Baltimore Afro-American*, 5 April 1952, p. 4.

⁶¹⁶ “Keeping The Record Straight!” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 29 March 1952, p. 6.

⁶¹⁷ McCullough, 888-894.

⁶¹⁸ “Truman And Stevenson,” *Chicago Defender*, 5 April 1952, p. 10.

political lightweight who was unlikely to best anyone the Republicans pitted against him.⁶¹⁹ The speculation surrounding the Democrats' choice, however, was overshadowed by the prospect that Dwight Eisenhower would be the Republicans' choice. Just as in 1948, both parties had sought to persuade the still highly popular general to run on their tickets. This time, however, the general proved more receptive to the Republicans' pitch and allowed himself to be placed on the ballot for the New Hampshire primary. After winning the primary in March 1952, Eisenhower officially declared his candidacy for the Republican nomination.⁶²⁰

Eisenhower's candidacy was a concern for many in the black press, who had neither forgiven nor forgotten the general's remarks about the abilities of black soldiers just a few years earlier.⁶²¹ Commenting on the general's prospects, the *Defender's* editorial board concluded that, "The biggest handicap against Ike lies in his testimony on Army segregation in a 1948 Congressional hearing."⁶²² The *Afro* urged Eisenhower to clarify his current opinion on racial segregation in general and military segregation in particular if he wanted any support from black voters. Responding to reports in the mainstream press that Eisenhower would be "militant" in his protection of racial minorities, *Afro* editor Cliff Mackay noted that "certainly Ike, neither by word or deed, has thus far shown any of that militancy."⁶²³ The newspaper's editorial cartoonist poked fun at Eisenhower's reluctance to clarify his opinions on racial matters by depicting him

⁶¹⁹ "Dilemma Of Negro Democrats," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 19 April 1952, p. 6.

⁶²⁰ Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower Volume One: Soldier, General of the Army, President Elect, 1890-1952* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 524-27.

⁶²¹ MacGregor, 227.

⁶²² "The Ike Bandwagon Begins To Roll," *Chicago Defender*, 29 March 1952, p. 10.

⁶²³ Cliff W. Mackay, "The Week's News In Tabloid," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 10 May 1952, p. 4.

as a giant, stone-faced sphinx.⁶²⁴ The *Courier* also urged the general to explain himself, publishing articles about Ike's views on racial segregation for several weeks.⁶²⁵

Instead, Eisenhower shied away from the civil rights issue throughout the campaign. When pressed, the general expressed support for civil rights in the abstract but refused to commit himself to any particular program to guarantee them.⁶²⁶ Despite the *Defender's* earlier prediction, the issue of military segregation did not damage Eisenhower's candidacy to any great degree and even the black newspapers moved on to other issues. The *Defender* and the *Afro* were soon more concerned with Eisenhower's opposition to the Fair Employment Practices Commission.⁶²⁷ (The *Courier*, ever the iconoclast, endorsed Eisenhower as the best candidate because twenty years of Democratic control had failed to deliver equal rights to all Americans.)⁶²⁸ Eisenhower won the Republican nomination in July and cruised to victory over Stevenson in the general election in November.⁶²⁹ Although the controversy over Eisenhower's 1948 comments about black soldiers had not dissipated entirely—it would return as an issue in his 1956 reelection campaign—it had been eclipsed by other matters, most notably the still-unfinished war in Korea.

⁶²⁴ "The Sphinx-1952 Style," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 26 April 1952, p. 4.

⁶²⁵ William Gardner Smith, "'Ike' Bid For Our Vote Due Soon," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 5 April 1952, p. 5; "Powell Asks Eisenhower Position On Segregation Of Negro Soldiers," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 April 1952, p. 1; Benjamin E. Mays, "Eisenhower, The Man Of Mystery, Rides High On A Horse Of Golden Silence," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 April 1952, p. 7; "'Ike' Answers Powell: Nothing," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 19 April 1952, p. 1.

⁶²⁶ Ambrose, 527. In private conversation, Eisenhower remarked that, "I do not consider either race relations or labor relations to be issues. And I don't believe the problems arising within either of them can be ended by punitive law or a statement made in a press conference."

⁶²⁷ "Ike Spikes Ike," *Chicago Defender*, 14 June 1952, p. 10; Walter White, "Ike Did A Job On Himself And His Stock Plunged Downward Swiftly," *Chicago Defender*, 5 July 1952, p. 11; "Eisenhower And Nixon," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 6 September 1952, p. 4.

⁶²⁸ "Year Of Decision," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 25 October 1952, p. 1.

⁶²⁹ Ambrose, 571-72.

Cease-fire

Although there had been no major military developments along the frontlines in Korea since spring 1951 and the war had long since ceased to command the front pages of black newspapers, the war had played a major role in the presidential campaign. Peace negotiations continued to drag on in Panmunjon even as American troops and their allies continued to fight. One of the campaign's most memorable moments occurred in October when Eisenhower announced that if he were elected, he would go to Korea to seek an end to the conflict.⁶³⁰ In November the president-elect did just that, meeting with Far East commander Mark Clark (who had replaced Matt Ridgway in May) and James Van Fleet. Although his generals discussed strategies for ratcheting up the pressure on the Chinese, Eisenhower was uninterested. He wanted to end the fighting sooner rather than later.⁶³¹

The war that had given the black press the opportunity to make their case for the viability of an integrated military was coming to an end. Yet its passing generated little commentary from the major black newspapers. The lack of interest was perhaps understandable; black Americans were as tired of the fighting as everyone else. Thus when on July 27, 1953, the United States and North Korea signed an armistice that signaled an end to all hostilities on the Korean peninsula, the black press paid relatively little attention. This muted reaction may have also owed something to the inconclusive nature of the conflict's conclusion: no peace treaty between North Korea and South Korea was ever signed. Just as the war had never been declared officially, it never ended officially.⁶³²

⁶³⁰ Ibid., 569.

