AM I A MAN: MASCULINITY AND BLACK MILITARY SERVICE

during the American Civil War

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> Which shall it be, my brave and strong-hearted brothers? The decision of our destiny is now, as never before, in our own hands….To fight for the Government in this tremendous war is, then, to fight for nationality and for a place with all other classes of our fellow citizens.[1]

Thanks to well-organized campaigns, enlistment into Northern United States Colored Troops (USCT) was wide-spread. This 1863 Frederick Douglass piece was one example of the recruitment effort that successfully galvanized thousands of African American men to join the Union Army. Enlistment campaigns used a combination of presses, editorials and articles, pamphlets, private and public speeches, broadsides, and monetary enticements to convince able-bodied men to serve. Pennsylvanian and New York campaigns convinced some of the largest numbers of African American men to enlist in each state.[2]

This article examines the class tensions among Northern African American men in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, over differing definitions of African American manhood during USCT recruitment. For elite African American men, manhood, usually referring to military participation and citizenship, was a surrogate for personhood.[3] Their limited characterization of manhood rarely reflected the realities of

[1] Frederick Douglass, «Another Word to black men», *Anglo-African,* March 17, 1863.

[2] Nearly 34 percent of all Northern USCT soldiers came from both states. Ira Berlin, Leslie S. Rowland, and Joseph P. Reidy (eds.), *Freedom, A Documentary history of Emancipation, 1861-1867: Series II The Black Military Experience*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1982, p. 12.

[3] For this paper, personhood will only focus on the context of manhood and humanity in the nineteenth century. Reginald Shepard, «Coloring outside the Lines: An Essay at Definition», *Callaloo*, 22/1 (1999, Winter), pp. 137, 139.

DOSIER: *Masculinidades y feminidades en conflicto en el ámbito bélico-militar*, David Alegre Lorenz y Miguel Alonso Ibarra (coords.)
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many working poor African American men who framed their manhood by surviving racism. This study problematizes «manhood» to recognize that there was no single trait or definition.[4]

An examination of the contentious debate of black enlistment will explore topics, including citizenship, suffrage, racial violence, education, and employment by investigating the lives of Northern USCT soldiers and their families from 1850 to 1863. By using an intersectional analytic approach, this article explores the contentious issue of Northern African American manhood. All of this chaos was due to whites' othering of African American men, through a crossing of race and gender, to ignore their humanity and various traits of manhood.[5]

Previous scholarship has carefully examined USCT soldiers' wartime and postwar experiences.[6] While there is scholarship on the antebellum experience of formerly enslaved Southern USCT soldiers emphasizing their move from slaves to freedmen looking at issues, such as whites refusing to recognize the manhood of enslaved men, historians have yet to study the antebellum experiences of Northern freeborn USCT soldiers.[7] Perhaps the fact that Southern formerly enslaved USCT soldiers was a more appealing topic for analysis given their dramatic and sudden change in status. Coupled with the fact that formerly enslaved people played a direct role in ending slavery. However, little analysis on Northern USCT soldiers and their antebellum experiences exists, which does a disservice to understanding how the war impacted Northern African Americans.

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[4] A simplified usage of manhood would be an attack on women which this article does not desire doing. «Manhood» naturalizes the conflict between men and women. Manhood was not in a crisis of masculinity eventually gets resolved. For this paper, manhood will refer to adult men. Hortense J. Spillers, «Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book», *Diacritics*, Culture and Countermemory: The «American» connection, 17/2 (Summer, 1987), pp. 66, 69.

[5] Sylvia Wynter, «Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation-An Argument», *CR: The New Centennial Review*, 3/3 (2003, Fall), pp. 267, 291, 301.

[6] Joseph T. Glatthaar, *Forged in Battle: The Civil War Alliance of Black Soldiers and White Officers*, Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1990, pp. 109-117; Caroline E. Janney, *Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation,* Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 2013, pp. 115-115, 117, 119, 121, 226.

[7] For more information on the experiences of enslaved men please refer the following studies: Thomas A. Foster, «The Sexual Abuse of Black Men under American Slavery», and David Doddington, «Manhood, Sex, and Power in Antebellum Slave Communities», in Daina Ramey Berry and Leslie M. Harris (eds.), *Sexuality and Slavery: Reclaiming Intimate Histories in the Americas*, Athens, University of Georgia Press, 2018, pp. 124-144 and 145-158; Sarah N. Roth, «"How a Slave was Made a Man": Negotiating Black Violence and Masculinity in Antebellum Slave Narratives», *Slavery & Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies,* 28/2 (2007), pp. 255-275, Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made,* New York, Vintage Books, 1972, pp. 444-447, 492-493.

Defining African American Manhood

There was no single definition of adult African American manhood in nineteenth century as it varied considerably among African Americans and whites. Most whites often portrayed African American men as having no masculine characteristics but they were instead effeminate and therefore failed to live up white conceptions of masculinity.[8] African American men, however, perceived their own manhood in a myriad of ways. Displaying physicality, pursuing intellectual endeavors, practicing self-restraint, acquiring citizenship rights, participating in the military, having voting rights, being a sole wage-earner, getting married and becoming fathers, making dependents submit to their «authority», and protecting themselves and other African Americans from racial discrimination collectively comprised the complex construction of African American manhood.[9] This article reveals that advocates of enlistment, African American and white, preferred to focus on manhood regarding military patriotism and citizenship as *the* only way that white society would ever recognize African American manhood.

