

An Emancipation of Men: Thomas J. Morgan, the 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry and the Connection Between Bravery, Manhood and Citizenship in Nineteenth-Century America

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On the basis of this thesis and of written and oral examinations taken by the candidate on 4-15-2005 and on 5-3-05 we, the undersigned, recommend that the candidate be awarded HIGH HONORS in History.



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*Up to your manhood, Africa,  
This flag floats over all.  
Pure as its white our future see,  
Bright as its red is now our sky,  
Fixed as its stars is now our faith  
That nerves our hearts to do or die.<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> The Christian Recorder. September 5, 1863.

## Introduction

*...The status of more than four millions of people is now to be determined, determined it may be for the ages. Not alone the status of four but of untold millions trembles in the balance. Philosophy is still- the question is being decided on the field of war. The decision will be written in blood. Black men are being tried as soldiers and upon the [outcome] of the experiment rests largely the fate of their race. By proper discipline and instruction black regiments will be successful... These men are not always to be soldiers; they are to be men. The Heroes of a redeemed race and their influence will go down with all history of that people and gather strength as it grows... Shall their service be bondage more galling than that [which] has hitherto cursed this race, or should the Army be to them a school of instruction where principles are implanted and where they are taught the high and noble prerogatives and refined aspirations of manhood?<sup>2</sup>*

-Thomas J. Morgan, Lieutenant Colonel 14<sup>th</sup> USCI, January 4, 1864

The proceedings at Appomattox Courthouse on April 9, 1865 marked the official end to the bloodiest war America had yet seen or participated in. The American Civil War was a conflict that pitted brother against brother, friend against friend, and neighbor against neighbor. In regard to its overall effect on American social structures, however, one of the most consequential aspects of the Civil War was the opportunity it afforded black men to participate on the field of battle. By the war's end, nearly 200,000 black soldiers had served in the Union Army and Navy, often fighting side by side with whites.<sup>3</sup> Both preceding and following the Civil War, black soldiers and the black American community as a whole began to demand equal citizenship, citing the sacrifice and bravery of black soldiers as proof of the essential manhood of black men and thus as evidence of their worthiness to receive the full rights of American citizens. In addition, many white officers and political leaders began recognizing the manhood

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas J. Morgan, Lieut. Colonel 14<sup>th</sup> USCI, Gallatin, TN (Headquarters of the 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Troops) to George L. Stearns, Major and Assistant Adjutant General, Commissioner for the Organization of U.S. Colored Troops, January 4, 1864: Vol. 1, p. 27-29; Letter Box, 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry; Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations: Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780-1917, Record Group 94; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

<sup>3</sup> Trudeau, Noah Andre. Like Men of War: Black Troops in the Civil War. Boston: Little, Brown, 1998. 466.

of a race of men that had hitherto been subjugated and marginalized through the institution of slavery and the government's refusal to recognize blacks (even free blacks) as citizens of the United States. In the words of several military and civil leaders of the day, including those of Colonel Thomas Morgan of the 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry, the perceived manhood of black soldiers hinged ultimately on their ability to conduct themselves as good soldiers. Black military participation in the Civil War strengthened blacks' future claims to citizenship and political equality and served as a catalyst to subsequent institutional change with the ratification of the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Amendments to the United States Constitution.<sup>4</sup>

Within the pages that follow is a synthesis of social and military Civil War history as it is discovered through a close study of a particular black regiment in Tennessee: the 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry. In a detailed historical examination composed of specific characters and unique relationships, it is the individual fighting men themselves as well as their relationships and unique experiences that provide the deepest understanding of the black military experience during the Civil War. In order to examine closely the condition of black Union soldiers, their combat experience, the improvement of their relative status alongside white regiments, and the expectations and reactions of their white officers to black combat, it is helpful to analyze the experiences of a particular group of black soldiers. To provide such a localized perspective, this thesis focuses on the men of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI and those who fought beside them from the time of their organization on November 16, 1863 to the end of the war. After being organized by Thomas J. Morgan in November of 1863, the regiment spent nearly a year assigned to fatigue and garrison duty in both Alabama and Tennessee before its first taste of real combat in August

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<sup>4</sup> The 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment abolished all forms of slavery in the U.S., the 14<sup>th</sup> granted citizenship to blacks, and the 15<sup>th</sup> provided black men with the rights of suffrage. Of course, an end to institutional racism and the enforcement of civil rights for blacks would not appear until the 1960's, and we are still dealing with deep-seeded racism in the United States even to this day.

of 1864 in Dalton, Georgia. During this time, it also embarked on several recruiting expeditions throughout Middle Tennessee and surrounding areas in search of black enlistees. Following another brief engagement in Decatur, Alabama in October of 1864, the regiment found itself in Nashville in early December as part of the First Colored Brigade. At the Battle of Nashville, the men of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI experienced their greatest military victory, as they formed part of a crucial feint attack on the first day of battle against General John Bell Hood's Confederate Army of Tennessee. The Battle of Nashville, therefore, may be regarded as the culmination of the regiment's quest to prove their manhood in combat, as the military actions of black troops in the First and Second Colored Brigades were essential to the ultimate success of the Union army.

In order to accurately place our understanding of black manhood and citizenship within the unique context of the Civil War, it is important to discuss the main themes associated with the black military experience during the Civil War and how black soldiers' participation in the conflict helped to strengthen their petitions for equal rights after the war. Historical accounts of black Union soldiers generally agree on several common themes characterizing the black military experience during the Civil War. First of all, Civil War historians have drawn attention to the general reluctance of the Federal Government to arm black men in combat, as well as its hesitant decision, amid the pressure of wartime manpower shortages and intensifying appeals from abolitionists, to allow black men to enlist in the Union ranks. The Federal War Department navigated the road to emancipation and the formation of black regiments gradually and cautiously, and white Union leaders' racial preconceptions of blacks' competence and trustworthiness led many to believe that blacks were inherently unfit to take up arms in battle. Moreover, many whites feared the prospect of black military service simply because they

believed that allowing blacks to fight necessarily confirmed their manhood and put them on equal footing with whites.<sup>5</sup>

Another common theme touched upon by most historians of black military service during the Civil War is the unequal treatment of black Union soldiers as a result of both Federal policy and the individual prejudice of white soldiers and officers in the Union Army. Racial consciousness pervaded the Union army ranks as much as the Confederate ranks, and the actions of white Union military leaders demonstrate to modern historians a complex and sometimes contradictory set of racial attitudes toward black soldiers. During the war, black Union soldiers fought on two separate fronts. Not only were they fighting against an increasingly hostile and brutal Confederate army that threatened to re-enslave black prisoners of war, but they also faced blatant discrimination and unfair treatment from within their own Army.<sup>6</sup> For example, black Union soldiers were separated into black regiments, paid lower wages than white soldiers of similar rank, prohibited from becoming commissioned officers, and often received harsher discipline than white soldiers for instances of misconduct. Furthermore, white commanders often willingly delayed sending black regiments into combat, instead relegating them to menial labor detachments in Union camps. Indeed, these black men experienced much of the same hostility and prejudice within the Union ranks as they had in chattel bondage.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> McPherson, James M. For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, 124.

<sup>6</sup> The most infamous of these Confederate acts of brutality was the Fort Pillow Massacre of April 12, 1864, during which Confederate forces under General Nathan Bedford Forrest fired on surrendered white and black Union soldiers at Fort Pillow, TN.

<sup>7</sup> Smith, John David, Ed. "Let Us All Be Grateful." Black Soldiers in Blue: African American Troops in Civil War Era, edited by John David Smith. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002, 40. See also Battle Cry of Freedom by James M. McPherson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, 788-789), in which McPherson explains that black soldiers were paid several dollars a month less than whites and were generally regarded as laborers under the terms of the militia act passed in July 1862. Congress did reverse this discriminatory pay policy near the end of the war. However, they agreed to make equal pay retroactive only to January 1, 1864. Thus, black soldiers who were not free before the war and who enlisted prior to January 1, 1864 never received the full amount of their earned wages.

A third common theme emphasized in most scholarly works on the black Union soldier is the bravery and solidarity black soldiers exhibited in battle, as well as the resulting impression made upon white military and civil leaders. Historians of the African American experience during the Civil War generally agree that black soldiers fought to prove their manhood to whites, thereby establishing a stronger claim to freedom and equality that was made manifest in their petitions for equal rights and citizenship both during and after the war. Additionally, some scholars of the black military experience during the Civil War, particularly Ira Berlin, Joseph P. Reidy and Leslie S. Rowland, assert that that black enlistment in the Union ranks and black soldiers' bravery in combat strengthened both the slave's claim to freedom and the freedman's claim to equality under the law.<sup>8</sup>

However, existing scholarly works do not focus specifically on the reasons why the bravery and combat success of Union black soldiers helped to elevate the status of black men in American society. Nor do they address in detail the gendered societal context in which black soldiers fought for their freedom and subsequently for their citizenship on the basis of their bravery exhibited in combat. Lastly, they do not address why bravery was considered a prerequisite to citizenship in the minds and words of whites and blacks alike during and after the war. Rather, scholarly works on black military service during the Civil War emphasize how the bravery of black Union soldiers both strengthened their claims to equal rights and proved their collective manhood. What is noticeably missing in the existing historical narrative is an explicit analysis of the important relationships between bravery, manhood, and citizenship in nineteenth-century American society, and how these relationships played out in the context of black military service in the Union Army.

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<sup>8</sup> Berlin, Ira, Joseph P. Reidy, and Leslie S. Rowland. Eds. Freedom's Soldiers: The Black Military Experience in the Civil War. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. 22.



Nearly all historians of the African American military experience in the Civil War, but most notably James M. McPherson in his book For Cause and Comrades, discuss the nineteenth-century association between bravery and manhood as applied to black Union soldiers.<sup>9</sup> In addition, most scholars of the Civil War experience of black soldiers also highlight the relationship between bravery in combat and black veterans' post-war appeals for equal citizenship. However, few historical works dealing with the black military experience during the Civil War specifically highlight the nineteenth-century American concept of manhood and how black soldiers sought to assert themselves within that hierarchical grid of American society by exhibiting characteristics traditionally and commonly associated with masculinity. Furthermore, no historical works have yet explored the essential connection between bravery, manhood and citizenship that existed in nineteenth-century society and that was brought to the forefront through the issue of black military participation and the subsequent appeals for citizenship and equal rights made by black men. Without such an explicit connection, the existing historical analysis of the essential meaning and motivations behind black military participation in the Civil War remains incomplete. This correlation is essential to our understanding of African American history because black military participation during the Civil War was the central means by which black men were able to dismantle nineteenth-century assumptions of white racial superiority and the inherent weakness of black men, which was understood as *femininity* within the social context of antebellum and post-Civil War American society.

In For Cause and Comrades, James M. McPherson comes closest to explicitly defining the link between bravery, manhood and citizenship among black Union soldiers as well as the general black male population. The focus of his book is on the combat motivations of *all* Civil War soldiers; however, he explicitly mentions the difficulty involved with accurately assessing

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<sup>9</sup> McPherson, For Cause and Comrades. 31.

the motivations of black Union soldiers given the scarcity of personal letters and diaries written by black soldiers and the 30% literacy rate among black enlistees.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, utilizing various letters to the editors of black and abolitionist newspapers, he briefly discusses the issue of black soldiers' motivations for enlisting in the Union military, proposing that all black Union soldiers, both "free and slave alike...fought to prove their manhood in a society that prized courage as the hallmark of manhood."<sup>11</sup> The motivating factor behind the courage and determination of black Union soldiers in the face of immense prejudice was, according to McPherson, their desire to demonstrate their essential manhood to a white-dominated society that had for so long sought to destroy their masculinity.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to his assertion that black Union soldiers were generally motivated to fight by the prospect of demonstrating their manhood, McPherson also briefly explains how black soldiers and veterans appealed for equality and citizenship on the basis of their military valor. According to McPherson, the cause of "Right and Equality" gradually came to replace the cause of "Liberty and Union" as the war came to a close.<sup>13</sup> However, he is more concerned with black Union soldiers' motivations for fighting than the ultimate post-war consequences of black soldiery. Because of the meager amount of personal accounts available to historians from black Union soldiers, he chooses not to explicitly highlight the implicit connection between martial valor and citizenship whereby black Union soldiers fought to prove their manhood in a society where masculinity was the determinant of citizenship.<sup>14</sup>

To understand why both blacks and whites would have linked manhood and citizenship during and after the Civil War, one must begin with the history of American manhood and

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<sup>10</sup> McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, viii.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 128.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

citizenship in general, and the specific application of masculinity theories to African American men in particular. At its most basic level, nineteenth-century masculinity may be understood as men's ability to exert dominance over others. Craig Thompson Friend and Lorri Glover have defined the traditional mentality of white Southerners as one in which white males are elevated to positions of mastery over their wives, children, households, land and slaves.<sup>15</sup> While reinforcing the manhood of white men in the South, this mentality also stigmatized black men as "dependent, acquiescent, [and] externally controlled." According to Friend and Glover, years of slavery and white dominance had effectively led to the emasculation of black men.<sup>16</sup>

The notion of the emasculation of black males is central to the scholarly discussion of black manhood and citizenship. Ever since the commencement of the slave trade to the American colonies, American whites had marginalized black men as beings devoid of essential manly qualities. Historian Jim Cullen asserts that southern whites sought to emasculate black men by either consciously or unconsciously characterizing them as dependent and incompetent children or as untrustworthy animals in slavery to carnal instincts.<sup>17</sup> The institution of slavery only served to intensify whites' assertions of superiority over blacks, and southern whites defended slavery by adopting a paternalistic attitude towards their slaves. Cullen also claims that as through the persisting oppressive system of cultural domination, these white southern stereotypes were seemingly validated as black male slaves were perpetually stripped of their masculinity in the eyes of whites through being forced into subservient roles of passive obedience.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Friend, Craig Thompson and Lorri Glover, Eds. Southern Manhood: Perspectives on Masculinity in the Old South. Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2004. ix.

<sup>16</sup> Friend and Glover. Southern Manhood, xi.

<sup>17</sup> Cullen, Jim. "'I's a Man Now': Gender and African American Men." A Question of Manhood: A Reader in U.S. Black Men's History and Masculinity. Edited by Darlene Clark Hine and Earnestine Jenkins. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press. 1999. 496.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

In The Struggle for Equality, James M. McPherson argues that by the time of the Civil War, abolitionists were countering traditional notions of white superiority by asserting that blacks possessed an inferior social status simply because of the oppressive environment in which they had been forced to exist.<sup>19</sup> In regard to the apparent “vices” of the black race in America, McPherson declares, these abolitionists vehemently blamed the emasculating conditions of slavery for generating low personal initiative and diligence in labor among black male slaves and rendering them “childlike and dependent, lacking in initiative and self-respect.”<sup>20</sup> He also points out that even some white American abolitionists viewed blacks as inferior to whites in the so-called “masculine” virtues such as reason, enterprise, and warfare while being superior to whites in the more “feminine” virtues such as religion and art.<sup>21</sup> Thus, even well meaning white abolitionists often stigmatized black men as feminine beings. Of course, implied within the traditional gender mindset of American white males, and explicitly manifested in the denial of citizenship and suffrage to white women, was the belief in the superiority of masculinity over femininity.

In their description of black Union soldiers’ response to traditional racial preconceptions in America, Friend and Glover contend that the arming of former slaves partially subverted this mindset of white male mastery and dominance as black soldiers helped to redefine the traditional American definition of manhood to encompass black men as well as white.<sup>22</sup> In the introduction to A Question of Manhood: A Reader in U.S. Black Men’s History, Darlene Clark Hine and Earnestine Jenkins also delve in depth into a similar theme relating to black manhood. They assert that the institution of slavery produced a “resistant masculinity” among black men in

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<sup>19</sup> McPherson, James M. The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964. 134, 149.

<sup>20</sup> McPherson, The Struggle for Equality, 136, 149.

<sup>21</sup> McPherson, The Struggle for Equality, 147.

<sup>22</sup> Friend and Glover. Southern Manhood, ix.

America that sought to gain a foothold onto the hotly contested ground of American manhood.<sup>23</sup> According to Hine and Jenkins, black men during the nineteenth-century began to interpret any great “struggle” to gain freedom and to resist oppression as the essential characteristic of true manhood.<sup>24</sup> During the nineteenth-century, they argue, a complex association between black American men, work and masculinity developed that “equated manhood with the state of being free and powerful” and with having authority over other men, women and children.<sup>25</sup> This association bears close resemblance to the traditional mentality of white Southerners explained by Friend and Glover, demonstrating how black males adopted traditional American definitions of masculinity as their own.

Scholars of black manhood and citizenship recognize that with the abolition of slavery and the forming of black regiments during the Civil War, male slaves were finally afforded a real opportunity to prove their equal status to whites. Hine and Jenkins argue that military service in the Civil War freed more black men than any prior forms of black resistance to white oppression.<sup>26</sup> Since the generally patriarchal American culture had “traditionally sanctioned violence in the context of war,” they argue, black men were afforded “an opportunity to prove manhood through willing sacrifice for the society and way of life into which they were born.”<sup>27</sup> The reward for such willing military service promised to be certain rights and privileges, but these would extend only to black males because black women obviously stood no chance of asserting themselves politically in a society that valued manhood as the hallmark of citizenship.

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<sup>23</sup> Hine, Darlene Clark and Earnestine Jenkins. “Black Men’s History: Toward a Gendered Perspective.” A Question of Manhood: A Reader in U.S. Black Men’s History and Masculinity. Edited by Darlene Clark Hine and Earnestine Jenkins. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999, 1.

<sup>24</sup> Hine and Jenkins, “Black Men’s History,” 57.

<sup>25</sup> Hine and Jenkins, “Black Men’s History,” 13.

<sup>26</sup> Hine. “Black Men’s History,” 10. Such resistance had included insurrection plots by black slaves and “slave flight.” For more information on these forms of black resistance, see “Black Men’s History” by Darlene Clark Hine and Earnestine Jenkins, 1-58.

<sup>27</sup> Hine, “Black Men’s History,” 10.

Cullen also touches on the issue of black military service and manhood by declaring, “for many men [in the nineteenth century], black and white, the ultimate test of manhood was combat.”<sup>28</sup>

A few scholars of American history and political theory have also endeavored to make a theoretical connection between manhood and citizenship in the United States. In a theoretical work dealing with the implications of gender on both military service and civil engagement, R. Claire Snyder claims that the integral connections between gender, military service and citizenship trace their early beginnings to ancient Greece. These connections have manifested throughout the history of the “civic republican tradition” in the ideal of the “manly Citizen-Soldier.”<sup>29</sup> According to Snyder, this notion of an ideal male citizen harkening back to ancient Greece encompasses more than just military service, but also links manhood and citizenship with participation in government processes. It represents itself as the “fusion” of military service and citizenship as well as masculinity and citizenship.<sup>30</sup> Since the ancient beginnings of this “Citizen-Soldier” tradition, Snyder argues, the rights of citizenship in republican governments have not been conferred prior to individuals’ engagement in the civic and political realms of a nation.<sup>31</sup>

In agreement with Snyder’s claim that republican governments have practiced a “citizenship of civic practices,” whereby full recognition of citizenship comes only as a result of an individual performing a specific civic function, Hine and Jenkins assert that the public sphere was “the central proving ground for the self-made man” during the nineteenth century.<sup>32</sup> Thus, they claim that black men had to assert their manhood in a viable public manner in order to

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<sup>28</sup> Cullen, “I’s a Man Now,” 497.

<sup>29</sup> Snyder, R. Claire. Citizen-Soldiers and Manly Warriors: Military Service and Gender in the Civic Republican Tradition. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999, 1.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>32</sup> Hine and Jenkins. “Black Men’s History,” 14. See also Citizen-Soldiers and Manly Warriors by R. Claire Snyder, 15.

secure their freedom and citizenship. Native-born white men in America were already in possession of citizenship, which consequently gave them the right to be soldiers. In contrast, Hine and Jenkins argue, free blacks and former slaves “believed that they had to prove their manhood as soldiers first...[and] only then would the country reward them with freedom and citizenship for all African Americans.”<sup>33</sup> We see here a reversal in cause and effect for black men versus white men in America. For white men, their status as citizens afforded them the opportunity to take up arms as soldiers; for black men, their military service for the Union cause afforded them the opportunity to become citizens.

In addition to making the connection between African American manhood and citizenship, scholars have also linked literacy and education level with manhood and citizenship. Cullen notes that in mid-nineteenth-century America, the term “manly” implied an “acquired sense of civilization and duty” that depended heavily on the level of one’s education.<sup>34</sup> In the South especially, literacy was considered by blacks to be a key to the emancipation of the black race, since it was also deemed to be a necessary characteristic of the ideal “self-made man.” According to Friend and Glover, black men’s “conceptions of manhood...included power, self-determination, and the ability to provide for and protect families and communities. For many soldiers, literacy provided an important means toward achieving these varied measures of manhood.”<sup>35</sup> Therefore, along with military service and the exhibition of one’s bravery in combat, educational attainment was also a determinant of manhood in nineteenth-century American society.

This thesis seeks to offer a broader understanding of African American and Civil War history by demonstrating the connections between black military service in the Union Army and

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<sup>33</sup> Hine and Jenkins. “Black Men’s History,” 46.