⁶³¹ Halberstam, 626.

⁶³² Ibid., 630.

News of the armistice did not appear in the *Defender*'s August 1 issue. Instead, domestic news dominated the front page: the nomination of a black man for Manhattan borough president, the resignation of a New Orleans union leader, the appointment of a black clergyman as an alternate United Nations delegate.⁶³³ The only news from Korea was a three-paragraph report that a private from Alabama had been killed in action.⁶³⁴ The *Courier* had no news of the cease-fire on its front page, either. Only the *Afro-American* put the news on the front page of its August 1 issue, proclaiming that, "for the first time in recent history colored and white Americans lived, fought, and sometimes died side by side—not in isolated instances but in a general pattern that had the support of top American officers and policy makers."⁶³⁵ The next week's issue of the *Defender* did include a front-page feature story on the end of the war. In it, Alex Wilson summed up how the conflict had advanced the cause of civil rights: "The tragic Korean conflict stands today as another milestone in the forward march of the Negro and other minorities toward complete integration in the democratic way of life. That highly significant milestone is the integration of the American Negro in the United States Army. This costly achievement was not born altogether of plan but of necessity."⁶³⁶

Complete integration was not yet a reality; the last all-black Army unit would not be deactivated until November 1954.⁶³⁷ Nonetheless, the fact remained that the Army that had gone to war in the summer of 1950 had been radically transformed in just three years. With the end of

⁶³³ "Carter Candidate for Manhattan President," *Chicago Defender*, 1 August 1953, p. 1; "Dennis Resignation Splits Longshoreman," *Chicago Defender*, 1 August 1953, p. 1; "Carey Is Top UN Alternate," *Chicago Defender*, 1 August 1953, p. 1.

⁶³⁴ "Ala. GI Slain on Korea Front," *Chicago Defender*, 1 August 1953, p. 1.

⁶³⁵ "25,000 In Korea!" *Baltimore Afro American*, 1 August 1953, p. 1.

⁶³⁶ L. Alex Wilson, "Wilson Says Mixed Army Big Gain Of Korean War," *Chicago Defender*, 8 August 1953, p. 1.

⁶³⁷ MacGregor, 455. The unit was European Command's 94th Engineer Battalion.

segregation in the largest branch of the armed forces, and the one historically most hostile to racial integration, the black press had realized one of its oldest and most important goals. Its own role in achieving that goal, however, was ambiguous. As Alex Wilson recognized, it was the Chinese who had forced the Army to finally end a policy that was damaging its own effectiveness. If the military situation in Korea had not been so dire, the leaders of the black press might have recognized that their strategy of loyal opposition was bearing diminished returns. As it was, they remained committed to a policy of limited accommodation with the political and military establishment, unwilling to commit themselves to the more radical ideas of men such as A. Philip Randolph.

But change was in the air. Younger black activists had already fired the first salvos in the battle for civil rights. In 1951, black students in Farmville, Virginia staged a strike to protest the poor condition of their segregated school. In June 1953, one week before the end of the war, black residents of Baton Rouge launched a boycott of the city's segregated buses.⁶³⁸ A philosophy of direct action was replacing the gradualist, accommodationist strategy that had guided black leaders of the earlier generation. That change was not reflected in black newspapers' coverage of the war. Rather than acknowledge that the Korean conflict was fought in a different domestic context than World War II, the newspapers covered the new war in the same way they covered the last one. Yet black editors were at least somewhat aware that the ground beneath their feet was shifting. When the Army finally announced its plans for desegregation, for example, the *Courier* responded with a mixture of joy and regret. Although segregated units such as the 24th Infantry Regiment were an enduring reminder of institutional racism, they were also a source of racial pride to the older generation of civil rights activists.

⁶³⁸ Juan Williams, *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years, 1954-1965* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988), 25, 78.

Younger activists, however, had little interest in dwelling on the past. The civil rights movement was fast approaching a critical juncture. Some chose to follow the path of nonviolent resistance espoused by Martin Luther King, Jr. Others adopted a more forceful strategy, as epitomized in the early teachings of Malcolm X. Both of these philosophies, however, emphasized direct, organized action. This represented a sharp break from the ideas of accommodation and collaboration that the *Defender*, the *Courier*, and the *Afro-American* endorsed. Had the newspapers chosen to use the Korean War to editorialize more forcefully for equal rights within the military, they might have found a new generation of readers willing to follow them into the next decade. But in deciding to fight an old war, the black press failed to realize that the battlefield had already moved.

Chapter Six: Winning the Battle, Losing the War

In its November 6, 1954 edition the *Pittsburgh Courier* paid homage to Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., the famed Air Force officer who commanded the Tuskegee Airmen during World War II. One week earlier President Eisenhower had promoted Davis to the rank of brigadier general, making him the first black general in the Air Force. The *Courier's* editorialist noted that whereas it had taken Davis' father, Benjamin O. Davis, Sr., more than thirty years to achieve the equivalent rank in the Army, the younger Davis had earned his star in just eighteen.⁶³⁹ Moreover, Davis, Jr. now occupied the highest echelons of a completely integrated service. The difference in the two men's experiences, the anonymous writer concluded, provided a stark illustration of how drastically the condition of black servicemen and women had changed.