Americans have traditionally treated military service as a male-gendered experience. American military service, especially during times of national crisis, was a male domain where men willingly sacrificed their lives for a greater good –the nation–.[10] Meaning that for some American military service is a defining component of manhood. Before the creation of USCT regiments, African American men could not officially enlist in the military or join in a militia.[11] Once USCT enlistment began, some advocates began emphasizing that military service provide African American men with the final opportunity to

[8] Bruce Dorsey, *Reforming Men and Women: Gender in the Antebellum City*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2002, pp. 139-140.

[9] William Yates*, Rights of colored men to suffrage, citizenship and trial by jury*, Philadelphia, Merrihew and Gunn, 1838, pp. 42-43; *Anti-Slavery Tracts, The Fugitive Slave Law, and Its Victims*, New York, n.p., 1856, p. 8; «The Institute for Colored Youth», *Christian Recorder*, May 10, 1852; «Meeting of Colored Citizens», *Liberator,* November 8, 1850; «Thoughts on Marriage», *Christian Recorder*, February 9, 1861; «Formation of Colored Troops», *Anglo-African*, September 28, 1861; «We Should Not Drill», *Anglo-African*, October 12, 1861; «Formation of Colored Regiments», *Anglo-African*, October 26, 1861; «Philadelphian Affairs», *Anglo-African*, November 2, 1861; Carla L. Peterson, *Black Gotham: A Family History of African Americans in Nineteenth-Century New York City*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2011, pp. 65, 74,119-121, 167, 189.

[10] Stephen Kantrowitz, «Fighting Like Men: Civil War Dilemmas of Abolitionists Manhood», in Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber (eds.), *Battle Scars: Gender and Sexuality in the American Civil War*, Oxford, The University of Oxford Press, 2006, pp. 31-33; Ricard A. Herrera*, For Liberty and the Republic: The American Citizen as Soldier, 1775-1861*, New York, New York University Press, 2015, pp. 1-4.

[11] William Seraile, *New York's Black Regiments During the Civil War*, New York, Routledge, 2001, p. 17.

gain recognition of their manhood from their white counterparts. For instance, Philadelphian African American professor Alfred M. Green claimed that white society would only recognize African American manhood through military service.[12] Advocates of enlistment framing of African American manhood ignored the fact that their version of African American manhood, in many cases, could only be recognized by possibly dying. Therefore, enlistment rhetoric denotes that there was a battleground over competing notions of northern African American manhood as the Union Army called African American men into the war.

Antebellum Northern Society

State legislators in Northern states, including Pennsylvania and New York, enacted their emancipatory laws long before January 1, 1863, when Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation took effect. Pennsylvania first abolished slavery in 1799 while New York abolished slavery in 1817.[13] Antebellum emancipation was never meant to be equated to racial equality. Instead, it meant that the sin of slavery ended in the North, but there was no concern of protecting freed people. Neither state awarded Northern African American men citizenship rights. Thus, African American men did not have the right to sit on juries (or be judged by a jury of their peers), run for political office, serve in the military, or bear arms.

Debates over the lack of citizenship rights, in particular suffrage rights, incensed many Northern African American men since they already performed the duties of a citizen, such as paying taxes.[14] USCT advocates, hoping to galvanize embittered Northern African men, routinely emphasized in their enlistment rhetoric that military service would allow Northern African American men to prove their manhood to white society and possibly receive voting rights.[15] Enlistment rheto-

[12] Christian G. Samito, *Becoming American Under Fire: Irish Americans, African Americans, and the Politics of Citizenship During the Civil War Era*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2009, pp. 36-37.

[13] Emancipation in Pennsylvania first began in 1780 that stated slaveowners must free their slaves by the age of twenty-eight. Slavery, however, would linger in Pennsylvania until 1847 when the state legislature passed its final emancipation law that banned the institution. In 1817, New York state's legislature stated that it would end slavery by 1827, and it gave slaveowners to decide when to emancipate their slaves as long as it occurred by July 4, 1827. Leslie M. Alexander, *African or American?: Black Identity and Political Activism in New York, 1784-1861*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 2011, p. 3; «The Proclamation», *Christian Recorder*, October 18, 1862.

[14] «Colored Regiments», *Anglo-African*, October 12, 1861; William Yates, *Rights of colored men to suffrage, citizenship, and trial by jury*, Philadelphia, Merrihew and Gunn, 1838, p. 2; «Selections. National Council of the Colored People. First Day Morning Meeting», *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, May 18, 1855.

[15] «Our Colored Soldiers», *Anglo-African*, April 4, 1863.

ric refers to the calls by the Union Army recruiters and supporters who used public speeches, placards, broadsides, and ephemera with the objective of convincing able-bodied African American men to enlist in the Union Army. Generally interwoven within gender and racial ideology is the fact that white men dominated the ballot box in America. However, enlistment rhetoric failed to recognize that Northern state legislatures, which were all white men, enacted laws to solidify white male political dominance in the early and mid-nineteenth century. For instance, at the 1838 Pennsylvania constitutional convention, state legislators denied African American men their voting rights by revising the definition of «freemen» to apply only to white men. Pennsylvanian legislators believed that African Americans could not handle the responsibility of voting.[16] All African American Pennsylvanians could not vote. Therefore, future Pennsylvania USCT soldiers, including Wilson Day, Henry Harley, and Hiram Watters, had their political voice silenced.[17] Pennsylvania continued to tax its African American male inhabitants illustrating that African American men were not legal citizens but were still required to perform the duties of a citizen.[18]

Alternatively, New York state legislators took a different method to limit African American male suffrage by enacting the property-qualification law in 1821 that stipulated men must own over $250 in real estate to vote.[19]

> The committee in their report, proposed to exclude citizens of color from the right of suffrage, by inserting the word «white», in the clause relating to the subject, viz: «That every WHITE male citizen, of the age of twenty-one years, &c., (on certain conditions specified) be entitled to vote».[20]

The legislators, all white men, argued that free African American men were unfit for the responsibilities of citizenship because they felt that freemen were not well-equipped to handle voting responsibly.[21] Even though it was white society, including slave-owners, who had failed to educate African Americans on life outside of slavery, espe-

[16] After 1838, most Pennsylvanian African American men could not exercise the vote until the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment. Eric Ledell Smith, «The End of Black Voting Rights in Pennsylvania: African Americans and the Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention of 1837-1838», *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies, 65/3, African Americans In Pennsylvania* (1998, Summer), pp. 279-280, 282-284, 287-288, 291-293.