<sup>34</sup> Cullen, “I’s a Man Now,” 491.

<sup>35</sup> Friend and Glover, Southern Manhood, 196-197.

traditional American definitions of manhood and citizenship. It seeks to construct a link between black soldiers' demonstration of their martial valor, whites' recognition of black manhood, and the appeal for citizenship on the part of blacks and sympathetic whites. As a result of their military service during the Civil War, black men demonstrated to whites their bravery and willingness to sacrifice their lives for the Union cause. But more importantly, the earnestness and martial valor of black Union soldiers (and within the localized scope of this thesis, those of the 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry) proved to many whites the inherent manhood of black men in a male-dominated society that regarded qualities of manhood as necessary for acquiring the full rights of citizenship. Such an understanding of the significance of black military service helps to explain the proliferation of post-war written appeals and speeches petitioning the Federal government for equal citizenship as just compensation for the sacrifices of black Union soldiers. Indeed, the martial valor of black Union soldiers provided the black community with powerful ammunition in its post-war quest to secure liberty and equal citizenship.<sup>36</sup>

Following from McPherson's assertion that courage was an important determinant of manhood in 19<sup>th</sup> century America,<sup>37</sup> this thesis affirms that since manhood was an essential prerequisite to full citizenship, black soldiers' bravery in combat was a significant factor in their subsequent appeal for citizenship. By bringing existing scholarship on American manhood and citizenship to bear on our current understanding of the black military experience during the Civil War, this thesis expands our understanding of both the Civil War and nineteenth-century American society by explicitly commenting on black Union soldiers' experiences in light of the prevailing nineteenth-century American perceptions of manhood and citizenship. It agrees with

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<sup>36</sup> Liberty, suffrage, and equality were understood in the context of 19<sup>th</sup> century America to extend only to men.

<sup>37</sup> McPherson is, of course, not the only historian to make such claims. Other notable scholars who have made similar assertions are Ira Berlin, Joseph P. Reidy, Leslie S. Rowland, Darlene Clark Hine, Earnestine Jenkins, Jim Cullen and Eric Foner.



Friend, Glover and Cullen that black Union soldiers sought to invalidate bigoted racial perceptions in America that perpetuated the emasculation of black men.<sup>38</sup> In addition, it seeks to bring further historical validation to the conclusions made by Hine and Jenkins by demonstrating that most black soldiers (as well as some white officers) interpreted martial valor as an essential characteristic of manhood.<sup>39</sup> Ultimately, by examining the experiences of a particular black regiment and providing a historical example of the “Citizen-Soldier” tradition, this thesis strengthens R. Claire Snyder’s assertion that all republican governments promote a “citizenship of civic practices” whereby full recognition of citizenship comes only to those who engage in civic arenas such as the military.<sup>40</sup>

For a close investigation of the black military experience during the Civil War as well as an examination of white and black soldiers’ perceptions of manhood and citizenship, we turn to the 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry. Although their military accomplishments were relatively inconsequential in regard to the overall narrative of the Civil War, a study of the enlisted men and officers of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI offers an intimate glance into the black military experience during the Civil War. Such a localized narrative serves as a micro-historical illustration of the general experience of black Union soldiers during the Civil War, and provides an opportunity to evaluate both the actions and the rhetoric of black soldiers and their white officers. Specifically, the military and personal accounts of the regiment’s white officers, taken from both the National Archives of the United States and The Official Records of the War of the Rebellion, attest to the prevalence of traditional American assumptions of manhood within the Union Army. These accounts are rich with references to the connections between military service, manhood and citizenship for black soldiers. Also, these documents highlight, however indirectly, the

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<sup>38</sup> See Southern Manhood by Friend and Glover, xi, and “I’s a Man Now” by Jim Cullen. 496.

<sup>39</sup> See “Black Men’s History” by Hine and Jenkins, 57.

<sup>40</sup> Snyder, Citizen-Soldiers and Manly Warriors. 1, 3, 15.

motivations, actions and aspirations of the black enlistees themselves, as well as their grievances in response to unfair racial discrimination from within the Union ranks. Lastly, they reinforce common themes stressed among Civil War historians, including the hesitation of the Federal Government to allow for the enlistment of blacks, the decision to form black regiments in the face of increased military demands and pressure from abolitionists, the unequal treatment of black soldiers in Union regiments, and the role that military service played in improving blacks' relative position in nineteenth-century American society.

Given that the enlisted men of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI were generally illiterate former slaves, there are no firsthand accounts written by the black soldiers themselves. Consequently, the burden of primary evidence pertaining to the experiences and motivations of the fighting men of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI falls squarely on the shoulders of the white officers who were assigned to lead them. In particular, the writings of Thomas J. Morgan provide the most comprehensive awareness of the attitudes and aspirations of the men of the 14<sup>th</sup>. It is through the eyes of this man and other white officers in command over the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI that we must peer in order to deduce the military experience of their black soldiers.

Although the Union black soldiers themselves wrote a relatively scant number of documents during the course of their enlistment and after, there still remains a good number of published letters from black soldiers that offer us a firsthand glimpse into the black military experience. The bulk of available primary sources written by African Americans during the Civil War exist as letters to the editors of several northern abolitionist newspapers such as the Anglo-African and the Christian Recorder. None of these letters have been attributed to the enlisted men of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI. However, many black soldiers and veterans who fought with other Union regiments either enjoyed the privilege of learning to read and write before joining

the Union ranks or became literate during the course of the war in regimental schools, and thus scores of letters were written by these black soldiers to editors of black and abolitionist newspapers.<sup>41</sup> McPherson acknowledges in For Cause and Comrades the relative scarcity of documentation written by black Union soldiers, but he maintains that there is “no reason to believe...that the genuine feelings of black soldiers were different from the published letters of their most articulate spokesmen.”<sup>42</sup> It is fair to assume that the experiences and aspirations of literate blacks writing to abolitionist newspapers did not differ drastically from the men of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI.

Therefore, several of these letters to the editors of black and abolitionist newspapers will be utilized throughout this thesis in order to discuss the extent to which black soldiers, veterans and laymen saw their black enlistment as an opportunity to prove their manhood and trumpeted the demands for equal treatment of black soldiers and equal citizenship for all black men on the basis of black soldiers’ bravery in combat during the Civil War. Without question, there are certain limitations to this approach. The most obvious limitation is the restricted northern audience for which newspapers such as the Anglo-African and Christian Recorder were published. For instance, one might ask how a slave in Tennessee might be motivated to enlist in the Union Army by a literate black man’s letter to a Philadelphia newspaper. On the other hand, one might argue that in ascertaining the motivations and sentiments of black Union soldiers, using any available manuscripts written by blacks is better than using none at all. Therefore, at points within this narrative where there is a noticeable lack in black soldiers’ voices, the author has taken liberty to assume that the opinions and aspirations of these literate black soldiers were

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<sup>41</sup> Those black men who were literate before enlisting in the Union military were invariably free blacks from northern states. However, many former slaves learned to read and write in regimental schools initiated by their white commanding officers. Usually, regimental chaplains doubled as tutors for the enlisted men.

<sup>42</sup> McPherson, For Cause and Comrades, 128.

not far removed from the majority. This liberty is taken not out of intellectual laziness but out of sheer necessity, since the voices of the largely illiterate population of black Union soldiers have not been handed down to subsequent generations by means of paper and ink.

## Chapter 1

### *An Army of Free Men: Black Union Soldiers in the Civil War*

*If we hadn't become sojers, all might have gone back as it was before; our freedom might have slipped through de two houses of Congress and President Linkum's four years might have passed by & notin been done for we. But now tings can never go back, because we have showed our energy & our courage & our naturally manhood.<sup>43</sup>*

Through the candid words of a black Corporal in the 1<sup>st</sup> South Carolina Regiment, we come face to face with the profound impact of black military service. By the end of the Civil War, 179,000 black soldiers had enlisted in the Union Army.<sup>44</sup> At the war's beginning, few whites had given thought to employing black men in military service. Their initial military participation had been as confiscated property toiling in Union labor detachments. Furthermore, they were forced to endure discrimination within the Union ranks and the threat of brutal violence from racist Confederate commanders. As the war came to a close, and the North celebrated its costly victory, black Union soldiers could claim equality with whites by virtue of their valiant combat alongside white regiments. As this black Corporal so poignantly articulated, black Union soldiers could never return to the bondage of slavery after they had tasted freedom and demonstrated their manhood.

During the first year of the Civil War, following the opening Confederate shots on Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861, northern leaders did not given serious thought to utilizing free blacks in combat, even though free black men represented a significant source of the able-bodied

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<sup>43</sup> Cited in Blacks and the Military in American History: A New Perspective by Jack D. Foner, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974, 51.

<sup>44</sup> Berlin. Et. Al., Freedom's Soldiers, vii.

population in the North.<sup>45</sup> For an entire year, the Federal government prohibited black men from enlisting in the Union ranks. Many influential white leaders, including Union generals George H. Thomas and William T. Sherman, were apprehensive at the thought of arming free black men and runaway slaves. Sherman declared in April 1863 that he “would prefer to have this a white man’s war and provide for the negroes after the time has passed” and that he “[could] not bring [himself] to trust negroes with arms in positions of danger and trust.”<sup>46</sup> During the antebellum period leading up to the Civil War, southern whites had defended the institution of slavery by stigmatizing black men as either helpless children or as animals motivated by brute instinct that could not be placed in positions of trust. Both of these characterizations served to remove from black men any vestige of their masculine identity, thus perpetuating their subordinate social status.<sup>47</sup>

By the time of the Civil War, after many years of slavery in the southern United States, this stigmatization of black men had led whites to believe that years of chattel bondage had deprived black men of their essential manhood. As such, they were considered inherently unfit to take up arms in battle, and simply could not be trusted with a musket and bayonet. Moreover, many whites feared the prospect of black military service simply because they believed that allowing blacks to fight in combat necessarily conceded their manhood and put them on equal footing with whites.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to their apprehensions regarding equal status for blacks, the vast majority of white Union soldiers cared little for the emancipationist cause, insisting that their sole objective

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<sup>45</sup> Berlin, Et. Al., Freedom’s Soldiers, vii.

<sup>46</sup> Trudeau, Like Men of War, 275-76.

<sup>47</sup> Cullen, “I’s a Man Now.” 496.

<sup>48</sup> McPherson, For Cause and Comrades, 124.

was the preservation of the Union.<sup>49</sup> Their resentment of emancipationist sentiment would reach a climax when President Lincoln issued his Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863. Lincoln's edict alienated many white Union soldiers who felt their original motivations for enlisting in the Union Army had been betrayed.<sup>50</sup> One such soldier, a native German serving as a bricklayer in a New York artillery battery, lambasted the enlistment of black soldiers and the shift in Union war policy toward emancipation by saying, "I don't want to fire another shot for the Negroes and I wish that all the abolitionists were in hell."<sup>51</sup>

Though black men were barred from military enlistment during the first year of the war, they were employed sporadically in labor detachments for the construction of military fortifications and supplies. Beginning in the second half of 1861, when Union General Benjamin F. Butler began offering asylum to runaway slaves in Union-occupied southern territories in return for their labor in the Union camps, the Federal Government gradually softened to the notion of employing black men in labor detachments.<sup>52</sup> The decision to allow escaped slaves to labor for Federal war production was not dictated by an altruistic drive toward emancipation, but rather by military expediency. The practice of claiming escaped slaves from Confederate owners and employing them in Union military production was first widely supported and put into practice by Union General Benjamin F. Butler, the commander at Fortress Monroe in Virginia during 1861, who gave refuge to escaped slaves and insisted on putting them to work on Union fortifications. Butler understood the Confederacy's economic dependency on slavery, and he proposed dealing with escaped slaves as "contraband of war" that would simultaneously deal a

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<sup>49</sup> McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 117-119.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>51</sup> Andrus, Olney to Mary Andrus, in *The Civil War Letters of Sergeant Olney Andrus*, ed. Fred A. Shannon. Urbana, IL, 1947. 29. In *For Cause and Comrades* by James M. McPherson.

<sup>52</sup> Berlin, Et. Al., *Freedom's Soldiers*, 3. See also *The Struggle for Equality* by James M. McPherson. 69-70.

blow to the southern economy and bolster the strength of the Union army.<sup>53</sup> The United States Congress made Butler's position an official policy of the Union army in August 1861 when it passed the First Confiscation Act, which stipulated that all slaves in Union occupied territories were "declared to be lawful subject of prize and capture wherever found."<sup>54</sup>

In July 1862, the U.S. Congress passed the Second Confiscation Act and the Militia Act, which further stipulated that all fugitive slaves in Union-occupied territories were to be taken in and put to work for Union military production. The act of employing former slaves in labor detachments began a series of subsequent concessions by the Federal government that would eventually lead to the enlisting of black men in so-called "colored regiments." By allowing the mobilization of "persons of African descent...[in] any military or naval service for which they may be found competent," the Federal government effectively opened the door to the future possibility of forming regiments of black soldiers.<sup>55</sup> In September 1862, shortly after the passing of the Second Confiscation Act and Militia Act, President Abraham Lincoln issued his preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, which was scheduled to take effect on January 1, 1863. These seemingly bold and sweeping acts of legislation by the Federal government were not, however, signs of northern white leaders' approval of the enlistment of free blacks and runaway slaves. Rather, the majority of white leaders balked at the notion of arming thousands of black men because they viewed military participation as an act of citizenship. As Hine and Clark emphasize in A Question of Manhood, native-born white American men regarded military service as a function of citizens, and felt that black soldiers would gain their citizenship as soon

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<sup>53</sup> Berlin, Et. Al., Freedom's Soldiers, 3-4. See also For Cause and Comrades by James M. McPherson, 119.

<sup>54</sup> First Confiscation Act. August 6, 1861.

<sup>55</sup> United States of America. Statutes at Large, Treaties, and Proclamations of the United States of America. 17 vols. Boston, 1850-73, vol. 12, 589-92, 597-600. Cited in Freedom's Soldiers by Berlin, Et. Al.



as they “proved their manhood as soldiers first.”<sup>56</sup> Knowing that black military service would bring about a racially integrated battlefield, American whites were apprehensive at what they considered to be the forthcoming equality of the races in America.<sup>57</sup>

As aforementioned, the traditional connection between gender, military service and citizenship in republican societies since the height of ancient Greece was still prevalent in mid-nineteenth-century America. In an attempt to preserve their traditional social mindset of white superiority, white American men sought to preclude black men from military participation.<sup>58</sup> In a society in which racism and inequality were deeply ingrained, the enlistment of black men in Union regiments would suggest an inherent equality between races that could potentially usher in a radical change in the traditional American social order. White Union leaders and policy-makers were understandably hesitant to institute such a monumental change.

While escaped slaves were increasingly used effectively as military laborers, many northern blacks and white abolitionists appealed to the Federal government to begin the process of enlisting black men for combat. Northern black leaders, much like white policymakers, considered black enlistment to be the first step down the road to the recognition of black citizenship. For example, Frederick Douglass believed that once the black man was allowed to fight alongside white soldiers against the Confederacy, “there [would be] no power on earth which [could] deny that he [had] earned the right to citizenship in the United States.”<sup>59</sup> Douglass’ sentiments were shared by a few anti-slavery white officers in the Union army who desired to see Union war aims expand to include emancipation and the enlistment of blacks. Among these white abolitionist Union officers were General John W. Phelps of Vermont and

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<sup>56</sup> Hine and Jenkins. “Black Men’s History,” 46.

<sup>57</sup> Berlin. Et. Al.. *Freedom’s Soldiers*, 7.

<sup>58</sup> Snyder, *Citizen-Soldiers and Manly Warriors*. 1.

<sup>59</sup> Douglass’ Monthly. V. August, 1863, 852. In *The Negro’s Civil War: How American Negroes Felt and Acted During the War for the Union* by James M. McPherson, New York: Vintage Books, 1967, 161.

General David Hunter, the Union commander along the Gulf coast. Phelps and Hunter envisioned black regiments as becoming ‘armies of liberation’ for thousands of slaves, while the War Department generally considered black laborers to be nothing more than confiscated Rebel property and an effective means to wage economic war on the Confederacy. Despite the Federal government’s hesitance to officially sanction black enlistment during the first two years of the Civil War, a few black regiments were formed independently in Louisiana (the illustrious ‘Native Guard’ units), South Carolina and Kansas.<sup>60</sup>

Judging from the several prominent African American newspapers that published public appeals directed at black men to take up arms in defense of the Union cause, other members of the northern black community were of the same mind as Douglass, perceiving military service as a means of aiding the course of emancipation and securing the freedom of their race. Many northern blacks wrote letters to the editors of abolitionist newspapers in order to encourage their brethren to take up arms against their white oppressors. In a letter to the Christian Recorder, a black and abolitionist newspaper in Philadelphia, recruiting officer Joseph E. Williams made one such plea to his fellow African-Americans in the south:

What should be our position as the people of African descent, to obtain the freedom of our race? It should be a union of sentiment to be demonstrated in showing forth our manhood by taking hold of what the government has presented, and is willing to entrust us with, “arms.”<sup>61</sup>

To Williams and many other black men in Tennessee, the liberty that their race had so long wished for had presented itself as a prize that could be achieved if black men demonstrated their essential manhood by fighting for the Union cause. Williams’ impassioned appeal was emblematic of a common yearning among former slaves to prove their manhood to a white race that had for generations viewed blacks as lacking essential manly qualities.

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<sup>60</sup> Berlin, Et. Al., Freedom’s Soldiers, 9.

<sup>61</sup> The Christian Recorder, September 19, 1863.

In another letter written during the spring of 1863, George Nelson Williams lauded Joseph Williams' passion for recruiting black soldiers, and summarized his peer's position concerning black men's opportunity to fight:

[Joseph Williams believes] Colored men *must* fight if they would be free. [He] will do his utmost to instill this spirit among the freedmen of North Carolina, and inspire their hearts with true manhood and patriotism. He has left all, and given up all, and his life is at stake for the freedom of his race.<sup>62</sup>

What is noteworthy in George Williams' description of Joseph Williams' appeal to black men is his association of "manhood" with "patriotism." That he would make such a link is evidence that some in the northern black community equated a demonstration of their manhood with a display of their affection for their country and a desire for its security and prosperity. This link is logical, given the fact that military service is essentially a civic function that requires a certain level of devotion to one's country.

In yet another letter written to the Christian Recorder in August of 1863, members of the Contraband Relief Association challenged black men to enlist as soldiers in the Union military in order to "be a part of true exalted heroism." In their opinion, the eyes of every black person in America were focused on the outcome of black soldiery, hoping that black soldiers would, "by the nobleness, the magnanimity of [their] action, by the valor of [their] arms, claim and gain [for themselves] the respect and admiration of the world, and gain from [their] foes the position of true freemen." Equal rights for blacks in America would never be granted without "the full assertion and vindication of [black soldiers'] manhood upon the bloody field of strife."<sup>63</sup>

Military necessity would soon compel the Federal government to heed black Northerners' appeals for black enlistment. Beginning in the summer and fall of 1862, the Union army experienced major military setbacks that brought the question of arming blacks to the forefront

<sup>62</sup> The Christian Recorder. May 30, 1863.

<sup>63</sup> The Christian Recorder. August 22, 1863.

of national debate. After the Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863, Union sentiments regarding black military enlistment began to shift as leaders in the Federal government recognized the military significance of recruiting and arming runaway slaves in Union-occupied southern territories. The foremost crisis in the minds of Union military and political leaders by early 1863 was the growing manpower shortage in the Union army on account of mounting battle losses and the protracted nature of the conflict that had caused the number of white volunteers to dwindle during the waning months of 1862. Union military setbacks warned many white leaders to the idea of arming black soldiers. In addition, severe shortage in the available population of trained white soldiers, coupled with the introduction of a draft in the northern states in March 1863, changed the attitudes of many white soldiers and laypeople toward the enlistment of blacks. The creation of black regiments presented itself as a viable solution to increasing manpower shortages. In the opinion of an increasing portion of the northern white population, it was reasonable to demand that blacks bear a portion of the military burden since it was the black population that would benefit most from Union victory.<sup>64</sup>

As a result of the increasingly widespread labor employment of refugee slaves as contraband of war, an increasing number of white soldiers and Federal policy-makers grew to understand the inexorable connection between slavery and the strength of the Confederate army.<sup>65</sup> In the opinion of an increasing number of white soldiers, helping to facilitate the end of slavery by enlisting former slaves and free blacks would hurt the Confederacy while simultaneously ameliorating the worsening Union manpower shortages. In the words of a white colonel in the 5<sup>th</sup> Minnesota Infantry, “crippling the institution of slavery is...striking a blow at

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<sup>64</sup> Berlin, Et. Al., *Freedom's Soldiers*, 11-12.

<sup>65</sup> McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 119-120.

the heart of the rebellion.”<sup>66</sup> By late 1862, even President Lincoln himself was warming to the notion of arming black men, and his January 1, 1863 Emancipation Proclamation included the stipulation that all slaves in Union-occupied territories would be “received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.”<sup>67</sup>

In response to the growing acceptance of black enlistment among northern white leaders, Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton created the American Freedman’s Inquiry Commission in March 1863 to investigate the best measures to improve the treatment of escaped slaves in service to the Union army, and to determine “how they can be most usefully employed in the service of the Government for the suppression of the Rebellion.”<sup>68</sup> It was no coincidence that the Federal government began giving serious thought to the enlistment of black soldiers during the same month as the introduction of an extremely unpopular military draft. Union leaders’ willingness to consider the employment of blacks in military capacities reflected the shifting perceptions of white Northerners regarding the usefulness of blacks as soldiers.

