

NAME : DOROTHY
TAYLOR

COURSE # : HISTORY 442

PROFESSOR : DR. HARVEY H.
JACKSON

CLASS TIME : M-W-F 10:00

TITLE: Blacks in the
Military

DESCRIPTION : ORAL HISTORY
RESEARCH
BASED ON AN
INTERVIEW

DATE: APRIL 5 , 1996

Personal Chronology of Mr. Lee Grant Lewis

1920- 1941 : Unborn

1941

April 14 -----Born in Scott, Mississippi

in Delta of Miss.

Went to Coleman High School in Greenville, Miss.

1961

-----graduated high school

moved to Chicago with mother until 1963

1963

-----Enlisted in Army in Jackson, Miss.

sent to Fort Pope, Louisiana

Vietnam War is going on

1964

-----Went to Paris

Joined USO

Toured Europe for three years

1967

-----sent to Fort Benning, Georgia

got married

1968

-----Received orders to go to Germany

heard about Dr. King's death on the way

to Ft. Dix, New Jersey to go to Germany

1971

-----Sent back to Ft. Benning, Georgia
had two kids
Received orders to go to Vietnam
Went to Oakland, California
sent to Korea for thirteen months

1972

-----Sent to Fort Gordon, Georgia
Stayed three years
Promoted to Mess Sergeant

1976

-----promoted to Official Dining Facility Manager
Sent to Hawaii for three years
was stationed at Scofield Barracks along with family
was assigned to Air Defense Artillery

1979

-----Stationed at Fort McClellan, Anniston, Alabama

1980

-----went to Germany for two years

1982

-----came back to Anniston
Retired from Fort McClellan

1987

-----took a job at Army Anniston Depot

1989

-----First wife died

Sent to South Georgia

1991

-----remarried to present wife

currently resides in Anniston

Chronological List of Events from 1920-1980

1920

- Jan. ----Prohibition Amendment goes into effect
Red raids on private homes result in 4000 arrests
- May ----Socialist Labor Party
- June ----Merchant Marine Act
Federal Power Commission
Water Power Act
Army Reorganization Act
- July ----Farmer/Labor Party
Prohibition Party
- Aug. ----Nineteenth Amendment
- Nov. ----Warren G. Harding elected President
Calvin Coolidge - Vice President
First Regular broadcast service

1921

- Jan.-----War finance Corporation revived
Russia's request to resume trade rejected
- May-----Bipartisan Farm Bloc formed in Congress
Emergency Quota Act
Emergency Tariff Act
- July-----War with Germany declared at an end
- Aug.-----Ku Klux Klan directs violence toward
Blacks and whites in South

1922

- Feb.-----Copper-Volstead Act
- May-----Lincoln Memorial dedicated

Sept.-----Cable Act

1923

Mar.-----Credit Act adopted

First old age pension grants enacted

Aug.-----US Steel Corporation institutes eight - hour day

1924

June-----Farmer-Labor Progressive Party

July-----Conference for Progressive Political Action

Worker's Party (Communist)

Aug.-----Dawes Plan

Nov.----Calvin Coolidge elected President

Charles G. Dawes elected Vice President

1925

Jan. ----First female governor in U.S.

July ----Scopes (monkey) Trial

Aug.-----KKK holds massive demonstration in Wa., DC

Oct.-----Peak of Florida land boom

1926

Feb.----Revenue Act

May----Air Commerce Act

July----Army Air Corps established

Sept.---Eight-hour day and five-day week

introduced in Ford Motor Co. plants

1927

Apr. ----Television first demonstrated

1928

Jan. ----Amelia Earhart becomes first woman to fly across the Atlantic

July -----First color motion picture
Aug. ----Kellogg-Briand Pact
Nov.-----Herbert Hoover elected President

Charles Curtis - Vice President

1929

Apr. -----First Birth Control Clinical Research Center established
June -----Agricultural Marketing Act
July -----Immigration Act goes into effect
Oct. -----N.Y. Stock Exchange collapse (Black Thursday)
Black Tuesday; worst day in history of N.Y. Stock Exchange