[17] All three men would later enlist in the Third USCI.

[18] «The Passenger Cars of Philadelphia», *Christian Recorder*, December 26, 1863.

[19] Leslie M. Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626-1863*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2003, pp. 116-119.

[20] Yates, *Rights of colored men to suffrage, citizenship and trial by jury*, *op. cit.,* p. 2.

[21] Peterson, *Black Gotham, op. cit.,* p. 121.

cially in the realm of politics. Still, African American men were still responsible for paying state taxes which denotes that state legislatures in New York found an avenue to continue making suffrage a white male privilege through economics while still requiring all men were responsible for paying taxes. A small sample of future Twentieth United States Colored Infantry (USCI), Twenty-Sixth USCI, and Thirty-First USCI soldiers who were born in New York City reveals that none of the soldiers or their fathers owned enough property to vote.[22] By 1861, a minimal portion of the city's African American male population, or nearly 1 percent, were eligible to vote.[23] African American men were unable to demonstrate their political manhood and have a distinctive role in shaping the political culture of New York state.

Northern Racial Violence

Understanding the enlistment of thousands of Northern African American men must include an investigation into racial violence. Throughout the early to mid-nineteenth-century large-scale racial violence took place in both cities. Race riots targeted African American communities before, during, and after the Civil War. Northern African American churches and businesses were often targets of white rioters because these places were symbols of progress.[24] Despite the continual threats of racial violence Northern African Americans pushed for racial equality and an end to slavery. Desires to create a racially egalitarian society antagonized some white Northerners who felt compelled to defend white supremacy to the point of using violence. Future USCT soldiers, along with thousands of Northern African Americans, witnessed or were victims of these episodes of large-scale racial violence.

In New York City, during two large-scale race riots anti-abolitionists violently expressed their displeasure to challenges with the status quo. In 1834, an «amalgamation» riot took place, where African Americans became the victims of anti-abolitionist aggression after the rioters' initial targets (white abolitionists) were put down.[25] New York

[22] Peter Vandermark, a future soldier in the Twentieth USCI, was the only soldier to live in residence with a male-relative who owned property. His father, James, was a cooper and amassed $100 in real estate. The USCT included various types of military regiments, including cavalry, heavy artillery, and infantry. USCI refers to the infantry regiments in the USCT. U.S. Census Bureau, Seventh Census of the United States, 1850 M432 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1850) (hereafter cited as U.S. Census, 1850).

[23] «Colored People in New York.-There are only 10,831 blacks», *Christian Recorder*, February 16, 1861.

[24] Emma Jones Lapsansky, «"Since They Got Those Separate Churches": Afro-Americans and Racism in Jacksonian Philadelphia», *American Quarterly*, 32/1 (Spring, 1980), pp. 106-107.

[25] Alexander, *African or American?*, *op. cit.*, pp. 85-86.

City's most notorious race riot began on July 13, 1863. The initial violence was in response to the federal draft (which forced Democratic supporters and poor whites to serve in the Union Army), but rioters soon focused their attacks on innocent African American New Yorkers. When the riot ended on July 16, over one hundred African Americans had died and thousands more were severely injured. Numerous homes of African American New Yorkers and their institutions, such as the Colored Orphan Asylum, were looted and burned to the ground.[26]

Unfortunately for the African Americans, the culprits were rarely, if ever, arrested and prosecuted for their actions. So during various race riots, African Americans were never safe. For instance, Charles Howard, a soon-to-be Twentieth USCI soldier, recollected how rioters, during the 1863 New York City draft riot, pillaged his home and destroyed his family's personal belongings, including his birth certificate.[27] In another example, an unassuming African American man, William Jones, was brutally beaten while walking home after purchasing baked goods. «They instantly set upon and beat him and after nearly killing him, hanged him to a lamp-post. His body was left suspended for several hours and was much mutilated».[28] One unnamed woman, the mother of William Derickson, was not only physically assaulted in the street, but also doused in camphene, a lamp fuel, and covered with straw. Local policemen were able to save her from being lit on fire before rioters struck the match.[29] Even the kin of a USCT soldier in the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry became victims of the draft riots. Mrs. Simmons (first name unknown) recently heard information that her son was taken prisoner during a military engagement at Morris Island in Charleston, South Carolina. Little did Mrs. Simmons know, she and countless other African American New Yorkers would experience their own civil war that only ended when Edwin Stanton, Secretary of War, authorized various Union Army regiments, including the Seventh Regiment of the New York Militia, into New York City to put down the riot.[30] Ultimately, the draft riots visibly demonstrated to African

[26] James McPherson, *The Negro's Civil War: How American Blacks Felt and Acted During the War for the Union,* New York, Vintage Books, 1993, pp. 71-77; «The Lessons of the Riot», *New York Times*, July 25, 1863.

[27] Deposition of Charles Howard, on August 16, 1916, in Charles Howard, Twenty-Sixth USCI pension file. NARA-Washington, D.C.

