



Brothers to the Buffalo Soldiers: Perspectives on the African American Militia and Volunteers, 1865-1917

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During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, African American men were seldom permitted to join the United States armed forces. There had been times in early U.S. history when black and white men fought alongside one another; it was not uncommon for integrated units to take to battle in the Revolutionary War. But by the War of 1812, the United States had come to maintain what one writer called “a whitewashed army.” Yet despite that opposition, during the early 1800s, militia units made up of free black soldiers came together to aid the official military troops in combat.

Many black Americans continued to serve in times of military need. Nearly 180,000 African Americans served in units of the U.S. Colored Troops during the Civil War, and others, from states such as Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Missouri, and Kansas, participated in state militias organized to protect local populations from threats of Confederate invasion. As such, the Civil War was a turning point in the acceptance of black soldiers for national defense. By 1900, twenty-two states and the District of Columbia had accepted black men into some form of military service, usually as state militiamen—brothers to the “buffalo soldiers” of the regular army regiments, but American military men regardless.

Little has been published about them, but *Brothers to the Buffalo Soldiers: Perspectives on the African American Militia and Volunteers, 1865–1919*, offers insights into the varied experiences of black militia units in the post–Civil War period. The book includes eleven articles that focus either on “Black Participation in the Militia” or “Black Volunteer Units in the War with Spain.” The articles, collected and introduced by author and scholar Bruce A. Glasrud, provide an overview of the history of early black citizen-soldiers and offer criticism from prominent academics interested in that experience.

Brothers to the Buffalo Soldiers discusses a previously little-known aspect of the black military experience in U.S. history, while deliberating on the discrimination these men faced both within and outside the military. Chosen on the bases of scholarship, balance, and readability, these articles provide a rare composite picture of the black military man’s life during this period. *Brothers to the Buffalo Soldiers* offers both a valuable introductory text for students of military studies and a solid source of material for African American historians.

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