In addition to creating the American Freedman’s Inquiry Commission, Stanton also authorized the mobilization of a few black infantry regiments in New England, sending Union Major General (and radical abolitionist) George L. Stearns to recruit free blacks for combat duty throughout Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut.<sup>69</sup> Stearns hired several prominent northern black leaders to assist him in recruiting black soldiers in New England. These recruiting agents, in conjunction with several black abolitionist newspapers, exhorted northern

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<sup>66</sup> Hubbard, Lucius to Mary Hubbard. September 8. 1862, in “Letters of a Union Officer: L.F. Hubbard and the Civil War.” ed. N.B. Martin. Minnesota History. vol. 35 (1957): 314-315. In For Cause and Comrades, by James M. McPherson, 120.

<sup>67</sup> Lincoln, Abraham. The Emancipation Proclamation. January 1, 1863.

<sup>68</sup> Official Records of the War of the Rebellion. Ser. 3. vol. III, pg. 73. In Freedom’s Soldiers by Berlin, Et. Al, 10.

<sup>69</sup> By the summer of 1863, Stanton also allowed the recruitment and mobilization of runaway slaves in Union-occupied southern states, including Tennessee.

black men to enlist in the army. An article published in the Anglo-African early in 1863 posed a compelling question to northern blacks: “Is there any higher, any nobler duty than to rush into the heart of the South, and pluck out from the grasp of the slaveholders the victims of their lust and tyranny?”<sup>70</sup>

The Federal government took a decisive turn in favor of black enlistment with the creation of the Bureau of Colored Troops in May 1863, which heralded the beginning of a widespread, standardized recruitment of black soldiers. The War Department established the Bureau as a separate office in the Adjutant General’s Office in order to supervise and regulate the recruitment of black soldiers into separate regiments to be led by selected white officers.<sup>71</sup> As a result of the March 1863 Enrollment Act, which allowed wealthy draftees to purchase their way out of military service, low income white Northerners had found the draft particularly taxing and in a few instances had vented their frustrations on their black fellow citizens.<sup>72</sup> The influx of black men into the Union army ranks beginning in May 1863 brought about an easing of tensions among lower class white Northerners who had endured the heaviest burden of war and who vehemently opposed the notion of a war fought only by whites. As black regiments began to prove their usefulness in combat during the spring and summer of 1863, a number of former skeptics began to realize the benefits of arming blacks, and some even went so far as to admit that “they fought just as well as [whites] did.”<sup>73</sup>

The vast majority of black Union soldiers were motivated to enlist by a desire to free themselves from bondage to their former masters (in the case of runaway slaves) and by the

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<sup>70</sup> The Anglo-African, quoted in Douglass’ Monthly, V, March 1863, 802. Cited in The Negro’s Civil War by James M. McPherson, 176.

<sup>71</sup> Smith, Black Soldiers in Blue, 26.

<sup>72</sup> Berlin, Et. Al., Freedom’s Soldiers, 14.

<sup>73</sup> Tomlinson, William J. to Emily Tomlinson. December 26, 1864, March 28, 1865. Tomlinson Papers, in private possession. Cited in For Cause and Comrades by James M. McPherson, 127.

lingering possibility of attaining the full rights of American citizens. By and large, black Union soldiers “coveted the liberator’s role” they played in fighting against the Confederacy.<sup>74</sup> In Freedom’s Soldiers, Berlin, Reidy and Rowland contend that the prospect of securing lasting freedom for their families and communities provided black soldiers with “the most powerful stimulus to enlistment.”<sup>75</sup> When asked why he chose to enlist in the Union Army, a black soldier from Tennessee replied that he was “fighting to get free” himself, and to free his family still held in slavery throughout Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia.<sup>76</sup> His sentiments were representative of most black Union recruits, who recognized the opportunity for freedom offered to them by means of military service. Although most former slaves understood a war against the Confederacy as a war against slavery, there is little evidence that a great number of them fought in order to obtain the full rights of citizens. Unlike free blacks from the North, former slaves enlisting in the Union Army fought more for the destruction of slavery and the recognition of their manhood than for equal citizenship. In For Cause and Comrades, McPherson expounds on the distinctions between free blacks and slaves in their motivations for enlisting in the Union Army. He declares that while both groups of black men fought to prove their manhood, their envisioned outcomes were somewhat different in that free blacks were more apt to fight for “equal citizenship in a restored Union.”<sup>77</sup>

Although most black Union soldiers fought for freedom or equal rights, one must not ignore the presence of other motivations among free blacks and former slaves in Union-occupied territories. Not all black men fighting in the Union army claimed to be fighting for such a noble

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<sup>74</sup> Berlin, Reidy, and Rowland. The Black Military Experience. Vol. 2 of Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, 1.

<sup>75</sup> Berlin. Et. Al., Freedom’s Soldiers, 21.

<sup>76</sup> Lovett, Bobby L. “The Negro’s Civil War in Tennessee, 1861-1865,” *The Journal of Negro History* Vol. 61, No.1 (Jan., 1976), 49.

<sup>77</sup> McPherson, For Cause and Comrades, 128.

and lofty goal as the liberation of an entire race. Some black soldiers were motivated simply by a desire to free their families still in slavery or to help bring about a swifter end to a cruel war.<sup>78</sup> As fighting dragged on and the inevitable costs of war became more apparent to black men and their families, the prospect of fighting for the Union Army lost some of its initial appeal in the eyes of many black men, especially those who had managed to make some sort of living outside of military service.<sup>79</sup>

As a desperate measure to alleviate manpower shortages, Union military leaders often forcibly impressed black men into military service (for both labor and combat purposes).<sup>80</sup> In contradiction to its supposed reputation as an army of liberation, the Union army eventually resorted in the beginning of 1864 to the forced conscription of black soldiers in order to meet its wartime demands.<sup>81</sup> In The Black Military Experience, Berlin, Reidy and Rowland declare that “most free blacks and slaves rushed to join the Union [Army], [but] others entered federal service only at the point of a bayonet.”<sup>82</sup> In his statement given to Major George L. Stearns in September 1863, a black man from Ohio named Armstead Lewis recounted his experience of being impressed into service with the Union army. Coming into contact with Union infantryman, Lewis wrote:

They ordered me to fall in among them and I was marched around from place to place till they collected all they could get...At dark they put a double Guard around us and told us if we attempted to escape we would be shot down.”<sup>83</sup>

In another personal account of unjust Union recruitment practices, black recruiter Joseph E. Williams described the black citizens and soldiers of Nashville as being “greatly oppressed”

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<sup>78</sup> Berlin, Et. Al., The Black Military Experience, 138-39, 150-51.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>83</sup> Berlin, Et. Al., The Black Military Experience, 177.



in being coerced by Union forces to labor on fortifications without pay.<sup>84</sup> As seen from this example, even black laymen were affected by coercive recruitment. These accounts are emblematic of a larger pattern of discrimination in the Union military during the Civil War. While blacks in Union-occupied southern territories were often recruited by unjust force, black soldiers were also subject to discriminatory policies and blatant racism within the Union Army.

In addition to facing criticism and doubts from white soldiers who were indignant at the emancipation and enlistment of black men, the Union War Department itself also engaged in unjust practices toward black recruits that limited their freedom within the military. Black Union soldiers were constrained by unjust Federal policies regarding payment and advancement in rank. From the beginning of the war, black soldiers were not allowed to become commissioned officers, although many were employed in black regiments as non-commissioned officers.<sup>85</sup> Even black non-commissioned officers were not privy to a typical white officer's wages and received the same pay as regular black soldiers.<sup>86</sup> In response to heavy protest by northern black abolitionist leaders and by black soldiers who were able to voice their exasperation over unequal pay and poor treatment of black soldiers in the Union ranks, the United States Congress eventually agreed to equalize the pay for white and black soldiers in June 1864.<sup>87</sup>

Moreover, black soldiers received lower real wages than their white counterparts. As a War Department policy according to the Militia Act of 1862, white soldiers were paid \$13 per month and were equipped with free uniforms. In contrast, black soldiers received only \$10 per month and were forced to pay \$3 for their own uniforms. In effect, black soldiers earned \$7 per

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<sup>84</sup> The Christian Recorder. September 19, 1863.

<sup>85</sup> Non-commissioned ranks included captains, majors, quartermasters, cooks, etc.

<sup>86</sup> Berlin, Et. Al., Freedom's Soldiers. 29.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 30. The most common media by which black soldiers could voice their opinions and recount their experiences in the Union army were several black abolitionist newspapers such as The Christian Recorder, The Anglo-African and The New York Herald.

month, which was a full \$6 less per month than white soldiers of similar rank and experience. In his letter to the Headquarters of U.S. Colored Troops in Tennessee written on April 11, 1864, Colonel Reuben D. Mussey, Commissioner for the Organization of Black Troops in Middle and East Tennessee, wrote on the terrible living conditions of black soldiers in Nashville due to unequal pay and excessive fatigue duty:

I think, too, among the intelligent Colored men of this vicinity the tardiness of the Government to accord equal pay to all its Soldiers, acts disadvantageously for recruiting Colored Troops...In calculating this difference of pay- the actual difference is larger than the apparent- for when Colored troops are kept on fatigue duty their clothing wears out much faster than that of white troops doing ordinary field duty.<sup>88</sup>

The men who were mobilized into black regiments were also subjected to particularly harsh and extended fatigue duty. Particularly during the first two years of the war, black laborers were exploited for long hours and endless toil in order to “do all the ‘extra duty’” in the Union camps, such as “making roads, chopping wood, [and] policing camp.”<sup>89</sup> The prevailing rationale for using blacks instead of whites for “extra duty” in Union camps followed from the widely-held belief that blacks were incapable of successful soldiery and that every white soldier would be better employed in combat than in fatigue duty. For every slave that retreated to the Union lines and labored in the camps, one white Union soldier could be released to combat, while one white Confederate soldier would be effectively placed “*hors de combat*.”<sup>90</sup>

Notwithstanding the supposed military benefits of employing blacks in heavy labor detachments, there were many reported instances of white commanders exacting excessive amounts of labor from blacks in the Union camps. In a letter written on September 13, 1863, Colonel James C. Beecher related to his brigade commander the damaging effects of such

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<sup>88</sup> Berlin, Et. Al., The Black Military Experience, 181.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>90</sup> Berlin, Et. Al., The Black Military Experience, 143.

intense labor on his regiment of former slaves from South Carolina: “As you are aware- the fatigue duty of my regiment has been incessant and trying- so that my sick list has increased from 4 or 5 to nearly 200 in a little over one month.”<sup>91</sup> Even after black enlistment had begun in earnest following the establishment of the Bureau of Colored Troops in May 1863, many white military leaders were hesitant to employ black men in combat and often preferred to keep them engaged solely in labor detachments or stationed far from the battle lines in relief of white regiments. Guided primarily by their conviction that blacks were inherently inferior in their discipline and drill, white commanders kept many black soldiers from the chance to prove themselves fully in combat.<sup>92</sup>

Thus, for the first two years of the Civil War, black Union soldiers fought an uphill battle for the demonstration of their manhood. Although a growing number of war-weary white Northerners had come to recognize the military value of enlisting escaped slaves by the middle of 1863, many white soldiers still voiced their vehement opposition to the notion of fighting side by side with black soldiers. In a letter to his father in March of 1863, a private in the 17<sup>th</sup> Indiana Infantry wrote: “If you make a soldier of the Negro you can not dispute but he is as good as me or any other Indiana soldier.”<sup>93</sup> Like most other white Union soldiers, this young man believed that the logical conclusion to granting blacks the right to bear arms for the Union would eventually be their acceptance into American society as full citizens. Needless to say, this prospect of racial equality was terrifying to many whites in both the North and South who had grown accustomed to the existing social order. By relegating black recruits to fatigue duty, paying them lower wages, preventing them from becoming commissioned officers, and

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<sup>91</sup> Berlin, Et. Al., *The Black Military Experience*, 493.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 485.

<sup>93</sup> Benton, Aaron J. to father. March 2, 1863. Benton Papers, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, PA. Cited in *For Cause and Comrades* by James M. McPherson, 124.

coercively conscripting them into military service, white Union leaders generally prevented black soldiers from demonstrating their martial valor and manliness.

## Chapter 2

### *The 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry: Their Organization and Early Campaigns*

Much like the black Union soldiers in other regiments, the men of the 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry found it tremendously difficult to demonstrate their manhood during the first year of their regiment's existence. The 14<sup>th</sup> USCI was composed in 1863 of former slaves from the Middle Tennessee region. Also, similar to other black soldiers in regiments composed chiefly of former slaves, the men of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI viewed themselves as liberators and "had very noble ideas of manliness" to which they wholeheartedly aspired.<sup>94</sup> Throughout the course of their first year in military service, however, they faced severe obstacles from within the Union ranks. Most significantly, they were prevented from engaging in active combat duty until nearly a year after their regiment's organization. As a replacement for combat, they were kept for prolonged periods of time in fatigue duty, which they spent building fortifications and maintaining Union supply lines. While these chores were a part of any regiment's normal course of duty during the Civil War, the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI found itself toiling continually for nearly a year in labor detachments while white regiments stationed in the vicinity either "stood idly by" or were called into active combat duty.<sup>95</sup> Repeated fervent requests from their commanding officer for reassignment to active combat duty went largely unheeded until late in the summer of 1864.

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<sup>94</sup> Morgan, Thomas J. "Reminiscences of Service with Colored Troops in the Army of the Cumberland, 1863-65." In Personal Narratives of Events in the War of the Rebellion: Being Papers Read Before the Rhode Island Soldiers and Sailors Historical Society. Providence: published by the Society, 1885-87, 14.

<sup>95</sup> Thomas J. Morgan. Lieut. Colonel 14<sup>th</sup> USCI. Gallatin, TN (Headquarters of the 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Troops) to Captain R.D. Mussey, Acting Commissioner for the Organization of U.S. Colored Troops. December 6, 1863; Vol. 1, p. 22-23; Letter Box, 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry; Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780-1917, Record Group 94; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

An examination of the men and officers of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI from the regiment's organization to its engagement at the Battle of Nashville provides a specific demonstration of the difficulties faced by black Union regiments in their quest to prove their martial valor, and consequently their inherent manhood, to white Americans. The white officers and black soldiers of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI understood the implicit connection between martial valor, manhood, and citizenship within the context of the nineteenth-century American society. One deduces through the writings of the regiment's commander that both officers and enlisted men in the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI considered black military service to be a demonstration of black soldiers' manhood.<sup>96</sup> This understanding also follows from the conclusions of several historians of the black military experience in the Civil War who claim that black Union soldiers generally fought to display their martial valor in order to prove their manhood.<sup>97</sup> Therefore, it is safe to assume that the fighting men of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI were no different than the majority of enlisted former slaves who fought to destroy the institution of slavery and assert their manliness to a white-dominated culture that viewed "courage as the hallmark of manhood." However, from what one is able to observe through the available historical record, the commanding officer of the regiment appeared to be much more insistent than the illiterate former slaves he recruited on linking the demonstration of black soldiers' manhood to equal citizenship.

In the story of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI, Thomas J. Morgan takes center stage for two important reasons: first, because his personal and military writings are the only available conduit to the experiences and aspirations of the black soldiers in his regiment; second, because as the commanding officer of the regiment, his sentiments must certainly have influenced the experiences of the men under his command. Morgan's enthusiastic support for the advancement

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<sup>96</sup> McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 128.

<sup>97</sup> See *The Black Military Experience* by Berlin. Et. Al., 1, *Freedom's Soldiers* by Berlin, Reidy, and Rowland, 21, and *For Cause and Comrades* by McPherson, 128.

of the black soldiers in his regiment, being emblematic of the emancipationist cause, is evident throughout all of his military and personal written accounts. His optimistic opinion of the capabilities of black soldiers was very well documented during and after the war, as well as his firm conviction that manhood, freedom and citizenship for black soldiers were inevitable results of their military service. Because he was an ardent abolitionist, Morgan's own experiences during the war offer us a glimpse at the tensions that existed among white Union officers over the question of emancipation and black enlistment, and the degree to which these debates manifested themselves in disagreements about the manliness of blacks.

Morgan belonged to a small yet burgeoning faction of white Union officers who were committed to the advancement of black soldiers and who were adamant about black soldiers proving their manhood in combat and thus establishing what historian Keith P. Wilson describes as a "link between free, self-reliant labor and citizenship."<sup>98</sup> After having enlisted in the 7<sup>th</sup> Indiana Volunteer Infantry during the first year of the war, and later having re-enlisted in August of 1862 as a first lieutenant in the 7<sup>th</sup> Indiana Regiment under Colonel Benjamin Harrison, Morgan entered "with the deepest interest" into the national discussion over the enlistment of black soldiers.<sup>99</sup> Under the "strong conviction that the Negro was a man worthy of freedom, and [who] possessed all of the essential qualities of a good soldier," he began advocating the formation of black regiments at an early stage in the war. Insisting that black men be enlisted "not for fatigue or garrison duty, but for field service," Morgan requested late in the summer of 1863 to be made an officer in a black regiment.<sup>100</sup> Considering his natural disposition toward the advancement of African-American men, it is hardly surprising that he wrote so extensively about

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<sup>98</sup> Wilson, Keith P. Campfires of Freedom: The Camp Life of Black Soldiers During the Civil War. Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 2002, 40.

<sup>99</sup> Morgan. "Reminiscences of Service with Colored Troops in the Army of the Cumberland, 1863-65," 7.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

his black soldiers' aspirations for the recognition of their manhood and citizenship. Littered throughout his accounts of the regiment's organization and early campaigns are abolitionist sentiments that reflect a desire for black men to surmount whites' traditionally emasculating preconceptions. Morgan strongly opposed what historian Robert B. Edgerton has described as the traditional stereotype of black men as "natural cowards" inherently unfit for the traditional "manly" occupation of warfare.<sup>101</sup>

One of the most significant themes that emerges from an analysis of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI is the apparent inconsistency between Morgan's definitions of manhood and citizenship as applied to the black soldiers of his regiment and those described by scholars of manhood and citizenship as being characteristic of nineteenth-century American society. Throughout Morgan's military and personal accounts of his experiences leading the men of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI, he articulated a certain definition of manhood that advocated efficiency, organization, moral principle, obedience, ability to follow orders, literacy and cultural refinement. His definition of manhood in regard to black soldiers, however, was quite different than that of most American whites at the time. As described by Friend and Glover, the traditional American characterization of manhood in the nineteenth-century placed men in positions of dominance and control over others. Conversely, characteristics normally associated with femininity at the time of the Civil War were dependence, obedience, and submission to authority.<sup>102</sup> Since the process of military enlistment instilled in the black soldiers of Morgan's regiment a certain level of literacy and authority over others while also encouraging the cultivation of qualities typically associated with femininity in pre-Civil War American society, it becomes clear that Morgan sought to promote a particular

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<sup>101</sup> Edgerton, Robert B. Hidden Heroism: Black Soldiers in America's Wars. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2002. 1. In his book, Edgerton examines the history of African-American participation in American wars, and postulates that American blacks have endured for centuries a pervasive and enduring "natural coward" stereotype that intensified in times of war.

<sup>102</sup> Friend and Glover. Southern Manhood, ix.



paternalistic definition of black manhood that was very much shaped by class distinctions. If nineteenth-century white masculinity was, as Hine and Jenkins claim, equated with the state of being “free and powerful” and having authority over others,<sup>103</sup> it should be noted that Morgan’s definition of manhood in regard to his men included absolutely no mention of black soldiers’ ability to give orders and exert power over others. Black soldiers in the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI sought to prove their manhood through an emphatic demonstration of their martial valor and willing to sacrifice themselves for the Union cause. However, though military service in the Union Army allowed the black soldiers of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI to break free and eventually destroy a social institution that rendered them “dependent, acquiescent, [and] externally controlled,” it did not allow them to fully adopt traditional American definitions of manhood as their own.<sup>104</sup> Instead of being encouraged to assert their personal autonomy and power over others, as Hine and Jenkins define nineteenth-century white masculinity, black soldiers in the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI were obligated to accept their commanding officer’s definition of manhood that was very much shaped by the cultural mentality of the white American middle class.

What follows is an analytical account of the 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry’s organization and early campaigns, with particular emphasis placed on the motivations and aspirations of its black soldiers, the white officers’ reactions to their drill and combat, and what these sentiments reveal to us about how blacks believed and acted as though their right to citizenship depended upon their ability to prove their manhood. This narrative of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI also explains the articulation and endorsement of two different classifications of manhood: one promoted by Morgan, and the other by the free black populace in the North. By analyzing the words of both Morgan and the writers of black promotional literature, one arrives at the

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<sup>103</sup> Hine and Jenkins, “Black Men’s History,” 13.

<sup>104</sup> Friend and Glover, Southern Manhood, xi.

realization that both parties not only sought to convince black soldiers to prove their manhood through combat, but also to define what it means to be a man.