[28] *Report of the Committee of merchants for the relief of colored people, suffering from the late riots in the city of New York*, New York, G.A. Whitehorne, printer, 1863, p. 16.

[29] *The Tribute Book A Record of the Munificence, Self-Sacrifice and Patriotism of The American People During the War for The Union. Illustrated by Frank B. Goodrich, author of «The court of Napoleon», etc.*, New York, Derry & Miller, 1865, p. 381.

[30] William Swinton, *History of the Seventh Regiment, National Guard, State of New York, During the War of Rebellion: with A Preliminary Chapter on The Origin and Early History of The Regiment, A Summary of Its History Since The War, and a Roll of Honor,*

Americans and white abolitionists the lengths that anti-abolitionists were willing to go to maintain the dominance in Northern society.

Philadelphia also had a long history of antebellum race riots. Between 1834 and 1842, four riots took place during which white Philadelphians savagely attacked and burglarized African American institutions, homes, and people. Violence began with the opening of the Pennsylvania Hall, an abolitionist institution. A skirmish occurred between African American and white men at a local entertainment venue. Rioters expressed their anger after African Americans orchestrated an event celebrating West Indian emancipation.[31] Even though no available pension records detail how future native-born Philadelphian USCT soldiers or their families experienced large-scale racial violence, many soon-to-be soldiers resided in a violently and racially divided Northern metropolitan city.

Racism in Northern Public Education

As children, USCT soldiers learned that public education was another site of racial conflict in both. African American schools were woefully inferior to the white counterparts' institutions regarding funding and class sizes. Northern African American adults criticized the racially segregated schools for not hiring African Americans, upholding inept administration, and dilapidated facilities. By 1854, Pennsylvania began mandating the segregation of schools if twenty or more African American children attended a public school. Beginning in 1850, at least one school, the Public Colored School, operated in Philadelphia through 1863.[32] Meanwhile, in New York City from 1850 to 1863 there was a minimum of eight schools operating simultaneously, but from 1854-1861 the number of schools peaked at nine meaning that New York African

Comprising Brief Sketches of The Services Rendered by Member of Regiment in the Army and Navy of the United States, New York, Fields, Osgood, & Co., 1870, pp. 349-367.

[31] John Runcie, «"Hunting the Nigs" in Philadelphia: The Race Riot of August 1834», *Pennsylvania History*, 39/2 (April, 1972), pp. 190, 197-198, 201; Leonard L. Richards, *«Gentlemen of Property and Standing»: Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1970, p. 9; *History of Pennsylvania Hall, which was destroyed by a mob, On the 17th of May, 1838*, Philadelphia, Merrihew and Gunn, 1838, pp. 63, 65, 117, 119, 124, 136; Charles W. Gardner, Daniel W. Payne, and Robert Purvis, «The Late Riots», *Liberator*, August 19, 1842.

[32] *A M'Elroy's Philadelphia Directory, for the year 1850*, Philadelphia, Edward C. & John Biddle, 1850 (hereafter *Philadelphia Directory, 1850*), p. 502; *Philadelphia Directory, 1851*, p. 509; *Philadelphia Directory, 1852*, p. 525; *Philadelphia Directory, 1853*, p. 522; *Philadelphia Directory, 1854*, p. 711; *Philadelphia Directory, 1855*, p. 96; *Philadelphia Directory, 1856*, p. 886; *Philadelphia Directory, 1857*, p. 908; *Philadelphia Directory, 1858*, p. 918; *Philadelphia Directory, 1859*, p. 961; *Philadelphia Directory, 1860*, p. 1410; *Philadelphia Directory,1861*, p. 1310; *Philadelphia Directory, 1862*, p. 861; *Philadelphia Directory, 1863*, p. 920.

American children had more opportunities to access public education in comparison to Philadelphian African American children.[33]

Northern African American schools were underfunded and understaffed, and they rarely employed black teachers. African American Philadelphian women were vocal about the flaws in their public education system, including unqualified teachers, high faculty and administrative turnover, classroom overpopulation, and a lack of new schools that could adapt to the growing population.[34] Meanwhile, African American New Yorkers asked for transparency in the curriculum and school operations.[35]

Even with the limitations to receive an education some African American Philadelphians emphasized that their scholastic endeavors would improve their economic and social standing. Jacob C. White, an African American student, informed James Pollock, the governor of Pennsylvania, during a visit, that he believed education would negate claims that African Americans were unintelligent and unworthy of voting rights. «…We are nevertheless preparing ourselves usefully for a future day, when citizenship in our country will be based on manhood and not on color».[36] There is no doubt that some Northern African American families, including the parents and guardians of future USCT soldiers, believed that intellectual improvement would improve the lives of their children.

Many Northern African American adults recognized that education was vital for children who could hopefully advance their prospects in every aspect of American society and possibly elevate their race in the process. A random sampling of fifty Northern USCT soldiers (twenty-five Philadelphians and twenty-five New Yorkers) reveals that very few attended public schools. Seven Philadelphian soldiers and

[33] *Doggett's New York City Directory, 1849-1850*, New York, John Doggett, 1850 (hereafter *New York City Directory, 1849-1850*), p. 7*; New York City Directory for 1850-1851*, p. 31; *New York City Directory, 1851-1852*, p. 32; *New York City Directory, 1852-1853*, Appendix 43-44; *New York City Directory, 1853-1854*, p. 55; *New York City Directory, 1854-1855*, Appendix 28; *New York City Directory, 1856*, Appendix 60; *New York City Directory, 1857,* Appendix 56; *New York City Directory, 1857-8*, Appendix 50; *New York City Directory, 1859*, Appendix 45; *New York City Directory, 1860*, Appendix 19; *New York City Directory, 1861*, Appendix 19; *New York City Directory, 1862*, Appendix 18; *New York City Directory, 1862-1863*, Appendix 15.