Most of these changes had come with a speed and magnitude that surprised even those who had fought so long for them. When the *Courier* began its campaign for military integration in the 1930s, the editorial continued, "complete integration of races in the armed services was regarded as extremely remote even by incurable optimists, and only in the last five years has it become a reality. This rapid development in the betterment of racial relations in an institution generally regarded as class-ridden and tradition-bound, and in so short a space of time, is almost miraculous, and yet it is typical in a culture accustomed to revolutionary changes of all sorts."⁶⁴⁰ Black newspapers such as the *Courier* had played a vital role in this change, as they had

⁶³⁹ "General Davis Another Milestone," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 6 November 1954, p. 6.

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid.

provided a focal point for opposition to the military's policies of racial segregation and kept public pressure on military and political officials who resisted efforts to end it. The end of segregation in the military, however, was only the beginning of a decade of changes that would ultimately overwhelm the black press.

The failure of black editors and publishers to anticipate these changes is in some ways understandable. The civil rights movement of the late 1950s and early 1960s was *sui generis*. Comparing this period with the Reconstruction-era effort to win civil rights for black Americans, the historian C. Vann Woodward concluded that the twentieth-century experience was “deeper, surer, less contrived, more spontaneous.”⁶⁴¹ He continued: “More than a black revolt against whites, it was in part a generational rebellion, an uprising of youth against the older generation, against the parental “uncle Toms” and their inhibitions. It even took the NAACP and CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) by surprise. Negroes were in charge of their own movement, and youth was in the vanguard.”⁶⁴² The most influential leaders of the black press—John Sengstacke, P.L. Prattis, William Nunn, and Carl Murphy—belonged to this “parental” generation. They had played a vital role in expanding the economic, educational, and political opportunities for black Americans. Among their accomplishments was the gradual but inexorable expansion of opportunities for black military personnel, culminating in the eradication of segregation throughout the military.

This achievement, among others, had emboldened a new generation, who would ultimately reject the methods of their parents and instead launch a massive campaign of direct,

⁶⁴¹ C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 170.

⁶⁴² *Ibid.*

nonviolent action to win full equality. The symbolic culmination of this strategy was the 1963 March on Washington, in which a quarter of a million people marched to the Lincoln Memorial to hear Martin Luther King, Jr.'s appeal to the nation's conscience. That march was the brainchild of A. Philip Randolph, whose earlier threats of a massive act of civil disobedience in protest of military segregation had been dismissed by the black press as counterproductive.⁶⁴³ Without fully realizing what they were doing, black newspapers had helped sire the generation that would supplant them as the leaders of the newly radicalized civil rights movement.

Answering the Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to document how the black press pressed for military integration before and during the Korean War, analyze how this campaign adhered to or departed from theoretical models of the alternative press, and understand how this campaign was connected to the larger civil rights movement of the mid-twentieth century. Black newspapers utilized every tool at their disposal to achieve their goal and their methods were both overt (editorials urging integration) and subtle (news coverage valorizing black soldiers). The research questions that drove this study were designed to use the issue of racial integration in the armed forces as a vehicle to explore the ideas that motivated the most influential voices in the black press at a critical time in the history of civil rights.

The black press pursued a two-pronged strategy in its pursuit of military integration. First, black newspapers sought to convince the white-dominated political and military power structure of black Americans' loyalty and competence. Second, the black press attempted to dismantle the infrastructure of segregation by highlighting its inherent injustice and demonstrating the illogical behavior it engendered. These two efforts came into conflict with the

⁶⁴³ MacGregor, 478.

eruption of the Korean War, when black newspapers were confronted with the stark choice of whether to support another war for democracy that would be waged with a profoundly undemocratic military, or to hold fast to their demands for equal treatment and open themselves up to charges of disloyalty. In the end, the black press opted to support the war while hoping it would provide black servicemen with an opportunity to finally earn their civil rights.

In their efforts to prove their loyalty, all of the black newspapers analyzed in this study presented a united front against what was commonly perceived as the menace of global Communism. In defining themselves as opposed to the machinations of the Soviet Union and its client states, black newspapers sought to tamp down concerns among white Americans about the allegiance of blacks. These concerns were fueled by the Soviet Union's worldwide propaganda campaign, which sought to appeal to racial minorities and other marginalized groups in the West, as well as an atmosphere of virulent anti-Communism at home in the United States. The depredations of McCarthyism had proven dangerous to individuals and institutions far more powerful than the black press. Black editors and publishers could not afford even the suggestion that their publications were allied in any way with Moscow's agenda.

The three major black newspapers toed the anti-Communism line with varying levels of enthusiasm. The *Courier* was far and away the most committed to its program of anti-Communism, while the *Afro* frequently voiced caution about the dangers of McCarthyism. The *Defender* was reliably anti-Communist, although not as vociferous as the *Courier*. Nonetheless, all of these newspapers made clear that they—and their audiences—could be relied upon to oppose the expansion of global Communism. Their commitment to this principle left them with little choice but to support the United States' involvement in the Korean conflict. Even after the spring of 1951, when the war settled into stalemate and it became apparent that total victory was

no longer a feasible option, the major black newspapers continued to support the goal of containing the spread of Communism in east Asia. Although the black press might criticize the tactics of the nation's political and military leaders, they did not take issue with the overarching strategy of checking Moscow's influence around the globe.

In addition to demonstrating the fealty of black Americans, black newspapers were also compelled to prove that black troops were the equal of their white counterparts on the battlefield. Once war broke out on the Korean peninsula and thousands of black troops were rushed from occupation duty in Japan to the front lines, black newspapers were presented with an opportunity to again highlight the martial prowess of these soldiers. The 24th Infantry Regiment's seizure of Yechon, and the heroics of Medal of Honor winners Cornelius H. Charlton and William Thompson were highlighted by the black press to rebut racist notions about the intelligence and skill of black soldiers. These stories were also covered closely by the black press because many mainstream media organizations tended to ignore or downplay the achievements of blacks in both military and civilian life.

