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Black Yanks in America's Pacific: Race and the Making of a Military Empire, 1945-1953

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ABSTRACT

**Black Yanks in America's Pacific:
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This dissertation examines the participation of tens of thousands of African-American servicemen in the occupation of Japan and the Korean war. It poses three questions: how were black servicemen incorporated into a postwar military empire; how did they help shape their nation's expanding Asian protectorate; and how did they understand their role in it? I employ historian Thomas Holt's concept of the "everyday"—where macro-level phenomena are lived and interpreted—for a study of international military history. Black citizens recognized the socioeconomic advantages of a burgeoning warfare-welfare state whose armed forces provided employment opportunities to disadvantaged citizens. American policies in Japan, which promoted personal consumption by soldiers while demanding varying degrees of American-Japanese segregation, encouraged proprietary attitudes toward the nation and its people. American tactics in Korea, as well as soldiers' belief they were fighting for an ungrateful and feckless population, produced a disdain for Koreans, allies and enemies alike. The war's lingering effects, moreover, sustained African Americans' socioeconomic dependence upon militarization and the projection of American power. One of the central ironies of this story is that many black Americans enjoyed greater citizenship privileges when serving abroad in an authoritarian institution dedicated to the use of force.

The employment of black men in a trans-Pacific military empire hindered notions of Afro-Asian solidarity and enhanced black identification with America's regional ambitions. A

generation of African Americans abroad and at home entered a new phase of racial formation, one that encouraged black citizens to share many of the same racialized attitudes toward Asian peoples held by their white counterparts, to think of themselves first and foremost as Americans (and distinctly not as members of broader communities defined as “colored” or “non-white”), and to identify with their government’s foreign policy objectives in Asia (if not its every strategic decision). Armed service in Japan and Korea thus encouraged black citizens to reassess their identities and priorities in a militarized, global context at the dawn of the Cold War.

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INTRODUCTION: RACE AND THE "EVERYDAY" IN AMERICA'S PACIFIC

Lemo Houston, a native of Alabama and member of the American occupation forces in Japan, experienced something common among many of his fellow black soldiers: he began an intimate relationship with a local Japanese woman. Houston and Setsuko Takeuchi eventually fell in love. Their situation became unusual, however, when Houston was both willing and able to marry and bring to the United States an Asian spouse previously ineligible for immigration and citizenship.[1] Their homecoming would prove inauspicious. While visiting relatives in New York City in 1955, Houston was summoned to Washington, D.C. to receive his next military assignment. He left Setsuko and their two daughters with his extended family. Houston returned days later to discover relatives had locked his wife and children in an attic. As one daughter later remembered, those responsible did not want their black neighbors "to think they were harboring a 'Jap.'" The Houstons departed at once, and Lemo severed all contact with his New York family.[2]

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[1] The United States established barriers to Asian immigration through the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 (repealed in 1943 and replaced with a small annual quota), the Asia Barred Zone Act of 1917, the Oriental Exclusion Acts of 1921 and 1924, and the Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934. A series of laws passed in the late 1940s and early 1950s created short-term openings for Asians married to American citizens, primarily servicemen, but it was only with the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act, popularly known as the McCarran-Walter Act, that Asian military brides were provided immigration opportunities equal to their European counterparts. The Act, although it repealed the blanket exclusion laws, created a token quota system for all other forms of Asian immigration. These quotas remained in force until the system was dismantled in 1965. See Alicia J. Capi, "The McCarran-Walter Act: A Contradictory Legacy on Race, Quotas, and Ideology," The American Immigration Law Foundation (June 2004), www.ailf.org/ipc/policy_reports_2004_mccarranwalter.asp (accessed 6 February 2007); and Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

[2] Elfrieda Berthiaume Shukert and Barbara Smith Scibetta, *War Brides of World War II* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1988), 225. A 1953 article in *Ebony* echoed such unpleasant experiences: "By marrying Negroes, these Japanese girls have cast their lot with the Negro people and are hurt to find that they do not readily fit into the Negro world." See "The Loneliest Brides in America," *Ebony*, January 1953, 21. In response to this article, sailor Edward A. Coble wrote that "until recently, it was thought by many in Japan that Negroes would be the last to discriminate against Japanese warbrides, [but] we find the effect of this manifest unfriendliness on the part of American Negroes

Chicagoan Curtis James Morrow enlisted in the United States Army in the spring of 1950, at the age of seventeen. During basic training he volunteered for combat duty in Korea. After being wounded and evacuated from frontline service, Morrow was assigned temporary duty in Pusan, the primary port of entry for Americans serving in Korea. Shortly after visiting a Korean prostitute, Morrow joined a friend for drinks in a neighborhood tavern. At one point his companion remarked, "I never knew no Chinese before. Sure, I used to see 'em around D.C. sometimes, but hell, I don't even remember ever speaking to any of 'em before. As for Korea, man, I never even heard of any Koreans before coming here." Morrow thought for a moment, took a sip from his glass, and replied, "The same thing goes for me. But if I live to get out of here, every time I see one, I'll be reminded of Korea."[3] Morrow's later memories, as evidenced by his memoir, were overwhelmingly unpleasant.

As these anecdotes suggest, encounters between a generation of African Americans and Asians were fraught with tensions from the occupation of Japan to the Korean War and beyond. Why? And what were the implications for black views on this incipient American military empire and international race relations? The armed service of African Americans at the dawn of the Cold War enabled ubiquitous Afro-Asian social relations. Yet it simultaneously undermined their long-term survival, hindered notions of Afro-Asian solidarity, and enhanced black identification with America's regional ambitions. To phrase my arguments in slightly different terms, African-American service in an empire of military bases encouraged black citizens to share many of the same racialized attitudes toward Asian peoples held by their white counterparts, to think of themselves first and foremost as Americans (and distinctly not as

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becoming more and more apparent in Japan." See Edward A. Coble, *Ebony*, April 1953, 8. Note the volume of trans-Pacific communication that Coble's letter suggests.

[3] Curtis James Morrow, *What's a Commie Ever Done to Black People?: A Korean War Memoir of Fighting in the U.S. Army's Last All Negro Unit* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., Inc., 1997), 1, quotes from 77.

members of broader communities defined as "colored" or "non-white"), and to identify with their government's foreign policy objectives in Asia (if not its every strategic decision). This project—a work of international military history—explains how black citizens were incorporated into the projection of American power and how they came to support their nation's expanding Asian protectorate.

It also speaks to broader scholarship in the humanities and social sciences in two principal ways. First, it suggests that scholars look beyond the domestic majority-minority dichotomy that grounds most work on interracial cooperation and conflict. My approach recognizes that individual and community identities are forged in global contexts and cannot be fully comprehended through exclusively national studies. Second, it positions military service, voluntary or not, as a locus of study for interactions across racially and nationally defined lines of difference. The project encourages examinations of interpersonal experience situated within one of the largest and most influential—and historically understudied—social institutions of the modern era.[4] Overall, I hope to suggest further avenues of inquiry into how and why various social groups, especially those considered averse to foreign intervention, have bought into imperial expansion and maintenance.[5]

The dissertation's subject and emphasis on informal relationships do not imply that Afro-Asian solidarities were in any sense transhistorical or "natural," or that they *should* have existed. Indeed, this project is in dialogue with scholarship that posits durable strains of black

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[4] Recent works exploring the American military as a social institution of extraordinary geographic reach include Donna Alvah, *Unofficial Ambassadors: American Military Families Overseas and the Cold War, 1946-1965* (New York: New York University Press, 2007); Beth Bailey and David Farber, *The First Strange Place: The Alchemy of Race and Sex in World War II Hawaii* (New York: The Free Press, 1992); and Petra Goedde, *GIs and Germans: Culture, Gender, and Foreign Relations, 1945-1949* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003).

[5] For a recent study emphasizing the effects of paternalist discourse among white marines in the Caribbean, see Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

internationalism and notions of Afro-Asian kinship within a twentieth-century "Black Pacific."[6] My approach likewise differs through its focus on a large cohort of non-elite black Americans who experienced day-to-day contact with Asian peoples—Japanese and Koreans in particular—a condition that did not, indeed could not, exist prior to the end of World War Two. I utilize a bottom-up approach rather than focusing on black radicals, intellectuals, civil rights leaders, or opinion-makers, individuals who generally proffered a theoretical, abstract rhetoric of Afro-Asian solidarity, even as they encountered Asian peoples rarely or never at all.

In advancing its historical claims this dissertation engages three recent bodies of scholarship, the first of which asserts a potent degree of pro-Japanese sentiment among African Americans in the first half of the twentieth century. Historian Reginald Kearney, for instance, has focused on wartime struggles over the significance of imperial Japan between "the black bourgeoisie" (who may have viewed the conflict as a race war but believed pro-Japanese sentiment threatened black progress) and a "radical fringe" belonging to groups such as the Pacific Movement of the Eastern World, remnants of the Marcus Garvey campaigns of the 1920s.[7] Kearney notes that many if not most black men who entered the military "were representative of the broad center of black life who were neither unswerving patriots nor seditionists," but maintains these soldiers "often revealed themselves closely allied to those who were most cynical about the war." He thus concludes that with Japan's surrender, a significant

[6] The term "Black Pacific" is from George Lipsitz, "'Frantic to Join . . . the Japanese Army': The Asia Pacific War in the Lives of African American Soldiers and Civilians," in Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd, eds., *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 327.

[7] As an example of the latter's sentiments, Kearney reproduces a poem circulated by the Associated Negro Press that reads in part: "I know some people want to whip the Japanese for ever daring to think they are as good as whites / and Hirohito sent work to black men / Japan is the champion of all colored people. Stand ready to rebel." Reginald Kearney, *African American Views of the Japanese: Solidarity or Sedition?* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998), 97-98 (all quotes), 104, 117.

percentage of African Americans abroad and at home "were anxious to seek reconciliation with the Japanese on the basis of equality."[8]

Historian Marc Gallicchio has likewise emphasized "black internationalism" and the prominence of Asia "in the minds of black Americans in the decades before World War II." He defines the former as "an ideology that stressed the role of race and racism in world affairs," its adherents African-American "intellectuals, journalists and editors, leaders of radical mass movements, and mainstream civil rights organizations" who "believed that, as victims of racism and imperialism, the world's darker races . . . shared a common interest in overthrowing white supremacy and creating an international order based on racial equality." Gallicchio claims that although most black citizens who supported Japan "limited their enthusiasm to the realm of debate and commentary," others, particularly among the working class and unemployed, "sought membership in what they thought was a Japanese-led alliance against white supremacy."[9] As with most historical works in this vein, Gallicchio's ends with American victory in 1945. We are thus left to ask how African-American views of Asia and Asians evolved after World War Two, when the United States emerged as *the* preeminent military power in the region.

Finally, historian George Lipsitz has advanced similar arguments regarding the importance of prewar pro-Japanese movements and the racialized nature of the Pacific conflict, while also touching upon postwar developments. He has written, for instance, that the American presence in Asia during and after World War Two instigated "unexpected alliances and affinities across communities of color." Arguing that "[i]mages of Asia and experiences with Asians and

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[8] Ibid., 105, 123.

[9] Marc Gallicchio, *The African American Encounter with Japan and China: Black Internationalism in Asia, 1895-1945* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 1-5. See also Gerald Horne, "Tokyo Bound: African Americans and Japan Confront White Supremacy," *Souls*, Summer 2001, 17-29; and Gerald Horne, *Race War: White Supremacy and the Japanese Attack on the British Empire* (New York: New York University Press, 2004).

Asian Americans have played an important role in enabling Black people to complicate the simple black-white binaries that do so much to shape the contours of economic, cultural, and social life in the United States," Lipsitz emphasizes their salutary effects. As evidence he has focused on Ivory Perry, a civil rights activist in St. Louis during the 1950s and 1960s, who served in the occupation of Japan and the Korean War. According to Lipsitz, "meeting Japanese and Korean citizens who seemed to [Perry] refreshingly nonracist compared to the white Americans he had known helped him see that white supremacy was a primarily historical [and] national phenomenon and not human nature." Lipsitz further claims that Afro-Asian alliances, and public denunciations of them by "anxious whites," "called attention to a potential resource for Black freedom struggles that would eventually come to full flower in the 1960s in the form of opposition to the Vietnam War . . . and expressions of solidarity with anti-imperialist struggles in Asia, Africa, and Latin America by more radical groups."[10] Although I do not discount the sincerity of individuals such as Ivory Perry, I view their outlook as exceptional. Few of the historical actors given voice here enjoyed such unproblematic relations with Asian peoples or reached Perry's harmonious conclusions.

A second body of literature explores wartime and postwar Afro-Asian interactions within the continental United States, California in particular. Scholars Daniel Widener, Scott Kurashige

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[10] Lipsitz, "'Frantic to Join . . . the Japanese Army,'" 327, 332, 343-344. See also George Lipsitz, *A Life in the Struggle: Ivory Perry and the Culture of Opposition* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 40, for another account of Perry's pleasant encounters with Japanese civilians, in this case university professors and students. Historian Robert F. Jefferson is another of the few scholars to investigate interpersonal relations between black soldiers and Asian peoples. His study, based upon the experiences of an all-black unit stationed in the Philippines during World War Two, explores "how the political perspectives and identities of semi-state actors in uniform serving in . . . Asia were fundamentally transformed during the course of the war," and emphasizes "the degree of interethnic, anti-imperialist coalitions forged among black GIs." Jefferson contends that "the race-conscious politics of black soldiers were altered by the Philippines experiences, giving rise to a sense of nascent internationalism wrapped in anti-racism and anti-colonialism." However, as Chapter Two of this dissertation explains, black-Filipino interactions in the immediate postwar months were racially charged and frequently punctuated by violence, until the removal of all black soldiers at the Philippine government's insistence. See Robert F. Jefferson, "Staging Points of African American Identity in the Southwest Pacific Theater and the Politics of Demobilization," *Contours: A Journal of the African Diaspora*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Spring 2003), 82-100.

and Charlotte Brooks each have identified a postwar divergence of socioeconomic trajectories for black and Asian Americans, while differing slightly in emphasis. Widener notes that although Japanese-American internment interrupted daily interactions between black and Japanese individuals, it "hardly ended points of contact, conflict, and cooperation" as internees began returning to Los Angeles in early 1945. Intergroup tension rather than open hostility, however, remained the norm. At the same time, white Americans' deployment of a model-minority concept for Asian immigrants ensured that the two groups would experience radically different fortunes in postwar southern California.[11]

Scott Kurashige's analysis of demographic change and political activism in mid-century Los Angeles offers similar findings. Kurashige argues that before World War Two, African Americans, Japanese, and Mexican Americans "tended to live in the same neighborhoods and to face similar forms of exclusion, but they rarely cooperated politically. During the war, however, the first truly multiracial social movement in the city's history arose." Yet with the end of internment, "the return of Japanese Americans to the city seriously tested the new spirit of solidarity." Like Widener, Kurashige emphasizes that a "resuscitation of the Nisei's image," combined with the gradual assimilation of Japanese Americans into white neighborhoods, fatally compromised efforts to forge non-white interracial alliances in the postwar city.[12]

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[11] Daniel Widener, "'Perhaps the Japanese Are to Be Thanked?': Asia, Asian Americans, and the Construction of Black California," *positions: east asia cultures critique*, vol. 11, no. 1 (Spring 2003), 166-167, and 179, note 45. Widener's article appears in a special issue of *positions* entitled "The Afro-Asian Century." Guest editors Andrew F. Jones and Nikhil Pal Singh acknowledge that "while this issue is largely devoted to a genealogical investigation of the Afro-Asian interactions in the first half of the twentieth century, the global proliferation of African American music and popular culture in the post World War II period—as well as the very physical presence of U.S. military bases and black servicemen throughout Asia (and particularly in Korea, Vietnam, and Japan)—has only expanded the scope and complexity of the Afro-Asian encounter in the Pacific Rim." See "Guest Editors' Introduction," *positions: east asia cultures critique*, vol. 11, no. 1 (Spring 2003), 3-4.

[12] Scott Kurashige, "The Many Facets of Brown: Integration in a Multiracial Society," *The Journal of American History*, vol. 91, no. 1 (June 2004), 60, 67.