1930

Mar. -----Public Building Act
Apr.-----Congress authorizes \$300 million to states for road
construction
July -----Veterans Administration established
Aug. -----American Lutheran Church formed
Sept. -----First electric train tested
Immigration prohibited
Oct.-----Committee for Unemployment Relief appointed
Nov.-----Democrats gain control of the House
Dec.-----Bank of the United States, NYC, closes

1931

Mar.-----"The Star- Spangled Banner" designated as national anthem
The Scottsboro Boys Case

1932

Jan.-----Reconstruction Finance Corporation authorized
May -----" Bonus Army" descends on Washington

July -----Relief and Reconstruction Act

Federal Home Loan Bank Act

Nov.-----Franklin D. Roosevelt elected President

John Nance Garner - Vice President

1933

Feb.----Twentieth Amendment Adopted

May----Federal Emergency Relief Act

Agricultural Adjustment Act

Tennessee Valley Authority

Federal Securities Act

June----Roosevelt's 'Hundred Days'

Reforestation Relief Act establishes the CCC

U.S. Employment Service created

Jul.-----Home Owners Refinancing Act creates HOLC

National Industrial Recovery Act establishes PWA and NR

Banking Act of 1933 establishes FDIC

Nov.----CWA established

Dec.----Twenty First Amendment

1934

-----The Dust Bowl

Feb.----Civil Works Emergency Relief Act provides funds for FERA

May----Lindbergh Act

June----Securities and Exchange Commission established

Corporate Bankruptcy Act

Farm Mortgage Foreclosure Act

National Guard Act

Federal Housing Administration

1935

Apr.----Emergency Relief Appropriation Act

Soil Conservation Service

May----Resettlement Administration established

WPA established

Rural Electrification Administration established

June----Alcoholics Anonymous organized

Aug.----Social Security Act

Public Utilities Act

Revenue Act

Neutrality Act

1936

June----US Maritime Commission established

Nov.-----Franklin D. Roosevelt and John Nance Garner

win election for second terms

1937

Sept.----US Housing Authority created

1938

Feb.-----Second Agricultural Adjustment Act

May-----Naval Expansion Act

June----Civil Aeronautics Authority established

Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act

Fair Labor Standards Act

1939

Sept.---World War II begins

1941

Dec.----Bombing of Pearl Harbor

Draft Act

1944

June-----D-Day

1945

Aug.-----Atomic Bomb dropped on Hiroshima

Oct.-----U.N. established

1947

Mar.-----Twenty-second Amendment

1950

June-----Korean War begins

1951

-----Women in industry peaks

1952

May-----First woman Ambassador to U.S.

1953

Apr.-----Department of Health, Education and Welfare

1954

Feb.-----Polio vaccine administered to schoolchildren

May-----Brown v. BOE of Topeka ruled upon by Supreme Court

1955

Jan.-----First televised presidential press conference

Nov.-----Racial segregation on trains and buses banned

1956

Feb.-----U of A enrolls first black student

1957

Aug.-----Civil Rights act of 1957

1958

Jan.-----First U.S. satellite launched

1959

Jan. -----Alaska enters Union as 49th state

Aug.-----Hawaii becomes 50th state in Union

1960

May-----Civil Rights Act of 1960

Nov.-----John F. Kennedy elected President

Lyndon B. Johnson - Vice President

1962

Oct.-----Cuban missile crisis

1963

Aug.-----Freedom March on Washington

Nov.-----President Kennedy assassinated

1964

July-----Civil Rights Act of 1964

1965

-----Military advances in Vietnam

Mar.-----Selma to Montgomery March

1966

Mar.-----Cold War GI Bill

May-----Anti-War Demonstrations in Washington

1967

Feb.-----Twenty-fifth Amendment

Aug.-----Thurgood Marshall becomes first black Justice on Supreme Court

1968

Jan.-Feb.----Tet Offensive

Apr.-----Martin Luther King assassinated
Nov.-----Richard M. Nixon elected President
Spiro T. Agnew- Vice President

1969

Apr.-----First artificial heart implant
July-----First man on moon

1970

Apr.-----Cigarette advertising banned from television and radio
June-----Voting Age lowered to 18
Dec.-----EPA activated
World Trade Center completed