[34] «Teacher Wanted», *National Era*, May 27, 1852.

[35] Cecil P. Frey, «The House of Refuge for Colored Children», *The Journal of Negro History,* 66/1 (Spring, 1981), p. 19; Ernestine K Enomoto and David L. Angus, «African American School Attendance in the 19th Century: Education in a Rural Northern Community, 1850-1880», *The Journal of Negro Education*, 64/1 (Winter, 1995), p. 42; Harry C. Silcox, «Delay and Neglect: Negro Public Education in Antebellum Philadelphia, 1800-1860», *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 97/4 (October, 1973), pp. 452-453, 456, 459, 463.

[36] «—», *Provincial Freeman*, June 5, 1855.

none of the New Yorker soldiers attended public school between 1850 and 1860. During the same timespan, twenty-two (eleven male and eleven female) school-age siblings of future Philadelphian-born USCT soldiers attended school. Meanwhile, seven (five males and two females) siblings of future soldiers born in New York City went to school. Forthcoming soldiers also resided in homes with school-age boarder children: two (one male and one female) in Philadelphia and one New Yorker boarder. Both Philadelphian boarders attended school, and the New Yorker boarder did not.[37] These examples illustrate that school-age children, other than New York and Philadelphian USCT soldiers, attended public school. Any time an African American child received an education, their intellectual growth challenged the racist ideology that insisted they were incapable of intellectual growth.

Receiving an education at a Northern public school was never assured for school-age African American boys and girls. Unfortunately, occupational racial discrimination hindered the economic stability of their households and forced families with school-age children to decide whether education or employment was more important for their children.[38] In 1850, Peter Vandermark, a future Twentieth USCI soldier, was a fifteen-years-old child working with his father as a cooper. That same year Benjamin Deets, the brother of Charles Deets, an upcoming Third USCI soldier, worked as a laborer at the age of sixteen alongside their father, Benjamin Sr., who worked the same occupation. Josephine Woodson, the fifteen-year-old sister of Joseph, a soon-to-be Eighth USCI soldier, worked as a laundress in 1860.[39] These examples signify that some African American households had children, male and female, who worked full-time rather than attending a school, a situation representative of some Northern African American families. These future USCT soldiers, similar to other African Americans, learned that economic survival occasionally trumped education. It also meant that the idealized notion of childhood innocence and playfulness was not an experience that Northern African Americans had.[40] Similar to adults, these children were crucial wage-earners for their families.

In an extreme case, school-age African American children not only forewent attending school, but they also assumed the responsi-

[37] U.S. Census, 1850, M432; U.S. Census Bureau, Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, M653, Washington, D.C., National Archives and Records Administration, 1860 (hereafter cited as U.S. Census, 1860).

[38] Silcox, «Delay and Neglect», *op. cit.*, p. 463; Jane E. Dabel, «Education's Unfulfilled Promise: The Politics of Schooling for African American Children in Nineteenth Century New York City», *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, 5/2 (Spring, 2012), pp. 207-208.

[39] U.S. Census, 1850, M432, M653; U.S. Census, 1860, M653.

[40] «Childhood», *Godey's Lady's Book*, August, 1853.

bilities as the primary wage-earner in their household. Long before Eugene Bell enlisted in the Twentieth USCI, he assumed the role of primary wage-earner in his household at thirteen-years-old after his father abandoned their family in 1850.[41] By the age of twenty, Bell worked two jobs to economically help his mother, Susan, and two sisters, Emily and Isador. Bell worked as a coachman and waiter, both of which were semi-skilled occupations. His economic contributions were essential to the Bell household. He paid the rent, covered other household expenditures, and made it possible for his nine-year-old sister, Isador, to attend school.[42]

Bell's childhood gave him a sophisticated understanding of African American manhood. As an adolescent, he saw his father abandon his familial responsibilities. Victorian-era gender roles ascribed that husbands and fathers had a responsibility to economically provide for the families, as historian Stephan M. Frank argues.[43] Bell might have questioned how a man could leave a family who needed him economically. Even without his father, Bell was willing and able to support his family. Bell's mother stated that «For 4 years prior to enlistment[,] he paid rent and other necessary household expenditures…».[44] In the end, Bell served as the primary wage-earner from the ages of thirteen to twenty, which meant that he transitioned to manhood for the sake of his family's survival.

As children, most USCT soldiers learned essential lessons about African American manhood, race relations, and familial dynamics from their fathers. The progeny of male African American unskilled and semi-skilled workers might have witnessed their fathers' masculinity repeatedly denigrated by whites, which illustrated to the children that they, too, were regarded as «inferior» by whites. Still, many African American fathers took care of their children and possibly confirmed to the children that their fathers were men who honored their familial responsibilities as wage-earners. Doing so challenged the myth of the missing African American father.[45] Occupational racial discrimination successfully forced most adult African American men to find employment in low-paying jobs that were physically demanding and offered

[41] 1865 Claim for Mother's Pension for Susan Bell; 1865 Mother's Declaration for Pension in Eugene Bell, Twentieth USCI pension file. National Archives Records Administration-Washington, D.C. (hereafter NARA-Washington, D.C.).

[42] U.S. Census, 1860, M653.

[43] Stephen M. Frank, *Life with Father: Parenthood and Masculinity in the Nineteenth-Century American North,* Baltimore, The John Hopkins University Press, 1998, pp. 62-64, 141-144.