Charlotte Brooks concurs with these evaluations and points to the critical importance of housing in Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area to explain relations between African-American migrants and returning Japanese Americans. She notes that "Little Tokyo's white landlords openly favored Japanese Americans who wished to 'reclaim' the district from black residents. Most believed that the Nisei and Issei were more desirable tenants than African Americans." And according to Brooks, many returnees resented or simply ignored the few black residents who managed to retain their homes. Overall, "[o]perating in segregated, unequal California, nonwhite people continually jockeyed for position. Moments of interethnic and interracial cooperation remained just that—mere moments. . . . People from different communities formed alliances of convenience from time to time, but these generally fell apart when interests diverged. Those in the position to improve their standing did so, despite the costs to their former partners."[13]

My dissertation complements and builds upon these studies of Afro-Asian interactions by expanding the topic's scope and geographic dimensions, taking as its subject tens of thousands of black servicemen from across the United States who served overseas, as well as various Asian peoples who encountered them. It likewise highlights the manner in which accounts of black experiences in Asia were transmitted through the press and other channels to African Americans stateside. In so doing it suggests that the inversely proportional power relations operating in eastern Asia (black over Asian) and western America (Asian increasingly over black) significantly aggravated Afro-Asian tensions.

[13] Charlotte Brooks, "Ascending California's Racial Hierarchy: Asian Americans, Housing, and Government, 1920-1955" (Diss. Northwestern University, 2002), 238, 396-397. African-American poet and novelist Maya Angelou, whose family moved to San Francisco shortly after Pearl Harbor, explained, "A person unaware of all the factors that make up oppression might have expected sympathy or even support from the Negro newcomers for the dislodged Japanese. . . . But the sensations of common relationship were missing. . . . No member of my family and none of the family friends ever mentioned the absent Japanese. It was if they had never owned or lived in the houses we inhabited." See *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (New York: Random House, 1969), 204-205.

A third and final contingent of historical scholarship emphasizes Cold War political repression as the cause for declines in black internationalism and anti-imperialism. Jonathan Rosenberg has recently investigated twentieth-century "race reformers' worldview" of "color-conscious internationalism."[14] Rosenberg acknowledges that his "focus is largely on top-level reformers and the organizations in which they served" but insists that world affairs "were likely more significant to national rather than local figures, who were more concerned with . . . day-to-day challenges."[15] Historian Brenda Gayle Plummer similarly describes a lengthy record of black involvement with international developments, while criticizing scholars of international relations for grounding their work in the worldviews of national leaders. Yet a close reading of her study reveals a source base tilted heavily toward the activities and pronouncements of eminent black spokespersons, Walter White and W.E.B. Du Bois in particular. In regard to a black anti-imperialist agenda, Plummer argues the "Cold War quickly derailed the internationalist strategies mounted by civil rights organizations." She thus points to the Korean War "and the crisis atmosphere that it engendered" for a lack of outspoken black opposition to this Asian conflict and its racial aspects, and for a focus instead on integration and fair treatment within the military.[16]

Historian Penny M. Von Eschen, who has produced the most comprehensive study of black Americans and anticolonialism at mid-century, largely agrees with this assessment. She

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[14] Jonathan Rosenberg, *How Far the Promised Land?: World Affairs and the American Civil Rights Movement from the First World War to Vietnam* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 5. This ideology, according to Rosenberg, asserted a "unity of the downtrodden. Oppressed peoples of color throughout the world—whether in Africa, Asia, or the United States—were bound together by the reality of their subordinate status, interconnected by a shared lack of autonomy" (6).

[15] Rosenberg places his greatest emphasis on how the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and its leadership "responded to global developments and American actions in world politics throughout the twentieth century. (3)"

[16] Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 184, 204.

maintains that by "the last years of World War II, internationalist anticolonial discourse was critical in shaping black American politics and the meaning of racial identities and solidarities." Yet "[t]his politics in the making did not survive the beginnings of the Cold War." Systematic state-sponsored repression of anticolonial activism was reinforced, in this argument, by black liberals' embrace of an American Cold War agenda. Such "striking changes in the views of African American leaders and journalists on U.S. foreign policy," Von Eschen argues, "can be seen in responses to the Korean War." Whereas "in the 1940s journalists had consistently linked Jim Crow and imperialism, they drew sharp distinctions in discussion of Korea," choosing instead to portray American intervention as an exercise in the defense of freedom.[17]

This dissertation grants the widespread and chilling effects of anti-communist repression, particularly among the leadership of civil rights organizations. However, its story is one of reinforcement from below—that is, individual and collective experiences circulating horizontally and upwards—rather than imposition from above. I contend that the history of this period looks markedly different, and much more contingent and complex, from the bottom up. Non-elite African Americans, whom most historians would never call "activists" in the strictest sense of the term, used their experiences in Asia to make sense of their—and their relatives' and friends'—places in a world of tremendous upheaval. I argue that the domestic political environment of the early Cold War was never the sole or even the most important factor shaping the attitudes, outlook, and goals of the majority of black Americans; new personal experiences and opportunities were often more determinative. At its core this dissertation seeks to elucidate the racial politics at work in, and produced by, informal relationships between black servicemen

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[17] Penny M. Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 2-3, 146-147.

and Japanese and Korean civilians and violent encounters with Korean and Chinese combatants, while integrating international relations into a study of localized experience and public concern.

In order to accomplish these aims, I rely on published and archival print sources, including black- and Asian-American-oriented newspapers and magazines, with an emphasis on editorials, opinion pieces, and reader correspondence.[18] I also employ military and other government records, as well as memoirs and oral history collections describing African-American life in the occupation of Japan and the Korean War. In using these resources I have found particularly helpful historian Thomas Holt's theoretical insights on spanning the divide between international context and historical actor: "[H]istorians—no less than other analysts of human life—need an approach that bridges the global and the local, the societal and the individual. I believe some elements of that approach are offered by the concept of a study of everyday life and 'everydayness.'" Drawing upon the work of sociologist Henri Lefebvre, Holt asserts, "It is at the global level that human activity achieves its greatest efficacy and most enduring significance. It is at the level of the everyday that global phenomena are enacted. . . . In short, the everyday is where macro-level phenomena—politics, economics, ideologies [and, one might add, military strategy]—are lived."[19] One central contention of this project is that notions of Afro-Asian solidarity attracted few adherents during the early Cold War in large measure

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[18] In so doing, I bear in mind both the political orientations of authors and editorial boards and the fact that the black press at this time functioned first and foremost as an advocate for African Americans and their interests. I have also endeavored to maintain a healthy skepticism as to the representative nature of letters to the editor, given the multiple filters—initial selection, subsequent redaction, and so on—involved in their publication. And yet I have discovered a remarkable degree of correlation between these historically specific expressions of opinion and those found in a variety of other sources.

[19] Thomas C. Holt, "Marking: Race, Race-making, and the Writing of History," *The American Historical Review*, vol. 100, no. 1 (February 1995), 7, 10. Holt also provides a valuable caveat: "It is important, moreover, not to confuse the everyday with the merely popular or non-elite. Every institution, class, or power also has its 'everyday'; it is a level of experience and analysis, not an aspect of social hierarchy" (10, note 22). I wish to thank Kate Masur for drawing my attention to this article.

because they conflicted with the experiences and interpretations of black servicemen living and working in militarized social environments overseas. Moreover, a steady accretion of media accounts of their activities had a cumulative effect that produced collective African-American beliefs and memories regarding the black experience in Asia. In this manner armed service contributed decisively to contemporary views on Afro-Asian relations and America's East Asian military presence.

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Before discussing the substance of each chapter, a word on organization is in order. This project's scope is atypical in that it conjoins histories of the occupation of Japan and the Korean War. I have adopted this periodization not merely because of the geographical proximity of the nations involved and the chronological overlap between the two events, but also because both foreign policy endeavors called upon many of the same human and material resources. Occupation personnel were among the first sent to fight in Korea (the southern half of which the American military administered from 1945 to 1948). Indeed, the occupation largely made American participation in the war possible. Furthermore, most soldiers subsequently going to and returning from Korea passed through or served in Japan, which functioned as the American military's rearward staging area. More generally, both nations were fundamental elements of American postwar expansion in Asia, and continue to anchor a chain of military bases along the Pacific Rim. The following chapters are grouped in complementary pairs. All are to varying degrees thematic, and some include consideration of events beyond the project's chronological endpoint. However, together they form a cohesive historical narrative stretching from V-J day through the signing of the Korean armistice.

The opening two chapters explicate the appeal of military service in the immediate postwar years and the structural factors that regulated and influenced African-American behavior abroad. In the wake of World War Two the United States maintained a relatively large peacetime military for the first time in its history. My approach is to treat postwar military history as labor history. I trace the confluence of employment in the armed forces with trends in economic mobility, education, housing, commodity prices, and other factors in the domestic political economy. African-American men—mostly of urban and rural working-class backgrounds—enlisted in the military primarily as a means to acquire economic security and material comforts unavailable in the civilian economy.[20] Their substantial remittances further swelled the number of black citizens materially invested in continued militarization. These young men, despite the odious and well-documented discrimination endured in the wartime armed forces, were among the very first to recognize the new socioeconomic possibilities of a burgeoning warfare-welfare state.[21] And the attitudes, aspirations and motives these men brought with them into the service strongly informed their behavior once overseas.[22]

Government policy, the attitudes of local populations, and the sheer number of positions available increased African-American assignments to Japan at the expense of Europe. More than ten thousand black men served each year in an occupation that persisted for more than six.

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[20] See Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), 83-84, 90-95, and 166-167, for an analysis of the importance black Americans placed on access to sites of consumption as a *sine qua non* of American citizenship during and after World War Two.

[21] I define the warfare-welfare state as a variant of the national security state, one that combined a policy emphasis on national defense, military preparedness, and the use of military force abroad with a relatively limited social welfare apparatus. Such factors encouraged disadvantaged citizens, especially racial minorities, to volunteer for armed service in order to acquire remuneration and consumption opportunities denied them in civilian society. Thus, a nation's most socioeconomically vulnerable citizens came to depend upon the maintenance of a military-industrial complex, overseas military installations (and their concomitant claims upon local resources), and preparations for actual combat. The United States exhibited all of these traits following World War Two.

[22] For more on the importance of understanding the pre-service backgrounds of enlisted men and women, see Richard H. Kohn, "The Social History of the American Soldier: A Review and Prospectus for Research," *The American Historical Review*, vol. 86, no. 3 (June, 1981), 565.

African Americans abroad, and stateside in particular, initially expressed ambivalence regarding the suitability of American rule over a non-white population. Yet black occupationaires—and increasingly their dependents—acquired material comforts unimaginable in their circumscribed communities at home, especially the Jim Crow South. American policies in Japan, which promoted personal consumption by soldiers and their families while demanding varying degrees of American-Japanese segregation, likewise encouraged proprietary attitudes toward the nation and its people. I thus emphasize how structural forces constrained and directed the behavior of occupationaires in general and black Americans in particular. I further argue that when Afro-Asian personal contacts developed, they were strongly influenced by inequitable relations of social and economic power.[23] Overall, state-sponsored carrots and sticks and black economic interests, working in tandem, led African Americans to accept, and even embrace, occupation policies and opportunities.

The dissertation's middle two chapters examine the romantic and familial attachments officials sought to deny servicemen—African Americans in particular—or encouraged them to disavow. They analyze relationships between black soldiers and Asian women, and the impact of the Korean War on the long-term viability of Afro-Asian families. Black publications regularly featured explorations of a growing "brown baby crisis" in the Pacific—that is, the plight of abandoned children of black servicemen and their Asian partners. This crisis was the result of both the transitory nature of many of these intimate encounters and the numerous obstacles standing in the way of legally recognized Afro-Asian families. Enlisted men were

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[23] This contention mirrors recent discussions of *Brown v. Board of Education* that understand "integration structurally, as the equitable distribution of material and social goods and resources, a notion that diverges sharply from the interpersonal notion of racial integration that was implied and influenced by *Brown*." See Kevin Gaines, "Whose Integration Was It? An Introduction," *The Journal of American History*, vol. 91, no. 1 (June 2004), 23, as well as essays in the subsequent round table.

required to obtain permission from often reluctant white officers if they wished to marry Asian women, and black soldiers encountered particularly stiff resistance. American immigration law, which severely restricted entry for those with fifty percent or more "Asian blood," likewise complicated matters. Those few brides who managed to emigrate to the United States, although occasionally celebrated by black Americans as a breakthrough in race relations, came to be portrayed as objects of pity or scorn because of their small numbers, isolation within or from often hostile black communities, and lack of secure standing in the domestic racial hierarchy.[24]

As locally recognized partnerships began to fall apart in America's Pacific because of community strains, military disapproval, troop transfers and, later, large-scale black casualties in Korea, African Americans at home and abroad initially expressed urgent concern for the plight of children left behind. Yet most found the legal and economic requirements for adoption simply too daunting. Black Americans also lacked the powerful cultural reinforcements, targeted at white middle-class Americans, that promoted symbolic and formal adoption of Asian orphans.[25] Japanese and Korean communities shunned Afro-Asian offspring because they functioned for some as living reminders of military defeat and occupation and because of racial prejudice.[26] As

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[24] Historian Alex Lubin has recently produced a study of the public-sphere politics of interracial intimacy between the end of World War Two and the Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown* decision, but with a focus on black GI-white European romance and marriage and the implications for civil rights activism. As he admits, "I have struggled to understand race by moving beyond the black/white binary. Nonetheless, my sources continually brought me back to black/white relationships. … Without exception, the kind of interracial intimacy that most concerned policy makers, the NAACP, and cultural workers after the war involved white bodies. Hence, while I do not limit the definition of interracial intimacy to white/black relationships, much of the study engages black/white racial categories." See *Romance and Rights: The Politics of Interracial Intimacy, 1945-1954* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2005), xx-xxi.

[25] See Christina Klein, "Family Ties and Political Obligation: The Discourse of Adoption and the Cold War Commitment to Asia," in Christian G. Appy, ed., *Cold War Constructions: The Political Culture of United States Imperialism, 1945-1966*, (Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 2000); and Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 174-175.

[26] An extensive body of scholarly literature has illuminated East Asian notions of race, "racialized senses of belonging," and the negative symbolic connotations of "blackness," as well as the influence of contact with the West on such beliefs. See Frank Dikötter, "Introduction," in which the author notes that "far from being a negligible

a result, the vast majority of these children faced lives of hardship in isolated, mixed-blood-only communities overseas. African Americans sharply and repeatedly criticized the treatment afforded these children by their Asian hosts, before gradually turning to domestic black adoption. In time the human ties that bound black and Asian communities disappeared physically and rhetorically from mid-century American life.