The positive portrayal of these troops in the black press also touched on social constructions of black masculinity. Historically, the construction of black men in American society centered on the idea of the black male as an unthinking "beast."⁶⁴⁴ This concept, which provided the justification for the use of black men as chattel in antebellum America, emphasized the physical strength of the black male while devaluing his intelligence. The institution of slavery also contributed to the idea of the black "Sambo," a docile servant lacking initiative or

⁶⁴⁴ Thomas F. Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: Norton, 1996); Peter Hoch, *White Hero, Black Beast* (London: Pluto Press, 1979); Ashley Montague, *Man's Most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of Race* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1997).

desires outside of his appointed role.⁶⁴⁵ Paradoxically, black men were also considered to be physically and sexually uncontrollable.⁶⁴⁶ By the mid-20th century, some scholars began to re-evaluate the legacy of slavery and its effects on interpersonal roles within the black community. These scholars concluded that the history of enslavement and oppression had shifted the black family system from a patriarchal model to a matriarchal one.⁶⁴⁷ This research led to subsequent studies that defined the modern black male as psychologically and interpersonally impotent.⁶⁴⁸

Black newspapers were therefore pushing back against a number of critical and sometimes contradictory depictions of black manhood. These ideas of black masculinity also informed black newspapers' campaign for an integrated military. The armed forces were one of the few arenas in which a black man could prove not only his fighting ability—as physical aggression had long been linked with black men—but also his intelligence and reasoning skills. When the fighting began in Korea, black newspapers took care to emphasize not just the fighting ability of black troops but their intelligence and leadership skills. The black press focused considerable attention on the still relatively small number of black officers, such as the Navy's Lt. Jesse Brown, for just this reason. As officers, these men provided a rebuke to the construction of the black man as lacking either intelligence or ambition.

⁶⁴⁵ Stanley M. Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976); William H. Turner, "Myths and Stereotypes: The African Man in America," in *The Black Male in America*, ed. Doris Y. Wilkinson and Roland L. Taylor (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1977).

⁶⁴⁶ Lynne Segal Hoch, *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990).

⁶⁴⁷ E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Family in the United States* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001).

⁶⁴⁸ Abram Kardiner and Lionel Ovesey, *The Mark of Oppression* (New York: Norton, 1951).

When the Army announced its plans to desegregate Far East Command, which signaled the beginning of the end for racial segregation in the U.S. armed forces, the black press reacted with a mixture of joy and remorse. The happiness of the journalists who had waged a decades-long campaign to end Jim Crow was of course understandable. But it was tempered with a sense of loss that accompanied the dissolution of units such as the 24th Infantry Regiment and their storied history. The ambiguous feelings evinced by these journalists in their coverage of the news suggests that they were unsure about what the end of legal segregation would mean for black service members, as well as all black Americans. Such uncertainty would be one reason black journalists were reluctant to embrace a more revolutionary agenda as the modern civil rights movement gained momentum.

As mentioned earlier, black newspapers' strategy of supporting the war effort while emphasizing black accomplishment in the armed forces was in all significant aspects identical to the Double V campaign launched by the *Courier* and followed by all of the major black newspapers during World War II. In describing the result of the Double V campaign of World War II, historian Lee Finkle wrote:

After waiting more than a decade without any sign of white gratitude for their wartime loyalty, blacks took to the streets and organized direct action, mass civil disobedience movements to demand their rights. Segregation laws were violated and discrimination patterns ignored. The advances blacks made during the 1960s came by the very actions that the black press opposed and worked to avoid during World War II. It was resistance rather than rhetoric, action by the masses, not pleas by the leaders that forced concessions from a reluctant white society. . . . There were, indeed, stirrings among the black people. Anger and resentment often led to open conflict and widespread racial violence. On the other hand, black leadership—including the press which was considered the most radical—was definitely anti-revolutionary.⁶⁴⁹

⁶⁴⁹ Finkle, 222.

As this study has illustrated, the black press was presented with another opportunity to change its strategy during the Korean War. Instead it chose to abide by its gradualist philosophy. The most obvious example of this strategy was the *Courier's* abortive effort to launch a second Double V campaign during the Korean conflict, but all of the newspapers adhered to this approach even if they did not describe it as such. By 1950, however, many black Americans were no longer willing to sublimate their own demands for social justice to the nation's war effort. In fact, what Woodward described as a black "awakening" was fueled in large part by black Americans' experience during World War II, when the contradiction of fighting for democracy with a profoundly undemocratic military became too obvious to ignore. The Double V campaign, the black press' attempt to reconcile this contradiction, had failed to earn black citizens any significant concessions from the white-dominated political and legal structures. Despite their sacrifices, blacks remained second-class citizens. Given this experience during World War II, it was unlikely that another Double V would win much support from blacks during the Korean War.

Yet black newspapers continued to focus their efforts on reforming racist institutions from within. This strategy was not limited to the struggle for an integrated military; these newspapers advocated similar campaigns for other causes, most notably public education for black children. The *Afro-American*, *Defender*, and *Courier* were all vocal supporters of the NAACP's efforts to integrate the nation's schools through legal action.⁶⁵⁰ There was certainly reason to believe that such a strategy could succeed; by 1950 civil rights advocates had already won a number of important legal victories. These included the Supreme Court's ruling in

⁶⁵⁰ See for example, "Who Wants Jim Crow?" *Chicago Defender*, 16 June 1951, p. 6; "A Very Good Sign," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 20 October 1951, p. 4; "Drama in Delaware," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 3 November 1951, p. 6.