1971

Apr.-----Busing upheld by Supreme Court
June-----Twenty-sixth Amendment
Aug.-----Ninety day freeze on prices, wages, and rents

1972

Mar.-----Equal Rights Amendment passed
May-----Alabama Governor George C. Wallace shot
June-----Bill for federal aid to college and
University students passed
State death penalties ruled unconstitutional
Oct.-----Water Pollution Control Act passed
Consumer Product Safety Commission established

1973

Jan.-----Roe v. Wade
Vietnam peace agreement signed
Draft ends

June-----Price freeze on retail goods

Oct.-----Maynard Jackson is elected mayor of Atlanta
becomes first black mayor of Southern city

Nov.-----War Powers Act passed

1974

Aug.-----President Nixon resigns

Nov.-----Freedom of Information Act

1977

Aug.-----Department of Energy formed

1978

June-----Bakke v. University of California

1979

Feb.-----Protesting Farmers drive tractors, trucks, and campers into Wa.,
DC

Oct.-----Department of Education established

1980

May-----Race riots in Miami Florida

Nov.-----Ronald Wilson Reagan elected President

George Bush elected Vice President

Questions for the Interview With Mr. Lee Lewis - March 7, 1996

What were your parents and/or grandparents like?

What was your childhood like?

Where were you educated?

What was the school like?

Describe your home and/or chores you were assigned to do.

Describe your adolescent years.

What high school did you attend?

What were the race relations like and what did you do for recreation?

When did you enlist in the army?

What influenced you to do so?

Where did you enlist?

What was army life like for you?

Where did you travel?

What differences did you notice in places outside of the U.S.?

How has being in the army affected you?

Did you serve during wartime? If so, which war, how long, and where?

What was your occupation in the army?

What were the differences in living on base as compared to civilian life off base?

When did you get married?

Describe your wife, her family, and tell how you met her.

How did being married alter your life?

How did your wife adjust to army life?

How many children do you have?

Did your children experience army life and how did this affect them?

Were you ever away from your family for long periods of time?

Describe any experiences you may have had during the 50's and 60's.

What impact did the civil rights movement have on you and your family?

How many places have you lived thus far?

What impact did the Vietnam war have on you?

Can you describe some of the differences in the area you grew up as opposed to now? How has it changed?

What prompted you and your family to move to Anniston?

What was the atmosphere like when you moved there and how has it changed?

Are you still enlisted in the army?

What else would you like to accomplish in the future?

Table of Contents

Introduction...

Background of Interviewee...

Childhood experiences...

Education...

Jobs held by interviewee and wife...

Places resided...

Children and family...

Times and places served in the Army...

Affects of events...

Present status...

In 1920, economic conditions in the South were good. The war had boosted the economy. Yet most Blacks had little economic or social opportunities available for them. Many Blacks turned to the military for equal rights, equal protection under the law, better wages, and better job training. Blacks have served in the military, particularly the army, since the colonial periods in America. And even though Blacks served and died to protect their country, they had still been treated as second class sometimes even third class soldiers. Most of these Blacks had fought voluntarily, when they fought at all. Because Army officers usually used black soldiers in non-combat activities, very few Blacks actually experienced combat after the Civil War. Although "some educated Blacks believed that World War I afforded an opportunity to break the cycle of white discrimination, black violence and white repression by demonstrating a willingness to fight for the United States." ¹

But in World War I as in World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War, blacks encountered discrimination. This was true especially in the South where Jim Crowism had its strongest hold on society. Most of the military bases were placed in the South because of three generally shared beliefs. One was that the southern climate was more appropriate training weather all -year- round. Two, because of the political power base of southern white politicians. Three, because of the widely held belief that "southern whites knew best how to 'handle' blacks and so were chosen to command them".²

¹Bernard C. Nalty, *Strength for the Fight: A History Of Black Americans in the Military*, (New York: The Free Press : A Division of Macmillan, Inc., 1986), 107.

²Ibid., inset to chapter 12, beneath caption.

Blacks therefore found themselves segregated in the armed services. They were often placed in all black battalions and served in all black units. They had segregated dining facilities, restrooms, and sleeping quarters.