The final chapter and epilogue explore the experiences of black servicemen with the Korean War and an integrating military and these events' lasting implications. The Korean "police action" was carefully followed and scrutinized by many black citizens. A handful initially claimed the conflict amounted to a race war, one African Americans within and without the armed forces should refuse to support. Yet many more argued that by opposing those whom soldiers routinely referred to as the "Asiatic hordes," the Korean "gooks," and "Joe Chink," black and white men would recognize a common purpose. Black servicemen were at first skeptical, but the brutal nature of the conflict persuaded most otherwise. Guerilla warfare and American tactics, which blurred distinctions between combatants and civilians, as well as soldiers' belief they were fighting for an ungrateful and feckless population, produced a disdain

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aspect of contemporary identities, racialized senses of belonging have often been the very foundation of national identity in East Asia in the twentieth century" (2), and Michael Weiner, "The Invention of Identity: Race and Nation in Pre-war Japan," in Frank Dikötter, ed., *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (London: Hurst & Co., 1997); Michael Weiner, "Introduction," and Millie Creighton, "*Soto* Others and *uchi* Others: imagining racial diversity, imagining homogenous Japan," in Michael Weiner, ed., *Japan's Minorities: The Illusion of Homogeneity* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Michael S. Molasky, *The American Occupation of Japan and Okinawa: Literature and Memory* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 74; Yukiko Koshiro, *Trans-Pacific Racisms and the U.S. Occupation of Japan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 8; John Russell, "Race and Reflexivity: The Black Other in Contemporary Japanese Mass Culture," *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 6, no. 1 (Feb., 1991), 3-25; Michael Charles Thornton, "A Social History of a Multiethnic Identity: The Case of Black Japanese Americans" (Diss. The University of Michigan, 1983); William R. Burkhardt, "Institutional Barriers, Marginality, and Adoption Among the American-Japanese Mixed Bloods in Japan," *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 42, no. 3 (May 1983), 529; Hiroshi Wagatsuma, "Mixed-Blood Children in Japan: An Exploratory Study," *Journal of Asian Affairs* (Spring 1977, vol. 2, no. 1), 9-17; Won Moo Hurh, "Marginal Children of War: An Exploratory Study of American-Korean Children," *International Journal of Sociology of the Family*, vol. 2, no. 1 (March 1972), 12-15; and Hiroshi Wagatsuma, "The Social Perception of Skin Color in Japan," in John Hope Franklin, ed., *Color and Race* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968).

for Koreans among servicemen, African Americans included. So too did the appalling poverty and human misery they encountered, which reinforced a sense of alienation from Koreans, allies and enemies alike. As one black veteran later recalled, "I've seen fathers with their daughters out there, using them to get food. … I'd never [before] seen a person kill somebody for food or go down in a garbage pit for food. We were poor, but we didn't have to do that. We still had our morals."[27]

Although these soldiers harbored few illusions about the durability of black-white bonds forged during the war, they recognized the socioeconomic advantages available through an embrace of American foreign policy in an integrating military. A good number had also come sincerely to believe in the necessity of American military action against "communist aggression" in the region. At the same time, their bitter experiences encouraged the same racialized and racist attitudes toward Asian peoples held by Americans generally. The formal end to the occupation of Japan in early 1952 bolstered this development, as relations with communities surrounding American bases deteriorated. By the conclusion of the war in mid-1953, black servicemen either remained stationed in increasingly hostile Asian environments or returned to a nation in which liberal Americans, black and white, celebrated martial desegregation as an example for civilian life.[28] Several of these young men also settled upon armed service as a promising long-term career, and later served in Vietnam, a war marked by similar varieties of Afro-Asian conflict.[29]

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[27] Samuel King interview (2002), "Korea: The Unfinished War," a project of American RadioWorks, documentary unit of American Public Media.

[28] Developments in Korea subsequently provided a model and a rationale for American military desegregation in the United States, Europe, and elsewhere. By 1954 the process was virtually complete worldwide.

[29] Milton J. Bates, for instance, notes that "[m]any black soldiers despised the Vietnamese and freely used epithets like 'slope' and 'gook.'" Moreover, upon their return to the United States, "black veterans had occasion to contrast their lot with that of the [Vietnamese] boat people. … [T]hey watched Vietnamese immigrants move into the black community and succeed as shopkeepers." See *The Wars We Took to Vietnam: Cultural Conflict and*

Historian Kevin Gaines, in recent remarks on the current role of African-American servicemen in Iraq, notes that after the Korean War a dwindling cluster of black public figures warned of the potential dangers of integration into Cold War American society. "During the late 1950s," he explains, "some African American spokespersons feared that in finally achieving full citizenship, many black Americans would exchange their historical and cultural traditions for . . . an identification with dominant American nationalism and militarism," and for an acceptance of "an American foreign policy hostile to democratic national liberation movements."[30] This dissertation suggests that by the time these concerns were raised, that process was well underway. Armed service in Japan and Korea had prompted a sizable contingent of black citizens to reassess their identities and priorities in a militarized, global context at the dawn of the Cold War.

Storytelling (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996), 61. By that time, of course, Korean immigrants were also establishing themselves as storekeepers in African-American neighborhoods.

[30] Kevin Gaines, "Historians Reflect on the War in Iraq: A Roundtable," Organization of American Historians (5 April 2003), www.oah.org/meetings/2003/roundtable/gaines.html, (accessed 6 February 2007).

CHAPTER ONE: RECONVERSION BLUES AND THE APPEAL OF (RE)ENLISTMENT[1]

The war is over, now, baby, what are you goin' to do?/ I used to give you twenty, but now one or two will have to do. ... We used to ride in taxis, we couldn't even walk a block,/ But since the Japs surrendered, that jive will have to stop,/ Because, hey, . . . I haven't got a lousy dime,/ So start your reconversion, let's go back to the smaller times.

Ivory Joe Hunter, "Reconversion Blues" (1945)[2]

I spent two years in the European country, way out across the deep blue sea,/ And since I've been round here, don't seem like home to me. ... Gonna get up early in the morning, goin' down to my local Board,/ Just anywhere away from here, if it's out on the Burma Road.

Walter Davis, "Things Ain't Like They Use to Be" (1947)[3]

By the end of World War Two the American military seemed an enemy of most black citizens. Amzie Moore, raised in the Mississippi Delta, was drafted in 1942. After serving stateside and overseas, Moore maintained he "really didn't know what segregation was like" before entering the army.[4] The status of African-American personnel in fact worsened during the war's immediate aftermath: opportunities for training and advancement were fewer in 1946

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[1] This chapter represents, in part, an attempt to answer historian Laura McEnaney's call for narratives that capture "demobilization's colorful street-level history, where we can see people's first encounters with reconversion and its more complex political meanings." See "A Critical Moment: World War II and Its Aftermath at Home," round table, *The Journal of American History*, March 2006, 1266-67.

[2] Guido van Rijn, *The Truman and Eisenhower Blues: African-American Blues and Gospel Songs, 1945-1960* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 14-15.

[3] Ibid., 25.

[4] Quoted in Charles M. Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1995), 30. Numerous scholars have recorded the more loathsome experiences of black military personnel during the war and the impact of their anger and frustration on later civil rights activism. See, for example, Gerald Astor, *The Right to Fight: A History of African Americans in the Military* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1998); Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); Richard M. Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces: Fighting on Two Fronts, 1939-1953* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1969); John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Herman Graham III, *The Brothers' Vietnam War: Black Power, Manhood, and the Military Experience* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2003); and Steve Estes, *I Am a Man!: Race, Manhood, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

than in previous years, while black servicemen encountered growing racial violence, especially in the South.[5] By decade's end little had changed. The armed forces, and the army in particular, remained predominantly segregated and discriminatory. Notwithstanding President Truman's 1948 executive order mandating "equality of opportunity" in the military, a conservative officers corps dragged its feet. The army's director of personnel and administration blithely remarked in early 1950 that martial segregation might continue "two years or fifty years."[6]

Yet African-American men flocked to the military in record numbers during the half-decade following Japan's surrender. Eleven months after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, the assistant to the Adjutant General for Military Personnel Procurement expressed delight with the army's recent enlistment results. Never before had so many volunteered in so short a period of time, he explained. Approximately 850,000 Americans had joined the army by the end of June 1946. Since the introduction of a recruitment drive in early October 1945, more than 16 percent of all volunteers—nearly 140,000 men—had been African-American (at a time when black citizens constituted roughly 10 percent of the civilian population). This figure, he enthused, represented "the highest percentage of Negro enlistments in the history of the United States Army."[7]

Most military commanders, however, were horrified. Six days later, while President Truman finalized plans to resume the draft, the War Department announced the suspension of all black army enlistments except for those few qualifying for the "specialist classes." Its directive

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[5] Bernard C. Nalty, *Strength for the Fight: A History of Black Americans in the Military* (New York: The Free Press, 1986), 218; Michael S. Sherry, *In the Shadow of War: The United States Since the 1930s* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 145.

[6] Quoted in "The Army Stumbles On," *The Crisis*, February 1950, 101.

[7] "Army's Recruiting Wins Elks' Backing," *New York Times*, 11 July 1946, 11.

was the first of several attempts from 1945 through 1949 to curtail African-American entry into the armed forces. To justify the measure, the Department acknowledged the "overwhelming response" of black men to the recruitment initiative, for which military planners were thoroughly unprepared. Segregated units were overflowing with personnel; there was simply no more room. The *New York Times* described the new policy as an attempt to restrict black citizens from "over-subscribing the quota for Negroes," which henceforth would be maintained at a ratio of one in ten.[8]

Thus began a cycle that endured for nearly five years. Each spike in African-American enlistment was followed by an official directive to limit the number of black servicemen, which was in turn rescinded once a proper balance, variously defined, had been obtained. Three months before the outbreak of war in Korea, when military commanders finally abandoned attempts to preserve a racial quota, the number of black soldiers skyrocketed. African-American enlistments accounted for 22 percent of the total for April 1950. By July, *after* the outbreak of hostilities, the number had reached 25 percent.[9] If segregated military service was so odious during World War Two, why did tens of thousands of black citizens attempt to enlist or reenlist soon thereafter? To resolve the paradox, this chapter traces the confluence of employment in the armed forces with trends in the domestic political economy of the latter 1940s. African-American men understood enlistment primarily as a means to secure stable employment during

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[8] "Truman Limits Army Draft to Take Only Men 19 to 29," *New York Times*, 17 July 1946, 1.

[9] Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces*, 202. In this and subsequent chapters the terms "army" and "the military" will be used interchangeably unless otherwise noted. Events confined to the Navy, the Marines, or, from 1947 on, the Air Force, will be highlighted as such. The reasoning behind this use of terms is twofold: first, following World War Two the army remained by far the largest branch of the armed services, with the greatest percentages and absolute numbers of black Americans in uniform; and second, African-American interest and concern remained focused on the army as a site of both conflict and opportunity. For the general experiences of the Navy, Air Force, and Marines, see Sherie Mershon and Steven Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines: Desegregating the U.S. Armed Forces* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 135, 139; Nalty, *Strength for the Fight*, 234; and Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces*, 53.

uncertain economic times. Coercion, direct or not (including the draft and family tradition), as well as fears of domestic persecution and violence, certainly played a role in the decisions of some volunteers. But economic factors were of greatest importance, and they acquired more salience as the decade wore on. The American military offered what American civilian society would not: decent wages, low-income housing, adequate health care, affordable commodities, and job security.

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Shortly after 10 p.m. on August 10th, 1945, African-American military chaplain Joseph Pruden was enjoying a USO performance somewhere in the Pacific. A report suddenly came over the camp's public address system that the war with Japan was over. As Pruden later reported, "[t]here followed the usual expressions of great joy." The chaplain returned to his office uneasy, however. Believing "a few of the men of the battalion might feel the same way," he scheduled an evening prayer service. Moments later, black soldiers began to trickle in, some having been told of the meeting, others evidently hoping to speak with the chaplain alone. Soon more than 300 were packed into the chapel. Following the ceremony, several asked the chaplain to say prayers for them, while others who had been unable to attend kept his phone ringing late into the night. Pruden concluded his report on the evening on a solemn note. Little he had read or experienced during the war filled him with much hope for the future. Yet he sought comfort in the high turnout among soldiers at his service. Perhaps their prayers would serve as an inspiration "during the trying days of peace."[10] Pruden's melancholy was soon echoed on the other side of the Pacific.

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[10] National Archives II, Records of the Office of the Chief of Chaplains, Box 1474, Folder 201 Pruden, Joseph D.

Five days later and several thousand miles away, Claude A. Barnett, founder of the Associated Negro Press, sat alone in his Chicago office. Much of the city was in a state of euphoria at news of Japan's formal surrender. The South Side, however, was more conducive to quiet contemplation. While white Americans "are celebrating the Peace," Barnett noted, the "joy seems very restrained in Negro neighborhoods." His fellow black Chicagoans, he surmised, were looking beyond victory and feeling apprehensive about their postwar fortunes: "Something of a pall seems to hang over our folk."[11] The *Chicago Defender* similarly lamented that "Negroes cannot look upon the end of the war with the joyous abandonment [sic] of their white fellow citizen, but must view it with . . . mingled . . . happiness and uncertainty." Black citizens were acutely aware of the economic woes that threatened if, as the *Defender* put it, "the same color caste occupational system" continued.[12] Their fears would prove well founded.

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"50,000 Lose Jobs Here!" screamed the *Chicago Defender*'s banner headline. "The collapse of Japan this week," declared the accompanying article, "boomeranged on Negro workers here with the devastating effect of an atomic bomb, blasting thousands from their well-paying wartime jobs."[13] Days later the National Urban League issued an urgent call for full-employment and anti-discrimination legislation. The exigencies of total war had led to full-time work for at least one million African Americans, and twice as many black workers held skilled

[11] Claude A. Barnett papers, Chicago Historical Society, Box 316, Folder 13: Home Front—World War II—Correspondence, 1940-45. Black residents of New York City registered similar anxieties. "Harlem was strangely quiet and almost tomb-like in contrast with the wild jubilation in other parts of the city," remarked the *New York Amsterdam News*. "[T]he prospect of peace seemed to open up a fearful vista." See "Victory: Not Without Sadness," *New York Amsterdam News*, 25 August 1945, 6A. A journalist for the paper explained that many Harlem residents "interpreted the cessation of hostilities with the Japs to be the automatic switch that would slide them back on relief, government dole jobs or even selling apples." See Abe Hill, "Workers Fear Loss of Jobs On Heels of End of the War," *New York Amsterdam News*, 25 August 1945, 1B.

[12] "Peace and a Jobless Minority," *Chicago Defender*, 8 September 1945, 14.

[13] Robert Lucas, "50,000 Lose Jobs Here!: Big Dodge Engine Plant Shuts Down," *Chicago Defender*, 18 August 1945, 1.

positions at war's end than had in the winter of 1941-42. The League estimated that cuts in industrial production would affect upwards of 800,000 black men and women, with between 500,000 and 600,000 losing their jobs.[14] In a memorandum prepared for President Truman and subsequently released to the public, the League emphasized the discriminatory practices of both employers and labor unions, the need to expand access to housing, health services, and opportunities in the military, and the threat of workplace competition posed by returning white veterans. Of all the "racial aspects of the social and economic problems which the American nation faces as it completes the transition from war to peace," it argued, the primary concern of black citizens was that postwar society "find a way to use their skills properly."[15] Among African-Americans with access to unemployment compensation, many faced the loss of benefits unless they took part-time, unskilled work paying as little as fifty cents an hour.[16] The flush times had come to an end.

[14] "Mayor Backs Plans for Reconversion," *New York Times*, 29 August 1945, 25; George Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight: Labor and Culture in the 1940s* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 73.

[15] National Archives II, Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs, Box 32, Folder 291.2; "Anti-Bias Laws Urged on Truman," *New York Times*, 13 September 1945, p. 20; Carol Anderson, *Eyes off the Prize: The United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human Rights, 1944-1955* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 66.

[16] Ben Burns, "V-J Unemployed Forced to Take Low-Paying Jobs," *Chicago Defender*, 25 August 1945, 1. The article began with a satirical job advertisement: "Help wanted – Low pay. Long hours. Little opportunity for advancement. Permanent postwar employment. Negroes only need apply. Call United States Employment Service."

Fig. 1.1, *Afro American,* 13 October 1945.

Black servicemen likewise found themselves disadvantaged in the scramble for postwar employment. More than 95 percent of African-American soldiers were employed in labor, quartermaster and other service units, while discharges were furnished primarily on the basis of time spent in combat. With fewer eligibility points, black personnel were separated from the service later than their white counterparts. Edgar G. Brown, director of the National Negro

Council, sent an open telegram to President Truman decrying the "unbelievable violence" such policies visited upon the rights of black troops, since they "will be the last to return home and therefore have the least chance for any remaining jobs."[17] Racial prejudice and military segregation also hindered the return of black veterans: officers routinely gave preference to their white brethren for inclusion on troop transports, leaving thousands of African Americans stranded overseas. When they finally reached American soil, few employment opportunities remained. A National Urban League investigation revealed that by 1946 veterans comprised 50 percent of unemployed black workers registered with the United States Employment Service.[18]

Entwined with these concerns was a struggle to enact a permanent, national Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC). The war had greatly increased the importance of the federal government to African Americans concentrated in defense industries and governmental agencies, sites monitored by an FEPC scheduled to expire following the cessation of hostilities. Thus in the summer of 1945 civil rights advocates initiated a campaign to establish an enduring FEPC that would protect employees from racial discrimination in the private sector. If the state failed to defend African-American economic interests at the local level, they asked, how could it possibly provide adequate employment opportunities amid widespread calls for a rapid postwar demobilization?[19]

As autumn turned to winter, the domestic outlook remained bleak. One quarter of all war workers had lost their jobs, real income for those still employed had fallen by an average of 15 percent in just three months, and consumer prices had risen sharply. Black workers, of

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[17] "Discharge Bias Charged," *New York Times*, 19 August 1945, 4; Morris J. MacGregor, Jr., *Integration of the Armed Forces, 1940-1965* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1981), 152.