Morgan v. Virginia, which outlawed racial segregation in interstate transportation, and its ruling in *Sipuel v. Board of Regents of Univ. of Oklahoma*, which forbade colleges from denying admission on the basis of race.⁶⁵¹

Despite these achievements, however, black Americans were making only fitful progress toward true equality by the early 1950s. Victories in the court room did not translate into tangible results for most black Americans, especially those living in the South. On the contrary, many Southern states reacted to these rulings with voter suppression, racial violence, and campaigns of “massive resistance” designed to frustrate and terrorize their own black citizens.⁶⁵² This reaction paralleled the Army’s reaction to Harry Truman’s executive order, the findings of the Fahy Committee, and other official rulings directing the military to integrate. Rather than comply with these directives, the Army chose to maintain its tradition of racial segregation, making only minor changes to its policies regarding black soldiers. True equality arrived only when the conflict in Korea laid bare the logistical problems of segregation and the Army found itself with no choice but to integrate. In this respect, the North Korean People’s Army and the Chinese People’s Volunteer Army did more to end military segregation than the black press could ever do.

The ways the black press covered the fight for military integration revealed how these black newspapers saw their role within the black community as well as the larger society. According to media scholar Lauren Kessler’s taxonomy of dissident publications, alternative media serve two major functions: internal communication aimed at members of a particular

⁶⁵¹ Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America’s Struggle for Equality* (New York: Knopf, 1976), 237-238; 259-260.

⁶⁵² *Ibid.*, 752-753.

minority and external communication aimed at members of the majority group.⁶⁵³ Alternative media fulfill the internal communication function in several different ways, including community-building, providing a forum for intragroup debate, and defining the group's own identity.⁶⁵⁴ They serve as external communicators by highlighting issues generally ignored by the mainstream media and attempting to convince non-group members to support their cause.⁶⁵⁵

In general, the *Defender*, *Courier*, and *Afro-American* emphasized the internal communication function but also utilized the external communication function. Although the black press kept the issue of military integration on their front pages throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s, black newspapers were hardly alone in covering the controversy. The 1948 Congressional hearings on universal military training, A. Philip Randolph's threatened civil disobedience campaign, and the Army's troubles with segregated units during the early fighting in Korea were all highlighted by the mainstream media as well as the black press.⁶⁵⁶ Black newspapers therefore had little need to highlight an issue that was already dominating headlines across the country. Neither did these black newspapers demonstrate a particular interest in appealing to allies outside the black community as they pressed for equality in the armed forces. Although editorials in these newspapers were sometimes directed toward President Truman or

⁶⁵³ Kessler, 158.

⁶⁵⁴ Rhodes, xii; Park, 70; Riggins, 3; Vogel, 4; Dann, 3.

⁶⁵⁵ Kessler, 158.

⁶⁵⁶ See for example, C.P. Trussell, "Congress Told UMT Racial Bars Would Unleash Civil Disobedience," *The New York Times*, 1 April 1948, p. 1; Hanson W. Baldwin, "Need Of Training Revealed In Korea," *The New York Times*, 3 November 1950, p. 4; "Mixing Of G.I. Units Pays Off In Korea," *The New York Times*, 9 February 1951, p. 3; John G. Norris, "Negroes May Ignore Draft, Leaders Say," *The Washington Post*, 1 April 1948, p. 1; "Army Is Criticized For Courts-Martial of Negro Troops," *The Washington Post*, 22 February 1951, p. 1.

other white leaders, they more often spoke to the aspirations and problems of their predominantly black readers.

Courier columnist Horace Cayton, in a November 1950 article, described what he considered the purpose of the black press:

The function of the Negro press (or for that matter the press of any minority group) is to inform Negroes about what is happening in the world that is of special concern to them. It is to report the special injustices which Negroes have to endure in America. It is to bolster up their courage by telling of Negroes who have surmounted almost insurmountable difficulties. It is to direct and guide Negroes in their fight for a greater share of democracy.⁶⁵⁷

Cayton's vision of the black press accurately describes how his paper and its major competitors conducted their campaign to end Jim Crow in the military. When Cayton referred to how the black press reported on black Americans who "surmounted almost insurmountable difficulties" and how it acted to "direct and guide Negroes in their fight for a greater share of democracy," he illustrated how the black press emphasized its role as an internal communicator during this campaign.

But although most of the newspapers' editorial content was targeted explicitly at black Americans, black journalists were also aware that their publications reached a wider audience. The newspapers' robust avowals of patriotism and denunciations of Communism during the Korean War provided not only guidance for their readers, but reassurance to a white power structure that had longstanding concerns about the loyalties of blacks during wartime. In this way, the *Afro-American*, *Defender*, and *Courier* sent subtly different messages to different audiences.

⁶⁵⁷ Horace Cayton, "While Being Criticized, The Negro Press Keeps The Race Informed And Fights For Its Rights," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 11 November 1950, p. 6.

Throughout this process, the three major black newspapers focused on shaping the self-image of black Americans, specifically black males, and directing the course of organized action to achieve the goal of an integrated military. As discussed above, the black press emphasized the accomplishments of black officers to counter images of black men as variously unintelligent, uncontrollable, cowardly, and weak. Perhaps even more importantly, black newspapers used their pages as a vehicle to for social change within the military. Yet in the view of black publishers and editors, such change could only arrive through accommodation with the white-dominated political and military establishment. Men such as Sengstanke and Prattis and Murphy did not hesitate to use their publications as a bullhorn for their agenda, applauding their allies and vilifying their opponents. In that respect, their newspapers fit the model of many alternative or dissident media. But they were not yet prepared to embrace social action as a feasible method of societal change, and in that respect they remained as antirevolutionary as they had nearly a decade earlier.