But despite the racial strife and segregated facilities, blacks continued to enter the army. "In the years just before World War II, American blacks became increasingly concerned about the racial policies and conditions in the armed forces." ³ Blacks remained in segregated units and their numbers never reached the ten percent quota set by the War Department during World War II. This was in part due to the uneasiness among southern whites of armed black soldiers in the deep South.

Mr. Lee G. Lewis recalled how segregated the army was at this time from his father's experiences, he said " It (the army) wasn't as bad as when my daddy was in the army in the 40's... he couldn't eat in the same mess hall or places like that."⁴

Most black candidates for officer school were not allowed to graduate and many did not receive the promotion or rank due to them. The very few blacks who became officers were not allowed to rank higher than first or second lieutenant. These officers, rarely, if ever got a chance to train soldiers to go into combat. Many of these officers were sent to all black units not integrated units. There was reluctance on the part of the army and every other branch of the military to integrate.

³Martin Binkin et al., *Blacks and the Military*, (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1982), 18.

⁴Interview with Mr. Lee Grant Lewis, March 4, 1996, Anniston, Alabama.

"The War Department seemed determined to keep all Afro-American soldiers in the lowest ranks in service and labor units and to keep Negro officers limited in number and to ranks of second or first lieutenants."⁵ Blacks enlisted in the army found it ironic that they were fighting a war that was against prejudice and fascism when they were living in prejudice in their own country. Some soldiers did not volunteer for this reason and for religious reasons. These soldiers were drafted as other citizens were. These soldiers had wanted equality. "However, discrimination rose steadily to a peak to the World War II period."⁶ Black soldiers were always made to feel black first and soldier second in war time or peacetime.

Many soldiers thought by enlisting in the army, many of the racial obstacles would be torn down. But in 1940 the War Department announced its plan to segregate Negro troops. "The policy of the War Department is not to intermingle colored and white enlisted personnel in the same regimental organizations".⁷ Nevertheless, blacks fought and helped the Allied countries win a victory in WWII. Despite all the obstacles faced, Black soldiers fought bravely in World War II and this bravery would aide in the decision to integrate the army during the Korean War.

"Until the Korean War, the Afro-American soldiers were primarily restricted and separated, alienated from their African background, and were made to feel as temporary auxiliaries."⁸

⁵Jesse J. Johnson, *A Pictorial History of Black Soldiers (1619-1969): In Peace and War*, (Hampton, Virginia: Hampton Institute, 1970), 47.

⁶Ibid.,46.

⁷Ibid.,47.

⁸Ibid., 62.

After World War II was over, blacks units were either torn apart or dismissed altogether. The blacks allowed to remain in the army after the war were given positions as messmen, laborers, or other service jobs. The demand for equality from the black community became more and more intensive and the NAACP was pressuring the federal government for more concessions.

The white officers assigned to all black units usually saw this as a demotion and protested having to be in charge of all blacks units. Most of these officers were passed down from white units and were not highly trained. During WWII, the soldiers training under these officers were not as efficient and well trained as those who served exclusively with French units.

Recreation on military bases were usually as segregated as off base facilities. Blacks had to use separate pools and even attend separate non-commissioned officers (NCO) clubs. The buses that took the soldiers to and from base were also segregated.

"Some Negro leaders suggested an integrated all volunteer division; however this idea was rejected by the War Department, and was initiated, by military necessity, during the Korean War."⁹ The Korean Conflict or the Korean War was to set the stage for a more integrated army. Although at first, blacks were sent to Korea in segregated units to serve in segregated units. As white units became increasingly unavailable to serve, blacks were used as replacements and assigned without regard to race. "By 1953, only five percent of the Negro soldiers remained segregated."¹⁰

⁹Ibid.,62.

¹⁰Ibid.,68.

This led to more black officers finally commanding integrated units in combat. But this process was gradual and the army as a whole would not have many Negro officers or Negro units. Many blacks were given outstanding recognition like Corporal Charles Banks & Private first class James Gene who were awarded the bronze star medal.

"Between the Korean War in 1953 and the Vietnamese War, the Army became fully integrated; but all feelings of culture are not entirely forgotten."¹¹ This is especially true in the South because the Civil rights movement has taken root. The 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, the Montgomery bus boycott, and the NAACP were working behind the scenes to acquire equal rights for blacks civilian and military. Most blacks, 80% of those enlisted or drafted into the army during Vietnam, still held service jobs.