[18] "Survey of 50 Cities Reveals Negro Vets Denied Jobs, Training," *California Eagle*, 11 April 1946, 1.

[19] Donald R. McCoy and Richard T. Ruetten, *Quest and Response: Minority Rights and the Truman Administration* (Lawrence, KS: The University Press of Kansas, 1973), 25-26.

course, often bore the brunt of layoffs: unemployment among African Americans during the winter of 1945-46 increased at double the rate for whites.[20] And by early February a bill to create a permanent FEPC was in serious trouble. "Not since the fight to pass the civil war amendments," declared the *Pittsburgh Courier*, "has there been such a clear-cut fight against feudalism, racism and reaction."[21] Pro-business conservatives, who equated fair hiring practices with quotas, joined southern Democrats to kill the legislation. After the Senate failed to invoke cloture in the face of a filibuster, the FEPC was removed from consideration.[22] The following July the understaffed wartime FEPC officially closed its doors. The Committee, in its final report to the president, warned that "gains against discriminatory employment practices were . . . being rapidly dissipated." Minority workers faced an "unchecked revival" of discriminatory practices, it noted, while minority veterans would continue to encounter far greater difficulties than other veterans in acquiring occupational training and stable employment.[23]

Such barriers to economic security and advancement persisted in the years to come. Ten months after the final FEPC report, the Commerce Department made public a survey indicating that more than one in four black veterans in the South was unemployed, while, not surprisingly,

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[20] Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight*, 99, 115, 338.

[21] "[T]he struggle for elimination of color and creedal discrimination in employment," the editorial continued, "transcends the anti-lynching bill in importance." See "The Battle of the Century," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 2 February 1946, 2.

[22] Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *The Journal of American History*, vol. 91, no. 4, March 2005, 1248; "The FEPC Is Dead," *Chicago Defender*, 16 February 1946, 16; "Closure Defeated, FEPC Sidetracked," *New York Times*, 10 February 1946, 1. The campaign for a permanent FEPC persisted sporadically through the 1950s and beyond. In 1948, A. Philip Randolph sent a telegram to Robert A. Taft urging the senator to place FEPC ahead of an anti-lynching bill and a bill to outlaw the poll tax because "a law against job discrimination is of bread and butter significance to masses of people North and South." Quoted in "Communist Aid Held 'Death Kiss' for FEPC," *New York Times*, 16 January 1948, 17. Randolph late ensured the 1963 March on Washington was a gathering for "*Jobs* and Freedom," one that called for passage of a national fair employment practices law.

[23] "FEPC's Life Ends with No Hope Held for Early Revival," *New York Times*, 1 July 1946, 1.

those working made considerably less than their white counterparts.[24] The United States Employment Service reported that rising prices were crippling purchasing power, while a national housing crisis threatened black Americans already hemmed in by red-lining and restrictive covenants. The cost of living had reached an all-time high, 59 percent above the figure for 1939.[25] In the spring of 1947 Lester B. Granger, executive secretary of the National Urban League, declared that industrial training for African Americans, especially in the South, "presents a more dismal picture today than it did at the close of the war." Turning to the plight of black veterans, he found the situation "critical with no sign of improvement." The continued migrations of African Americans from the South to the West and North demonstrated the need for a "national program of education for industrial training."[26] In fact, as of December 1948, only 5.6 percent of African-American veterans eligible for free, expense-paid vocational education, courtesy of the GI Bill, were enrolled.[27]

Working-class African Americans also faced declining economic assistance from organizations such as the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People). During the tight wartime labor market, which increased the bargaining power of black labor, NAACP lawyers identified employment discrimination as one of the most pressing

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[24] "Nearly [sic] Fourth of Veterans Unemployed in 26 Southern Areas, Survey Shows," *Afro American*, 24 May 1947, 6.

[25] "Spectre of Joblessness," *Chicago Defender*, 20 September 1947, 14.

[26] "Urgent Need Seen to Train the Negro," *New York Times*, 27 March 1947, 3.

[27] Several factors contributed to this low enrollment figure. In addition to the fact that a smaller percentage of black veterans, for reasons ranging from government indifference to black distrust of state intentions, were aware of the benefits to which they were entitled, there were simply too few schools available to them. Those that did exist were consistently mediocre, or the schemes of fly-by-night operators looking to secure government funds. Most detrimental, in the eyes of one African-American observer, was that "any school, north or south, operated by white or colored, catches the devil from the State if it tries to present a full list of worthwhile courses designed to produce skilled Negro workers. Nothing you can put your hand on, understand, but there is always some little thing wrong that keeps the State from okaying the school to Vets Administration." Charlie Cherokee [Alfred Smith], "National Grapevine" column, *Chicago Defender*, 4 December 1948, 6. See also Mark D. Van Ells, *To Hear Only Thunder Again: America's World War II Veterans Come Home* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2001), 142. The fragmented, locally-directed nature of the GI Bill's educational provisions, in other words, produced a racially tracked system for veterans, especially in the South but nationwide as well.

concerns of its economically diversifying constituency. Labor-related casework became so great a priority (offering opportunities for both legal success and institutional growth), that the Association assigned one in five of its attorneys to handle it. With the advent of reconversion, however, the NAACP's attacks on inequalities in the private sector decreased, and by 1950 such litigation had largely disappeared from its national agenda. The abrupt reversal was due in part to the organization's erratic approach to labor issues, which entailed little long-term planning. Moreover, growing attacks from the political right encouraged the Association to ally with organized labor, rendering legal assaults on unions for racial discrimination politically problematic. The NAACP opted instead to embed itself within a liberal, pro-labor but anticommunist Democratic coalition, one that counseled moderation and emphasized symbolic advances in the arena of civil rights.[28] By the late 1940s, black workers had lost another erstwhile champion of their economic interests.

African-American living standards continued to deteriorate as the decade came to a close. By late 1947 unemployment rates among black citizens were twice as high as those for whites, a difference greater than in 1940.[29] The following spring the *Chicago Defender* spotlighted the recently enacted European Recovery Program and congressional calls for assistance to the continent's "displaced persons." It urged legislators instead to "get down to the business of

[28] Risa Goluboff , "'Let Economic Equality Take Care of Itself': The NAACP, Labor Litigation, and the Making of Civil Rights in the 1940s," *UCLA Law Review*, June 2005, 1395-1468. Historians Robert Korstad, Nelson Lichtenstein, George Lipsitz and Martha Biondi, among others, have alerted scholars to additional causes of the postwar decline in working-class black activism. First, an "employer offensive" in the latter 1940s, bolstered by passage of the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act (which outlawed secondary boycotts and sympathy walkouts), put all unions on the defensive. Second, the rise of mechanization in heavily African-American industries increased urban unemployment. And third, much of organized labor adopted a more bureaucratic approach to advancing the interests of their constituencies. The leadership of larger unions thus became less responsive to the concerns of their rank and file black members than they were during the Second World War. See Robert Korstad and Nelson Lichtenstein, "Opportunities Found and Lost: Labor, Radicals, and the Early Civil Rights Movement," *The Journal of American History*, vol. 75, no. 3 (December 1988): 800-801, 811; Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight*, 157, 255; and Biondi, *To Stand and Fight*, 17, 98, 260, 269-270.

[29] "Unemployment Rates Twice as High for Colored Group, Census Shows," *Afro American*, 20 December 1947, 13.

passing public housing legislation" since, as the paper tartly observed, "we have displaced persons of our own."[30] By February 1949 *Pittsburgh Courier* correspondents were reporting dramatic increases in black unemployment across the United States. As one journalist glumly concluded, "little is seen to indicate that optimism should be the order of the day."[31] And in the summer of 1950 Congress again failed to pass an FEPC. The recent eruption of war in Korean, moreover, along with the White House's waning political capital, led to a shift in the Truman administration's legislative priorities away from domestic initiatives. The FEPC was officially extinct, killed off by a new war. A cartoonist for the *California Eagle* captured the irony of military necessity, whose demands were once considered prime evidence for the FEPC's passage, now serving as its executioner (see Figure 1.2).

[30] "Our DP Problem," *Chicago Defender*, 17 April 1948, 18.

[31] "Unemployment on Steady Rise Throughout Nation," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 February 1949, 6. The National Urban League reported days later that a "depression" was overtaking black workers, the unskilled in particular, with further layoffs expected. See "Negro Joblessness Reported on Rise," *New York Times*, 24 February 1949, 15.

Fig. 1.2, *California Eagle*, 4 August 1950.

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While civilians struggled with reconversion's economic effects, the armed forces were bursting at the seams with black personnel. Shortly following Japan's surrender, a surge in interest strained to the breaking point the military's machinery for absorbing and segregating black men. African-American reenlistments immediately exceeded expectations, particularly among those serving abroad. As 1945 turned to 1946, the percentage of blacks in the army climbed far beyond the wartime high of 9.68 percent: military planners feared reenlistments

alone would push overall black strength to 15 percent or more within a year.[32] New recruits likewise did their part: in the first six months of peace over 17 percent of volunteers were African-American, at a time when less than 11 percent of male citizens of military age were black.[33]

The military's initial response was to organize a committee. In October 1945 a board of officers was convened under the direction of Lieutenant General Alvan C. Gillem, Jr. to evaluate the future use of black troops. By the following April they were ready to submit their findings.[34] Entitled *The Utilization of Negro Manpower in the Postwar Army*, the report called for increased occupational opportunities for African-American servicemen, the elimination of all-black army divisions, equality in the commissioning of officers, and the assignment of black soldiers to communities where racial attitudes were supposedly benign (outside the American South and certain European locales, in other words). Most of the recommendations, notwithstanding sporadic attempts at implementation, remained operational on paper only. Yet the army enthusiastically embraced the Gillem Board's proposal to maintain a ratio of one African American for every ten soldiers. Black citizens were henceforth subject to a strict quota of no more than 10 percent of all personnel.[35]

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[32] MacGregor, *Integration of the Armed Forces*, 152.

[33] Samuel A. Stouffer et al., *Studies in Social Psychology in World War II, Volume 1, The American Soldier: Adjustment During Army Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1949), 542.

[34] For detailed discussions of the Gillem Board's hearings, deliberations, and conclusions, see Astor, *The Right to Fight*, 310-313; Jack D. Foner, *Blacks and the Military in American History: A New Perspective* (New York: Praeger, 1974), 177-178; Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces*, 149-152; and Bernard C. Nalty and Morris J. MacGregor, eds., *Blacks in the Military: Essential Documents* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1981), 168.

[35] Scholars have debated the merits of this policy, with some maintaining it represented a good faith effort by the Board and military commanders to ensure a representative number of African Americans in the armed forces. Intentions aside, the policy effectively functioned as a limiting quota. See Foner, *Blacks and the Military*, 177; and McCoy and Ruetten, *Quest and Response*, 37. For favorable views on the quota system, see MacGregor, *Integration of the Armed Forces*, 166; and Nalty and MacGregor, *Blacks in the Military*, 168.

The army's decision set off a four-year battle between military officials on one side and African Americans seeking to enlist and their supporters on the other. As of June 1946, there were approximately 175,000 black soldiers in the army; the Director of Personnel and Administration estimated this number could be reduced to 125,000 within a year.[36] Time was of the essence: in the previous two months more than 20,000 black men had signed up.[37] To thin the ranks and discourage applicants, the army established stringent entrance standards for African Americans and moved to discharge those suddenly judged inept.[38] The War Department likewise barred African-American members of the Women's Army Corps from overseas duty.[39] In order to ensure familiarity with the new restrictions, the army distributed an "Army Talk" in April 1947, to be used as the foundation of a service-wide program of edification for officers and enlisted men.[40] "Since the close of the war," it explained, "Negroes have been enlisting so far beyond the 10 percent estimated and allotted that the Army has temporarily restricted the further enlistment of Negroes to certain specialists and to those who can make a score of 99 [on the Army General Classification Test]—an approximate indication that the man has the equivalent of a high school education. These restrictions will be lifted when the 10 percent level has reestablished itself."[41] The educational requirements, along with campaigns to purge black

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[36] Disposition Form, Director of Personnel and Administration to Director of Organization and Training, 12 August 1946, subject: Utilization of Negro Personnel, reprinted in Morris J. MacGregor and Bernard C. Nalty, eds., *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces: Basic Documents*, Vol. VIII: Segregation Under Siege (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1977), 36.

[37] *Afro American*, 22 June 1946, 19; McCoy and Ruetten, *Quest and Response*, 38. The *Pittsburgh Courier*, noting that 140,000 African Americans had enlisted since the fall of 1945, explained, "Apparently the colored boys were less optimistic about [their] economic future . . . than were the white boys." See "Military Embarrassment," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 17 July 1946, 6.

[38] See, for example, "Army to Weed Out Negroes," *California Eagle*, 22 August 1946, 4.

[39] "Halts Negro Army Enlistments, Bars WACs From Overseas Duty," *California Eagle*, 18 July 1946, 1, 11.

[40] War Department Circular 76, 1947, reprinted in MacGregor and Nalty, *Basic Documents*, Vol. VIII, 80

[41] Army Talk 170, 12 April 1947, reprinted in MacGregor and Nalty, *Basic Documents*, Vol. VIII, 90-91.

soldiers through sweeping discharges, proved highly effective. By mid-1947, African Americans constituted only 9 percent of the army's total strength.[42]

Black citizens were indignant. Horace Mann Bond, President of Lincoln University, pointed to the contradiction behind War Department announcements in late summer 1946 that a net decline in enlistments might require a partial resumption of the draft. "It is a well known fact," he maintained, "that in all other democratic countries, during peacetime, the ranks are filled with persons from the lower economic levels." The military could easily achieve its manpower requirements, Bond reasoned, by retracting its "artificial limitation" on black personnel.[43] African Americans also lambasted the new entrance standards, noting that the educational requirements for black volunteers were now greater than those for whites. The military had, in effect, established a program of affirmative action for white men.[44]

Others took a more direct approach. Nineteen-year-old Robert Kelly of Washington, D.C. brought suit to volunteer for the army following a temporary ban on black volunteers. The War Department sought to have Kelly enter through Selective Service rather than the recruiting office, but eventually capitulated under the advisement of Justice Department lawyers.[45] The settlement of one lawsuit, however, merely sparked another. Pittsburgh native Henry Stewart's first attempt to enlist ended when he was informed that only African Americans possessing

[42] Mershon and Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines*, 150.

[43] Horace Mann Bond, *New York Times*, 12 August 1946, 20. The executive director of the Chicago Civil Liberty Committee deployed a novel argument against the quota, telegramming President Truman in mid-1946 to claim army policy violated the Second Amendment to the Constitution. See Center for the Study of the Korean War (Independence, MO), B File 20, Desegregation of the Armed Forces, Folder 11.

[44] Venice T. Spraggs, "Army Ducks Suit; Takes Educated Negro Enlistees," *Chicago Defender*, 12 October 1946, 3. Many African Americans interpreted the test-score requirement as a denial of both educational and occupational opportunities. Asked if enlistments ought to be limited to high school graduates, one black veteran asserted that in the army young men could "learn and earn a living at the same time." The military, argued another respondent, offered "an opportunity to get good training and yet make an adequate living…. I'd enlist myself if I were young enough." See "The Inquiring Photographer," *New York Amsterdam News*, 7 December 1946, 17.

[45] Spraggs, "Army Ducks Suit," 3.

highly technical skills were being accepted. Three months later he tried again. Permitted to take the general aptitude test, Stewart correctly answered fifty of fifty-four questions but was rejected on grounds he lacked adequate formal education. Stewart then filed an injunction in federal court seeking to prevent "all further Army enlistments" until the educational requirements were equalized. Named as defendants were the commanding officer of the Pittsburgh recruiting district and the Secretary of War.[46]

As Stewart's lawsuit wound its way through the courts, the military finally relented. With recruiters falling short of their targets and Cold War tensions mounting, the Truman Administration pressed Congress on two fronts: a temporary reinstatement of the draft; and a permanent program of universal military training (UMT).[47] Meanwhile, in July 1947 the War Department dropped educational restrictions on black enlistment as part of a program to bolster the army's peacetime strength (the 10 percent quota, however, remained in effect).[48] African Americans again responded enthusiastically. Within a year of the rule change, the number of black soldiers approached 64,000, or more than 11 percent of total army strength, in violation of the Gillem Board's recommendation.[49] Military officials expressed predictable alarm. More interesting, however, is the skeptical eye some African-American spokespersons had begun to cast on America's incipient national security state and its vocational appeal to so many black men.