[44] 1865 Mothers Pension Application for Susan Bell, in Eugene Bell, Twentieth USCI pension file. NARA-Washington, D.C.

[45] Sarah N. Roth, *Gender and Race in Antebellum Popular Culture*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014, pp. 218-220.

minimal job security.[46] Historians Bruce Laurie and Mark Schmitz note that adult African American Philadelphian men rarely worked in various semi-skilled and skilled manufacturing industries, including clothing, textiles, furniture, and printing, in 1850.[47] Instead, the fathers of forthcoming Northern USCT soldiers worked a litany of unskilled and occasionally semi-skilled occupations, including laborer, waiters, farm laborer, and boatman.[48]

Occupational discrimination was not an anomaly that only African American men experienced in Northern society. Countless European immigrant men experienced financial hardships working unskilled and semi-skilled occupations due to native-born American white men limiting employment opportunities.[49] As a result, European immigrant and African American populations came into direct competition for employment which led to tensions between the two groups, occasionally leading to racial violence.[50]

As adults, most of the USCT soldiers in this study's sample size continued dealing with occupational racial discrimination in Northern society. Before their military service, these men worked a wider range of unskilled and semi-skilled jobs than their fathers. The rise in semi-skilled occupations occurred as the North industrialized, transportation modernized, and business markets expanded.[51] They became boatmen, farmers, butchers, laborers, wagoners, carpet shakers, fishermen, coachmen, farm laborers, teamsters, lumbermen, and porters, but the majority worked as farm laborers and laborers. Thus, most soon-to-be Northern USCT soldiers who worked in various professions were paid low wages where they usually performed physically demanding duties with minimal job security.

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[46] Bruce Laurie, *Artisans into Workers: Labor in Nineteenth-Century America*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1989, pp. 62-63.

[47] Bruce Laurie and Mark Schmitz, «Manufacturing and Productivity: The Making of an Industrial Base, Philadelphia, 1850-1880», in Theodore Hershberg (ed.), *Philadelphia: Work, Space, Family, and Group Experience in the 19th Century*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1981, pp. 54-55.

[48] Deposition of Bradford Tompkins, on September 12, 1922, in Bradford Tompkins, Twentieth USCI pension file. NARA-Washington, D.C.; U.S. Census Bureau, Seventh Census of the United States, 1850 M432. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1850 (hereafter cited as U.S. Census, 1850); U.S. Census, 1860, M653; Deposition of Leonard Wabath and Jacob Drurn on December 24, 1884; Deposition of George King and William Sterling, on January 17, 1884, in William Mingo, 20th USCI pension file. NARA-Washington, D.C.

[49] Laurie and Schmitz, «Manufacture and Productivity», *op. cit.,* p. 56.

[50] Seraile, *New York's Black Regiments During the Civil War*, *op. cit.,* p. 11.

[51] Jaqueline Jones, *American Work: Four Centuries of Black and White Labor*, New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 1999, pp. 253-254; Earl F. Mulderink III, *New Bedford's Civil War*, New York, Fordham University Press, 2012, p. 37; Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1988, p. 148.

African American women had to find wage-earning work, either full-time or part-time, to keep their households economically stable. African American women worked paid occupations, including washerwomen and servants, in other people's homes. In New York City between 1860 and 1880, nearly 45 percent of the African American workforce were women.[52] In 1850, 26 percent of the manufacturing workforce in Philadelphia were women.[53] Wage-earning expanded beyond African American women, and each example shows that their material realities did not reflect idealized notions of gender.

As children, a small number of African American soldiers lived in households where African American women worked full-time occupations. Though, this was usually in homes that were headed by a single mother. For instance, in 1860, Margaret Woodson, the mother of Joseph, worked as a washerwoman, while her fifteen-year-old daughter, Josephine, worked as a laundress.[54] Joseph, a future soldier in the Eighth USCI, and his brother, David, went to school but saw their mother and school-age sister keep their home economically stable. Both young boys, unlike their sister, attended public school which also highlights that the Woodson family's conscious decision, possibly to assure the boys were prepared for citizenship privileges, to educate only the male children.[55] Since education was another example of demonstrating one's manhood, the fact that advocates of enlistment claimed that military service was the only way to have African American manhood recognized they devalued educational pursuits.

Northern Black Enlistment

The enlistment of hundreds of thousands of Northern African American men into the Union Army did not happen immediately. Instead, it was a gradual process. By 1863, white Unionists loathed hearing reports that 40,275 Union Army soldiers either died in combat, received wounds (mortal and non-fatal), or became prisoners of war. White Unionists were aslo tired of the repeated military defeats against Confederate military forces at battles, including Thomas Jonathan «Stonewall» Jackson's Shenandoah Valley Campaign.[56] These events

[52] Dabel, *A Respectable Woman*, *op. cit.*, pp. 64, 73, 82.

[53] Historians Bruce Laurie and Mark Schmitz never specified the racial breakdown of the Philadelphian women working in various manufacturing industries. Laurie and Schmitz, «Manufacture and Productivity», *op. cit.*, p. 47.

[54] U.S. Census, 1860, M653.

[55] U.S. Census, 1860, M653.

[56] James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1988, pp. 347, 532; «Overview of the 1862 Stonewall Jackson Valley Campaign», National Park Services, <https://www.nps.gov/cebe/learn/historyculture/overview-of-the-1862-stonewall-jackson-valley-campaign.htm> [last time accessed 9/8/2016].

ultimately laid the foundation for African American men –freed and freeborn– to participate in the Civil War as Union Army soldiers and fundamentally change American society.