Mr. Lewis recalls joining the army in 1963 and given a choice of either airborne or kitchen. "When they sent me to Advance Individual Training (AIT), I told them I was not going to jump out of an airplane. They informed the people to put him in the kitchen."¹²

Most blacks were put in service jobs or mess work in order to keep them from making rank. But to some blacks, this was not looked upon as a hindrance. Mr. Lewis said cheerfully "This (being put in the kitchen) was supposed to hurt this old poor boy from Mississippi."¹³ Some blacks were given an option if they joined with someone else. Mr. Lewis and his buddy were given the option of going to Europe or Vietnam.

11

¹²Interview with Mr. Lewis.

¹³Interview with Mr. Lewis.

American black soldiers were allowed to fight and had been distinguishing themselves as soldiers, but the Army insisted that they would not make good officers. The Army said the black soldiers would have no respect for black officers. Until recently, the number of black officers in the Army has been a handful and even many of these have been chaplains. The 92nd Division of all black officers was the ideal example of this theory. But these officers were mostly inexperienced and had been trained at the inferior Negro Officers School at Des Moines. But not all of the black officers proved this theory to be true. " One division had five Negro National Guard officers on maneuvers. Though four of them showed an attitude of indifference, perhaps born of the conviction that since they were Negroes, they wouldn't get a promotion no matter how hard they worked, the fifth threw himself into the maneuvers- and is slated for promotion."¹⁴

The black cadets at West Point had been subjected to such things as the "silence cure." This was a mental test given to all the Blacks, who weren't very many to begin with, to screen them out. This was done by not talking to or looking at the cadet the whole first year. If the cadet stayed, he would be deemed fit to be an officer by West Point officials. " In October 1940, it was announced that Negroes would be inducted into the service in proportion to their numbers in the population- about 10 percent."¹⁵

¹⁴W.L. White, condensed from *Survey Graphic*, "The Negro in the Army," *Reader's Digest*, 40: 51-4, April 1942.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 52.

Of course this percentage was never reached during wartime and certainly not during peacetime. By the end of 1941, almost 100,000 Negroes comprising about 20 regiments, were in uniform and in 1942, the Army planned to call up 175,000 more."¹⁶ In officer training camps, the platoon leader rates the officer candidates and then the platoon mates rate each other. The platoon leader and other platoon mates of the Blacks often rated them as being, "initiating", "intelligent", and "determined." These statements, made by whites, tear at the assumption that Blacks would not make good officers.

Blacks were also given another open door when an air corps was established at Tuskegee, Alabama. This had been a school specifically for training black combat pilots. "This is in defiance of a theory that Negroes couldn't be taught to be good pilots."¹⁷ The instructors at this school all have volunteered to be there and are proud of their assignments. They say there is no differences between black candidates and white candidates.

For most Blacks, going into the Army was a choice. But even those drafted did not find the Army to present any physical challenges. Blacks are "used to hard physical work, which is nine-tenths of a soldiers routine." The Army gives Blacks an opportunity to learn about machinery and motors while giving him food, pay, and shelter that they otherwise might not get. In World War II, the base pay of an Army private (\$21 a month, soon raised to \$46 or more) does not look to bad to someone with virtually no income.

¹⁶Ibid., 52.

¹⁷Ibid., 53.

This pay was still below what whites were getting paid, but it was also at a time when there was a depression going on in America. World War II brought the realization that the Army would be integrated eventually. That day was to come during the Korean War. "As our troops pushed their way back up the peninsula Negro and white officers and men were fighting together."¹⁸ In Germany, the troops were still operated on a segregated basis. This did not hold true in sports, however. "In Germany, in the 'GI World Series' at least 12 players on each of the 20-man teams were Negroes, including the star pitchers for both."¹⁹ At the time of the Korean War, there was only one black General, six black Colonels, and about twenty black Lieutenants Colonels in the Army. " American democracy will be a myth as long as racial segregation is tolerated."²⁰

Most wars are fought successfully because of a large supply of men and superior leadership. But what if the soldiers are armed with only pick forks and shovels, will they be as successful as they would if they had arms and supplies? This question raises the point that although guns and ammunition are useless without men, likewise men are also useless without guns and ammunitions. Most Blacks were assigned to service jobs when they enlisted in the Army. " This is true, but there is a tendency to underestimate the crucial contribution they have made as service troops."²¹

¹⁸Jean Regeman, "Two Armies or One?" *New Republican*, 123: 11-12, November 6, 1950.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 11.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 12.