Their determination to stay the course was not the only factor in the marginalization of the black press in the late 1950s and 1960s, or even the most important one. As Patrick Washburn wrote, black newspapers

[B]ecame a victim of the shining prize for which they had sought so hard and long: integration. As the civil rights movement revved up and then roared onward over the years with an increasing, throbbing intensity, sometimes resulting in destruction, violence, and even death, integration spread out to gradually encompass far more than public schools, and one of those integrating out of necessity was the white press. It began hiring away some of the best young black journalistic talent in order to cover the black communities, particularly when there were riots, and suddenly black papers did not have a virtual monopoly on black news. This, in turn, led to blacks starting to buy white papers rather than black

ones, and as circulation dropped, it became apparent that the black paper might be in a death spiral that few of them would survive.⁶⁵⁸

Washburn went on to note, however, that although the link between integration and the decline of the black press has been widely noted, the downturn was in fact more complicated. Black newspapers, unsure of how to react to the changing times and mores, adopted different editorial strategies. Some continued to agitate for change while others modeled themselves after mainstream, white-owned publications in an effort to regain their lost audience.⁶⁵⁹

The decline of the black press and the success of the black protest movement of the 1950s and 1960s have to a certain degree eclipsed the accomplishments of black newspapers during the struggle for military integration. Although these papers opted to pursue a fundamentally conservative strategy in their efforts to end Jim Crow in the armed forces, the black press nonetheless played a vital role in that process. In the case of the largest newspapers, these publications served as one of the few institutions that could mobilize black opinion on a national scale. Just as they had done during World War II, black newspapers urged their readers to take up arms and prove the worth of the black fighting man. The white political and military elite might not have been impressed with the performance of these black soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines, but their accomplishments were a source of racial pride for black Americans whose avenues for personal achievement were still severely constrained. The *Afro-American*, *Defender*, and the *Courier* highlighted the victories and sacrifices of these troops when few mainstream publications would, and in the process affirmed the equality of black Americans who could fight and die as well as any white man.

⁶⁵⁸ Washburn, *The African American Newspaper*, 199-200.

⁶⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 200-205.

As the historian Adriane Lentz-Smith wrote in her study of black Americans during and after World War I, “the generation of black Americans that came of age during World War I entered World War II knowing the pitfalls of purported wars for democracy and knowing, as well, their strength.”⁶⁶⁰ Similarly, the black press viewed the Korean War as an opportunity to finally force the federal government and the military to make good on the promises of the last two wars. This war, however, took place in a time of unparalleled fear of Communism, when insufficient patriotism was tantamount to disloyalty to some Americans. In such a heated environment, black newspapers had to calibrate their demands carefully. An overly militant stance could have been costly. The largest black newspapers, after all, had a lot to lose. From the perspective of a half-century later, it might seem as though the black press opted to err on the side of caution. But in fact, these newspapers continued to do what they had done for decades: fight for the rights of their readers.

Implications for Future Research

As stated earlier, most histories of the black press have ignored how black newspapers covered the Korean War and the role it played in ending racial segregation in the military. Similarly, general histories of black Americans in the military have not devoted much attention to the importance of black newspapers in pushing for the right to fight. This study has demonstrated that three of the largest black newspapers remained committed to the goal of an integrated military even after the disappointments of black troops’ experience during World War II, even as their strategy began to distance them from more militant leaders in the nascent civil rights movement. Although the *Defender*, *Courier*, and *Afro-American* were among the most influential black newspapers at the time, there were many other, smaller black newspapers

⁶⁶⁰ Adriane Lentz-Smith, *Freedom Struggles: African Americans and World War I* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 209.

waging similar campaigns against discrimination in all its forms. An analysis of these newspapers and how their coverage adhered to or differed from the patterns discussed here would provide a starting point for a larger and more comprehensive inquiry. One aspect that should be examined is the role of economics. The three newspapers studied were among the most financially successful black-operated businesses in America at this time due to the advertising windfall they reaped from the World War II-era excess profits tax. Smaller publications with fewer or different kinds of advertisers may have been subject to different economic pressures that in turn could have affected the militancy of their editorial pages. A study of this topic could reveal how black newspapers either resisted or capitulated to such concerns.

A study of other black newspapers may also illuminate what, if any, role regional differences might have played in how these publications approached the issue of military segregation. Although the *Defender*, *Courier*, and *Afro* focused much of their coverage on their respective cities, the newspapers examined in this study were the national editions targeted for a nationwide audience of black Americans. More regionally focused publications may have chosen to highlight issues more pressing to their local audience than military segregation. Alternatively, publications located near military facilities with large numbers of black troops may have covered the issue with more depth than other newspapers. By examining smaller publications, researchers could determine if the crusade for an integrated military was limited to newspapers in major urban centers or was a truly nationwide phenomenon.

Another avenue of inquiry is the reaction of black troops themselves to the coverage of their struggles in the black press. Although black newspapers frequently published letters to the editor from black servicemen in Korea during the conflict, the vast majority of these letters were requests for correspondence from home. There is little in the published letters to suggest how

these men viewed the crusade black newspapers had launched on their behalf. Some of these veterans are still living, although their numbers grow smaller each day. Oral histories and memoirs could also be useful in discovering the reaction of black soldiers during this crucial period in American military history. By adding these voices to the existing scholarship on the black press, researchers could determine how effective black servicemen thought such editorial campaigns were in ending segregation.