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[46] "Negro Suit Charges Segregation In Army," *New York Times*, 19 December 1946, 21; "Justice Dep't To Defend Army Suit," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1 March 1946, 2.

[47] For more on the Truman administration's attempts to create a program of compulsory military training, and the often contentious debates generated by the proposal, see Michael J. Hogan, *A Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State, 1945-1954* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 119-158.

[48] Congress had authorized slightly more than one million personnel, but the army was then losing an average of 385 men a day. "Army Again Asks Negroes," *New York Times*, 19 July 1947, 15.

[49] James C. Evans, Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army, "The Negro in the Army, Policy and Practice: A Summary Prepared for the Secretary of the Army," 31 July 1948, reprinted in MacGregor and Nalty, *Basic Documents*, Vol. VIII, 704, 710.

Some feared creeping militarism. A columnist for the *Chicago Defender* urged readers to "[f]ace facts on this Universal Military Training (Conscription, to us)": "[L]et the army pamper and take care of a kid for a year during the 'depression' that's got to come, and then watch when he steps back out on the hard turf . . . 'mid the pushing and shoving for a living. He's going to whine and say: 'Nobody cares about you in this country but the army.' Then, chum, you've got a generation of young war-mongers."[50] The *Pittsburgh Courier*, for its part, argued that growing military expenditures would necessitate either increased taxation or drastic reductions in federal social programs.[51] It counseled readers to oppose UMT in order to protect young men from the psychological effects of segregation. "[C]olored citizens . . . must fight it," maintained an editorial in early 1948, "because, as currently conceived, it is a jim crow proposition which will humiliate and embitter our young men."[52] One week later, the *Afro American* ran an editorial cartoon aimed directly at those considering a military career, suggesting that the "small print" of military blandishments allowed for little occupational mobility. (see Figure 1.3).

[50] Charley Cherokee, "National Grapevine" column, *Chicago Defender*, 14 June 1947, 17.

[51] "What About Conscription?" *Pittsburgh Courier*, 15 February 1947, 6.

[52] "Brass Hats and Jim Crow," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 10 January 1948, 6. The most publicized opposition to universal military service involved labor leader A. Philip Randolph. As National Treasurer of the Committee Against Jim Crow in Military Service and Training, Randolph appeared with Grant Reynolds, the Committee's national chairman, before a Senate panel investigating UMT and various short-term draft proposals in the spring of 1948. Randolph testified he was "not beguiled by the Army's use of the word 'temporary,'" because no UMT program could avoid becoming permanent "since the world trend is toward militarism." Randolph thus called for a mass civil disobedience campaign. A national uproar ensued, with various African-American leaders appearing before the Committee either to support or to condemn Randolph's civil disobedience proposal. In the end, the UMT went down to defeat in Congress, and debates over a civil disobedience campaign quickly became moot. In July 1948 President Truman issued Executive Order 9981, mandating "equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion or national origin." Many African Americans reacted warily, calling attention to the order's vague wording. Truman's explicit statement at a press conference three days later that he intended to end segregation across the armed forces helped allay their concerns. A satisfied Randolph then abandoned his opposition to a draft. See "Hearings before the U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services, "Universal Military Training," U.S. Senate Reports, 1948, reprinted in MacGregor and Nalty, *Basic Documents*, Vol. VIII, 653-655; C. P. Trussell, "Congress Told UMT Racial Bars Would Unleash Civil Disobedience," *New York Times*, 1 April 1948, 1, 10; "Bars Negro War Protest," *New York Times*, 2 April 1948, 18; Walter C. White, *New York Times*, 17 August 1948, 20; Astor, *The Right to Fight*, 322; and Nalty, *Strength for the Fight*, 242.

Fig. 1.3, *Afro American*, 17 January 1948.

Yet despite the army's maintenance of racial segregation and other discriminatory practices, African-American representation in the armed forces continued to climb. Military leaders, struggling to reach their manpower targets, were divided over how to respond to the large pool of potential black volunteers. In the spring of 1949 Secretary of the Army Kenneth C.

Royall transmitted to the Secretary of Defense a numerical justification for the racial quota. The estimated black reenlistment rate of an astonishing 75 percent, he explained, was a peacetime high.[53] Royall's immediate successor, Gordon Gray, complained one month later that the higher educational standards of the Navy and Air Force excluded most black Americans, thereby "throw[ing] that excess on the Army."[54] President Truman's new Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services struggled through the rest of the year to reach an agreement with the army, to no avail.[55] However, the following spring Secretary Gray relented. He agreed to discontinue the racial quota beginning in April 1950, with the understanding that he retained the right to reinstate it if the expected increase in black servicemen proved unwieldy. Truman's Committee likewise agreed to compromise language that ensured any integration would be gradual.[56] Yet after nearly five years African Americans had finally won the right for qualified applicants to volunteer for the military as they pleased.

African-American enlistments immediately jumped. Although black commentators continued to take rhetorical jabs at the army for lagging behind the other services in

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[53] Memorandum, Secretary of the Army Kenneth C. Royall for Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson, 21 April 1949, reprinted in Morris J. MacGregor and Bernard C. Nalty, eds., *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces: Basic Documents*, Vol. XI: The Fahy Committee (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1977), 1228-1229.

[54] Memorandum, Acting Secretary of the Army Gordon Gray for the Secretary of Defense, 26 May 1949, reprinted in MacGregor and Nalty, *Basic Documents*, Vol. XI, 1252-1256.

[55] Georgia native Charles Fahy, the Committee's leader, wrote Secretary Gray in September with a proposal to honor the letter if not the spirit of Truman's executive order by substituting a quota based on achievement testing for the racial quota. Fahy conceded it would be impossible to predict with certainty the impact on African-American strength, since "the factors entering into the decision to enlist are too various and complex to warrant any positive prediction." Nevertheless, he provided a mathematical formula for determining the size of the potential manpower pool, which theoretically would determine the number of enlistees. Even in a worst-case scenario, Fahy promised, that is "even if the entire Negro manpower pool enlisted in the Army during the next year, and no Negroes enlisted in the Navy and Air Force," the numbers would be manageable. With approximately 67,000 black men already in the army, the total under such circumstances would be only 220,900, or "33 percent of the total Army enrollment." Secretary Gray rejected the proposal. See Memorandum, Charles Fahy for the Secretary of the Army, 8 September 1949, reprinted in MacGregor and Nalty, *Basic Documents*, Vol. XI, 1314-1317.

[56] Foner, *Blacks and the Military*, 188; McCoy and Ruetten, *Quest and Response*, 197; Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces*, 196.

desegregating its men, they had no appreciable effect.[57] In the weeks following announcement of the quota's demise, the number of black volunteers reached 28 percent of the total.[58] Following American intervention in Korea, that figure increased. The *Pittsburgh Courier* reported in late July 1950 that, across the country, "Negro lads were swarming into recruiting offices."[59] By year's end, the percentage of African Americans soldiers had risen one-and-a-half points, to nearly 12 percent, a substantial increase considering the number of whites drafted and veterans called back into the service.[60] A shooting war had done nothing to stem the tide.

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Coercion by the state, one's family and friends, or some combination of the two certainly persuaded some to enlist. Suggestions of a return to conscription were a constant presence in the tense postwar climate. President Truman signed a Selective Service bill in mid-1948, initiating a series of unprecedented "peacetime drafts"—not particularly difficult for the affluent to evade—that over the next two years ensnared roughly 300,000 Americans.[61] The *Chicago Defender* reported that, although high school students under the age of twenty would be exempt until graduation, more than 450,000 non-veteran African Americans were technically subject to the draft.[62] Dramatic increases in manpower requirements and accompanying changes to deferment policies also remained distinct possibilities. Preemptive enlistment in the face of conscription, moreover, enabled many to secure advantageous terms of service.

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[57] See, for example, "Weakest Link in Nation's Defense Chain," *Afro American*, 3 June 1950, 4.

[58] Leo Bogart, ed., *Project Clear: Social Research and the Desegregation of the United States Army* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1992), xxx.

[59] "25,000 Negroes Face Draft!" *Pittsburgh Courier*, 22 July 1950, 1.

[60] Mershon and Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines*, 223.

[61] Foner, *Blacks and the Military*, 180, 182; Clay Blair, *The Forgotten War: America in Korea, 1950-1953* (New York: Times Books, 1987), 28.

[62] "Draft Law Triples Enlistments," *Chicago Defender*, 26 June 1948, 1.

Black men were subject to such pressure, as well as to familial expectations. Jesse Brown recalled he simply came "from an army family." Growing up outside St. Louis, he had listened to his father (a veteran of the First World War) and three brothers (veterans of the Second) describe the benefits of army life. At nineteen Brown decided that family tradition, as well as the likelihood of being called to serve anyway, left no option but to enlist. Along with five teenage friends he traveled to St. Louis for processing. After basic training at Fort Knox, Brown was inducted into an engineer combat battalion, quickly becoming a standout in his unit. After seven months in the army, he was up for promotion to sergeant. "I understood the military," he explained, "'cause I listened to my father and all my brothers and [the army] didn't hardly have to teach me anything." Brown then took the opportunity to transfer to the Far East Command, landing in Japan as a member of the American occupation. By this point in his life, "I knew I was going to do a total career in [the military]."[63]

Fears of legal and extra-legal violence swayed others. Clentell Jackson, raised in relative comfort in north Minneapolis, had not given much thought to a military career. A run-in with the police in 1948 quickly changed his mind. One or more men in Clentell's neighborhood had been intimately involved with a white woman, who at some point went to the police. Clentell hardly knew her, but his name came up, along with those of several friends. "We were scared," he later explained, "because the cops were picking up everybody . . . [and] our word wouldn't

[63] Jessie Brown interview (2003), "Korea: The Unfinished War," a project of American RadioWorks, documentary unit of American Public Media. Norvel Phillip West, also of Missouri, similarly bowed to community expectation and the threat of a draft. Neighborhood tradition dictated that "once you graduated from high school, [you went] into the service." An older brother had been drafted, buttressing West's sense of certainty, while his older acquaintances had already opted to volunteer. "It was tradition—not only tradition, it was the law," he later remembered, "that you were going to go in when you became a certain age and your name came up on the list." West eventually returned to civilian life and attended college, although he remained "affiliated" with the armed forces. He subsequently obtained a commission as a military officer, reentered the army, and served long enough to see action in Vietnam. See Norvel Phillip West interview (2003), "Korea: The Unfinished War," a project of American RadioWorks, documentary unit of American Public Media.

hold for anything." They spent the rest of the day hiding at an ice-skating arena in St. Paul, while the police conducted a house-to-house search. Early the next morning, all seven marched to the local recruiting station and promptly enlisted. "And once Uncle Sam had us," Jackson remarked with a laugh years later, "the cops couldn't do anything, we were home free." A few months later Jackson found himself stationed in Japan, and, eventually, fighting in Korea.[64]

More than coercion or fear, economic necessity propelled the greatest number of African Americans into the military.[65] Indeed, black citizens were among the first to recognize the range of economic benefits made available by a large standing army. In November 1945, the *Afro American* published its second editorial in less than a year favoring universal military training. Only one of its rationales involved national security. The others included a year's "military, academic and vocational training at government expense" for a million black citizens, which "would prove a godsend" to "[s]outhern farm youths condemned by poverty and race prejudice to the status of peons."[66] Even some of UMT's most vocal opponents found such arguments compelling. *Pittsburgh Courier* columnist Horace R. Cayton, although he remained "against the Army and military training and all their brass hat, Southern-bred, jim-crow [sic] generals," nonetheless informed readers of an acquaintance's "realist" arguments. Nicodemus McCallum,

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[64] Clentell Jackson interview (2002), "Korea: The Unfinished War," a project of American RadioWorks, documentary unit of American Public Media. Servicemen were of course subject to authoritarian control in the military, but the legal machinery was strictly standardized and judicial proceedings for enlisted personnel gradually improved. As one African-American advocate for universal military training argued, "The Army court-martial is fairer than trial by your so-called peers in many parts of the country." See Horace R. Cayton, "Conscription: Nicodermus Has Good Words for Universal Military Training," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 3 April 1948, 7. Indeed, an updated army manual approved by President Truman that year further democratized such judicial proceedings. New regulations added additional legal protections for those facing military charges and allowed enlisted men to sit on courts martial. The latter provision, given the scarcity of African-American officers, made it more likely for a black serviceman to be tried by a jury consisting of at least one of his racial peers. See Walter White, "Justice in the Army," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 25 December 1948, 16.

[65] Herman Graham III, writing on the Vietnam War, likewise contends that in addition to providing affordable, quality housing, military service enabled black men to "express themselves through a familiar masculine occupation" during a time of high unemployment. See *The Brothers' Vietnam War*, 15, 25.

[66] "Shape of Things to Come," *Afro American*, 17 November 1945, 4.

Jr. was well aware of the humiliations of military segregation. "But for the ordinary Negro from Mississippi, Georgia, or for that matter from Harlem," he told Cayton, "housing facilities were better in the Army than they were on the outside." Then there was the matter of health. As McCallum noted, most African Americans had never seen a doctor, while the army subjected them to a battery of medical and psychiatric tests. Such examinations not only constituted free, government-financed health care, he reasoned, they also "made Negroes at least conscious that those types of services were available for human consumption." Finally, in his estimation, material comfort and basic economics were key. In addition to acquiring decent food and clean, warm clothing, black citizens in the military could expect to receive equal pay for equal work. "If you are a black sergeant you get the same money as you would if you are a white sergeant," he concluded, "and that's more than happens in most places, especially in the South."[67]

Black periodicals from across an ideological spectrum highlighted enlistment's tangible rewards with striking regularity. Even outlets editorially hostile to American Cold War foreign policy, such as the staunchly leftist *California Eagle*, joined the pro-enlistment bandwagon in their news pages. In fact, the *Eagle* published some of the first positive stories on peacetime military life. Readers learned in January 1946 of First Sgt. Tassie Desaux, recently signed up for another two-year tour. Desaux found "Army life good after South Carolina," his former home.[68] The following month, two soldiers from Los Angeles spent a portion of their time on furlough assisting a once-disabled veteran reenter the service. All three were reportedly "sold on the regular army," since it provided "security beyond that of the average job in civilian life."[69]

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[67] Cayton, "Conscription," 7.

[68] *California Eagle*, 24 January 1946, 2.

[69] "Two Tenth Cavalry Vets Help Ex-Buddy Reenlist in Army," *California Eagle*, 7 February 1946, 3. In late 1947 the *Eagle* highlighted the story of thirty-four-year-old veteran Frank French, who responded enthusiastically to a direct mailing from his previous employer. "The army was just about the best boss I've had," French remarked,

Other periodicals soon followed suit. In September Baltimore's *Afro American* weighed in with an editorial calling for a "Fifth Freedom": the unfettered freedom to enlist. The paper acknowledged that, given ongoing military segregation, some readers might question its stance. It countered with an appeal to "enlightened selfishness." The army, it explained, "offers guaranteed wages, insurance, pension[s], hospitalization and education far beyond anything disadvantaged workers can secure."[70]

Black servicemen offered similar reasoning, and many vigorously protested claims to the contrary. NAACP executive secretary Walter White found himself in a heated confrontation with several veterans over the question of black attitudes toward the military. Following a speech to the Palmetto State Teachers Association, White attended a reception at the local USO. There he was accosted by a group of veterans who, according to White, "at times almost belligerently" challenged his claim that African Americans overwhelmingly despised the Jim Crow army and hoped to escape as soon as possible. One young man, employing "a rolled newspaper to emphasize his point," insisted that most wished to stay in uniform, especially if it enabled foreign occupation duty. He was joined by a chorus of his fellow veterans. White later wrote that the encounter indicated "a regrettable development among Negro youth," criticizing the men for "indulging in . . . escapism."[71]

Indirect rebuttals to White's claim emerge from the recollections of those who enlisted. Norvel Philip West of St. Louis remembered one salient advantage to volunteering: "It offered—I don't want to say a way out of the ghetto, but it offered a way to do something more

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"and when I got a letter from them, it proved they were still interested in me." See "Two Here Choose Career In U.S. Army," *California Eagle*, 20 November 1947, 10.