During the course of black enlistment in the Civil War, the largest number of black Union soldiers came from the border slave states (Maryland, Delaware, Missouri and Kentucky) and the Union-occupied states of Tennessee and Louisiana. Tennessee alone contributed 20,000 black soldiers, more than a tenth of the entire black fighting force.<sup>105</sup> Except for Kentucky and Louisiana, no other state provided more black troops to the Union army than Tennessee.<sup>106</sup> The roughly 650 men of the 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry represented slightly less than one thirtieth of the 20,000 black soldiers organized in Tennessee.<sup>107</sup> The experiences of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI coincided with key military engagements during the final stages of the war, as the men of the 14<sup>th</sup> (as well as others in the Department of the Cumberland) played a significant military role in both the Battle of Nashville and the subsequent southward retreat of General John Bell Hood's Army of Tennessee.

Black recruits were enlisting in the Union army so rapidly during the summer of 1863 that Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton sent Major George L. Stearns, a respected northern recruiter of black regiments, to Nashville in order to organize four additional black infantry regiments composed of former slaves: the 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry. In his orders, Stanton authorized Stearns to enlist the slaves of loyal masters in Tennessee. He allowed his prized recruiter to rally slaves to the Union cause with or without their owners' consent, provided they received a suitable monetary compensation for their property. Stearns'

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<sup>105</sup> Berlin, Et. Al., The Black Military Experience, 14.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>107</sup> The actual size of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI vacillated between 711 men with 29 officers while on garrison duty in Chattanooga, TN (May 2, 1864) to about 500 men at their action in Decatur, AL (October 27-28, 1864).

arrival in Tennessee began a campaign of earnest recruitment of black soldiers throughout the state.<sup>108</sup>

Stearns closely identified himself with the anti-slavery cause, and had strongly advocated black enlistment shortly after the beginning of the Civil War. Thomas J. Morgan wrote in his post-war memoir that after being commissioned as a Major by the Board of Examiners at Nashville in October of 1863, he was ordered to report to Major Stearns for his command assignment. Stearns was at that time in charge of the organization of black regiments in the Department of the Cumberland, and Morgan described him as a “large-hearted, broad-minded, genial gentleman” who had been for years “an ardent abolitionist...[who] had befriended John Brown.”<sup>109</sup> Beginning as a merchant in Boston, he had offered his services to the Federal government and received an appointment as Assistant Adjutant General. His appointment placed him directly under the authority of the Secretary of War, and he acted independently of the Department Commander.<sup>110</sup>

Following a decisive tactical victory by Confederate armies at the Battle of Chickamauga on September 19-20, 1863, black enlistees entered Union army lines at an even quicker rate, creating a surge in black recruitment that would last throughout the entire autumn.<sup>111</sup> With such an unprecedented flood of black recruits into Union camps during the last few months of 1863, the Union Army recruited many officers in white regiments to lead the newly created regiments

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<sup>108</sup> Berlin, Et. Al., The Black Military Experience, 123. See also The Black Military Experience, 124. Stearns was at that time in charge of black recruitment in the Tennessee. He would remain in this position until February 1864, when Captain Reuben D. Mussey replaced Stearns as the head of black recruitment in middle and east Tennessee.

<sup>109</sup> Morgan, “Reminiscences of Service with Colored Troops in the Army of the Cumberland, 1863-65.” 10.

<sup>110</sup> Morgan, “Reminiscences of Service with Colored Troops in the Army of the Cumberland, 1863-65.” 10-11.

<sup>111</sup> Tennessee Civil War Centennial Commission. Tennesseans in the Civil War: A Military History of Confederate and Union Units with Available Rosters of Personnel. Nashville: Civil War Centennial Commission, 1964, 400.

of former slaves.<sup>112</sup> One such officer was Thomas J. Morgan, who was ordered by Stearns in October of 1863 to report to Nashville on temporary duty before being chosen in November to oversee the organization and deployment of a new regiment of black soldiers.<sup>113</sup> Stearns later ordered Morgan to report to the Union post at Gallatin, Tennessee, which was under the command of General E.A. Paine. Morgan would arrive in Gallatin on November 1, 1863 to begin organizing the 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry.<sup>114</sup>

As soon as he reached the Union post at Gallatin, Colonel Morgan was met with the difficult task of organizing a group of former slaves whose entire lives had been spent in servitude. Prior to Morgan's arrival in Gallatin, Brigadier General E.A. Paine had armed approximately one hundred of the new black recruits with what Morgan depicted as "old arms," in order to prepare for an impending attack by guerilla forces.<sup>115</sup> Naturally, a crowd of raggedly clothed and improperly trained "contraband of war" armed with one hundred guns of "various caliber" represented a fairly chaotic scene for Morgan upon his arrival.<sup>116</sup> He later recounted his initial impressions of the black men he was to lead into combat:

There were at that time several hundred negro men in camp, in charge of, I think, a lieutenant. They were a motley crowd- old, young, middle aged. Some wore the United States uniform, but most of them had on the clothes in which they had left the plantations, or had worn during periods of hard service as laborers in the army...as soon and as fast as practicable I set about organizing the regiment.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Berlin, Et. Al., The Black Military Experience, 123. See also The Black Military Experience, 124. Stearns was at that time in charge of black recruitment in the Tennessee. He would remain in this position until February 1864, when Captain Reuben D. Mussey replaced Stearns as the head of black recruitment in middle and east Tennessee.

<sup>113</sup> Morgan, "Reminiscences of Service with Colored Troops in the Army of the Cumberland, 1863-65," 10.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>115</sup> Thomas J. Morgan, Colonel 14<sup>th</sup> USCI, Chattanooga, TN (Headquarters of the 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Troops) to Brigadier General D. Ramsey, Chief of (?), U.S.A., February 27, 1864; Vol. 1, p. 38; Letter Box, 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry; Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780-1917, Record Group 94; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> Morgan, "Reminiscences of Service with Colored Troops in the Army of the Cumberland, 1863-65," 11.

All of the new recruits at Gallatin had at one point in time lived under the yoke of slavery. Several had just arrived at the Union camp fresh off their plantation, having fled their masters in hopes of gaining their freedom. Morgan observed that many of the men still “bore the wounds and bruises of the slave-driver’s lash, and many were unfit for duty by reason of some form of disease to which human flesh is heir.”<sup>118</sup> In addition, the fact that some of Morgan’s new recruits were dressed in tattered labor clothes is evidence that some of them had already spent considerable amounts of time laboring for the Union Army. Some of Morgan’s new recruits in Gallatin had begun their service as contraband of war and had continued to labor for the Union Army even after it began arming black men for combat duty. Years of forced servitude had rendered these new recruits eager to serve and fight as free men, yet Morgan judged them to be “raw and untutored,” wholly unequipped for the duties of soldiers.<sup>119</sup>

However, Morgan strove to bring order to chaos as soon as possible, and ordered that the men be thoroughly examined, organized into companies, mustered and armed with standard weapons. Throughout the entire time of the regiment’s organization, the black men in camp “were employed as Scouts, Pickets, Foragers...[and] Recruiters” prior to being officially mustered as soldiers in the regiment.<sup>120</sup> Morgan emphasized his belief that they would not be an efficient group of fighting men until they were organized into ranks, clothed in the Union dress and properly equipped with the necessary weapons and tools.<sup>121</sup> Morgan’s emphasis on efficiency and strict organization was representative of the particular definition of manhood that

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<sup>118</sup> Morgan, “Reminiscences of Service with Colored Troops in the Army of the Cumberland, 1863-65,” 13.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 12, 14.

<sup>120</sup> Thomas J. Morgan. Colonel 14<sup>th</sup> USCI, Chattanooga, TN (Headquarters of the 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Troops) to Brigadier General D. Ramsey, Chief of (?). U.S.A., February 27, 1864; Vol. 1. p. 38; Letter Box. 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry; Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations; Records of the Adjutant General’s Office. 1780-1917. Record Group 94: National Archives Building. Washington. DC.

<sup>121</sup> Morgan, “Reminiscences of Service with Colored Troops in the Army of the Cumberland. 1863-65,” 12, 14.

he sought to instill in these black recruits. Such a definition of masculinity perceived black soldiers more as components of a well-functioning machine than as autonomous individuals.

To check the physical condition of the new recruits, Morgan ordered them to come before him and his clerk “*a la Eden, sans the fig leaves*” for a medical examination. The physically unfit were summarily rejected from military service, while those passing the physical examination were added to the regiment. Given the poor physical condition of many recruits who had just recently escaped from the brutal conditions of slavery, such a scrutinizing examination eliminated many black men from serving in Morgan’s regiment.<sup>122</sup> In wielding such immense power over the fate of black recruits, Morgan again promoted a certain definition of manhood, whereby black men’s opportunity to demonstrate their manliness was dependent on their level of physical fitness and strength.

During his assessment of the new black recruits in Gallatin, Morgan discovered that some of them had been previously employed as laborers in Union military detachments. By being exposed to the excitement of battle, and having an implicit understanding of the connection between martial valor and manhood in nineteenth-century American society, several of the new black recruits “had very noble ideas of manliness.”<sup>123</sup> Morgan considered his role in the regiment to be essentially that of a father who would help the men develop into magnificent soldiers,” and thus demonstrate their manhood. He was convinced that “although [his recruits were] black in skin, [they] had men’s hearts,” and could therefore become effective soldiers with the right handling and guidance.<sup>124</sup>

Two weeks from his arrival in Gallatin, Morgan and his clerk had examined all the new black recruits, leaving a thousand able-bodied men at his disposal by the end of the process. He

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<sup>122</sup> Morgan, “Reminiscences of Service with Colored Troops in the Army of the Cumberland, 1863-65.” 13.

<sup>123</sup> Morgan, “Reminiscences of Service with Colored Troops in the Army of the Cumberland, 1863-65.” 14.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

did not commence the official organization and drill of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI until November 16, 1863, a process that continued until the end of the year.<sup>125</sup> The field officers assigned to command the regiment were, in addition to Morgan, Major Henry C. Corbin and Major N.J. Vail. All the non-commissioned officers of the regiment, including the hospital steward, quartermaster sergeant, sergeant major, orderlies, sergeants and corporals were black.<sup>126</sup> Right away, companies within the regiment were put to work on garrison duty, railroad protection, wagon train protection and fatigue duty.<sup>127</sup> Just four days later on November 20, General George H. Thomas, the commander of the Army of the Cumberland, ordered six companies of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI to Bridgeport, Alabama in order to report for fatigue duty under the command of Major Henry C. Corbin. Though Morgan had assumed full command of the regiment as Lieutenant Colonel upon completion of the first six companies, he remained in Gallatin to complete the organization of the other four companies of his regiment, which was accomplished by January 1, 1864.<sup>128</sup>

The transfer of men to Bridgeport began a relatively long stretch of time during which black soldiers in the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI were subjected to excessive amounts of labor duty. To Morgan's chagrin, Union commanders were hesitant to allow black regiments in Tennessee a taste of combat duty, preferring instead to let them continue to perform endless amounts of labor in the Union camps. He declared that while few whites doubted that black soldiers could labor effectively in Union camps, many doubted that black soldiers had the "courage to stand up and fight like a man."<sup>129</sup> Since blacks had been employed as forced labor for generations and therefore "knew nothing of the duties of a soldier," most white soldiers had deemed it only

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<sup>125</sup> McPherson, *The Negro's Civil War*, 229.

<sup>126</sup> Morgan, "Reminiscences of Service with Colored Troops in the Army of the Cumberland, 1863-65," 16.

<sup>127</sup> Description of 14<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> USCT; p. 526 (National Archives Microfilm Publication M1822, Roll 11); Service Records of the 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry; Compiled Military Service Records of Volunteer Union Soldiers Who Served With the United States Colored Troops, Infantry Organizations: Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780-1917, Record Group 94; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

<sup>128</sup> Morgan, "Reminiscences of Service with Colored Troops in the Army of the Cumberland, 1863-65," 15-16.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

natural and fitting that they should continue in such traditionally less masculine capacities in the Union Army.<sup>130</sup>

Morgan worked tirelessly to bring about a change in assignment for the men of his regiment, as he was convinced that “the ultimate status of the Negro was to be determined by his conduct on the battle-field.”<sup>131</sup> In a note to the Army Chief of Staff, Morgan requested that the six companies of his regiment that were stationed in Bridgeport, Alabama doing fatigue duty “be ordered back to Gallatin for the purpose of drill, discipline, and the legitimate duties of the soldier.”<sup>132</sup> In another letter to Captain Reuben D. Mussey, the Acting Commissioner for the Organization of U.S. Colored Troops, Morgan vigorously requested that his regiment be ordered back to Gallatin in order to begin active combat duty. He communicated that his men felt it “degrading to single out Colored Troops for fatigue duty while white soldiers stand idly by.” Apparently, the black men of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI had been unjustly assigned to excessive fatigue duty while their white counterparts at Gallatin were exempt. Morgan expressed his resolved hatred for this unreasonable practice of relegating black regiments solely to labor duty, and pronounced his doubt that any black man would enlist for the sole purpose of laboring in the Union camps under the watchful eye of white officers and soldiers. He asserted that “such treatment [resembled] much of the old regime, and if persisted in, will utterly ruin the prospects of the work of...making soldiers out of black men.” The ultimate fate of black soldiers, Morgan emphasized, would have to be decided by what he called the “great tribunal” of public sentiment, which stood waiting either to affirm or reject the manhood of black soldiers. In order to secure a

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<sup>130</sup> Morgan, “Reminiscences of Service with Colored Troops in the Army of the Cumberland, 1863-65,” 12.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>132</sup> Thomas J. Morgan, Lieut. Colonel 14<sup>th</sup> USCI, Gallatin, TN (Headquarters of the 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Troops) to Major General Reynolds, Chief of Staff, Army of the Cumberland, December 6, 1863; Vol. 1, p. 23-24; Letter Box, 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry; Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations; Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1780-1917, Record Group 94; National Archives Building, Washington, DC. Two companies of black soldiers must have joined the regiment at Bridgeport between November 20 and December 6.



favorable response from the white public to the sacrifices and toils of black soldiers, it was necessary, in Morgan's opinion, that the "Colored Soldiers be allowed to do the work of soldiers." Given the heightened level of Guerilla warfare in the middle Tennessee region at the end of 1863, he was adamant that his regiment could be more effectively employed in the defense of Union establishments, which would also result in a greater influx of black recruits from the surrounding countryside.<sup>133</sup>

The practice of keeping black regiments at work in labor detachments and preventing them from entering into combat service followed mostly from the philosophy of Union General William T. Sherman. During his Atlanta campaign, Sherman believed he needed every available white soldier at the front, and that blacks were better suited "with spades and axes" than "with arms in positions of danger and trust."<sup>134</sup> Such a deep mistrust of blacks armed as soldiers bred resentment among the black men of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI. As they remained stationed in Bridgeport doing fatigue duty for longer and more frequent periods than men in white regiments stationed in the same vicinity, they became increasingly aware of blatant racism within the Union camps. According to Morgan's recollection, the men of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI generally viewed themselves as liberators and held to "very noble ideas of manliness" in regard to their military service.<sup>135</sup> However, being forced to labor incessantly in the Union post at Bridgeport, they found themselves in the same subjugated and subservient position as before the war.

The discontent and frustration of the men of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI became increasingly evident throughout the month of December, as evidenced by the increased desertion rate among new recruits. In response to the excessive physical work they were forced to do at Bridgeport,

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<sup>133</sup> Thomas J. Morgan to Captain R.D. Mussey, December 6, 1863. National Archives.

<sup>134</sup> William T. Sherman to Ellen Sherman. April 17, 1863 and William T. Sherman to Lorenzo Thomas, June 21, 1864. Official Records, 1<sup>st</sup> Ser., 39 (2):132. Cited in Black Soldiers in Blue, edited by John David Smith, 229-230.

<sup>135</sup> Morgan. "Reminiscences of Service with Colored Troops in the Army of the Cumberland, 1863-65," 14.

Alabama, several of the men decided to desert the regiment and the Union Army altogether. Morgan lamented in a letter to Captain Mussey that up to several of his soldiers had deserted, and that two remained “absent without leave.” As their collective dissatisfaction with Union policy reached an apex, sixteen black soldiers deserted the regiment one day in early December. A month earlier, the men had enlisted “as soldiers” in hopes of proving themselves in combat, and they were “greatly dissatisfied” with being kept out of combat duty.<sup>136</sup>

Throughout the fall of 1863 and even into the beginning of 1864, Lieutenant Colonel Morgan and his soldiers were heavily involved in the work of recruiting additional former slaves to serve in the Union army. Following the transfer of six companies to Bridgeport for fatigue duty, the rest of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI assembled enough runaway slaves and former contraband laborers to organize, muster and arm four additional companies.<sup>137</sup> On December 31, 1863, the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI was officially reported as a regiment in the District of Nashville as part of the larger group of forces under Brigadier General Eleazer A. Paine that was stationed in Gallatin and the surrounding areas.<sup>138</sup> In January of 1864, Morgan secured an order from General Thomas to unite the regiment in Chattanooga, which was the headquarters for the Department of the Cumberland.<sup>139</sup>

After arriving in Chattanooga on February 9, 1864, the regiment spent the entire month of March recruiting.<sup>140</sup> Adjutant General Lorenzo Thomas promoted Morgan to the rank of Colonel

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<sup>136</sup> Thomas J. Morgan, Lieut. Colonel 14<sup>th</sup> USCI, Gallatin, TN (Headquarters of the 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Troops) to Captain R.D. Mussey, Acting Commissioner for the Organization of U.S. Colored Troops. December 28, 1863: Vol. 1, p. 25: Letter Box, 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry: Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780-1917, Record Group 94; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

<sup>137</sup> Thomas J. Morgan to Brigadier General D. Ramsey, February 27, 1864, National Archives.

<sup>138</sup> Tennessee Civil War Centennial Commission, 400.

<sup>139</sup> Morgan. “Reminiscences of Service with Colored Troops in the Army of the Cumberland. 1863-65.” 19.

<sup>140</sup> Thomas J. Morgan, Colonel 14<sup>th</sup> USCI, Chattanooga, TN (Headquarters of the 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored

upon visiting the regiment for inspection, and Morgan sent out several recruiting detachments into the areas surrounding the Department's headquarters in order to take full advantage of the available fighting force of middle Tennessee.<sup>141</sup> These detachments were usually composed of upwards of 50 black soldiers under the command of a white officer from the regiment. In a letter to Captain A.C. Snyder of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI, Morgan gave orders for one such recruiting detachment to leave their fatigue post in Bridgeport and visit a neighboring county in search of new black recruits. "Squads of men will be sent to the plantations [in nearby Gibson County]," Morgan ordered, with the express purpose of receiving "any able bodied black men who may wish to enlist as soldiers." Despite his desire to recruit as many former slaves as possible, Morgan was firm in his stipulation that "no force threats, or undue persuasion" be used to bring black men into the Union camp.<sup>142</sup>

Aside from their excessive toil in fatigue detachments, the men of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI experienced several manifestations of outright racism during the first few months of their military service. During the regiment's last few weeks in Bridgeport and first few weeks stationed in Chattanooga, three manifestations of blatant racism on the part of white officers and Union staff are evident in Morgan's letters. The first instance came about as officials in the Union Army were deciding which white officer to place at the head of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI. Prior to Morgan's appointment as Colonel in February, Union leaders were considering the appointment of Colonel James Trimble to the post. Several fellow officers, including Morgan, were opposed to this appointment because of Trimble's poor character and impure motivations for desiring the

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Troops) to Lorenzo Thomas, Adjutant General USA, July 20, 1864: Vol. 1, p. 83; Letter Box, 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry; Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780-1917, Record Group 94; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

<sup>141</sup> Morgan. "Reminiscences of Service with Colored Troops in the Army of the Cumberland, 1863-65," 19.

<sup>142</sup> Thomas J. Morgan. Lieut. Colonel 14<sup>th</sup> USCI. Gallatin, TN (Headquarters of the 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Troops) to A.C. Snyder. Captain 14<sup>th</sup> USCI, December 11, 1863; Vol. 1, p. 20; Letter Box. 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry; Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780-1917. Record Group 94; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

command of the 14<sup>th</sup>. In a letter to Major Stearns, Morgan declared that he believed Trimble to be seeking the appointment merely out of selfish ambition, rather than out of a “desire to elevate to manhood” the black soldiers that would be entrusted to his leadership. Not only did Trimble lack any interest whatsoever in the social advancement of black soldiers, Morgan proclaimed, but he even went so far as to refer to black men and women as “Niggers and Yaller Galls.”<sup>143</sup> For Morgan, it was Trimble’s character that was most in question, and he judged that his black soldiers’ military service would be “bondage more galling than that [which] has hitherto cursed [their] race...” if men such as Trimble were appointed to lead them. Instead of being an instrument of further oppression, the Union Army should be for black soldiers “a school of instruction where principles are implanted and where they are taught the high and noble prerogatives and refined aspirations of manhood.” In order to begin accomplishing such grandiose ambitions, Morgan decided that his men “should be drilled as soldiers...and educated as men.”<sup>144</sup> Again, Morgan’s words expose his particular definition of black manhood. His emphasis on developing principled and refined soldiers demonstrates that his perception of black manhood was very much shaped by his understanding of the white American middle class society in which he was raised.