The black press, including the three newspapers analyzed in this study, still exists today. It is much smaller and ideologically heterogeneous than it was during its heyday in the middle of the 20th century.⁶⁶¹ Black publications still wrestle with the question of who is their audience and how best to serve them. In addition, they must contend with the same new technologies and expanded news opportunities that have bedeviled much larger mainstream newspapers. Yet black newspapers and magazines continue to exist in part because the goals of the civil rights movement did not end with the integration of the military or *Brown v. Board of Education*. As Roland Wolseley wrote, “a black press of some sort always will be available in the U.S.A. unless *fully integrated* means the complete eradication of the black experience, culture, temperament, and personality.”⁶⁶² And so, the fight goes on.

⁶⁶¹ Washburn, *The African American Newspaper*, 201-205.

⁶⁶² Wolsely, 332.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Baltimore *Afro-American*, 1948-1954.
Chicago *Defender*, 1948-1954.
Pittsburgh *Courier*, 1948-1954.

The Crisis (selected issues)
The *New York Amsterdam News* (selected issues)
The New York Times (selected issues)
The *Washington Post* (selected issues)

Nalty, Bernard C. and Morris J. MacGregor, eds. *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces: Basic Documents*. Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1981.

Black Americans in the U.S. Military

Astor, Gerald. *The Right to Fight: A History of African Americans in the Military*. Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1998.

Binkin, Martin and Mark J. Eitelberg with Alvin J. Schexnider and Marvin M. Smith. *Blacks and the Military*. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1982.

Bogart, Leo. *Project Clear: Social Research and the Desegregation of the United States Army*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1992.

Bowers, William T.; William M. Hammond, and George L. MacGarrigle. *Black Soldier, White Army: The 24th Infantry Regiment in Korea*. Washington, DC: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1996.

Converse, Elliott V. III; Daniel K. Gibran; John A. Cash; Robert K. Griffith, Jr. and Richard H. Kohn. *The Exclusion of Black Soldiers from the Medal of Honor in World War II*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1997.

Dalfiume, Richard M. *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces: Fighting on Two Fronts*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1969.

Edgerton, Robert B. *Hidden Heroism: Black Soldiers in America's Wars*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001.

Fletcher, Marvin. *The Black Soldier and Officer In the United States Army, 1891-1917*. Columbia, MO: The University of Missouri Press, 1974.

- Foner, Jack D. *Blacks and the Military in American History: A New Perspective*. New York: Praeger, 1974.
- Glatthaar, Joseph T. *Forged in Battle: The Civil War Alliance of Black Soldiers and White Officers*. New York: The Free Press, 1990.
- Gropman, Alan L. *The Air Force Integrates: 1945-1964*, 2nd ed. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998.
- Lentz-Smith, Adriane. *Freedom Struggles: African Americans and World War I*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009.
- MacGregor Jr., Morris. *Integration of the Armed Forces, 1940-1965*. Washington, DC: Center for Military History, United States Army, 1981.
- Mershon, Sherie and Steven Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines: Desegregating the U.S. Armed Forces*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.
- Nalty, Bernard C. *Strength for the Fight: A History of Black Americans in the Military*. New York: The Free Press, 1986.
- Patton, Gerald. *War and Race: The Black Officer in the American Military, 1915-1941*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981.
- Stillman, Richard J. *Integration of the Negro in the U.S. Armed Forces*. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968.

The Black Press

- Buni, Andrew. *Robert L. Vann of the Pittsburgh Courier*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1974.
- DeSantis, Alan D. "Selling the American Dream Myth to Black Southerners: The Chicago *Defender* and the Great Migration of 1915-1919." *Western Journal of Communication* 62, no. 4 (Fall 1998): 474-511.
- Detweiler, Frederick G. *The Negro Press in the United States*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1922.
- Digby-Junger, Richard. "The *Guardian*, *Crisis*, *Messenger*, and *Negro World*: The Early 20th-Century Black Press." *The Howard Journal of Communications* 9, no. 3 (1998): 263-282.
- Farrar, Hayward. *The Baltimore Afro-American, 1892-1950*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998.

- Hutton, Frankie. *The Early Black Press in America, 1827 to 1860*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993.
- La Brie III, Henry G., ed. *Perspectives of the Black Press: 1974*. Kennebunkport, ME: Mercer House Press, 1974.
- O'Kelly, Charlotte G. "Black Newspapers and the Black Protest Movement: Their Historical Relationship." *Phylon* 43, no. 1 (Spring 1984): 1-14.
- Oak, Vishnu. *The Negro Newspaper*. Yellow Springs, OH: Antioch Press, 1948.
- Ottley, Roi. *The Lonely Warrior: The Life and Times of Robert S. Abbott*. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1955.
- Pride, Armistead S. and Clint C. Wilson. *A History of the Black Press*. Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1997.
- Rhodes, Jane. *Mary Ann Shadd Cary: The Black Press and Protest in the Nineteenth Century*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998.
- Tripp, Bernell. *Origins of the Black Press: New York, 1827-1847*. Northport, AL: Vision Press, 1992.
- Washburn, Patrick S. *The African American Newspaper: Voice of Freedom*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2006.
- Wolseley, Roland. *The Black Press U.S.A.: A Detailed and Understanding Report On What The Black Press Is And How It Came To Be*. Ames, IA: The Iowa State University Press, 1971.