[70] "For A Fifth Freedom," *Afro American*, 28 September 1946, 4.

[71] Walter White, "People, Politics and Places," *Chicago Defender*, 18 May 1946, 15.

constructive with your life."[72] For Beverly Scott, born in Statesville, North Carolina, "[t]here was no better institution in American life . . . than the army for the black man in the forties and fifties. Things weren't perfect, but they were better than any civilian institution." "From the first day I went in the army," he continued, "I had no thought of getting out."[73] For many, the immediate economic returns outweighed any drawbacks, and their improved material circumstances often encouraged reenlistment. Isaac Gardner, Jr. grew up in Harlan County, Kentucky, coalmining country. A self-described "mountain boy," Gardner volunteered for the simple reason he dreaded the thought of working in the mines. After basic training the army flew him to Japan with a stopover in Hawaii. As the plane was being refueled, the soldiers were treated to a complimentary meal in the one of the island's best restaurants. Gardner remembered being astonished by the experience, never having been "exposed to such finery."[74]

The sentiment was echoed by a cohort of black servicemen interviewed in mid-1948. They asked a journalist to remind mothers and wives of the American GI's proper diet, adequate clothing and access to medical care. One third stated their intention to acquire twenty years of military service in order to retire on a pension while still young. "A large number re-enlist because they like the life," the author reported, while others "get out, stay at home a few months, and decide to come back in." With consumer prices on the rise and decent housing in short supply, the men agreed, civilian employment rarely could compete with the army.[75] Nor, it seemed, could higher education. In a reflection of the press's growing awareness, if not always acceptance, of the outlet offered by the military for personal advancement, editorial cartoons

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[72] Norvel Phillip West interview (2003), "Korea: The Unfinished War," a project of American RadioWorks, documentary unit of American Public Media.

[73] Scott quoted in Rudy Tomedi, *No Bugles, No Drums: An Oral History of the Korean War* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1993), 182.

[74] Isaac Gardner, Jr. interview (2002), "Korea: The Unfinished War," a project of American RadioWorks, documentary unit of American Public Media.

[75] Ollie Stewart, "Segregation Hurts Army," *Afro American*, 17 July 1948, 1.

began to contradict earlier admonitions against enlistment. A *Chicago Defender* illustration from September 1948 captured the mood among many black men contemplating their career options (see Figure 1.4).

Fig. 1.4, *Chicago Defender*, 11 September 1948

Finally, the wages of armed service extended into ever-larger segments of the civilian population. Some African-American soldiers pooled their resources to support civil rights organizations. More than fifteen hundred soldiers of the all-black 24th Infantry Regiment, stationed in Japan, together contributed nearly four thousand dollars to the NAACP's national

office.[76] Many more sent funds directly home. Indeed, the prospect of remittances exerted a powerful enticement for black men with families. Charles Earnest Berry had grown up in Chattanooga, Tennessee, where "the only employment that you really had was working in a hotel, or some type of menial work." The seventeen-year-old Berry, hoping to marry his high-school sweetheart and begin a family with "a nice home and car, and maybe a couple dollars in the bank," dropped out of school and convinced his mother to sign the enlistment papers. At first concerned for his safety and future prospects, Berry's mother experienced a change of heart once "she started getting the allotment checks." Berry would serve in both Japan and Korea.[77]

George Lipsitz's biography of rank-and-file activist Ivory Perry likewise indicates the importance volunteers placed on being able to provide for family. Perry, raised by a sharecropping family in rural Arkansas, was frustrated by his limited occupational opportunities, but even more so by an inability to provide for his siblings. Even though life in the military meant leaving family, Perry knew his room and board would be provided, lessening potential burdens on others, and hoped to acquire enough money to send a portion home each month. He enlisted in November 1948. On board a train to basic training at Fort Knox, Kentucky, Perry looked around his railroad car and found a number of young men similarly situated. The following year his cousin, who also faced the prospect of supporting his family on poverty wages from picking cotton, joined him in Japan.[78]

Ira T. Neal, a high-school dropout from Tennessee, attempted at first to join the Air Force. He traveled to Biloxi, Mississippi, only to be informed that the quota for African Americans had been filled; he then signed with the army at Fort Dix, New Jersey. "There wasn't

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[76] "24th Inf. Soldiers Give $3,770 to NAACP," *Afro American*, 4 September 1948, 5.

[77] Charles Berry Collection (AFC/2001/001/5950), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.

[78] Lipsitz, *A Life in the Struggle*, 38-41.

a lot for a black kid to do [at] that day and time in the South," Neal recalled, "no jobs." Although only sixteen years old, he convinced his mother to sign the consent forms and to lie about his age. "I think my mother was glad in a sense," he explained, "because I was able to help provide support for the family." His was not an exceptional case; many of Neal's friends and acquaintances were moving directly into the service after graduating or dropping out of school. In addition to the all important "three hots and a cot," they earned a starting salary of $75 a month (an income that, after free room, board, and clothing were taken into account, leapt to the equivalent of more than $200, according to one army estimate). Neal regularly sent home at least half his earnings while stationed in Japan and Korea.[79]

In fact, applying for an overseas assignment made sound economic sense. The following chapter explores in detail the financial benefits of occupation duty, including greatly reduced living expenses and the ability to send for kin (which could improve an entire household's financial standing). One immediate effect of military remittances was that a growing number of black citizens were becoming economically invested in American militarization. And these motives would shape both servicemen's behavior overseas and how their experiences were interpreted by those on the homefront.

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[79] Ira Neal Collection (AFC/2001/001/1189), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress; the income-equivalency estimate is cited in Eric Larrabbe, "The Peacetime Army: Warriors Need Not Apply," *Harper's Magazine*, March 1947, 240-241. Numerous similar examples exist. Veteran Stephen Hopkins, whose father died when Hopkins was a child, enlisted at the age of eighteen—and a month before the Korean War began—because he "thought it would be a way to bring more money into the house." Hopkins quoted in Yvonne Latty, *We Were There: Voices of African American Veterans, From World War II to the War in Iraq* (New York: Harper Collins, 2004), 63. Walter S. McClellen, of Philadelphia, decided to volunteer following a fruitless attempt to secure a civilian job paying enough to support his family. McClellen requested an overseas assignment, then arranged for a set amount, based upon his number of dependents, to be sent home automatically each month. See "Philly Father of Eight Finds Civilian Pay Too Low, Reenlists," *Afro American*, 27 April 1946, 9. See also Shedrick Burk Collection (AFC/2001/001/9554), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.

One final development—the military's tendency in the late 1940s to assign African Americans to the Far East at the expense of Europe—requires brief explanation. As World War Two drew to a close, sensational and grossly exaggerated accounts of African-American sexual assaults on European women circulated in the press.[80] In December 1946, a report prepared by the Senate War Investigating Committee's legal counsel publicly damned black troops in Germany with allegations of widespread sexual misconduct.[81] Bowing to enormous pressure from white Americans,[82] as well as to their own prejudices, military officials set out to whittle down the number of African-American personnel in the theater. The War Department began in the summer of 1946 by ordering the army to "discontinue shipment" of black soldiers to Europe.[83] In August the army secured Department authorization to initiate a program, aimed primarily at African-American personnel, to order dishonorable (or "blue") discharges to any individual in the European Command deemed "a detriment to the good reputation of the United States Army." Others were to be dismissed with honorable ("white") discharges for being

[80] Lee Nichols, *Breakthrough on the Color Front* (New York: Random House, 1954), 186.

[81] Chief among its complaints were high venereal disease rates and sexual contacts with German women. "A large portion of the Negro troops are being used as service troops, principally as truck drivers," read the report. "This has resulted in their moving freely and unsupervised among the civilian populations. It has also resulted in their ready access to Army supplies, which they have used for the purpose of gaining favor with frauleins. The latter have been propagandized by Hitler into a psychology of moral laxness, and, in view of the food shortage, are unusually receptive to the generosity of the Negro troops." See "Suppressed Report on Germany Lays Immorality to U.S. Forces," *New York Times*, 2 December 1946, 3.

[82] In June 1946 General Dwight Eisenhower, then Military Governor of the U.S. Occupation Zone of Germany, received a somewhat incoherent missive from an outraged white citizen, who asked, "Why are [African-American servicemen] not moved elsewhere, say to Japan where there are no white people for them to exploit their negro blood upon. . . . Some day and it may not be far off, we may welcome the assistance of the Germans in a war with Russia, but our actions in Germany especially with our Negros [sic] may turn the Germans on the Russians' side." See National Archives II, RG 407, Box 718, Folder 291.2 Race 6-1-46 – 6-30-46. Two-and-a-half years later an internal memorandum described a letter sent by Congressman Carl T. Curtis of Nebraska to Secretary of Defense James Forrestal: "Advises that [a] constituent has in recent months made extended trip to Europe. Greatly distressed over the problems being created by the maintenance of colored troops in Bavaria. Pointed out large number of colored babies being born to white girls living there." See National Archives II, RG 335, Box 71, Folder 291.2 Negroes 7-1-48.

[83] Papers of the NAACP, Part 9, Series A, Reel 12 Frame 784. See also National Archives II, RG 335, Box 71, Folder 291.2 Negroes 2-9-50, Jean Byers, "A Study of the Negro in Military Service" (June 1947), 262. The ban on new black assignments to Europe, after evidently being lifted in late 1946 or 1947, was reinstated in early 1948. See Ashton Williams, "'For White Only' Signs Raised by Army Again," *Afro American*, 28 February 1948, 1.

"inefficient" or otherwise "unable to adjust themselves" to military life. At year's end the civilian aide to the Secretary of War returned from a tour of American military installations to report that black servicemen would constitute half of all those so removed from Europe.[84]

Thus at the same time African Americans were clamoring for opportunities to serve in the military, the number of black soldiers in Europe steadily declined. The 18,000 stationed there in January 1947—as opposed to the 35,000 then assigned to the Pacific—fell to 10,000 by April 1948 and to less than 4,000 by the start of 1949.[85] Although the Far East Command (FEC) witnessed a similar, albeit more modest, decline in black personnel until 1950, it remained a theater of choice for military commanders responding to domestic pressures and to their own distaste at the prospect of black-white sexuality. America's enormous military presence in Asia likewise provided officers with the convenient explanation that they were merely following the Gillem Board's recommendation to avoid stationing African Americans among hostile populations.[86] Indeed, the call to confine black servicemen to "localities where community

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[84] Bill Smith, "Blue Discharges for Disliked GIs?: Army 'Big Shots' Speed 'Purge' Of Race Troops From Germany," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 9 November 1946, 3; William Smith, "Chopped Off by Army: Half of Tan GIs Leaving Germany," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 21 December 1946, 1; "Half of ETO Discharges Non-White," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 4 January 1947, 11. The *Courier* subsequently reported that the records of "the tremendous number of enlisted men ordered out of the European Theater for Blue Discharges were carefully checked by the War Department. As a result, only one out of every ten men . . . was given such a discharge when they reached the States. The rest have been retained honorably in the service." The program's principal effect, therefore, was to remove substantial numbers of black troops from the European Command without jeopardizing their future utilization elsewhere. See "Many Backing 'Blue Discharge' Outrage Now Face Army Trials," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 22 February 1947, 21. For a discussion of the military's use of blue discharges against homosexuals during World War Two, see Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two* (New York: Plume, 1991), 139-141.

[85] "122,037 Tan Yanks Listed in U.S. Army on First of Year," *Afro American*, 8 March 1947, 10; Cliff Mackay, "Europe's Most Beautiful Women Give Their Affection to Generous Tan Yanks," *Afro American*, 17 April 1948, 1; Vernon W. Stone, "Germany Baby Crop Left by Negro GI's," *The Survey*, November 1949, 580. The number of black servicemen in Europe rebounded to 9,000 by the start of the Korean War, and then, amid fears Korea was a feint to disguise Soviet moves on Western Europe, to more than 27,000 by the end of 1951 (as part of a general tripling of American strength in the theater). See Nalty, *Strength for the Fight*, 260.

[86] The northern United States was the primary alternative, and by 1947 the majority of black soldiers stateside were stationed outside the American South. See National Archives II, RG 335, Box 71, Folder 291.2 Negroes 2-9-50, Jean Byers, "A Study of the Negro in Military Service" (June 1947), 262.

attitudes are most favorable," FEC headquarters repeatedly boasted, "does not present a problem in this theater."[87]

[87] For two examples, from May 1947 and January 1949 respectively, of identical use of this language, see MacGregor and Nalty, *Basic Documents*, Vol. VIII, 115; and National Archives II, RG 554, Box 88, Folder 291.2 Races.

Chapter Two: Seeking the American Dream in a Prostrate Japan

Shortly after the June 1950 outbreak of war in Korea, a black columnist posed a question: "Have you ever seriously considered what might happen here in America if we should enter an all-out war and lose it?" In response to his own query, the author contemplated American practices in the Far East. "I have just had a look at Japan who lost a war in 1945," he warned, "and if Japan can be used as a yardstick and Russia can be placed in the position of . . . conqueror in this country of ours, here are some of the things we might expect." There followed an extensive catalogue of socioeconomic ills. "Let's begin with your money," it commenced. Loss of purchasing power "would be only the beginning. There would also be limitations on where you could spend what you have. If the Russians followed the pattern we have set in Japan," Americans "would only be allowed to enter certain stores in this country." The largest retailers "would probably end up as Russian post exchanges where Americans could work but not where they could be customers." Discrimination would likewise extend to toilets and drinking fountains, "with the better facilities being plainly marked 'For Russians only.'" In sum, "there would be two standards observed. The first would be that the Russians must be served first at all times. Then would come the serving of American needs." The author concluded his illustration of "the U.S. pattern in Japan now" with an admonition: "[O]nce one sees [Japan] and does not remain in it long enough to become calloused," the occupation foretold what might occur if the United States were conquered.[1]

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[1] James L. Hicks, "What Will Happen If Russian Conquers U.S.: Way We Treat Japan a Warning," *Afro American*, 18 November 1950, 13.

What is remarkable about this column, aside from the oblique allusions to American Jim Crow, is its blanket condemnation of American occupation policies. Did it reflect mainstream African-American sentiment, among people presumably more sympathetic than white Americans to the plight of the Japanese?[2] What of those "calloused" by occupation duty? Finally, did black sentiments change during the years of peace between Japan's surrender and the onset of the Korean War, and if so, how and why? Answering these questions requires a careful examination of the workings of American military and political hegemony in Japan, the influence of the Japanese themselves, and the activities of African-American occupationaires. Most black men, as we have seen, understood enlistment primarily as a means to acquire economic security and material benefits, while their remittances encouraged family members to identify with peacetime armed service. Patterns of life for both Americans and Japanese under the occupation powerfully reinforced these personal investments among black soldiers and their kin.

This chapter details living conditions during the first five years of occupation to explain the development of proprietary attitudes toward Japan and its people. A distinction, however, must be made between the overall American occupation and the specific experiences of black personnel. African-American soldiers were at once integral to the white-dominated occupation force and apart from it. They lived under most of the same rules and regulations and enjoyed many of the same privileges as their white counterparts, yet martial segregation persisted. Black personnel worked and lived largely in their own enclaves, interacting with Japanese civilians on

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[2] See, for example, Lipsitz, "'Frantic to Join . . . the Japanese Army,'" and Kearney, *African American Views of the Japanese*. Both authors, while differing somewhat in emphasis, posit strong black-Japanese affinities before and during the Second World War, in contrast to Euro- (or white-) Japanese racial hatreds. Such mutual antipathy is extensively documented in John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986).

their own terms. These individuals, and often their wives and children, acquired socioeconomic rewards alien to their circumscribed communities stateside. The Japanese, meanwhile, struggling to survive and dependent for their meager livelihoods upon the American-led Supreme Command for the Allied Powers (SCAP), worked to sell the nation and its culture for their occupier's consumption.[3] An international African-American audience debated the suitability of benefiting economically from American rule over a non-white people. Yet as the occupation wore on, such qualms grew more infrequent: black citizens on both sides of the Pacific reconciled themselves (however uneasily) to American hegemony in East Asia. Military policies and black economic interests, working in tandem, led to an acceptance and even an embrace of occupation opportunities that strongly influenced black-Japanese personal relations.