Before USCT enlistment officially began some Northern African American men eagerly petitioned to serve in the Union Army. From 1861 to 1862, Alfred M. Green regularly agitated in newspapers, African American and white, and in public speeches calling able-bodied African Americans to mobilize militias and prepare for their opportunity to fight in the Civil War. Green was confident that the Civil War would culminate with African American soldiers playing a definitive role in defeating Confederate military forces. Green justified his endeavors after hearing stories of African American men in various Pennsylvanian and New Jersian cities who practiced military drilling and marching, without weapons.[57] Throughout Green's enlistment campaign he chose not to focus on the fact that Northern states banned African American men from participating in militias. Instead, Green focused on the idealized aspects of military service. He emphasized that Northern African American men must assist in emancipating their enslaved Southern brethren. Moreover, throughout military service, African American men would have their manhood recognized by white society and create a pathway for them to receive citizenship rights.

Green failed to recognize that even with his best efforts Abraham Lincoln repeatedly demonstrated in the first two years of the Civil War that it was a «white man's war». After all, President Lincoln quickly rescinded the emancipatory proclamations of Union Army Major-Generals David Hunter and John C. Fremont for freeing Confederate enslaved people to aid the Union Army without presidential authority. Lincoln also removed Simon Cameron from the Secretary of War post for authorizing the enlistment of Confederate enslaved men into the Union Army.[58] Collectively, these actions demonstrated to all African Americans that Civil War battles were exclusively for white men.

Green's call to arms was not an anomaly as there were other Northern African American men with aspirations for military service. African American New Yorkers, such as Robert Hamilton, co-editor of the *Anglo-African*, published articles questioning when African

[57] Alfred M. Green, «The Colored Philadelphians Forming Regiments», *Philadelphia Press,* April 22, 1861; Alfred M. Green, «Editorial», *Pine and Palm*, June 22, 1861; Alfred M. Green, «Formation of Colored Regiments», *Anglo-African*, September 28, 1861; «Philadelphia Affairs», *Anglo-African*, April 5, 1862.

[58] In 1861, Lincoln's rhetoric showed African Americans that he viewed the Civil War as a conflict to restore the Union. Dudley Cornish Taylor, *The Sable Arm: Black Troops in the Union Army, 1861-1865*, Lawrence, University of Kansas Press, 1987, pp. 19-23, 34-35.

American men would get the chance to serve.[59] Meanwhile, African American men in New York City privately formed militias and drilled even though it was illegal. Unfortunately for the African American men training, the chief of police in New York City ordered them to cease their mobilization efforts due to fears of a violent response from local whites.[60] Whites considered militia members as protectors of patriotism, law, and order.[61]

Some Northern African American men opposed military service since African American men already had a well-established history of military service, but they did not receive full citizenship rights afterwards. When whites needed African American men to fight to defend and save the nation, they bravely answered the call to arms. In both the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, African American men –freedmen and freeborn– fought alongside white men. In fact, in the War of 1812 Major-General, and future president, Andrew Jackson, lauded praise for the valor that African American men demonstrated at the Battle of New Orleans.[62] The praise that African American men received during these times of national crisis temporarily gave them, and African Americans on the whole, a strong sense of pride and hope for an improvement in their status in American society. Unfortunately, when these wars ended, so did the recognition and memory of their military service. African American men never received citizenship rights, let alone recognition of their entitlement to fundamental human rights.[63]

Green's calls for African American men to mobilize went unanswered by African American men. Some openly condemned the request by publicly chastising Green. One unnamed African American Philadelphian composed a response to Green in the *Anglo-African*; the writer urged the paper's readers to remain skeptical of elite African Americans overtures for able-bodied men to pledge their lives and loyalty to the Union Army.

[59] The *Anglo-African* was an African American newspaper published in New York City. George Lawrence, Jr., «Colored Americans and the War», *Pine and Palm*, May 25, 1861; «We Should Not Drill», *op. cit.*

[60] Seraile, *New York's Black Regiments During the Civil War*, *op. cit.,* pp. 17, 21.

[61] Simon Newman, *Parades and the Politics of the Street: Festive Culture in the Early American Republic,* Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania, 1997, pp. 16-17.

[62] William C. Nell, *Services of Colored Americans, in the Wars of 1776 and 1812*, Boston, Robert F. Wallcut, 1852, pp. 19-21; George Boker, *Washington and Jackson on Negro Soldiers. Gen. Banks on the Bravery of Negro Troops. Poem-The Second Louisiana*, Philadelphia, n.p., 1863, pp. 1-6; «Colored Men in the Revolution, and in the War of 1812», *Christian Recorder*, May 10, 1862.

[63] Chandra Manning, *Troubled Refuge: Struggling for Freedom in the Civil War*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2016, pp. 84-85, 202, 212-226.

> Is this all wisdom this mode of reasoning, or is it a mistaken idea called into existence by a desire of fame? Is it a demanding necessity…to prove out manhood and liberty? Have not two centuries of cruel and unrequited servitude in this country alone entitled the children of this generation to the rights of men and citizens? Have we not done our share towards creating a national existence for those who now enjoy it to our degradation, ever devising evil for our suffering, heart-crushed race?[64]

The author's commentary shows that even though Northern African Americans were perhaps united in condemning the Confederacy and slavery, other tensions did not stop class divisions from materializing. After all, the author recognized that it would be working poor men who would serve and comprise the majority of ranks within the Union Army.

Most of the USCT soldiers examined here came from working poor families, and the removal of these able-bodied men from their households negatively impacted their family's economic stability. As previously noted, occupational discrimination relegated most African American men to working low-wage, physically demanding jobs that made it imperative for every member in their household to find employment, either full-time, part-time, or seasonal. Therefore, the removal of any member could potentially thrust their households into economic disarray. Green's idealism refused to acknowledge the material reality of most Northern African American families.