²¹Private Irwin Ross, "Negro Service Troops," *The New Republic*, 112: 326-8, March 5, 1945.

In the last war, a soldier in supply or transportation was pretty safe, but sometimes faced enemies on the front line as they tried to get supplies to the troops. " The amphibious ducks (so called after the manufacturer's serial letters, DUKW) were of prime importance in moving cargo from ship to shore during World War II." ²² The men operated trucks that could move on land and floated in water. This work was also particularly dangerous because most of the supplies had to be moved at night. Therefore, the ducks could be sunk by submerged mines or submarines. They could tip over because of improper loading and/or rough seas. Because it was dark, the ducks usually had a hard time finding the ship with which to unload. Over half of these ducks were black. The ducks also worked long hours, from twenty up to twenty-four, with only ten minute breaks per hour. The Army also had what was known as the Corps of Engineers. There were a lot of battalions within it that were Black. They would build roads, bridges, hospitals, air strips, and railroads. Blacks are very patriotic, keenly aware of the aims of the war, and ready to get into the fighting stage.

But because of the color of their skin, " they are not allowed to express their patriotism, their democracy, and their militancy freely."²³ No matter how bravely or how courageously a black soldier fought, he was still sometimes treated as a black, not an American. A soldier said in a letter " that Army law is White man's law."

²²Ibid.,327.

²³Lucille B. Milner, "Jim Crow in the Army," The New Republic, 110: 339-42, March 13, 1944.

Black soldiers feel this way because even though they are enlisted into the same Army, wear the same uniform, and take the same oath as whites, they are discriminated against. Being allowed to enlist is a milestone in itself, but there are certain things a black soldier wants after enlistment. It is not enough just to be able to fight with the white soldiers and die with them, black soldiers want the same rights and privileges that white soldiers have.

Many of these inequalities may not mean the same to all soldiers, black or white, but the rationale behind them is what is being expressed. These things include access to post movie theaters and post exchanges. In camps located in the South, there were no accommodations for relatives and friends of black soldiers. Also, in many parts of the South, the black MP's may not be allowed to carry arms because of unwarranted fear by surrounding whites. If a soldier was wounded in combat, he would be sent home where he would find that some hospitals would not admit him, especially in the South.

Candidates in officer training schools are not usually segregated in camp, but upon graduation. The white officer is then likely to be sent overseas and the black officer to another camp to further his training. "Segregation is the deepest issue between whites and blacks in the services"²⁴ during the time of Jim Crow in the South. This conflict was made all the more worse because of the collaboration of whites and blacks, Northerners and Southerners thrown into camps and bases together. Northern Blacks were less than thrilled the first time they encountered Jim Crow in the South.

²⁴Ibid.,340.

Most Northern whites were equally shocked after seeing some of the things practiced on Southern bases. Southern Blacks were taken in by the freedoms they found existent in the North and West. Most Southern whites were disgusted at the very sight of a black officer and hated serving beneath them. One white private from Virginia exclaimed, "Gosh, I just had to salute a damn nigger lieutenant. Boy, that burns me up!"²⁵ Even though the black soldiers faced discrimination in the Army, it was less hate they would have faced as a civilian. "It is hard to decide which is more cruel-- this new pattern of murdering the ambition, the skills, the high potential contributions of the gifted Negro, or the old pattern of physical brutality which the Negro-baiters and Klan agents use against the colored man in uniform."²⁶ This statement was on the heart and mind of almost every black soldier in the Army.

Most Blacks felt that as a civilian, they could expect this kind of blatant hatred, but many had a hard time with this when they wore Army uniforms and fought for a country that was fighting a war against the very thing that it practiced. Blacks were killed in camp riots as were some whites. But these black soldiers were safer in the Army than they would have been in any Southern town or camp.