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A remarkably festive atmosphere pervaded the dockside ritual of departure for servicemen traveling to Japan. During the war troop transports had left by cover of darkness. Now, in the light of day, and frequently to the rhythm of USO bands playing popular melodies, crowds of civilians and soldiers mingled under balloons, banners and ubiquitous American flags. Enlisted men held signs reading "Tokyo Here We Come" or "Gotta See a Geisha Girl." Yet despite the excitement and ebullient farewells, the troops had a long and tedious journey ahead of them. In the years before large-scale air transport to Asia became economically practical, the military relied almost exclusively upon sea travel. The voyage from Seattle took two weeks; from San Francisco, almost three. On occasion a transport would sail directly from the East

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[3] For a recent study exploring how the Japanese "sold cherry-blossom visions of Japan to help them revive their prewar tourist industry and downplay their militant wartime reputation" (iv), see Naoko Shibusawa, "America's Geisha Ally: Race, Gender, and Maturity in Refiguring the Japanese Enemy, 1945-1964" (Diss. Northwestern University, 1998). See also Naoko Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

Coast, passing through the Panama Canal, a route requiring nearly two months. Aside from occasional rough seas, there was little to engage the men's attention, as recreational facilities were few or nonexistent. They read, played cards, spoke with fellow passengers and speculated about what the occupation held in store for them. Most would disembark at Yokohama, an industrial city twenty-four miles from Tokyo described by one contemporary as "to Tokyo rather as Newark or Jersey City is to New York." Initial greetings came from the first contingent of occupationaires: the outer jetty sported outsized black and red letters reading "KILROY."[4]

Once docked, the ship unloaded troops upon a wharf that appeared an exercise in controlled confusion. American and Japanese workers struggled to move cargo alongside army buses and trucks waiting to transfer new arrivals to their assignments. At the local replacement depot servicemen attended a mandatory orientation covering such basics as SCAP fraternization policies, currency exchange, black market regulations, and venereal disease prevention, capped by a cursory overview of Japan and its people. There was typically no substantive discussion of postwar Japanese conditions. Rushed through the depot in a few weeks, days, or even hours, the men were then scattered across the American command. They frequently knew little more than they had upon departing the United States. What would these occupationaires discover for themselves? The answer depended in large measure on when they arrived, where they served, and how long they stayed.[5]

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[4] Graffiti bearing the phrase "Kilroy was here" was produced by, and popularly associated with, American GIs during the Second World War.

[5] This composite description of travel to and arrival in occupied Japan is drawn from John W. Dower, Preface to Eiji Takemae, *Inside GHQ: The Allied Occupation of Japan and its Legacy* (London: Continuum, 2002), xxii; Jacob Van Staaveren, *An American in Japan, 1945-1948: A Civilian View of the Occupation* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994), 3-8; Noel F. Busch, *Fallen Sun: A Report on Japan* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, Inc., 1948), 13 (Tokyo-Yokohama quote); Cpl. Arthur Gottlieb, "Fresh from the States," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, Sunday Comic and Feature Section, 8 September 1946, 4; and Harry Emerson Wildes, *Typhoon in Tokyo: The Occupation and Its Aftermath* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1954), 20. See also Carmen Johnson, *Wave-Rings in the Water: My Years with the Women of Postwar Japan* (Alexandria, VA: Charles River

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The first American forces to land found a nation approaching social and economic collapse. In a land numbering approximately seventy-four million in 1941, nearly three million (roughly four percent of the population) had perished in war, with countless more injured, ill, or malnourished. More than sixty percent of urban housing had been destroyed, and some nine million people rendered homeless. During eight years of fighting in Asia and the Pacific, Japan had witnessed steadily declining food production; most ominous was a shortage of rice. Lack of fertilizer, poor weather, manpower shortages, and insufficient machinery conspired to reduce the 1945 yield by nearly forty percent from the previous year. Moreover, Japan could no longer depend upon forced rice deliveries from Korea and other former colonies. By the winter of 1945-1946, official rations for adults provided a mere 1,233 calories daily, little more than half the estimated nutritional requirements. Shortages of already scarce resources were exacerbated by the gradual return of six-and-a-half million repatriated soldiers and civilian settlers, combined with a soaring postwar birth rate.

The war had been as much an economic as a military defeat. Japan lost one quarter to one third of its national wealth, a fifth of all household goods, and perhaps fifty percent of its total income potential. An American presidential envoy reported in October 1945 that "the entire economic structure of Japan's greatest cities has been wrecked." Japanese citizens, facing a seventy percent drop in real wages, triple-digit inflation and potential famine, were reduced to foraging in the countryside and trading whatever possessions remained for food and clothing. By December 1945, they relied upon the black market for half their daily needs (by comparison, the black market in Germany at this time amounted to less than ten percent of all economic

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Press, 1996), 5-6, for a similar description of travel from the West Coast to occupied Japan, albeit from a civilian perspective.

transactions). One scholar of postwar Japan explains that for such men, women and children, it was known as a "'bamboo shoot lifestyle' (*takenoko seikatsu*), a metaphor for life below the subsistence line." Just as bamboo shoots are prepared by removing the outer husks one by one, so the Japanese stripped themselves of one layer of clothing after another. Luxurious silk kimonos were bartered for handfuls of rancid food.[6]

Yet despite physical and emotional exhaustion, idleness was virtually unknown. As one recent study of the Japanese consumer economy notes, "a curious vitality pervaded the early postwar period."[7] Since inertia in a shattered Japan meant likely starvation, street markets sprang up in nearly every urban center, offering astonishing varieties of goods. Many resourceful peddlers sold make-shift products to their fellow citizens, while observing varying degrees of occupational integrity. Footwear provides a case in point. Recycled duraluminum—salvaged from aircraft bodies—was utilized for the production of sturdy *geta*-style clogs. On the other hand, "unscrupulous cobblers compensated for a shortage of leather by using dried squid to

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[6] Wildes, *Typhoon in Tokyo*, 2; Laura E. Hein, *Fueling Growth: The Energy Revolution and Economic Policy in Postwar Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 53; John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1999), 93, 44 (envoy quote), 45; Simon Partner, *Assembled in Japan: Electrical Goods and the Making of the Japanese Consumer* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 46; Tiana Norgren, *Abortion before Birth Control: The Politics of Reproduction in Postwar Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 36-37; Eiji Takemae, *Inside GHQ: The Allied Occupation of Japan and its Legacy* (London: Continuum, 2002), xxxviii-xxxix, 77-78; Walter Rundell, Jr., *Black Market Money* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1964), 63; Patricia L. Maclachlan, *Consumer Politics in Postwar Japan: The Institutional Boundaries of Citizen Activism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 59 ("bamboo shoot lifestyle" quote). In *Sheathing the Sword: The Demilitarisation of Japan* (New York: Macmillan, 1987), Meirion and Susie Harries refer to an "onion skin economy" (25).

[7] Partner, *Assembled in Japan*, 47. According to another scholar, notwithstanding the "material desperation and chaos that plagued" most Japanese early in the occupation, "this was also a time of unbridled energy, enthusiasm, and creativity. Fledgling entrepreneurs built economic fortunes from humble beginnings in the black markets." See Molasky, *The American Occupation of Japan and Okinawa*, 9. For a contemporary account of Japanese peddling in the wake of defeat, see Russell Brines, *MacArthur's Japan* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1948), 42. Such dynamic entrepreneurialism was also reflected in Japanese literature. In "The Jesus of the Ruins" (1946), celebrated novelist Ishikawa Jun opened with a panorama of coexisting poverty and vitality: "[A]midst choking dirt and dust, a cluster of makeshift stalls has sprung from the land…. And as for the occupants, if there are those who flog their various and sundry household goods by simply setting them on the ground, and those who spread kimonos or things to wear across tables, by far the vast majority are people with food to sell." See Ishikawa Jun, The Legend of Gold *and Other Stories*, translated by William J. Tyler (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998), 72.

mend worn soles: the result was indistinguishable from the real thing until the owner went walking in the rain."[8] Other Japanese pinned their hopes on providing souvenirs, entertainment, and other services to the foreign occupation forces. Most American servicemen were eager to acquire any type of souvenir, at nearly any price. An Associated Press correspondent wrote in December 1945 that among the curb-side stalls offering ersatz Japanese wares, "[t]he prices are high, and the quality pathetically low, but the GIs buy readily. 'What the hell,' they say. 'It ain't money. It's only yen.'"[9] It was in this environment, in the late summer and fall of 1945, that occupationaires established a new American presence.

As the invasion of the home islands unfolded, African-American observers registered considerable ambivalence toward black participation in the enterprise. Billy Rowe of the *Pittsburgh Courier* lauded service troops in the Philippines who stood "poised by the thousands" to enter "the enemy's homeland to clinch the peace." "Just as during the war," he continued, "the service troops are among the first going in and the last coming out."[10] Some months later, Langston Hughes's fictional everyman Simple complained, "Now that the white folks have won the war, they do not want to be bothered with no occupation at no GI salary in some foreign country a long ways from home. So they are going to make the Negroes do the occupation for them, and the white GIs are coming home and making some of this Reconversion money." To which Hughes replied, "[S]uppose they did keep Negro troops in the occupied countries for a long time, it might not be so bad for the Negroes. I had rather be a soldier in . . . Asia than in

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[8] Partner, *Assembled in Japan*, 47.

[9] Mark Gayn, *Japan Diary* (New York: William Sloane Associates, Inc., 1948), 47. Japanese literature also captured such entrepreneurialism. Novelist Hisako Matsubara portrayed a community of impoverished Japanese pondering what the coming Americans might like to purchase. After considering cheap furniture and silks, they settle upon Japanese dolls. "I've been told that the honored victors pay a good price for well-made dolls," remarks one character, "in dollars, too." See Hisako Matsubara, *Cranes at Dusk*, translated from the German by Leila Vennewitz (Garden City, NY: Dial Press, 1985), 206.

[10] Billy Rowe, "Tan Yanks Invade Japan: Service Troops First to Occupy Enemy Homeland," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1 September 1945, 1.

Camp Claiborne, Louisiana, any day."[11] Other correspondents attempted to downplay enthusiasm for occupation duty, reflecting a belief that black servicemen wished to return home and to enter the civilian workforce as soon as possible. A reporter for the *Chicago Defender* began a dispatch from Manila by noting that "[s]trange as it may seem, Negro GIs here are anxiously awaiting orders which will land them in Japan." He attributed such eagerness to "[n]atural curiosity," and warned that "this unusual enthusiasm for the Japan assignment must not be interpreted as a wish to stay overseas any longer than necessary." Yet none of the men interviewed evinced any hatred for the Japanese people. "All of them looked upon this assignment as just one more military job in another strange country," he concluded, for they issued "no threats of personal violence against the Japanese, only interest in them as a strange people."[12]

Others were less charitable toward the Japanese and those who appeared to sympathize with them. Vincent Tubbs reported in the *Afro American* on the thousands of "mere soldiers whose job it was to win the war, but not figure out the ramifications of peace." They were men who "by innate human instinct are feeling compassion for the Japs that, by this correspondent's studied evaluation, is not deserved." Tubbs excoriated occupationaires who, by drinking, carousing, and fraternizing with Japanese women of dubious repute, were "making a laughing stock of themselves in the eyes of the Japanese."[13] Other items in the black press criticized Japanese leaders for failing to display proper deference toward their conquerors. One editorial noted that the Japanese government had offered American reporters an opportunity to attend a session of the Diet. The invitation contained a formal request that none arrive intoxicated. "This

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[11] Langston Hughes, "Here to Yonder," *Chicago Defender*, 9 February 1946, 16.
[12] Deton J. Brooks, Jr., "Troops Anxious to Move on Jap Capital," *Chicago Defender*, 1 September 1945, 1.
[13] Vincent Tubbs, "Jungle-Wary Tan Yanks Feel Sorry for Japanese," *Afro American*, 29 September 1945, 1.

sneering insinuation and innuendo is typical of white supremacy in America," the author claimed, casting Japan in the role of unrepentant champion of its own ethno-racial superiority. "The little yellow fellows have discovered that there are a half dozen ways of calling their enemy"—in this case, all Americans—"no good without saying it directly."[14] According to this view, African-American benevolence toward the Japanese was inexplicable.

Another line of reasoning, however, positioned the Japanese as victims of white supremacy. One cartoon strikingly juxtaposed two images (see Figure 2.1). The first portrayed an American general, presumably Douglas MacArthur, imperiously extending "American Dictates" before a bowing Asian caricature labeled "Japan." The second, larger image depicted an uncouth white man supplying "Southern Dictates on the Race 'Problem'" to a bowing Uncle Sam, hat in hand.

[14] "The Japs and 'Supremacy,'" *Afro American*, 29 September 1945, 4.

Fig. 2.1, *Chicago Defender,* 10 November 1945.

The illustration, although directed primarily against a federal government accused of cowardice in the face of southern intransigence, conflated domestic racism with an arrogance of power in the nation's conduct overseas. A September 1945 editorial, published alongside a photograph of a Japanese man bowing before a white occupationaire, exuded a similar attitude. "Here is a picture of a Jap being extra polite to an American officer in Tokyo," it explained, while the officer "by no word or sign acknowledges the salutation." "This," the editorial declared, "is what you would call a picture of a Jap 'Uncle Tom.'" The piece continued by linking the future trajectories of Japanese under the occupation, worldwide victims of colonialism, and racial

minorities in the United States, while simultaneously betraying lingering anti-Japanese sentiment:

> [D]on't get the idea that Uncle Toms over here or abroad represent people who can be kicked around, jim crowed, deprived of their equal rights and in general **perpetually** oppressed by a master race. We learned better than that when Japan declared war on us at Pearl Harbor and we discovered that some extra polite Japs who had been valets and gardeners on the Pacific Coast were officers in the Japanese Army and Navy."[15]

Contradictory as such sentiments toward the Japanese were, the following years witnessed the emergence of a consensus (although never uncontested) regarding African Americans' proper role in the U.S.-dominated Far East.

The African-American press trained its most vociferous attacks upon evidence of black-white segregation during the first months of occupation, particularly in recreational activities. To be sure, several correspondents celebrated the work performed by black troops. One report from Yokohama claimed that most of the sector's 2,000 black men "are not laid into the hard, dreary work they have known so long in the Pacific." Instead, "[b]ig, husky Tan Yanks . . . [who] draw expressions of awe from diminutive Japs are, for the first time, enjoying their jobs of strawbossing Japanese labor around the docks of this shattered city."[16] The author of a November 1945 piece found high morale among the first black soldiers assigned to guard duty in Tokyo, "[d]espite the fact that they will probably be in Japan at least a year."[17] Yet off-duty

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[15] "Look Into an Uncle Tom's Eye," *Afro American*, 22 September 1945, 4. Emphasis in the original. The *Afro* returned to this theme one year later. Under the title "How Uncle Toms Are Made," it explained that the "Japanese now constitute a minority group in their own country. It does not matter that they outnumber the Americans 1,000 to 1. The Americans have the money and the power. That makes them the majority." However, "[s]ome day the Russians, the Chinese, the Africans or some other group with a birth rate higher than ours will conquer America. The Uncle Toms of that day will not be Japanese, but white Americans." See "How Uncle Toms Are Made," *Afro American*, 19 October 1946, 4.

[16] Vincent Tubbs, "Sign Language Used by GI's to Boss Jap Stevedores on Yokohama Docks," *Afro American*, 13 October 1945, 3. See also Charles H. Loeb, "Japs Disinterested in JC Ideas—GI's," *Afro American*, 13 October 1945, 7; and Charles H. Loeb, "Jap Friendliness to GIs Increase," *Afro American*, 13 October 1945, 19, for similar accounts of black supervision of Japanese workers on the Yokohama waterfront.

[17] Peyton Gray, "First Tan Yanks in Tokyo Assigned to Guard Duty," *Afro American*, 3 November 1945, 8.

hours were a different story. One reporter maintained that "the first form of discrimination to rise in Japan" occurred in the field of prostitution. What had initially been a color-blind red light district fifteen miles north of Tokyo was, by October, unofficially designated off-limits to African-American troops. Military police directed the men to visit brothels set aside for black personnel. In the wake of this "flagrant insult to colored soldiers," the author continued, "General MacArthur has ordered the Japanese police to close all Geisha establishments and other houses of pleasure in Tokyo. Should the order become universal throughout Japan it will eliminate one of the most fertile fields of racial discrimination."[18] Segregation was reported in more wholesome pursuits as well. One editorial revealed that certain recreation centers, provided by SCAP for all enlisted men, were turning black occupationaires away.[19]

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[18] Billy Rowe, "GI Bigotry Threatens U.S. Plan in Japan," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 27 October 1945, Second News Section, 11.