A second instance of prejudice against the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI occurred in an encounter between Morgan and Lieutenant Colonel George Bowman of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Volunteers. After being greeted by Morgan at the headquarters of Brigadier General W.T Ward, Bowman refused to shake Morgan’s hand and coldly replied that he “did not recognize ‘Nigger Officers’.”<sup>145</sup> Bowman’s

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<sup>143</sup> Thomas J. Morgan, Lieut. Colonel 14<sup>th</sup> USCI, Gallatin, TN (Headquarters of the 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Troops) to George L. Stearns, Major and Assistant Adjutant General, Commissioner for the Organization of U.S. Colored Troops, January 4, 1864; Vol. 1. p. 27-29; Letter Box. 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry; Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations; Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1780-1917. Record Group 94; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Thomas J. Morgan, Colonel 14<sup>th</sup> USCI, Chattanooga, TN (Headquarters of the 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored

comment reveals an underlying animosity that existed between fellow white officers over the issue of black soldiery. Many white officers of black regiments had risked their reputations by taking command of black regiments, and they often faced persecution from their fellow white officers. Whether their motivations for commanding black regiments were based on abolitionist ideals or a desire to further their careers did not make a difference in the minds of racist white officers.<sup>146</sup>

A third example of racism occurred within the Union headquarters at Chattanooga.

Morgan wrote on February 20 to the Chattanooga Post Master J.R. Hood complaining of the Post Office staff's unjust treatment of the men of the 14<sup>th</sup>. He described in detail to Hood how the Post Office staff purposefully mishandled his regiment's mail:

Packages of letters for my Regiment come to me marked, "14<sup>th</sup> Niggers"...[and] my officers have been insulted by men in your employ. When Lieut. Billingsley inquired for the Mail on the 17<sup>th</sup> of this month, someone in the office replied, "Damn the 14<sup>th</sup> Colored." The mail was not given to him, although it was then in the office. A few moments after the Major of the Regiment called for the mail, and was told that it had already been called for half a dozen times that day, which was false, and not until he had asked the third time, was the mail given to him. Letters reach me from seven to sixteen days after the date of the Post mark, at Nashville, from which it is not unwise to conclude that they are detained in your office.<sup>147</sup>

It is evident from this account that some white officers in the Union Army harbored deep racial mistrust against black regiments and their leaders. While Colonel Morgan's abolitionist sentiments were shared by a number of other white Union officers, including George L. Stearns,

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Troops) to Brigadier General Thomas. Adjutant General U.S. Army, Nashville, TN, February 16, 1864; Vol. 1, p. 35; Letter Box, 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry: Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations: Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780-1917, Record Group 94; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

<sup>146</sup> Berlin, Et. Al., Freedom's Soldiers, 31. Many white officers were drawn to the command of black regiments because of the opportunity such an appointment offered them for advancement within the Union officer ranks.

<sup>147</sup> Thomas J. Morgan, Colonel 14<sup>th</sup> USCI. Chattanooga, TN (Headquarters of the 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Troops) to J.R. Hood, Post Master. Chattanooga, TN, February 20, 1864; Vol. 1, p. 37; Letter Box, 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry: Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations: Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780-1917, Record Group 94; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

they were anything but representative of most white officers' general opinions of black soldiers and their capabilities. Though a few white Union officers, such as Morgan, praised the Emancipation Proclamation and the subsequent arming of black men as just and necessary, many were extremely hesitant to recognize the masculine qualities of black soldiers and accepted them only as a necessary means to winning the war.<sup>148</sup> Faced with such an immense challenge to their long held notions of white racial superiority, these white officers attempted through their slanderous remarks to suppress the inevitable consequence of arming black soldiers by degrading their collective manhood.

Colonel Morgan was ordered on March 10, 1864 to engage his regiment in a recruiting expedition up the Sequatchie Valley through Pikeville, TN, and on to the Caney Fork and Calfkiller Rivers. The men of the regiment "endured the hardships of the march better than I expected," Morgan attested in his subsequent report of the recruiting mission, "and from the testimony of Citizens, Soldiers and their Officers, evince many of the qualities of the good soldier. My confidence in them as men and soldiers is strengthened."<sup>149</sup> In obedience to Morgan's explicit orders, the detachment did not engage in any coercive tactics of recruitment during its expedition. Judging from his order against forceful recruiting, it is evident that coercive tactics had become somewhat common on recruiting expeditions for able-bodied black men throughout Union-occupied southern territories. Instead of using force, they relied solely on black volunteers, whom they brought to Chattanooga to be organized into the black regiments stationed there. In a report issued March 28, 1864 from Sparta, TN, Colonel William B. Stokes

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<sup>148</sup> McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 124.

<sup>149</sup> Thomas J. Morgan. Colonel 14<sup>th</sup> USCI. Chattanooga, TN (Headquarters of the 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Troops) to W.D. Whipple, Brigadier General and Chief of Staff, Department of the Cumberland, April 10, 1864; Vol. 1, p. 59; Letter Box, 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry; Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations; Records of the Adjutant General's Office. 1780-1917, Record Group 94; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

of the 5<sup>th</sup> Tennessee Cavalry wrote: "Lieutenant Colonel Corbin [of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI] is here, with a portion of the 14<sup>th</sup> U.S. Colored Infantry, and is recruiting rapidly."<sup>150</sup> Since Morgan's confidence in the black soldiers of his regiment "as men" was strengthened because of their obedience to his orders, his particular definition of black manhood centered on the notion of acquiescence and obedience rather than freedom or autonomy.

In Morgan's opinion, his new recruits had successfully become soldiers since they were beginning to be regarded by those who observed them as men capable of excelling at the duties of marching and maintaining strict order. He commented that the soldiers of his regiment had become "well-drilled in the manual of arms, and took great pride in appearing on parade" in front of thousands of white spectators.<sup>151</sup> The men of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI became so adept at marching that their evening parades "converted thousands" to a belief in the capabilities of black soldiers. Morgan even recorded General George H. Thomas, who would later express doubt as to the military effectiveness of black soldiers prior to the Battle of Nashville, as saying that he "never saw a regiment go through the manual as well as [the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI]."<sup>152</sup>

During the time of their organization and training early in 1864, the men of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI were not the only black soldiers being enlisted into regiments at Chattanooga. In March of 1864, Morgan related that in obedience to orders from Union officials he had begun organizing two other regiments of black soldiers in Chattanooga. One of these regiments was to be composed of "such [men] as can pass the physical examination required of those entering the U.S. service," and another regiment of laborers was to be composed of those physically unable to pass the examination. "The able [black men] are enrolled as soldiers," Morgan declared. "[and] those fit only [as] laborers are enrolled as such." Those who were suitable for neither occupation were

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<sup>150</sup> Tennessee Civil War Centennial Commission, 400.

<sup>151</sup> Morgan, "Reminiscences of Service with Colored Troops in the Army of the Cumberland, 1863-65." 20.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

sent to a labor camp in Nashville as “contrabands.”<sup>153</sup> Morgan’s separation of black male volunteers into these three groups demonstrated the immense power he wielded to essentially determine who was fit to be a man and who should remain in the emasculating position of the laborer. Once again, we see that the definition of black manhood upheld by Morgan honored physical fortitude while rejecting weakness and infirmity.

By March of 1864, Morgan expressed satisfaction at how the original chaotic state of Union camps flooded with new and untrained black recruits had been replaced by a systematic and orderly method of enlistment and training. He explained the process by which former slaves entered Union-occupied territory in a letter to Brigadier General Davis Tilson on March 7, 1864:

A colored family enters our lines, the able-bodied young men are put in the ranks, the feeble are enrolled as laborers and find immediate employment, the women are furnished homes and work, the old men are taken care of, and the children are put to school.<sup>154</sup>

Thus, not only were black recruits flooding into the Union lines at an unprecedented rate at the end of 1863 and into the beginning of 1864, but whole black families often sought freedom by escaping slavery and offering their services to the Union military. Morgan’s systematic partitioning of black families into particular occupations suitable to each person’s age, gender, and physical ability is representative of the nineteenth-century American middle class white person’s vision of social harmony. The commander of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI was indeed concerned with instilling in his men a particular definition of manhood that was steeped in white American notions of social position and hierarchy.

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<sup>153</sup> Thomas J. Morgan, Colonel 14<sup>th</sup> USCI, Chattanooga, TN (Headquarters of the 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Troops) to Unknown Recipient, March, 1864; Vol. 1, p. 43; Letter Box, 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry: Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations; Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1780-1917, Record Group 94: National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

<sup>154</sup> Thomas J. Morgan, Colonel 14<sup>th</sup> USCI, Chattanooga, TN (Headquarters of the 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Troops) to Brigadier General Davis Tilson, Chief of Artillery, Dept. of Ohio, March 7, 1864; Vol. 1, p. 42; Letter Box, 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry: Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations; Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1780-1917, Record Group 94: National Archives Building, Washington, DC.



In his letter to Tilson, Morgan also described the formation of several other black regiments in the Department of the Cumberland. In particular, the six regiments of infantry that had been initially organized by Major Stearns were nearing completion early in March of 1864. In addition, Captain Mussey had begun assembling a black heavy artillery regiment, while plans were also being arranged for the organization of an “invalid regiment” for those black recruits who were unfit for field service but who were able to perform “camp and garrison duty.” In reference to the status of his regiment, Morgan explained that its organization was complete and that his men were heavily engaged in garrison duty in Chattanooga. He also reported that the men of the 14<sup>th</sup> had “won golden praise from the Army,” having been officially complimented for their exemplary service by Generals Thomas, Palmer, Steedman, “and very many Field and Line officers” of the Department of the Cumberland.” Even before his regiment had engaged in any sort of combat, Morgan was personally confident that “the question of the fitness of the Negro for a soldier [was] settled” as a result of the efficient organization and drill of his and other white commanders’ African American companies. The American people “may turn a deaf ear to [abolitionist] theories,” Morgan announced, “but a well-trained Regiment is the crystallization of all anti-slavery philosophy.”<sup>155</sup>

An essential component of the regiment’s first year of existence was the education that its men had the opportunity to receive while enrolled in the regimental school. As previously discussed, literacy was considered by blacks during the time of the Civil War to be a key to the emancipation of their race, since it was also deemed to be a necessary characteristic of the ideal “self-made man” and provided blacks with the opportunity to achieve “power...and the ability to

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<sup>155</sup> Thomas J. Morgan, Colonel 14<sup>th</sup> USCI, Chattanooga, TN (Headquarters of the 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Troops) to Brigadier General Davis Tilson, Chief of Artillery, Dept. of Ohio, March 7, 1864: Vol. 1, p. 42; Letter Box, 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry; Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations; Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1780-1917, Record Group 94; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

provide for and protect [their] families and communities.”<sup>156</sup> In addition to military service, educational attainment was an essential determinant of manhood for black soldiers.

As early as December 27, 1863, Major Henry C. Corbin of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI had ordered the creation of a school for white officers of the regiment to be held on Tuesdays and Thursdays of each week, and a school for non-commissioned black sergeants to be held in each company of the regiment on Wednesdays and Fridays. No commissioned or non-commissioned officers were allowed to miss these times of formal schooling without the consent of their commanding officer.<sup>157</sup> Morgan extended the scope of these orders on January 6, 1864 to include all enlisted men of the regiment. He enjoined each company commander to “use every exertion to excite an interest in study among [the] men.” and he even offered the prospect of honorable mention to the Adjutant General of the Union Army for the company that first reported each of its members as able to read and write.<sup>158</sup> By autumn of 1864, Morgan instructed his subordinate officers that the work of educating the enlisted men warranted “a little enthusiasm and a good deal of hard work” because the men would “make better soldiers by it, and better citizens, too.”<sup>159</sup>

Literacy was also considered necessary for black enlistees to be promoted into non-commissioned officer positions. Conversely, a lack of educational achievement was considered justifiable grounds for demotion. One such instance occurred within the ranks of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI in July of 1864, when Sergeant Wallace Thompson (a black non-commissioned officer) was

<sup>156</sup> Friend and Glover. Southern Manhood. 196-197.

<sup>157</sup> Battalion Orders No. 9. Major Henry C. Corbin, Bridgeport, AL (Headquarters of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI). December 27, 1863; Battalion Orders and Endorsement Book, Vol. 3. p. 8; Letter Box. 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry; Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations; Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1780-1917, Record Group 94; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

<sup>158</sup> General Orders No. 2. Thomas J. Morgan, Lieutenant Colonel 14<sup>th</sup> USCI, Gallatin, TN (Headquarters of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI). January 6, 1864; Regimental Orders, General Orders, Vol. 3. p. 3; Letter Box. 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry; Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations; Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1780-1917, Record Group 94; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

<sup>159</sup> Thomas J. Morgan, Colonel 14<sup>th</sup> USCI, Chattanooga, TN (Headquarters of the 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Troops) to A.J. Vail, Major 14<sup>th</sup> USCI, Commanding Detachment, October 11, 1864; Vol. 1, p. 99; Letter Box. 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry; Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations; Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1780-1917, Record Group 94; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

demoted to the general ranks “for failing to exhibit the qualifications necessary to constitute a worthy non-commissioned officer.” In the same day, Corporal Joseph Hays was promoted to the rank of sergeant while Private Charles Ewing was elevated to the rank of corporal. In his justification for these decisions, Captain F.G. Bressey pronounced that Hays had been promoted “by reason of good soldierly qualification [and] literary attainments,” while Ewing received promotion “for good conduct [and] a manifest desire to learn and to teach his comrades.”<sup>160</sup> Morgan’s command for company commanders to promote literacy and learning among their soldiers had begun to accomplish his objective of instilling the “high and noble prerogatives and refined aspirations of manhood” in the men of his regiment.<sup>161</sup> His method of promotion based on educational attainment rewarded those who agreed to embrace his particular definition of manhood, while punishing those who resisted. Literacy and a desire to learn were essential components of Morgan’s ideal conception of black manhood, as he insisted that such noble pursuits would “cultivate in them self-respect and all manly qualities.”<sup>162</sup>

Increasing amounts of black soldiers in the 14<sup>th</sup> responded with eagerness to Morgan’s call to learning. Unlike during their slavery days when they had been forced to labor without any positive personal incentive, the men of the 14<sup>th</sup> were inspired to become educated because of the incentive for promotion within the ranks.<sup>163</sup> In his report of February 21, 1864, Morgan

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<sup>160</sup> Company Orders No. 2, F.G. Bressey, Captain Company G 14<sup>th</sup> USCI, Camp Miller, TN (Headquarters of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI), July 27, 1864; Order Book, Companies F-K, Company G, Vol. 5: Letter Box, 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry: Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations; Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1780-1917, Record Group 94; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

<sup>161</sup> Thomas J. Morgan, Lieut. Colonel 14<sup>th</sup> USCI, Gallatin, TN (Headquarters of the 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Troops) to George L. Stearns, Major and Assistant Adjutant General, Commissioner for the Organization of U.S. Colored Troops, January 4, 1864: Vol. 1, p. 27-29; Letter Box, 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry; Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations; Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1780-1917, Record Group 94; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

<sup>162</sup> Morgan, “Reminiscences of Service with Colored Troops in the Army of the Cumberland, 1863-65,” 24.

<sup>163</sup> Company Orders No. 2, F.G. Bressey, Captain Company G 14<sup>th</sup> USCI, Camp Miller, TN (Headquarters of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI), July 27, 1864; Order Book, Companies F-K, Company G, Vol. 5: Letter Box, 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry; Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations; Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1780-1917, Record Group 94; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

observed that his men were showing “great anxiety to learn, [and] more books are daily called for.” He believed that this new desire for education explained the diminishing number of instances of drunkenness among the ranks. Also, he claimed that instances of “vain and improper language” were decreasing as “kindness, thoughtfulness, and soldierly habits [were] fast gaining ground” among the men.<sup>164</sup> In an attached statement by William Elgin, the chaplain for the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI, he shared his expectation that at the end of another quarter-year of study every man in the command would be able to spell, while several would be able to read. He contended that literacy was “one of the first steps toward that higher manhood to which these men are hastening.” In order for black soldiers to prove their manhood, Elgin believed that “they should be intelligent, thoughtful, self-reliant.”<sup>165</sup> His statements are illustrative of the prevailing nineteenth-century American conception of manhood, which implied a certain “acquired sense of civilization” that could only be attained through education.<sup>166</sup> Veiled within these white officers’ words was a belief in the inherent superiority of white American “civilization,” in which knowledge and chivalric propriety considered essential components of manhood.

Until the beginning of November 1864, the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI was assigned to the Post of Chattanooga within the Army of the Cumberland, and it generally remained stationed there performing fatigue and garrison duty during the spring and summer of 1864. However, the regiment did participate in three notable engagements during the summer and autumn of 1864. The first of these was in August of 1864 at Dalton, Georgia. Confederate General Joseph Wheeler’s forces had stormed into northern Georgia in order to destroy valuable railroad lines

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<sup>164</sup> General Order No. 7, Thomas J. Morgan, Colonel 14<sup>th</sup> USCI, Chattanooga, TN (Headquarters of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI), February 21, 1864; Regimental Orders. General Orders, Vol. 3, p. 6; Letter Box, 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry; Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations: Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1780-1917, Record Group 94; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Cullen, “T’s a Man Now,” 491.

and supplies, and they had attacked the Union blockade at Dalton with a “considerable force of cavalry.”<sup>167</sup> The 14<sup>th</sup> USCI was sent from Chattanooga to provide relief to the Union blockade in Dalton (under the command of Colonel Bernard Laibolt) that had come under attack by Major General Joseph Wheeler’s Confederate forces. Beginning on Monday, August 14<sup>th</sup> and continuing on into the next day, the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI (as part of Major General James B. Steedman’s District of the Etowah) helped to drive Wheeler’s forces out of Dalton and preserve the Union blockade.<sup>168</sup>

On Tuesday, August 15, the regiment “formed the left of the line of battle,” with skirmishers from the 108<sup>th</sup> Ohio Volunteers (a white Union regiment) to its right. “As the line advanced,” Morgan observed, “the entire Battalion was exposed to the enemy’s fire, and stood the test handsomely” while steadily driving Wheeler’s forces back.<sup>169</sup> As a result of this attack, the Confederate commander lost approximately 150 soldiers to casualties. In a dispatch from Nashville on August 18, 1864, one witness of the engagement at Dalton reported: “Colonel Liebold [sic], commanding the post [at Dalton], was reinforced on Monday [August 14] by General Steedman. The Fourteenth United States Colored Troops charged upon Wheeler, who fell back, and finally retreated. The Union loss was about thirty...[and] the railroad track has not been injured.”<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Morgan, “Reminiscences of Service with Colored Troops in the Army of the Cumberland, 1863-65.” 28.

<sup>168</sup> Tennessee Civil War Centennial Commission, 400.

<sup>169</sup> Thomas J. Morgan, Colonel 14<sup>th</sup> USCI, Chattanooga, TN (Headquarters of the 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Troops) to Major and Assistant Adjutant General, Department of the Etowah, August 19, 1864; Vol. 1, p. 89-90; Letter Box. 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry; Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations; Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1780-1917, Record Group 94; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

<sup>170</sup> The New York Herald. August 19, 1864.

The engagement at Dalton was a success for Union forces and the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI. Morgan described victorious Union engagement at Dalton as being “short, and not at all severe,” during which his entire regiment was exposed for the first time to the fire of Confederate muskets.<sup>171</sup> In a statement written a few days after the engagement, he expressed his admiration of “the steadiness and bravery of the men [and] their accuracy of aim.” In their very first combat encounter, the men had conducted themselves valiantly and had “evinced soldierly qualities.”<sup>172</sup> The regiment’s “glorious victory” had seen the men of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI take “their place side by side with a white regiment” and achieve recognition as soldiers for the first time.<sup>173</sup> As the regiment marched through town after the fight, men of the 51<sup>st</sup> Indiana Infantry saluted them with “three rousing cheers.”<sup>174</sup>

After its fighting at Dalton, the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI returned to its post at Chattanooga and remained there during the fall of 1864. Despite the fact that they had just been engaged in victorious combat at Dalton, the men of the 14<sup>th</sup> were still relegated unjustly to excessive amounts of fatigue duty upon their return to Chattanooga, which understandably bred further discontent and resentment within the regiment. In a letter to the Assistant Adjutant General of the Department of the Cumberland on August 22, 1864, Morgan explained that there was a “bitter dislike” among both officers and men of the regiment for the disproportionate amounts of labor they were required to perform in camp. This discontent had manifested itself months beforehand “by mutiny among the men, and by desertions; and among the officers, by an attempt

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<sup>171</sup> Morgan, “Reminiscences of Service with Colored Troops in the Army of the Cumberland, 1863-65,” 28-29.

<sup>172</sup> Thomas J. Morgan, Colonel 14<sup>th</sup> USCI, Chattanooga, TN (Headquarters of the 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Troops) to Major and Assistant Adjutant General, Department of the Etowah, August 19, 1864: Vol. 1, p. 89-90; Letter Box, 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry; Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations; Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1780-1917, Record Group 94; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

<sup>173</sup> Morgan, “Reminiscences of Service with Colored Troops in the Army of the Cumberland, 1863-65.” 29.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

to leave the service.”<sup>175</sup> For nearly the entire life of the regiment, it had been assigned to fatigue and garrison duty, despite Morgan’s continual appeals for combat assignments. For the black men of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI, exasperation was beginning to set in, as even their combat successes appeared to go relatively unnoticed.