Unlike the first World Wars and Korea, in Vietnam Blacks felt they were doing more than their fair share of the fighting. A public outcry was also coming from the black civilian community.

²⁵Ibid.,340.

²⁶Ibid.,342.

They felt that not only was the military inducting more Blacks than whites for the war in Vietnam, but also that the Army was choosing the best Blacks from the community. Blacks who were educated, talented, and healthy were often the ones drafted into the Army. This may have been due to the fact that some of the Blacks not admitted to serve were illiterate and unhealthy.

The public outcry was not only against the Army inducting Blacks, it was also against the Army inducting poor whites as well. Vietnam was nicknamed " Rich man's war, poor man's fight" because a lot of upper middle class and upper class whites were either not drafted or avoided the draft. The Army denied this and insisted that in some areas, Blacks were seated on the draft board. It seems ironic that the Army was only receiving the best Blacks into it's services, yet kept them in low service jobs or combat and not in highly skilled jobs where they could advance and excel. "

Popular magazines reported official Department of Defense Statistics showing that Blacks were more likely to (1) be drafted, (2) be sent to Vietnam, (3) serve in high risk combat units, and consequently, (4) be killed or wounded in battle."²⁷ In 1969, Presidential candidate, Richard Nixon proposed an end to the draft. Americans were torn over this decision because whites were afraid this might create an all black army and Blacks were afraid whites would be relieved of their duties and leave the Blacks, to defend the Nation. Neither of these rationales were factual.

²⁷Binkin et al., *Blacks and the Military*, 32.

But what was so striking, was that with the end of conscription, came a larger willingness on behalf Blacks to sign up for the Army. Although most of the Blacks who signed up were of a lower Socioeconomic status than the ones who had been drafted.

Nevertheless, " Over one out of four new soldiers was Black- more than double the percentage of Black Army recruits in 1970..."²⁸ But in 1980, for reasons still unclear, enlistment of Blacks in the Army fell tremendously. "Once in the military, Blacks are more inclined than whites to choose it as a career."²⁹ Since World War II, the Army has used military aptitude tests to screen possible inductees and whites have generally scored better on these tests. Although Blacks score lower than whites on these tests, the enlistees accepted into the Army usually have more formal training.

" In point of fact," notes one observer, " today's Army enlisted ranks is the only major area in American society where Black educational levels surpass those of whites and by significant degree,"³⁰ After Vietnam, it was discovered that more black soldiers go AWOL (Absence Without Official Leave), but more white soldiers tend to desert altogether. In the area of overall discipline, Black females are the least amount of trouble of Black, white, men, or women enlisted in the Army. Blacks in military prisons outnumber whites in military prisons, but this number is lower than the number of Blacks in civilian prisons. Blacks faced all odds to become soldiers in an Army that they believed they should be a part.

²⁸Ibid.,40.

²⁹Ibid.,44.

³⁰Ibid.,49.

Through all the hatred, discrimination, and violence, Blacks were made to endure, they never stop proving themselves as superior soldiers, fine citizens, and patriotic Americans who believed in "liberty and justice for all."

Bibliography

- Binkin, Martin, and Mark J. Eitelberg, with Alvin J. Schnexnider and Marvin M. Smith. *Blacks and the Military*. Washington : Brookings Institution, 1982.
- Johnson, Jesse L. *A Pictorial History of Black Soldiers in the United States (1619-1969) in Peace and War*. Hampton: Hampton Institute, 1970.
- Milner, Lucille B., "Jim Crow in the Army," *The New Republic*, 110:339-442, March 13, 1944.
- Nalty, Bernard C. *Strength for the Fight :A History of Black Americans in the Military*. New York: a division of MacMillian, Inc., 1986.
- Regeman, Jean, "Two Armies or One?" *The New Republic*, 123: 11-12, November 6, 1950.
- Ross, Private Irwin, "Negro Service Troops," *The New Republic*, 112: 326-8, March 5, 1945.
- White, W.L., "The Negro in the Army," *Reader's Digest*, 40: 51-4, April 1942.