Public criticism to Green's enlistment campaign from Northern African Americans continued to show how Northern African American men opposed military service. In October 21, 1861, the *Anglo-African* published an editorial from an anonymous New Jersian author entitled, «We Should Not Drill». The defiant author pondered why Northern African American men should waste their time drilling and training in militias if there was no official call for African American men to serve. Instead of toiling away as faux soldiers the anonymous author felt that African American men should focus their efforts elsewhere.

> But it is infinitely of greater importance that we strain every energy to drill our young men into habits of sobriety, frugality, chastity and economy that they attain to wealth, education and unity, that they may acquire force of character, positions of influence and the high standard of self-respect, that they may develop enterprise, talent, and other exemplary traits of character, and that they may all practically prove day by day that their highest unswerving hopes lie within a life of truth and righteousness.[65]

[64] «Formation of Colored Troops», *op. cit.*
[65] «We Should Not Drill», *op. cit.*

The author believed that military drilling, at least in 1861, was a fruitless endeavor that did not improve the lives of Northern African Americans.

However, this rhetoric failed to acknowledge that the families and local African American communities recognized the manhood of countless African American men on a daily basis. Charles Deets, a future Sixth USCI soldier, engaged in a common-law marriage with Hannah Clark and they also had a child, Ella Irene, who was born on October 27, 1862, nearly eleven months before the couple legally married.[66] Andrew White, a forthcoming Sixth USCI soldier, was a bachelor from 1850 until enlisting, and during this period he remained the primary wage-earner in his household. Due to a disability, Andrew's father, James Reeves, incurred, Andrew earned eight dollars per month, and he sent most of his wages home to his parents and seven siblings.[67] Also, Alfred Rothwell, a soon-to-be Third USCI soldier, and Elizabeth Harris legally wed in Chester, Pennsylvania, in 1857. The Rothwells also had three children –James, Isaac, and Hannah– who were all born before their father's enlistment.[68] To the families and friends of these three men, they were indeed *men* who created families and helped, with aid from every other household member through paid and unpaid labor, kept their households' economically stable.

A brief examination of twenty-five Philadelphian-born USCT soldiers, including Davis, White, and Rothwell, shows that these men were pivotal to their households long before enlisting in the Union. Ten men wed, legally and informally, before serving. From those marriages, the couples had a total of sixteen children –female and male–. The remaining fifteen soldiers were still bachelors. This high proportion of bachelors who would later enlist support the assertions of historians Paul Cimbala and Thomas Kemp who argued that most Civil War soldiers, of all races, were single at the time of the enlistment.[69] Though, remaining bachelors did not necessarily mean that these

[66] Deets and Clark lived together two years before Elle Irene's birth. Deposition of Charlotte Ann Morgan and Mary Ann Brown, on November 17, 1863; Deposition of Diana Clark, on October 21, 1868; Deposition of John W. Cornish, on September 11, 1868, in Charles Deets, Sixth USCI's, pension file. NARA-Washington, D.C.

[67] Deposition of Sarah Reeves, on January 31, 1884, in Andrew White, Sixth USCI pension, NARA-Washington, D.C.

[68] Deposition of Sarah E. Lambert, on January 11, 1870; 1863 Copy of Marriage Certificate, in Alfred Rothwell, Third USCI pension, NARA-Washington, D.C.

[69] All of these historical studies primarily examined white soldiers in the Union and Confederate Armies. Paul Cimbala, *Veterans North and South: The Transition from Soldier to Civilian After the American Civil War*, Santa Barbara, California, Praeger, 2015, p. 47; Thomas Kemp, «Community and War: The Civil War Experience of Two New Hampshire Towns», in Maris Vinvskis (ed.), *Toward A Social History of the American Civil War*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 68.

African American men did not have dependents that they helped economically.

Long before enlistment rhetoric claimed that African American manhood was only recognizable through military service, Northern African American men were seen as men daily within their homes and local communities. All of the men were crucial members of their households, whether serving as the primary or a supplementary wage-earner. Keeping an African American household stable was not solely limited to economics. African American men fought to make their residences a protected space from racial discrimination for themselves and their families, sometimes including non-kin members. Collectively, these examples demonstrate that African American men were indeed men even if advocates of enlistment and white society did not mention these actions as justifiable examples. Advocates of enlistment, who argued that manhood was an essential component to demonstrating one's manhood, seemed to ignore African American men's percepcions of their own manhood, in all its forms, as respectable.

Conclusion

Forthcoming Philadelphian and New Yorker USCT soldiers and their families battled racial discrimination daily. From the moment of their birth, these and other African Americans experienced a race war that predated the Civil War. Whether it was attempting to establish economic stability, challenging idealized gender norms, protecting each other during race riots, combatting racially discriminatory policies in public education, or questioning what role African American men would play in the war reveal that African Americans' place in society was undefined and tenuous.

The families of future USCT soldiers fought to have their civil liberties acknowledged and protected. It is vital to recognize that enlistment into USCT was not assured. Nor it is wise to ignore who USCT soldiers were before their enlistment. The Union's removal of African American men impacted families who were left to keep their households together with the absence of soldiers.

Evidence shows that it is possible to conduct a historical analysis of the pre-service lives of Northern USCT soldiers. There is a wealth of scholarship on the regimental and postwar experiences of USCT soldiers. Given that the war ended over 153 years ago, it is long overdue for scholars to know the antebellum experiences of African American men who played a role in winning the Civil War.