On September 27, 1864, the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI reported to Pulaski, Tennessee to support a force of Union cavalry stationed there under the command of Major General Rousseau. A “large force” of Confederate cavalry, commanded by General Nathan Bedford Forest, had been attacking Rousseau’s line and sought to destroy the Union rail lines. Colonel Morgan explained that his men were quite familiar with the massacre of black soldiers at Fort Pillow in April of 1864, and that General Forest was rumored to have “offered a thousand dollars for the head of any commander of a ‘nigger’ regiment.”<sup>176</sup> However, standing toe to toe with the enemy, the men of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI were undaunted. When Forest’s cavalry began its advance toward the Union line, Morgan was surprised at the black soldiers’ eagerness to engage in battle against Forest:

Pointing to the advancing column I said, as I passed along the line: “Boys, it looks very much like [a] fight. Keep your cool; do your duty.” They seemed full of glee, and replied with great enthusiasm: “Col’nel, dey can’t whip us; dey nebber git de ole Fourteenth out of heah...[and] dey nebber drives us away widout a might lot of dead men...”<sup>177</sup>

When Forest’s cavalry reached the Union line of forces, they were unable to break through, and instead turned eastward and began heading toward Murfreesboro. Though they had engaged in a full-scale battle, the men of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI “had stood face to face with a triumphant troop of

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<sup>175</sup> Thomas J. Morgan, Colonel 14<sup>th</sup> USCI, Chattanooga, TN (Headquarters of the 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Troops) to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of the Cumberland, August 22, 1864: Vol. 1, p. 92; Letter Box, 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry; Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations; Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1780-1917. Record Group 94; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

<sup>176</sup> Morgan, “Reminiscences of Service with Colored Troops in the Army of the Cumberland, 1863-65,” 31.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

southern cavalry, and [had] stopped their progress.”<sup>178</sup> Once again, they headed back to Chattanooga to await their next opportunity to prove themselves in battle.

Towards the end of October 1864, the regiment was sent from Chattanooga as part of a group of Union soldiers to the relief of Brigadier General Robert S. Granger at Decatur, Alabama. After having fought against General Sherman’s forces throughout East Tennessee and Georgia, Confederate General John B. Hood’s Army of Tennessee began heading westward toward Nashville when Sherman commenced his bold “march to the sea.” As a part of his Franklin-Nashville Campaign, Hood had begun attacking Granger’s relatively meager forces on October 26. Colonel Morgan and the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI reached Decatur at about 4 o’clock PM on October 27 as part of a detachment of approximately 5,000 men from Chattanooga, and were placed under Granger’s command.<sup>179</sup> According to a dispatch written by D.P. Conyngham from Chattanooga regarding the Federal actions against the Army of Tennessee, Decatur was garrisoned by “only a single brigade and the Fourteenth United States Colored Troops” when Hood’s generals Cheatham and Lee attacked again on October 27. On Thursday, October 27<sup>th</sup>, a detachment under Lieutenant Colonel Corbin stationed itself on the north side of the Tennessee River across from Hood’s right flank, keeping up “an annoying musket fire.”<sup>180</sup>

The following day, approximately 400 men of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI charged an earthwork on Hood’s right flank, capturing a small number of prisoners and driving away the remainder of those occupying the work, while also capturing and spiking a battery of four large guns. During the course of the charge, the men of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI captured 14 Confederate prisoners.<sup>181</sup>

Overall, the Union forces under Granger’s command captured over 200 prisoners and inflicted

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<sup>178</sup> Morgan, “Reminiscences of Service with Colored Troops in the Army of the Cumberland, 1863-65.” 33.

<sup>179</sup> Tennessee Civil War Centennial Commission, 400.

<sup>180</sup> The New York Herald. November 20, 1864. See also “Reminiscences of Service with Colored Troops in the Army of the Cumberland, 1863-65” by Thomas J. Morgan, 34.

<sup>181</sup> Tennessee Civil War Centennial Commission, 400.



approximately 300 casualties on Hood's army.<sup>182</sup> When ordered to charge and take the battery, the men of the 14<sup>th</sup> "manifested no wonder excitement or fear but seemed anxious for the work," even though they were equipped with "only accoutrements and canteens of water."<sup>183</sup> The admirable performance of the men earned praises from both General Granger and General Thomas, and Hood was forced to withdraw his men from Decatur.<sup>184</sup> General Granger was so impressed by the fighting of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI that he wrote: "The action of the colored troops under Colonel Morgan was everything that could be expected or desired of soldiers. They were cool, brave, and determined; and under the heaviest fire of the enemy exhibited no signs of confusion."<sup>185</sup> In the same manner as at Dalton, white troops who had witnessed the combat of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI gave the regiment "three rousing cheers" as they marched in to occupy the Confederate fortifications. Additional praise was offered by the lieutenant colonel commanding the 68<sup>th</sup> Indiana Volunteer Infantry, who said that his soldiers "would rather fight alongside...the Fourteenth Colored, than with any white regiment."<sup>186</sup>

Morgan himself expressed his praises of his regiment's service at Decatur in a statement written nearly a month later, in which he claimed that his men "proved themselves soldiers...on the march, on the skirmish line, [and] in the charge." In particular, he singled out companies F and G, who "behaved like veteran soldiers" even though they had never before been under fire. In return for their reputable conduct on the battlefield, his men had gained "an enviable reputation in the Western Army noted for its fighting qualities." This newly acquired reputation

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<sup>182</sup> *The New York Herald*. November 20. 1864.

<sup>183</sup> Thomas J. Morgan, Colonel 14<sup>th</sup> USCI. Decatur, AL (Headquarters of the 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Troops) to Charles T. Hewitt, Lieutenant 18<sup>th</sup> Michigan Infantry, November 2, 1864: Discharge Book. Vol. 1, p. 86-88; Letter Box. 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry: Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations: Records of the Adjutant General's Office. 1780-1917, Record Group 94: National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

<sup>184</sup> Morgan, "Reminiscences of Service with Colored Troops in the Army of the Cumberland, 1863-65." 35.

<sup>185</sup> Tennessee Civil War Centennial Commission, 400.

<sup>186</sup> Morgan, "Reminiscences of Service with Colored Troops in the Army of the Cumberland, 1863-65," 36.

in the Union Army is evidenced by the fact that the 14<sup>th</sup> received “three hearty cheers from a regiment of white men” following the engagement at Decatur. Just one year earlier, the regiment had been virtually unknown, and it was considered doubtful among the people of the United States whether blacks could bear the responsibility of soldiery. “Today,” Morgan proudly acclaimed, “the 14<sup>th</sup> is known throughout the Army and the North, and is honored. The Colonel commanding is proud of the regiment, and would not exchange its command for that of the best white regiment in the United States service.”<sup>187</sup>

Immediately after their engagement at Decatur, the men of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI could not have foreseen another encounter with Hood’s Army of Tennessee just over a month later. Following its two minor military engagements at Dalton and Decatur, the regiment returned to the Post of Chattanooga, where it had been stationed since February of 1864. However, this time they did not remain long enough to become bogged down with seemingly endless fatigue and garrison duty, since by the end of November they would be on their way to Nashville in order to participate in the defense of the city against Hood’s invading army.<sup>188</sup> In command of the 14<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 44<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry regiments, Colonel Morgan boarded a train from Chattanooga to Nashville on November 29, 1864.<sup>189</sup>

During their first year of enlistment in the Union Army, the black soldiers of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI emerged from the oppressive fetters of slavery to become soldiers worthy of recognition. Though they endured injustice from Union military policies and the racist actions of white soldiers, the men of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI demonstrated their martial valor to their commanders and to

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<sup>187</sup> General Order No. 50. Thomas J. Morgan. Colonel 14<sup>th</sup> USCI. Chattanooga, TN (Headquarters of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI), November 23, 1864; Regimental Orders. General Orders. Vol. 3, p. 24; Letter Box. 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry; Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations: Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1780-1917. Record Group 94: National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

<sup>188</sup> Tennessee Civil War Centennial Commission, 400.

<sup>189</sup> Morgan. “Reminiscences of Service with Colored Troops in the Army of the Cumberland, 1863-65,” 36.

other white soldiers. On the eve of the Battle of Nashville, the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI had already taken advantage of two opportunities to assert their martial valor, and they had subscribed to their commanding officer's conception of black manhood. However, its highest praise was to be won on the fields at Nashville.

## Chapter 3

### The Battle of Nashville

*[The Battle of Nashville] was the first time in the memorable history of the Army of the Cumberland [i.e. General George H. Thomas' army] that the blood of black and white men flowed freely together for one common cause for a country's freedom and independence. Each was cheered on to victory by the cooperation of the other, and now, as the result, wherever the flag of our love goes, our hopes may advance, and we may, as a people, with propriety claim political equality with our white fellow-soldier and citizen; and every man that makes his home in our country may, whatever be his complexion or progeny, with propriety, exclaim to the world, "I am an American citizen!" I ask, is there not something in this over which to rejoice and be proud?<sup>190</sup>*

-Sergeant Major Daniel W. Atwood of the 100<sup>th</sup> USCT

Sergeant Major Daniel W. Atwood's reflection on the Battle of Nashville elucidates the extent to which black soldiery in the Civil War was used by blacks in their appeals for equality during the late nineteenth century. Atwood wrote his account to the editors of the Anglo-American, a popular Black and abolitionist newspaper during the Civil War. His declaration paints a picture of white and black soldiers fighting for a "common cause," but in reality, black Union soldiers at the Battle of Nashville were fighting not just for military victory, but also for their very freedom. By demonstrating their bravery in combat at Nashville, the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI and other black regiments at the Battle of Nashville proved their worth as soldiers and demonstrated their manhood.

For the 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry and other black regiments at the Battle of Nashville, much was at stake in going to battle against the Confederate forces of General John Bell Hood's Army of Tennessee. Not only were they to face another opportunity to prove themselves as soldiers, thus demonstrating their manhood and strengthening their claims to equal

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<sup>190</sup> The Anglo-African, April 22, 1865.

rights, but also they were to engage in a battle over crucial Union territory. By December 1864, black Union regiments had already experienced a certain level of military success in engagements at Port Hudson, Milliken's Bend and Fort Wagner. In addition, the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI had enjoyed a considerable amount of military success in its initial engagements. However, the men of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI were to undertake at Nashville their first large-scale military operation, and both they and their white officers understood that their performance at Nashville would have far-reaching implications.<sup>191</sup>

Union leaders saw victory at the Battle of Nashville as essential to reversing the northward advance of the Confederate Army of Tennessee under the command of General John Bell Hood. To generals on both sides of the conflict, the area of Middle Tennessee represented a crucial military stronghold in the South. Not only did it hold a vast source of military supplies, but it was also a strategic geographical location for both armies due to its numerous railroads and communication lines. Because of its importance as a center for Federal military communication, transportation and supply, Union regiments had constructed several forts and redoubts to guard the city of Nashville. General Hood's main objective in mobilizing the Army of Tennessee northward was to "overpower [Union forces in Nashville] and regain possession of that important center and its vast source of supplies" in order to re-establish Confederate control of the western theater of conflict.<sup>192</sup>

Hood's Army of Tennessee had been frustrated in its attacks against General Sherman, and sought to "strike a bold blow" against General Thomas in order to make up for its failure to thwart Sherman's "march to the sea."<sup>193</sup> After Hood's debilitating defeat at Franklin just days before his arrival in Nashville, during which his forces had sustained 6,252 casualties including

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<sup>191</sup> Smith. Black Soldiers in Blue. 235.

<sup>192</sup> Horn. Stanley F. The Decisive Battle of Nashville. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press. 1956. 7.

<sup>193</sup> Morgan. "Reminiscences of Service with Colored Troops in the Army of the Cumberland. 1863-65." 39.

six general officers dead, six wounded and one captured, his Army of Tennessee was in quite a desperate situation as they faced a significant manpower shortage.<sup>194</sup> Furthermore, his remaining soldiers were “scantily clothed and poorly fed.”<sup>195</sup> With Hood’s army in such dire straits, and the looming prospect of being driven out of the western theater of war, the Battle of Nashville represented a last chance for the Confederacy. The stage was set for a dramatic and desperate contest between the North and South, on which hung the future of the Union and of the institution of slavery.

During the autumn and early winter of 1864, Union General Ulysses S. Grant had grown increasingly concerned about the prospect of being flanked by Hood’s northward advancing Confederate forces.<sup>196</sup> In his opinion, military success in Nashville was necessary in order to secure Union victory. In confirmation of his general state of anxiety over the fate of Nashville, Grant decided on December 14, 1864 to travel to the city himself from his post in Virginia in order to oversee General Thomas’ command. The fact that the most senior general in the Union Army would travel himself to Nashville to oversee preparation for battle reveals the uncertainty of Union leaders regarding the outcome of the Battle of Nashville.<sup>197</sup> Fears over the potential loss of Nashville to Confederate forces also permeated other sectors of the Union government and military ranks, as Chief of Staff W. Halleck, Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton and President Lincoln all expressed genuine uneasiness and concern in regard to the upcoming Nashville campaign.<sup>198</sup> Confederate officers also saw the Battle of Nashville as a crucial military engagement. In a distressed letter to Confederate General Edmund Kirby Smith of the

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<sup>194</sup> Official Records of the War of the Rebellion. Series I, Vol. XLV. Pt. I [S# 93]. No. 1.

<sup>195</sup> Morgan. “Reminiscences of Service with Colored Troops in the Army of the Cumberland. 1863-65.” 39.

<sup>196</sup> Horn, The Decisive Battle of Nashville, 7.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, ix.

Trans-Mississippi Department, fellow General Beauregard exclaimed, “The fate of the country may depend upon the result of Hood’s campaign in Tennessee.”<sup>199</sup>

After his disastrous defeat in Franklin, TN at the hands of Major General Schofield, General Hood moved his forces to the hills south of Nashville with an effective fighting force of roughly 23,000 men. Compared to General Thomas’ army of over 55,000, Hood’s forces were decidedly paltry.<sup>200</sup> Hood’s intelligence had discovered that the city was thoroughly fortified with Union troops and three major military forts (Fort Negley, Fort Morton and Fort McCook). Upon arriving in Nashville, he ordered Lieutenant General Stephen D. Lee’s forces to the center of the Confederate line, with Lieutenant General Alexander P. Stewart’s to the left and Major General Benjamin F. Cheatham’s to the right. Hood’s battle plan was strictly defensive, as he planned to wait until General Thomas’ forces struck the first blow.<sup>201</sup>

In command of the First Colored Brigade, including the 14<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, and 44<sup>th</sup> USCI regiments and as part of a detachment from the District of the Etowah under General James B. Steedman, Morgan left Chattanooga for Nashville on November 29, 1864 with the resolute intent of engaging the enemy in battle for the defense of Nashville. On the way, the 16<sup>th</sup> USCI was detached from Morgan’s command and assigned to guard a pontoon train, while the 17<sup>th</sup> USCI was ordered to take its place in battle. In addition, Morgan was put in command of the 18<sup>th</sup> USCI for the upcoming battle, leaving him in command of four black regiments.<sup>202</sup> Since Morgan was to be commanding one of two brigades of black regiments, Lieutenant Colonel Corbin was assigned to command the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI during the battle of Nashville. On the way from Chattanooga, as part of a convoy of troops traveling by train to Nashville, Companies A and D of

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<sup>199</sup> Official Records. Vol. XLV. Pt. II. 639.

<sup>200</sup> Horn, The Decisive Battle of Nashville. 21.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>202</sup> Berlin, Et. Al., The Black Military Experience. 560.

the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI were fired upon by one of General Forrest's batteries on the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad. Although their train was derailed and they sustained seven casualties, the two companies of the 14<sup>th</sup> continued on toward Nashville to rejoin the rest of their regiment.<sup>203</sup>

Arriving on December 1<sup>st</sup> in Nashville along with the rest of Major General Steedman's troops, Morgan's regiments were placed at the extreme left of the Union line facing southward toward Hood's approaching Army of Tennessee, which arrived in Nashville on the same day. Because of the heavy ice cover on the field of battle, General Thomas delayed the commencement of fighting, much to the chagrin of the jittery General Grant stationed in Virginia. Soon after they had arrived, the men of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI were put to work erecting a barricade in front of their portion of the line. In obedience to orders from Morgan, Lieutenant Colonel Henry Corbin ordered his companies to "sleep on their arms and to keep a strong alarm guard during the night in front of the regiment" in case of an unexpected attack.<sup>204</sup> The following morning, they abandoned the works they had constructed on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and moved to the rear of the line to construct "much stronger" works at an abandoned homestead. Upon receiving orders on December 5<sup>th</sup> for his command to "make a reconnaissance to [the] front and on the enemy's right," Corbin deployed five companies of troops within the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI to scout out the land between them and the Confederate right flank. While scouting out the land, they also captured fourteen Confederate prisoners, including one commissioned officer.<sup>205</sup>

From the 5<sup>th</sup> of December until the 15<sup>th</sup>, the men of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI continued to work picket duty, constructing defensive fortifications in their portion of the Union line. As soon as

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<sup>203</sup> Tennessee Civil War Centennial Commission, 401.

<sup>204</sup> Henry C. Corbin, Lieutenant Colonel 14<sup>th</sup> USCI, Chattanooga, TN to Lieutenant and Assistant Adjutant General Clelland, 1<sup>st</sup> Colored Brigade, January 13, 1865: Discharge Book, Vol. 1, p. 107-112; Letter Box, 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry; Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations; Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780-1917, Record Group 94; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.



the heavy ice cover had sufficiently melted on December 14th, Thomas resolved to begin the general charge. He called his generals to a meeting to discuss his carefully devised battle plan. General Thomas had planned a feint on the right flank of the Confederate army line (General Cheatham's 4<sup>th</sup> Corps) that would render their left flank vulnerable to a surprise attack by the bulk of Union forces. At the behest of Major General Schofield, Thomas had also decided to increase the number of men attacking Hood's left flank from 10,000 to 20,000, thus necessarily reducing the number of soldiers that would be involved in the crucial feint attack and increasing the inherent danger of such a maneuver.<sup>206</sup>

Considering the relatively few fighting men that were to engage Hood's right flank, the feint would be a particularly treacherous military maneuver. According to Thomas' original strategy for the opening day of battle, the black regiments of the First and Second Colored Brigades were to be placed in the rear of the Union left flank, as most inexperienced regiments- both white and black- usually were employed. However, in response to Morgan's protesting, Thomas changed his plans, assigning the First and Second Colored Brigades to the detachment that would carry out the feint on General Hood's right flank.<sup>207</sup> Therefore, Thomas' decision to assign black troops to the feint maneuver may be viewed more as a concession to Morgan, who was adamant about giving his men every possible opportunity to prove themselves in combat.

General Thomas chose a portion of Major General Steedman's provisional detachment to lead the feint, including the First and Second Colored Brigade, two white infantry regiments and two batteries of artillery. Colonel Morgan was summoned to General Steedman's headquarters at nine o'clock PM on December 14 to receive battle instructions for the brigade of black regiments under his command. His First Colored Brigade was to consist of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI under

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<sup>206</sup> Horn, The Decisive Battle of Nashville. 65.

<sup>207</sup> Redman, Major General George H. Thomas, Practitioner of Emancipation, October 2000.

Lieutenant Colonel Corbin, three other black regiments, a provisional brigade of white soldiers, and a section of artillery.<sup>208</sup> Steedman ordered Morgan and his troops to take their place at the extreme left of the Union line, and placed the Second Colored Brigade (commanded by Colonel Charles R. Thompson) to Morgan's immediate right.<sup>209</sup> Upon the order of Steedman, Morgan's and Thompson's brigades were to "open the fight by making a vigorous assault upon Hood's right flank," hopefully drawing the attention of Hood's army to his right flank and allowing the remainder of Union forces to attack and overwhelm a weakened and exposed Confederate left flank. Upon hearing of the plan to attack early on the morning of the 15<sup>th</sup>, the men of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI were instructed to "hold [themselves] in readiness to move."<sup>210</sup> Although a portion of the attacking group was white infantry and artillery soldiers, over seventy percent of the men assigned to execute the feint were black.<sup>211</sup>

Given the considerable danger involved in such a feint, and Thomas' decision to utilize the black troops under Major General Steedman as a grand diversion, racial prejudice may very well have factored into Thomas' battle plan. General Thomas' decision to entrust the execution of the feint to two brigades of black soldiers, many of whom had yet to see extensive combat experience, suggests that he may have viewed black soldiers as little more than cannon fodder. Even if they were massacred in their attempt to draw Hood's army off-balance, that would not spell doom for the overall success of Thomas' battle plan, since they would still have accomplished their main purpose in drawing the Confederate commander's attention toward his fight flank.<sup>212</sup> Prior to the Battle of Nashville, Union military leaders had heard of and seen instances of black valor and skill in combat, but many white leaders still harbored doubts as to

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<sup>208</sup> Morgan, "Reminiscences of Service with Colored Troops in the Army of the Cumberland, 1863-65," 41.

<sup>209</sup> McPherson, *The Negro's Civil War*, 233.

<sup>210</sup> Henry C. Corbin, January 13, 1865, National Archives.

<sup>211</sup> Horn, *The Decisive Battle of Nashville*, 74.