The Black Press and the Military

- Broussard, Jinx and John Maxwell Hamilton. "Covering a Two-Front War: Three African-American Foreign Correspondents During World War II." *American Journalism* 22, no. 3 (Summer 2005): 33-54.
- Finkle, Lee. *Forum for Protest: The Black Press During World War II*. Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, Inc., 1975.
- Jordan, William G. *Black Newspapers and America's War for Democracy, 1914-1920*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001.
- Washburn, Patrick S. *A Question of Sedition: The Federal Government's Investigation of the Black Press During World War II*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Civil Rights History

- Bloch, Herman D. "The Employment Status of the New York Negro in Retrospect." *The Phylon Quarterly* 20, no. 4 (Winter 1959): 327-344.
- Bloom, Jack M. *Class, Race, and the Civil Rights Movement*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987.
- Broderick, Francis L. "The Search for a Career." In *W.E.B. Du Bois: A Profile*, edited by Rayford W. Logan, 1-37. New York: Hill and Wang, 1971.
- Duberman, Martin. *Paul Robeson*. New York: The New Press, 1996.
- Gaines, Kevin K. *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996.
- Giddings, Paula J. *Ida: A Sword Among Lions: Ida B. Wells and the Campaign Against Lynching*. New York: Harper Collins, 2008.
- Gilmore, Glenda Elizabeth. *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2008.
- Grossman, James. *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners and the Great Migration*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989.
- Harlan, Louis R. *Booker T. Washington: The Making of a Black Leader, 1856-1901*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1972.
- Harlan, Louis R. *Booker T. Washington: The Wizard of Tuskegee, 1901-1915*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983.
- Higginbotham, Evelyn Brooks. *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993.
- Horne, Gerald. *Black Liberation/Red Scare: Ben Davis and the Communist Party*. Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1994.
- Kluger, Richard. *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality*. New York: Knopf, 1976.
- Lewis, David Levering. *W.E.B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race, 1868-1919*. New York: Henry Holt, 1993.
- Marable, Manning. *W.E.B. Du Bois: Black Radical Democrat*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986.

Myrdal, Gunnar. *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, vol. II. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1944.

Roark, James. "American Black Leaders: The Response to Colonialism and the Cold War, 1943-1953." *African Historical Studies* 4, no. 1 (1971): 267-268.

Toppin, Edgar A. *Blacks in America: Then and Now*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1969.

Williams, Juan. *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years, 1954-1965*. New York: Penguin Books, 1988.

Woodward, C. Vann. *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1974.

The Cold War and Korea

Alexander, Bevin. *Korea: The First War We Lost*. New York: Hippocrene Books, 2000.

Blair, Clay. *The Forgotten War: America in Korea, 1950-1953*. New York: Times Books, 1987.

Halberstam, David. *The Coldest Winter: America and the Korean War*. New York: Hyperion, 2007.

Hixon, Walter L. *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997.

McFarland, Keith D. and David L. Roll. *Louis Johnson and the Arming of America: The Roosevelt and Truman Years*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005.

Schrecker, Ellen. *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998.

Stueck, William. *The Korean War: An International History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995.

Toland, John. *In Mortal Combat: Korea, 1950-1953*. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1991.

Harry S. Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower

Ambrose, Stephen E. *Eisenhower Volume One: Soldier, General of the Army, President Elect, 1890-1952*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983.

Gardner, Michael R. *Harry Truman and Civil Rights: Moral Courage and Political Risks*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002.

McCullough, David. *Truman*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992.

Truman, Harry S. *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman: Volume One: Year of Decisions*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1956.

Truman, Harry S. *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman: Volume Two: Years of Trial and Hope, 1946-1952*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1956.

Yon, Richard M. and Tom Landsford. "Political Pragmatism and Civil Rights Policy: Truman and Integration of the Military." In *The Civil Rights Legacy of Harry S. Truman*, edited by Raymond H. Geselbracht. Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2007.

Theories of the Alternative/Dissident/Minority Press

Dann, Martin, ed. *The Black Press 1827-1890: The Quest for National Identity*. New York: Putnam and Sons, 1971.

Frazier, E. Franklin. *Black Bourgeoisie*. New York, Free Press, 1957.

Hutton, Frankie. "Democratic Idealism in the Black Press." In *Outsiders in 19th-Century Press History*, edited by Frankie Hutton and Barbara Straus Reed. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1995.

Kessler, Lauren. *The Dissident Press: Alternative Journalism in American History*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1984.

Park, Robert E. *The Immigrant Press and Its Control*. New York, Harper and Brothers, 1922.

Riggins, Stephen Harold. *Ethnic Minority Media: An International Perspective*. Newbury Park, NJ: Sage Publications, 1992.

Streitmatter, Rodger. *Voices of Revolution: The Dissident Press in America*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.

Vogel, Todd. "Introduction." In *The Black Press: New Literary and Historical Essays*, edited by Todd Vogel. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001.

Theories of Race and Gender in America

Elkins, Stanley M. *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976.

- Frazier, E. Franklin. *The Negro Family in the United States*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001.
- Gossett, Thomas F. *Race: The History of an Idea in America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Gould, Stephen Jay. *The Mismeasure of Man*. New York: Norton, 1996.
- Hoch, Lynne Segal. *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990.
- Hoch, Peter. *White Hero, Black Beast*. London: Pluto Press, 1979.
- Kardiner, Abram and Lionel Ovesey. *The Mark of Oppression*. New York: Norton, 1951.
- Montague, Ashley. *Man's Most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of Race*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1997.
- Turner, William H. "Myths and Stereotypes: The African Man in America." In *The Black Male in America*, edited by Doris Y. Wilkinson and Roland L. Taylor. Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1977.

Historical Methods

- Gottschalk, Louis. *Understanding History: A Primer of Historical Research*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980.
- Startt, James D. and David Sloan. *Historical Methods in Mass Communication*, rev. ed. Northport, AL: Vision Press, 2003.