<sup>212</sup> McPherson, *The Negro's Civil War*, 230.

the effectiveness and capability of black soldiers. General Thomas had exemplified this racial skepticism in a conversation he had with Colonel Morgan soon after the organization of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI. Thomas asked Morgan if he thought the men of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI would fight bravely if given the chance, and Morgan “replied that they would.” General Thomas expressed his opinion that black soldiers would only fight willingly “behind breastworks,” and he disagreed with Morgan’s claim that the men of the 14<sup>th</sup> would fight in the open field of battle.<sup>213</sup> Although this comment was not mentioned in Thomas’ own writings, it sheds light onto his complex attitudes regarding black soldiers and their capabilities in combat.

On the other hand, it is likely that General Thomas would not have placed black regiments of the First and Second Colored Brigades at the front of the initial attack if Morgan had not petitioned for such a move. Colonel Morgan’s adamant lobbying for black regiments to be placed in the front lines shows that he was willing to place the men of his regiment in the most dangerous position on the battlefield in order to provide every possible opportunity for them to “make their freedom a necessity, and their citizenship a certainty.”<sup>214</sup> Throughout the course of his regiment’s organization and frequent assignment to labor detachments, Morgan had been steadfast in his petitions for combat duty over fatigue duty. At the Battle of Nashville, his wish was granted, but his men were consequently placed in the most dangerous combat position on the field.

On the morning of Thursday December 15, 1864, the men of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI stood ready at daybreak, but didn’t receive orders to commence their charge until seven o’clock AM due to a heavy fog. About eight o’clock AM, Morgan’s Brigade (including the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI) moved forward on the right of the Confederate lines from the Murfreesboro Pike in the direction of

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<sup>213</sup> Morgan, “Reminiscences of Service with Colored Troops in the Army of the Cumberland, 1863-65,” 22.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

Riddle's Hill.<sup>215</sup> The black soldiers "moved forward slowly" at first, but soon succeeded in driving the Confederate right flank "from their outer works back to their inner lines." After being joined by the 44<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> USCI, the men of the 14<sup>th</sup> moved forward until they ran into a series of heavily entrenched Confederate batteries. From these batteries, the regiment "sustained a heavy fire," and was forced to fall back a ways to a small brick house. "Although under a deadly fire and the main line falling back," the men of the regiment tenaciously "stood their places and annoyed the enemy's gunners" before falling back under the cover of a hill.<sup>216</sup> At about eleven o'clock AM the regiment helped to attack a Confederate earthwork, a position it would hold until the next morning.<sup>217</sup> Uninformed of the status of the main attack on the Confederate left flank, the regiment continued firing until nine o'clock PM.<sup>218</sup> By the end of the On the morning of Thursday December 15, 1864, the First and Second Colored Brigades proceeded to execute a "vigorous feint" (along with two regiments of white infantry and two artillery regiments) that succeeded in toppling a Confederate line of works and attacking "a considerable force of the enemy."<sup>219</sup>

As a result of the diversion caused by the feint on the Confederate right flank, the remainder of Thomas' army was able to engage and overwhelm Horn's left flank, capturing a large number of Confederate prisoners. Although over 300 of Colonel Morgan's men were either killed or wounded, the Union army accomplished its primary objective of turning the Rebels' left flank, making December 15 a "severe but glorious day" for Thomas' Union forces.<sup>220</sup> Given his units' position at the extreme left of the advancing Union forces, Morgan

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<sup>215</sup> Tennessee Civil War Centennial Commission, 401.

<sup>216</sup> Henry C. Corbin, January 13, 1865, National Archives.

<sup>217</sup> Tennessee Civil War Centennial Commission, 401.

<sup>218</sup> Henry C. Corbin, January 13, 1865, National Archives.

<sup>219</sup> Berlin, Et. Al., *The Black Military Experience*, 560.

<sup>220</sup> Morgan, "Reminiscences of Service with Colored Troops in the Army of the Cumberland, 1863-65," 44.

and his troops suffered exceedingly high casualties in the feint, but their sacrifice was a necessary component of Union victory during the first day of battle. The black men of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI had demonstrated their courage to a multitude of white onlookers, and white soldiers had fought and died alongside black soldiers under a “common valor.” In his personal memoir after the war, Morgan remarked with a certain pride that his “colored soldiers had again fought side by side with white troops.” He also shared that his unit received high praise from Major General Steedman, who expressed that his “only fear had been that [they] might fight too hard.”<sup>221</sup>

Realizing his left flank had been hopelessly turned by Thomas’ army, General Hood withdrew his forces that evening a few miles back to a series of low hills and ordered the construction of heavy fortifications in anticipation of another Union assault the next day. By Friday morning, December 16, Hood’s army had fallen back some 2-3 miles from their original position, and they dug in at Overton Hill with Franklin and Granny White Pikes as their two lines of retreat.<sup>222</sup> Having been deceived by the Union Army’s feint and seriously hurt on the left side of their line, Hood and his men prepared earnestly for daybreak.

At the break of dawn on the following morning (December 16<sup>th</sup>), the left line of Union forces moved forward and occupied the Confederate works “without resistance.” Upon encountering several fallen comrades lying on the field of battle, the men could not help but notice that many of their fellow black soldiers had been stripped of all their clothing and belongings. Confederate soldiers had resorted to petty theft by running off with the clothing, weapons, and personal belongings of these black soldiers.<sup>223</sup> It is unknown whether their looting was limited only to black soldiers, but it is likely that racially charged emotions motivated some Confederate soldiers to ransack specifically the bodies of black soldiers. After recovering their

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<sup>221</sup> Morgan, “Reminiscences of Service with Colored Troops in the Army of the Cumberland, 1863-65,” 44.

<sup>222</sup> Berlin, Et. Al., The Black Military Experience, 560.

<sup>223</sup> Henry C. Corbin, January 13, 1865, National Archives.

dead and wounded from the charge the day before, the First and Second Colored Brigade advanced to the hillside at Overton Hill on the morning of the second day of battle.

During the night, Hood's army had built a considerable number of fortifications. In his letter to Captain C.P. Brown following the Battle of Nashville, Union Colonel Reuben D. Mussey observed that the "Rebels had battery of [four] pieces, sheltered by a strong earthwork" upon the slope of Overton Hill that would require a valiant charge on the part of the Union soldiers.<sup>224</sup> Once again, Morgan's and Thompson's Colored Brigades stood side by side at the left end of the Union line, along with the rest of Major General Steedman's detachment, which included also a small force of white infantry and two batteries of artillery. At 3pm, Colonel Thompson's Second Colored Brigade and Colonel P. Sidney Post's Second Brigade (Third Division of Brigadier General Thomas J. Wood's Fourth Army Corps) were ordered to charge the Confederate fortifications at Overton Hill in order to "feel out" the strength of Hood's defenses. Their attack was ultimately repulsed despite the gallantry of the black soldiers in Thompson's Second Colored Brigade. According to an official record written by Confederate Brigadier General James T. Holtzclaw, the black regiments under Thompson executed "desperate" and "determined" charges upon the Rebel earthworks, but their efforts were unsuccessful and they quickly fell back behind Morgan's First Colored Brigade and the rest of the Union line.<sup>225</sup>

Scarcely more than an hour after the first Union charges were repelled, the First and Second Colored Brigades participated in a second charge upon Confederate forces at Shy's Hill, about a half-mile from a Confederate fort. Colonel Morgan recalled the heroic charge made by the black soldiers under his command:

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<sup>224</sup> Berlin, Et. Al., *The Black Military Experience*, 561.

<sup>225</sup> *Official Records*, Vol. XLV, Pt. I, 698, 705.

It was with breathless interest I watched that noble army climb that hill with a steady resolve which nothing but death could check. When at length the assaulting column sprang upon the earthworks, and the enemy seeing that further resistance was madness, gave way and began a precipitous retreat, our hearts swelled as only the hearts of soldiers can, and scarcely stopping to cheer, or to await orders, we pushed forward and joined in the pursuit until the darkness and the rain forced a halt.<sup>226</sup>

This time the charge was successful, as Union forces forced the retreat of Hood's army out of Nashville. In his official account of the charge up Shy's Hill, General Steedman explained that the black soldiers of the First and Second Colored Brigades "immediately pursued" Hood's retreating army as soon as they had broken through the Confederate line and taken control of earthworks situated on Shy's Hill. After "taking a number of prisoners," the men of the First and Second Colored Brigades kept pursuing Hood's army until after dark, having pushed them as far south as Brentwood, Tennessee.<sup>227</sup>

For several weeks after the bloody yet victorious Union campaign at Nashville, members of Thomas' Army of Cumberland continued to pursue Hood's Army of Tennessee southward toward Franklin. During the subsequent month, the First Colored Brigade (as part of the Second Provisional Division under Major General Steedman) continued to drive General Hood's forces southward, eventually crossing the Tennessee River and moving as far as Huntsville, Alabama before concluding its pursuit.<sup>228</sup>

At Nashville, the advancing Army of Tennessee was soundly beaten, and Union forces continued to drive it across southward across the Tennessee River until the end of 1864.<sup>229</sup> In defeating the Army of Tennessee, General Thomas and his forces were able to overcome the Confederate left flank and thus succeeded in dashing any Confederate hopes of regaining control

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<sup>226</sup> Morgan, "Reminiscences of Service with Colored Troops in the Army of the Cumberland, 1863-65," 47.

<sup>227</sup> Official Records. Vol. XLV, Pt. I. [S# 93].

<sup>228</sup> Morgan, "Reminiscences of Service with Colored Troops in the Army of the Cumberland, 1863-65," 50.

<sup>229</sup> Official Records. Vol. XLV. Pt. I [S# 93].

of the militarily crucial area of Middle Tennessee.<sup>230</sup> The outcome of the two-day engagement sealed the fate of the Confederacy by ending Hood's military hopes in Tennessee and driving his decimate Army of Tennessee back southward. A mere four months after General Hood's Army of Tennessee began retreating southward from Nashville, the Confederates had surrendered and the war was finally over. In a statement that revealed the significance of the Battle of Nashville, Union Major General John M. Schofield wrote after the war: "the defeat and practical destruction of Hood's army in Tennessee was what paved the way to the speedy termination of the war."<sup>231</sup>

In his recollection of the First and Second Colored Brigade's heroic charge up Shy's Hill in pursuit of the enemy, Colonel Morgan wrote that the black men of both units exhibited "a steady resolve" and determination to achieve victory "which nothing but death itself could check."<sup>232</sup> The men of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI were fully aware of the atrocities committed against black Union soldiers at Fort Pillow in April of 1864.<sup>233</sup> Thus, they were conscious of the fact that being captured by any Confederate army might result in similar vicious tactics. This realization probably led to an increased sense of desperation in their combat, as they found themselves preferring death to humiliating capture at the hands of their former masters.

During the Union triumph on the second and final day of the Battle of Nashville, the black men of the First and Second Colored Brigades once again proved themselves in combat and invalidated preconceived notions of black soldiers' incompetence. As black and white bodies lay next to each other on the slopes of Shy's Hill, Colonel Reuben D. Mussey noted that "death had known no distinction of color, nor had Valor, for the blacks were as near the enemy's

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<sup>230</sup> Horn, *The Decisive Battle of Nashville*, xii.

<sup>231</sup> Schofield, General John M. *Forty-Six Years in the Army*, 348.

<sup>232</sup> McPherson, *The Negro's Civil War*, 233.

<sup>233</sup> Morgan, "Reminiscences of Service with Colored Troops in the Army of the Cumberland, 1863-65," 31-32.



line, as were the whites.”<sup>234</sup> Even General George H. Thomas, who before the battle had voiced his skepticism regarding the resolve and competence of black soldiers, spoke well of the men of the First and Second Colored Brigades after witnessing the “bodies of colored men side by side with the foremost, on the very works of the enemy.” According to Morgan’s post-war memoir, Thomas stood corrected as he declared his newfound respect for the sacrifice and bravery of black soldiers: “Gentlemen, the question is settled; negroes will fight.”<sup>235</sup>

Thomas was not alone in his positive impressions of black soldiers’ performance in combat during the Battle of Nashville. In his official battle report, Lieutenant Colonel Corbin testified that both “men and officers [of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI] acted most nobly throughout [the battle], never flinching and ever ready to go when ordered.”<sup>236</sup> Even General Sherman himself, who at the outset of black recruitment had expressed serious reservations against the enlistment of black soldiers, was quick to recognize the strategic importance of the Battle of Nashville toward ensuring the success of his Atlanta campaign. Although he didn’t praise the black men of the First and Second Colored Brigade directly, he did admit that Thomas’ victory at the Battle of Nashville, in which black soldiers were heavily utilized, was “necessary to [his victory] at Savannah,” which capped his decisive “march to the sea.”<sup>237</sup>

Following its involvement in the southward pursuit of Hood’s Confederate forces, and after the dissolution of the First Colored Brigade on January 12, 1865, the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI was stationed again in Chattanooga.<sup>238</sup> On March 1, 1865, Morgan voluntarily relinquished command of the 14<sup>th</sup>, expressing his “strong attachment to the regiment and [his] unbounded confidence in its bravery.” To his officers, Morgan expressed heartfelt gratitude for their “hearty

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<sup>234</sup> Berlin, Et. Al. *The Black Military Experience*, 561.

<sup>235</sup> Morgan, “Reminiscences of Service with Colored Troops in the Army of the Cumberland, 1863-65,” 48.

<sup>236</sup> Henry C. Corbin. January 13, 1865. National Archives.

<sup>237</sup> Sherman, William T. *Memoirs of General William T. Sherman*, vol. I. New York, 1984, 209, 217, 220.

<sup>238</sup> Tennessee Civil War Centennial Commission, 401.

cooperation in securing discipline and culture among the men.” Though he was exceedingly proud of his regiment’s accomplishments, and confident that it had already gained widespread reputation for exhibiting orderly conduct and bravery, he challenged the men to devote themselves “still greater to duty and to study, and for a higher development of manhood.”<sup>239</sup> Although much had been achieved toward the liberation and elevation of black men, much had yet to be accomplished. In Morgan’s farewell message to the men of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI, he continued to articulate a definition of manhood that upheld efficiency, obedience, education, and culture as its foundational components. Despite the courage and military strength displayed by black soldiers in his regiment during the course of their enlistment, Morgan chose not to emphasize these qualities when encouraging his men to devote themselves to “a higher development of manhood.”<sup>240</sup>

After the end of the war in April of 1865, black soldiers in the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI became increasingly anxious to move on with their lives and seek productive lives as free men. The increasing incidence of insubordination within the regiment is verification of this growing trend of restlessness among the men. In a report written during the middle of March 1865, Lieutenant Colonel Corbin described the problem of several soldiers straying away from the camp:

Hereafter until further orders any enlisted men found by the patrols beyond the limits of camp without permission from his company commander will be punished...[and] no more than five men from a company will be allowed to leave camp at a time and these must be at times to not interfere with drill save in case of extreme necessity; not more than two passes will be approved at these Headquarters from each company allowing men to visit the city except in cases of necessity, and these passes must be presented to the adjutant for approval by a non-commissioned before 9AM and always bear the approval of the company commander.<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> General Orders No. 7. Thomas J. Morgan, Colonel 14<sup>th</sup> USCI, Chattanooga, TN (Headquarters of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI), March 1, 1865; Regimental Orders, General Orders, Vol. 3, p. 81; Letter Box, 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry; Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations; Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1780-1917, Record Group 94; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> General Orders No. 11, Henry C. Corbin, Lieutenant Colonel 14<sup>th</sup> USCI, Commanding Regiment, Chattanooga,

Apparently, in their yearning to break free of the regiment and spend time in the city, many of the men had left camp without permission from their officers, a practice that posed a severe barrier to discipline in the regiment.

Alarmed by the reported rebelliousness among his former regiment, Morgan expressed his hope that the men of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI would “exercise the utmost care in everything they are called upon to do, to show themselves good soldiers, worthy of respect.” He earnestly exhorted them to be “vigilant and prompt in their work, and studiously avoid giving offense in any manner...[while avoiding] all controversies and quarrels and fights.”<sup>242</sup> The men’s reputation as brave and disciplined soldiers was in danger of being tarnished by the insubordination of those who were becoming tired of the military life and desired freedom. Veiled within Morgan’s language is a fear that black soldiers might nullify any potential gains from their military service if they did not continue to conduct themselves according to his understanding of “honorable men.” The increased incidence of insubordination among the men of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI was indicative of their growing restlessness with military life and their desire to seek productive civilian lives away from the hardships commonly associated with war. However, the mounting turbulence within the regiment also stemmed from resistance to Morgan’s promotion of a restrictive definition of manhood that emphasized obedience, subordination, efficiency, and the cultural values of the white middle-class.

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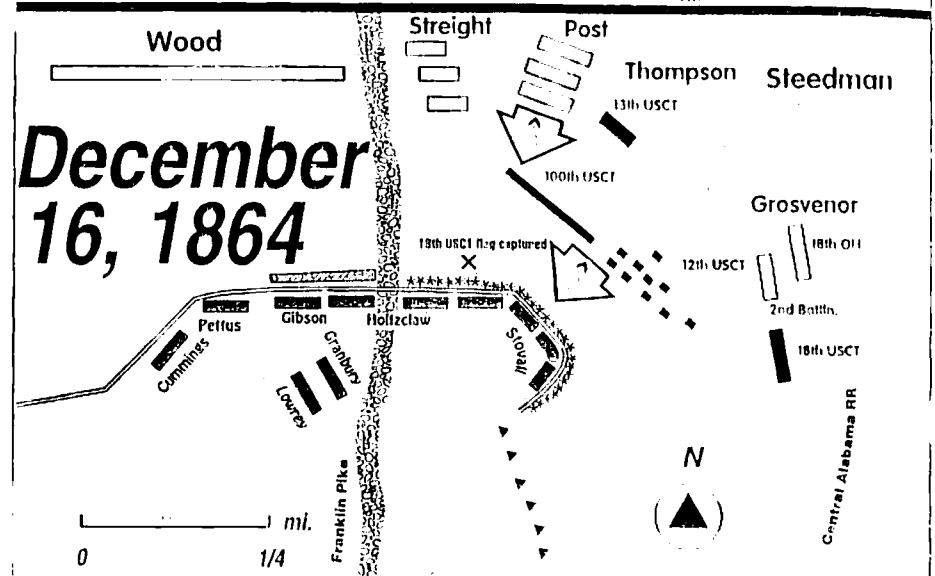
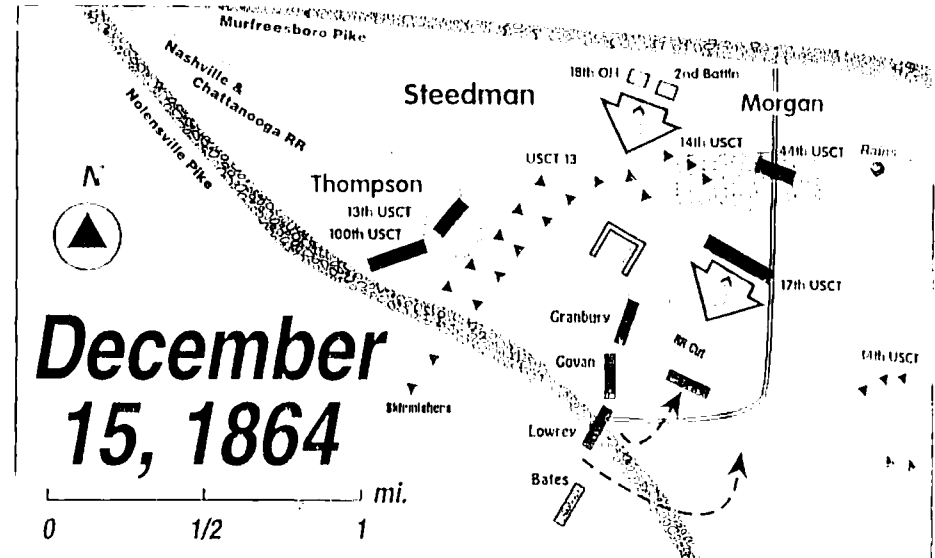
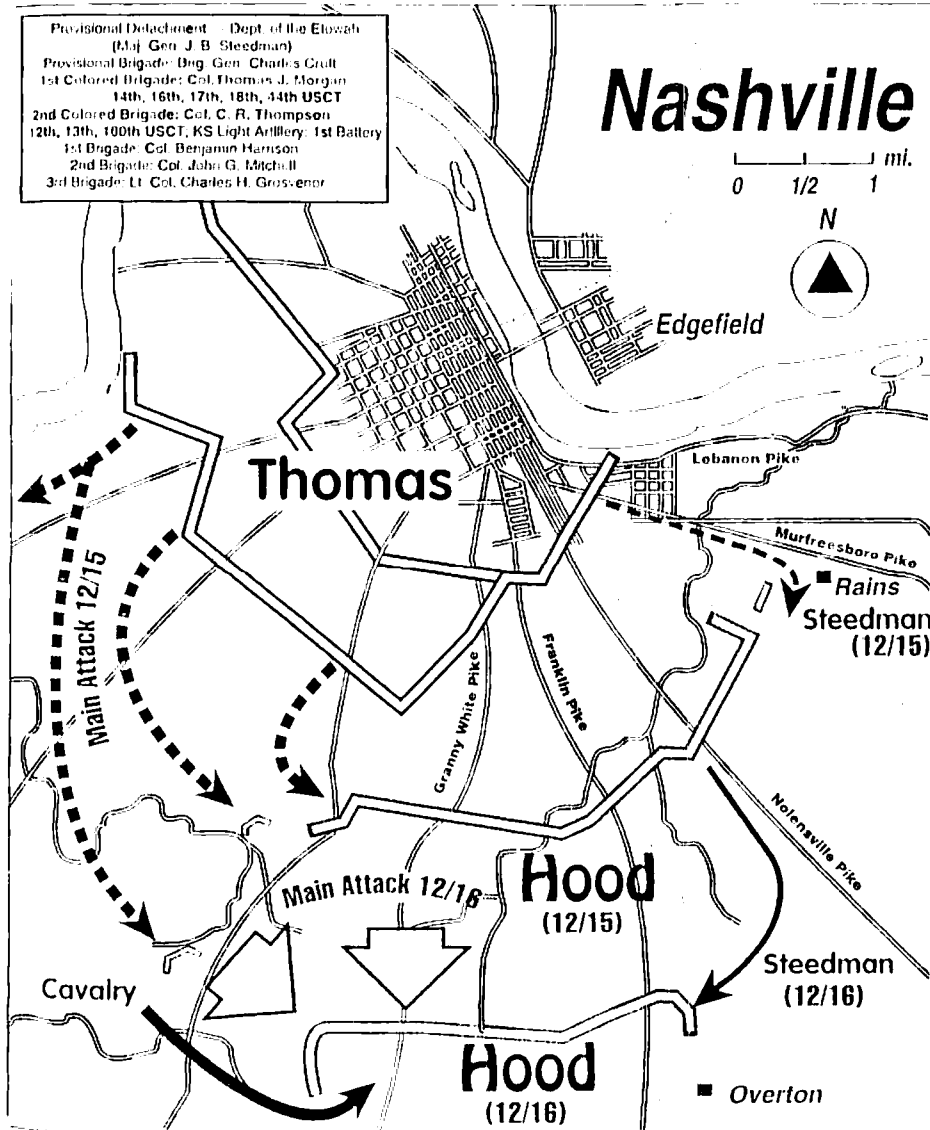
TN (Headquarters of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI), March 19, 1865; Order Book, Companies A-E, Company C, Vol. 4; Letter Box, 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry; Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations; Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1780-1917, Record Group 94; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

<sup>242</sup> General Orders No. 22, Thomas J. Morgan, Colonel 1<sup>st</sup> Colored Brigade and Colonel Commanding, Knoxville, TN (Headquarters of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI), July 22, 1865; Regimental Orders, General Orders, Vol. 3, p. 87-88; Letter Box, 14<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Infantry; Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations; Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1780-1917, Record Group 94; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

By means of their service in the Union Army, the black men of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI gained their freedom from slavery and actively participated in the overthrow of the Confederacy. Some learned to read and write in the regimental school, and all were taught new and useful skills that would apply to their post-war lives. They bonded together as a cohesive unit and supported each other in camp and on the field. In military engagements at Dalton, Pulaski, Decatur, and Nashville, they fought side by side with white regiments and effectively invalidated notions of white superiority in the minds of several white Union soldiers and commanders. However, in seeking to assert their manliness to a white-dominated American society that had effectively emasculated black men for generations, black soldiers in the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI were continually subjected to a definition of manhood that prevented them from becoming “free and powerful” and inhibited them from exerting authority over others.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> See “Black Men’s History” by Hine and Jenkins. 13.



Source: Trudeau, Noah Andre. *Like Men of War: Black Troops in the Civil War*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1998.

## Conclusion

### *Citizen Soldiers: The Construction of Black Manhood as the Connection Between Bravery and Citizenship*

*“By the bleached and whitened bones of the thousands slain upon the battlefields of the Republic, in the defence of Republican liberty- by the mangled corpses of our martyred braves at Fort Pillow- by every attribute of common humanity, we demand that the government shall do justice by the oppressed and loyal people who stood by the fortunes of the country in her hour of darkest trial.”<sup>244</sup>*

-Letter to the Editor calling for universal male suffrage, *The Christian Recorder*, June 24, 1865

Through their military service for the Union army and navy, black men were afforded the opportunity to prove their manhood by means of their collective bravery and willingness to sacrifice their lives for the Union cause. Their display of courage through military service brought about a change in the racial attitudes of many white Americans living in a male-dominated society that viewed martial valor as a determinant of manhood.<sup>245</sup> Also, black soldiers' bravery in combat strengthened their subsequent appeals for equal treatment within the Union military during the final stages of the Civil War and for citizenship rights after the war. References to “bravery” and “citizenship” are littered throughout newspaper editorials written by literate black soldiers and civilians immediately after the conclusion of military conflict. These vehement post-war appeals for equal treatment of blacks reveal both the limited effectiveness of the Emancipation Proclamation toward recognizing and maintaining the freedom of African Americans and the necessity of black military service for advancing the freedom and self-sufficiency of blacks in America.

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<sup>244</sup> *The Christian Recorder*, June 24, 1865.

<sup>245</sup> McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades*, 128.

In his Emancipation Proclamation, presented by public decree on January 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln announced a revolutionary policy of liberation for blacks in America:

On the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.<sup>246</sup>

Though its rhetoric was rich and its avowed intentions were noble, Lincoln's Proclamation was limited in its scope and efficacy toward bringing about universal emancipation and racial equality in America. Under its provisions, the Federal Government granted freedom only to slaves whose masters resided in states that were in rebellion against the United States as of January 1, 1863. Thus, the edict excluded from freedom those slaves who lived in Union border slave states.<sup>247</sup>

Also, following the establishment of the Bureau of Colored Troops in May 1863, the actions of the Federal Government toward black soldiers in the Union military certainly did not fulfill Lincoln's pledge to "do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom." In fact, in the post-war words of Thaddeus Stevens, the fiery abolitionist and proponent of radical reconstruction, "slavery was protected by [the U.S. Constitution] in every state in the Union where it existed."<sup>248</sup> President Lincoln presented the Proclamation as a necessary means to a desired end, namely the preservation of the Union. Though he viewed slavery as blemish on American society, he desired to implement a

<sup>246</sup> Lincoln, Abraham. The Emancipation Proclamation. January 1, 1863.

<sup>247</sup> McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom, 557-558.

<sup>248</sup> "Speech of the Honorary Thaddeus Stevens delivered to the city of Lancaster." (Pennsylvania). September 6, 1865.

stepwise process toward emancipation. In his public letter to Horace Greeley, editor of the *New York Tribune*, written on August 19, 1862, Lincoln clarified his personal war aims by stating that his ultimate objective was to save the Union, and that he would employ any means necessary to accomplish that task, including granting freedom to slaves in America.<sup>249</sup> In criticism of Lincoln's purposes for issuing the Proclamation, Frederick Douglass said: "I have applauded that paper and do now applaud it, as a wise measure- while I detest the motive and principle upon which it is based. By it the holding and flogging of Negroes is the exclusive luxury of loyal men."<sup>250</sup> It was clear to black leaders such as Douglass that the Emancipation Proclamation itself would not bring about the liberty and equality they desired.

In response to criticisms from several prominent northern blacks and abolitionist leaders, Lincoln invited Frederick Douglass to an interview at the White House. During his time with Douglass, the President asserted that while movement towards universal emancipation was proceeding slowly, it could only move forward as quickly as American public opinion would permit. The January 1 proclamation was merely the first step toward emancipation and equality, and a fuller realization of such noble aims would only come about as the American public began to acknowledge the humanity of black men and women.<sup>251</sup> In defense of President Lincoln, black abolitionist William Howard Day declared "that much of the failure of Mr. Lincoln to do his duty [toward blacks] is owing to the failure of the people of the land whose agent he is...[to] recognize the manhood of the black man of this country."<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> Lincoln, Abraham. Letter to the *New York Tribune*. August 19, 1862.

<sup>250</sup> Douglass, Frederick. "Mission of the War." *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, ed., by Philip S. Foner, III. New York: International Publishers, 1952. 386-87. In "Black Leaders and the Presidential Election of 1864" by Larry E. Nelson, *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 63, No. 1 (January, 1978), 47.

<sup>251</sup> Nelson, Larry E. "Black Leaders and the Presidential Election of 1864." *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 63, No. 1 (January, 1978), 47.

<sup>252</sup> Day, William Howard. "Address to American Anti-Slavery Society." *Liberator*. May 20, 1864. In "Black



As has been established up to this point, recognition of black men's manhood in nineteenth-century America came through their military service, and consequently through all of the accompanying opportunities, such as education and personal advancement, that such service afforded them. By participating in combat with the Union Army, black men were afforded the opportunity to prove their manhood in a society that prized manhood as a prerequisite to citizenship. However, as is illustrated in the particular example of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI, white officers often promoted complex definitions of manhood that emphasized duty and submission to authority. By nature of their dominant status in American society, the white American middle-class definition of manhood inevitably prevailed over that of black Union soldiers. Black men's display of collective valor through military service, as well as their ability to efficiently follow orders, brought about a change in the racial attitudes of some white Union officers during the war. This occurred with the social context of a male-dominated society that considered bravery, as well as duty and culture, to be necessary characteristics of manliness.

As stated in the introduction to this thesis, James M. McPherson makes a case for an explicit correlation between bravery and nineteenth-century masculinity in his book For Cause and Comrades by explaining how black Union soldiers "fought to prove their manhood in a society that prized courage as the hallmark of manhood."<sup>253</sup> Whether they were former slaves seeking to bring an end to slavery and provide freedom to millions of slaves, or whether they were free black men from northern states fighting to secure equal citizenship rights for all blacks, McPherson asserts that all black soldiers fought to prove their manhood through the demonstration of their bravery in combat.<sup>254</sup>

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Leaders and the Presidential Election of 1864" by Larry E. Nelson, *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 63, No. 1 (January, 1978), 47.

<sup>253</sup> McPherson, For Cause and Comrades, 128.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

Though he makes a compelling case for the connection between bravery and manhood in nineteenth-century America, McPherson's hypothesis does not explicitly differentiate between cause and effect as it relates to the discussion of black military service, manhood, and citizenship. McPherson correctly states that black soldiers fought "for their own freedom...[and] for citizenship in a restored Union" while also fighting "to prove their manhood."<sup>255</sup> However, he does not explicitly clarify in his work that black Union soldiers fought to prove their manhood *in order to* gain freedom and citizenship because manhood was traditionally considered a prerequisite to freedom and equal political status in America.

In order to deepen our understanding of the implicit relationship between military service and citizenship in nineteenth-century America, it is necessary to recognize manhood as the transitional link between military service and the granting of citizenship to black men. In other words, to borrow from McPherson, black Union soldiers "fought to prove their manhood in a society that prized courage as the hallmark of manhood" in order to gain equal rights and citizenship in a society that prized manhood as the hallmark of citizenship. From the combat experiences of black Union soldiers, the favorable responses of some white Americans, and finally the granting of black citizenship and suffrage with the fourteenth and fifteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution, one discovers two interesting characteristics of 19<sup>th</sup> American society: first, that courage was the determinant of manhood in the eyes of American men, and second, that manhood was the determinant of freedom and citizenship in the eyes of the leaders of the Union military and Federal government

Furthermore, to grasp more fully the relationship between military service, manhood, and citizenship, one must understand the various nineteenth-century contestations over how manhood should be defined. Through analysis of written documents from both white officers and free

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<sup>255</sup> McPherson. For Cause and Comrades, 128.

northern blacks, one notices that unlike middle-class whites such as Colonel Morgan, black voices did not emphasize the obedience, efficiency, discipline, or culture of black soldiers in their appeals for equal citizenship. Thus, we see considerable differences between the middle-class white and black definitions of manhood as it was applied to black Union soldiers. While it may be argued that middle-class whites underscored the efficiency and obedience of black soldiers when commenting on their manhood, free blacks stressed the attributes of courage and loyalty.

Although black military service did not single-handedly solidify the liberty of all blacks in America (including, of course, black women), it did provide a means by which black men could prove their manhood and thereby strengthen their claim to liberty and citizenship. Such a notion of citizenship was of course gendered, as the nineteenth-century definition of citizenship implicitly precluded women from citizenship. Women were simply not in a position to prove their inherent worthiness of citizenship, since America had traditionally favored masculinity over femininity. Much like slaves in America, women were essentially regarded as property. However, unlike black slaves, they were not afforded the opportunity to assert themselves in the public arena of warfare.

For the black men who fought fearlessly for the Union cause, their courage and common valor in combat became the basis of their collective appeal for equal treatment during the war and for citizenship and suffrage rights after the war. Free northern blacks and literate black soldiers wrote letters to the editors of various abolitionist newspapers during and after the Civil War, in which they made numerous references to the relationship between bravery and citizenship as they appealed for equal rights. Through a close examination of several of these appeals, we see that many blacks invoked images of military courage and loyalty in their

petitions for equal status. Also, we see that free northern blacks and literate black soldiers sought to advance a definition of manhood that focused on courage and loyalty. Not only did they seek to obtain citizenship on the basis of their martial valor, but they also attempted to define to the black community what it meant to be a man.

Even before the end of the Civil War, many northern free blacks and literate black soldiers were appealing for equal treatment of black regiments in the Union military on the basis of black soldiers' courage. In a piece of Union Army correspondence published by the Christian Recorder in June of 1864, a black soldier in the 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regiment lamented the fact that his fellow soldiers were "still in the field without [equal] pay" and that the Federal government had shown no intention to pay them justly for their services. In his appeal for the just treatment of his regiment, he insisted that the men had "served [their] country manfully for over twelve months without receiving one cent from the Government." Instead of being compensated monetarily for their service and labor for the Union cause, all they could show "for [their] bravery [was] the credit of fighting well." At the outbreak of war, he asserted, black men had sprung at the chance "to distinguish [themselves] as heroes...and to share alike their rights and privileges, to have the same opportunity for promotion as [their] bravery and ability would warrant." However, as he lamented in his letter, the "bravery [of black soldiers was] always in vain."<sup>256</sup>

In another example of black soldiers appealing for equal treatment from the Union military on the basis of demonstrated valor and sacrifice in combat, a second black soldier in the 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regiment bemoaned the lack of equal pay in the Union Army. "We have been on a great many arduous and dangerous expeditions, fought three hard battles, and yet after all this," the soldier communicated, "we have not received one cent of remuneration from the

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<sup>256</sup> The Christian Recorder. June 25. 1864.

Government.” According to this one soldier, not only had the Federal government failed to pay black soldiers in the 54<sup>th</sup>, but it had failed to do so even after promising “the negroes every thing pertaining to citizenship...in order to get them into the field.” The Federal government’s failed promises had provoked the men of the regiment to actively seek out the realization of equal rights by refusing to “tamely submit to the infliction of wrongs most foul” as their forefathers had done for generations in slavery. These black soldiers’ military success had equipped them with heightened aura of boldness and self-sufficiency that for centuries had been willingly suppressed by white Americans through the emasculating institution of slavery.

In addition to appeals for equal pay in Union regiments, black soldiers and freemen demanded citizenship rights and suffrage following the war’s conclusion by making reference to their brave combat, loyalty to the Union cause, and their role in bringing about the demise of slavery. The nation was severely divided on the issue of suffrage rights. Some favored the concession of suffrage rights to black males “upon the ground of right and justice before God and man,” while others rejected the notion “on account of color and prejudice.”<sup>257</sup> In a letter to the Christian Recorder published on June 24, 1865, one black veteran pronounced his appeal for suffrage:

Would you be guilty of depriving a race of people of the inestimable right of franchise and equality before the law, who...shouldered the musket, and went bravely forward, in the face of all the contumely and prejudice which surrounded them and rescued the bleeding country from the murderous grasp of a power which the white man was unable to overcome?<sup>258</sup>

In his letter, this black veteran went so far as to demand justice for those black soldiers who sacrificed all to bring victory to the Union military. His justification for demanding such a weighty concession as universal male suffrage was the sacrifice of black soldiers, demonstrated

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<sup>257</sup> The Christian Recorder, June 24, 1865.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid., June 24, 1865.

by the “mangled corpses of...martyred braves at [places such as] Fort Pillow.”<sup>259</sup> By assuring any representatives of the Federal government who might have been reading his letter that black veterans would keep demanding their rights until they were finally granted, this former soldier exhibited a dogged persistence in the face of trial and persecution.

In a July 1865 letter denouncing forced segregation and the prohibition of inter-racial marriage in post-war Tennessee, an unnamed black author seemed appalled at the thought of such inequality in light of “all the blood that [had] been shed” by black soldiers during the Civil War. He proudly recounted how black men had sacrificed their lives and fought bravely in the war, and he condemned “the base prejudice” that still kept blacks in subjugation to whites through unjust laws and forced segregation. Most importantly, he was aghast at how “men who [had] violated their obligations to the Federal Government” through secession were allowed to vote, while “the colored soldier who fought, bled and died in true loyalty” was not allowed even to give testimony in his own defense in Tennessee.<sup>260</sup> From this instance, we may understand post-war appeals for suffrage and citizenship as following not only from the bravery of black soldiers, but also their loyalty to the Union cause. We find another instance of this appeal to loyalty in a letter to the Christian Recorder on November 18, 1865, in which the author demanded that all literate black soldiers in Louisiana be allowed to “enjoy the right of suffrage, on the principle that a loyal black man is at least as good, for all practical State purposes, as a rebel white man.”<sup>261</sup>

These appeals to the loyalty of black Union soldiers may well have stemmed from what historian David W. Blight describes as the “politics of forgetting” in America that began during Reconstruction and extended into the mid-twentieth century. This trend in American society

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<sup>259</sup> The Christian Recorder. June 24, 1865.

<sup>260</sup> The Christian Recorder. July 1, 1865.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid., Nashville, TN, November 18, 1865.

emerged as the perceived need for sectional healing overshadowed considerations of the moral ramifications of slavery and the emancipationist vision of the black military experience.<sup>262</sup> As white Americans increasingly embraced a vision of the Civil War that excluded the contributions of black soldiers, northern blacks most likely felt compelled to remind Americans of the constant loyalty of the black race to the Union cause.

In a report detailing the events of a meeting of black men and women in Denver, Colorado in November of 1865, one of the speakers extolled the accomplishments of black soldiers during the Civil War. He asserted that black Union soldiers had “gained credit” for themselves, which should subsequently be used to petition for citizenship and suffrage. “Look...to the victories achieved by the colored troops at Fort Wagner, Shiloh, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg and Chickamauga,” the speaker implored, “and if such bravery is not enough to win the assent and admiration of the world, nothing is!” As in many other letters to the editors of black and abolitionist newspapers following the war, this person made demands for citizenship on the basis of the courage of black soldiers as well as their loyalty to the Union cause.<sup>263</sup>

Not only did blacks request citizenship and equal rights following the end of the Civil War, but some white government officials also considered the granting of full citizenship rights to be the natural consequence of black military service and bravery. In one such instance of this trend, a northern senator declared in 1864 that the “logical result” of black military participation was that “the black man is henceforth to assume a new status among us.”<sup>264</sup> Since by enlisting in the Union military black men had entered an organization that had been hitherto populated

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<sup>262</sup> Blight, David W. Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 2001. 316-317.

<sup>263</sup> The Christian Recorder, Denver, Colorado, November 18, 1865.

<sup>264</sup> Foner, Eric. “Rights and the Constitution in Black Life During the Civil War and Reconstruction.” *The Journal of American History*. Vol. 74, No. 3. The Constitution and American Life: A Special Issue (Dec., 1987), 864.

entirely by white male citizens, they were in essence beginning an inexorable process that would ultimately result in the recognition of their freedom and the granting of their citizenship. When comparing the sentiments of this northern senator to those of Colonel Morgan of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI, one discovers that both men considered equal citizenship to be a natural outgrowth of black military participation. However, Morgan differed from this white senator in the fact that he endorsed a definition of black manhood that focused less on bravery and more on efficiency and obedience.

Judging from the preceding newspaper editorials, the majority of blacks and some northern whites generally accepted an implicit connection between black soldiers' bravery and loyalty on the one hand, and the recognition of black citizenship on the other. At first glance, it may seem strange that bravery in combat allowed black soldiers to make stronger claims to citizenship following the Civil War. However, this association between bravery and citizenship makes sense within the social context of nineteenth-century gender and race relations. In American society at that time, the intermediate link between black soldiers' martial valor and the granting of citizenship was the recognition of their inherent manhood.

However, the writings of Colonel Thomas J. Morgan and the story of the 14<sup>th</sup> USCI, when juxtaposed with the published letters of northern black civilians and military veterans, reveal the multifarious understanding of manhood in American society. Furthermore, since manhood was necessary for attaining the full rights of citizenship in nineteenth-century American society, the differences between blacks' and whites' conceptions of manhood also offers a glimpse into the fiercely contested ground of citizenship. If, as historian Jim Cullen asserts, military participation was "the ultimate test of manhood" for blacks in nineteenth-



century American society,<sup>265</sup> then the question that begs to be asked is: Who was evaluating the test, and by what standard? Through an analysis of Colonel Morgan's notions of manhood as compared with blacks' perceptions of their own manhood, it is clear that both whites and blacks generally judged the ultimate significance of black military participation in the Civil War according to different standards propagating from their respective socio-cultural backgrounds.

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<sup>265</sup> Cullen, "I's a Man Now," 497.

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