[19] "Even in Japan!", *Pittsburgh Courier*, 3 November 1945, 6.

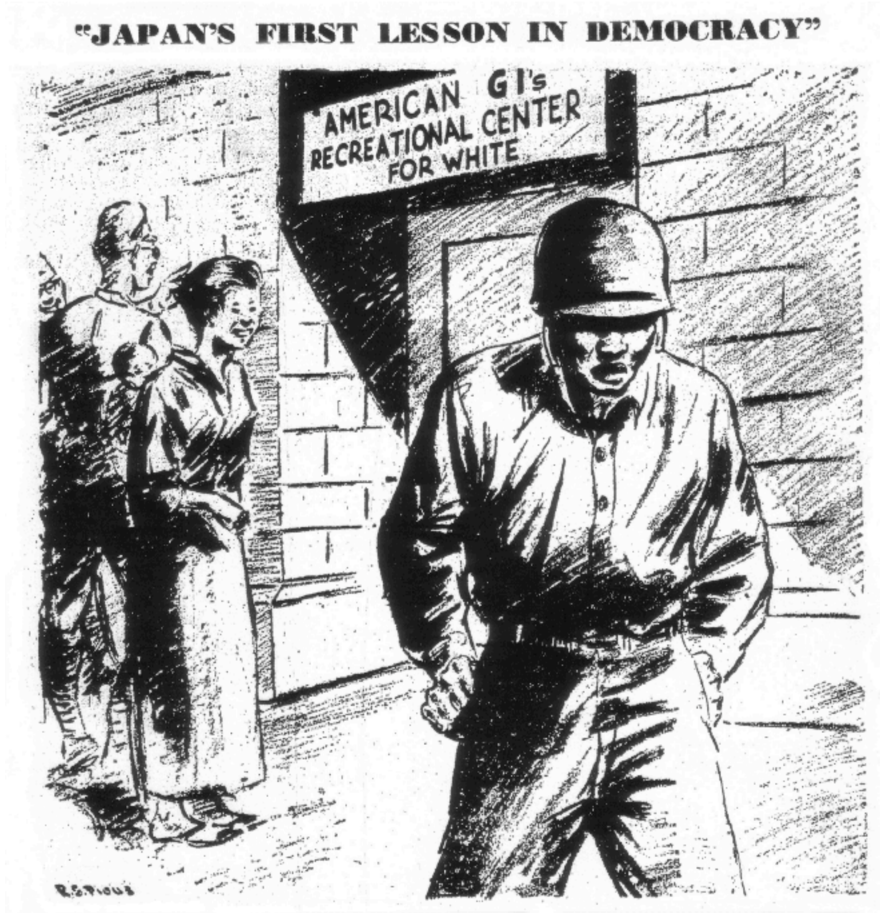

Fig. 2.2, *California Eagle,* 15 November 1945.

White troops used "Nazi methods" to introduce "a segregated setup wherever possible," the *Afro American* accused in January 1946, pointing to a newly-erected post exchange (PX). "Now barred from the new one which is fully equipped with useful and luxury items," black servicemen were "limited to the PX in their area," one presumably inferior in quality.[20] Overall, African-American media coverage of the early occupation emphasized the transplantation of American-style Jim Crow to Japanese soil.[21]

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[20] "Nazi Methods Employed by Americans in Japan, Marines Reveal," *Afro American*, 12 January 1946, 1-2.

[21] Such coverage also bristled at news of reforms, such as the abolition of sharecropping, instituted for the benefit of the Japanese but denied in the United States. See, for example, "Democracy Abroad; Slavery At Home,"

In fact, the first six months were more fluid and chaotic than such accounts suggest. White officers and enlisted men indeed discriminated against black soldiers, but by no means uniformly. Interracial groups of Americans occasionally ventured out to explore their new environment. The policies of General Robert L. Eichelberger, commander of the multiracial though segregated Eighth Army, facilitated these endeavors.[22] His directives provided substantial free time, the ability to explore Japan without escort, and complimentary transportation on Japanese railroads and streetcars for enlisted men. "I want every soldier given the opportunity to see as much of Japan as possible while he is stationed here," he explained.[23] Most of his men welcomed the chance to do so. Fresh from austere wartime service in the Pacific, and now stationed in a highly charged atmosphere, they also found countless ways to cause trouble. In early November the Central Liaison Office in Tokyo submitted to SCAP headquarters a series of reports on "remarkable incidents in which American soldiers were involved, as well as information that may be of use in finding the offenders." "About 8 p.m. September 22," began one, "several U.S. men (including two negroes) came to the cabaret of Shige Sato . . . for recreation, and hired five waitresses." When asked at the end of the evening to settle their bill for "entertainment," the occupationaires professed a lack of funds but promised to return in the near future. They departed after scrawling an IOU, signed "Johnsood Sim Dupree Sineon John Roy Peep Leo Smith."[24] More than one month later their debt remained unpaid. As this episode suggests, black and white soldiers together took advantage of the early occupation's social disorder and Japanese vulnerability.

Chicago Defender, 29 December 1945, 14; and "Somewhere in the U.S.A.," *Chicago Defender*, 29 December 1945, 15.

[22] The Eighth Army assumed complete responsibility for the occupation's army needs in 1946.

[23] "Join the Eight Army To See Japan And Bon Voyage Soldier," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 3 November 1945, 2.

[24] National Archives II, RG 331, Box 433, Folder 250-1 #2.

Some observers feared that law and order across Japan was disintegrating. One study exaggerated, but not by much, the impact of the war on Japanese mores when it concluded that the "confusion which followed the defeat was catastrophic to the old morality. In some cases it was catastrophic to moral restraint of any kind."[25] In a land where even theft had been a rarity, petty crime flourished, often targeting American personnel. Although active resistance to the occupation was neither organized nor prevalent, isolated incidents did occur, including minor assaults, armed robbery, and stone-throwing. Occupationaires fueled these attacks, or retaliated, by engaging in a range of misbehavior. Any Japanese physical challenge to American misdeeds generated swift and severe punishment. During the first months of the occupation, U.S. troops committed criminal acts ranging from larceny and disorderly conduct to rape and murder.[26] African Americans were no exception, and SCAP officials dutifully recorded Japanese allegations of misconduct.[27] SCAP censorship codes, which outlawed the publication of any material deemed "inimical to the objectives of the Occupation," kept most such incidents out of the press.[28] Nonetheless, early interactions between the Japanese and Americans were largely nonviolent, if hesitant, a surprising turn of events for all concerned.

Licensed prostitution instead emerged as the primary practical concern of occupation authorities. At the moment of surrender the Japanese government provided local businessmen with instructions and funds to create Recreation and Amusement Associations (RAAs), an

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[25] R. P. Dore, *City Life in Japan: A Study of a Tokyo Ward* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958), 162. Meirion and Susie Harries report that Japanese crime rates doubled following surrender. See *Sheathing the Sword*, 34.

[26] Takemae, *Inside GHQ*, 57, 67. See also Robert L. Eichelberger, with Milton Mackaye, *Our Jungle Road to Tokyo* (New York: Viking, 1950), 273-274, for an account of an assault on two GIs and the American military's harsh response.

[27] In December 1945, for example, "The People" of a Tokyo district requested the removal of black troops on the grounds that "[t]he women and children are very roughly treated." A similar complaint arrived from Yokohama one year later. See National Archives II, RG 331, Box 433, Folder 250-1 #2.

[28] SCAP issued its pre-censorship rules on 10 September 1945. Takemae, *Inside GHQ*, 67.

extension of its military's wartime use of "comfort women." Officials intended for the RAAs to act as a "shock-absorber," protecting daughters of the upper and middle classes from unwanted sexual advances while maintaining pure Japanese blood-lines.[29] "With a kitty of well over two million dollars," according to a contemporary account, "the geisha entrepreneurs went to Japan's small villages and towns . . . and bought up girls. It was an easy matter, for thousands of girls had lost their jobs with the ending of hostilities."[30] By the end of 1945 an estimated 20,000 impoverished women were working in RAA districts across the country. A large number of establishments, which typically housed dance halls, brothels, and occasionally even beer gardens, were concentrated in the Tokyo-Yokohama metropolitan area.[31] One brothel, located in a Tokyo suburb, serviced so many occupationaires it earned the moniker "Willow Run," after the Ford Motor Company's massive bomber factory.[32] Not surprisingly, rates of venereal disease among American personnel soared, reaching a peak in the Eighth Army of twenty-seven percent by January 1946.[33] In response SCAP declared all RAA establishments off-limits. Venereal disease rates gradually declined, but prostitution remained common. Private entertainment venues, large and small, and informal prostitution replaced the RAAs for the remainder of the occupation.

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[29] Takemae, *Inside GHQ*, 68.

[30] Frank Kelley and Cornelius Ryan, *Star-Spangled Mikado* (New York: Robert M. McBride & Co., 1947). 148. Japanese historian Yuki Tanaka has produced one of the fullest accounts of the origins of the RAA, confirming the figure of at least two million in 1945 dollars. He explains that RAA executives were astounded by the "astronomical sum" promised by the government, but that an official in the Ministry of Finance maintained any figure "was cheap if it would provide good protection for Japanese women." See *Japan's Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery and Prostitution During World War II and the US Occupation* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 142-143.

[31] Molasky, *The American Occupation of Japan and Okinawa*, 105.

[32] John LaCerda, *The Conqueror Comes to Tea: Japan Under MacArthur* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1946), 51. See also Theodore Cohen, *Remaking Japan: The American Occupation as New Deal*, edited by Herbert Passin (New York: The Free Press, 1987), 126.

[33] Kelley and Ryan, *Star-Spangled Mikado*, 150, 152. It was estimated at the time that the infection rate would reach fifty percent if no action was taken.

American commanders likewise expressed concern over lax discipline among their troops, virtually all of whom were jaded by wartime service. In September 1945 a Provost Marshall (military-police officer) compiled recommendations for the purpose of "establish[ing] a system of preserving order and . . . regulating the conduct of allied personnel on visitors' status in the City of Tokyo." All occupationaires, he suggested, should be advised that "an important part of the MP mission is to keep visitors out of trouble in this strange land with strange customs and to assist them in finding their way to points of interest." He further encouraged military police to regulate "derelictions in the wearing of the uniform," which evidently were rampant. Upon receiving the report, his immediate superior agreed that the "present situation in downtown Tokyo resembles the Mardi Gras." "Sailors, soldiers and Air Corps personnel," he complained, "are wondering [sic] about in the weirdest possible uniforms." Yet most officials engaged in this round of memoranda argued that the troops, through little fault of their own, were simply unaware of what was expected of them. In the words of the Provost Marshall, they did not yet understand the "rules of the game."[34] A more organized and regulated occupational environment did not arise until the following year.

Black military personnel certainly committed the infractions common to such a carnival-esque atmosphere. Tens of thousands participated in the first landings and movements of American forces in Japan (see Figure 2.3).

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[34] National Archives II, RG 331, Box 433, Folder 250-1 #2.

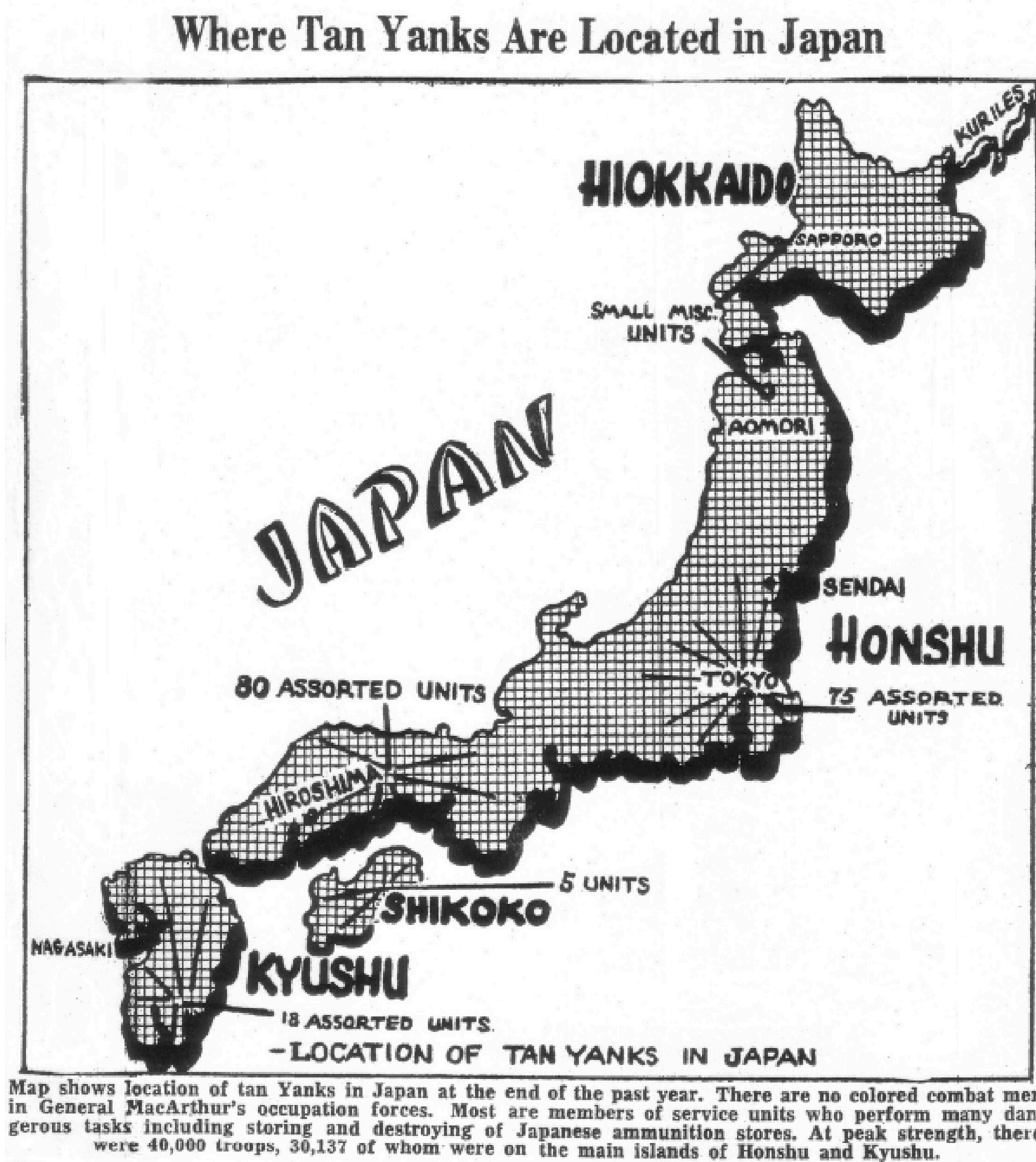

Fig. 2.3, *Afro American,* 6 April 1946. (Map contains data from the end of 1945.)

Members of service (i.e., non-combat) units, their numbers peaked at approximately 40,000 in late 1945, out of a total American force of 430,000. By the winter of 1945-46, just over 30,000 were evenly divided between the main islands of Honshu and Kyushu, with nearly 15,000 assigned to the Tokyo-Yokohama sector. The remainder were scattered across the sparsely

inhabited islands of Hokkaido and Shikoku.[35] Notwithstanding their relegation to service battalions, black troops were relatively free at this point to explore much the same areas of urban Japan as their white counterparts. And as veterans primarily of the exhausting Pacific campaigns, they too were weary of rigid military discipline.

African-American servicemen also took part in a remittance binge during the occupation's anarchic phase. With Japanese income restricted by law and the level of rationed goods inadequate to sustain life, most civilians relied upon the black market. And on the black market American goods sold at a premium.[36] Speculating on illicit transactions immediately became one of the primary recreational activities for American troops. "The new arrival learns . . . that Japanese yen, if handled properly, will multiply like rabbits," correspondent Helen Mears observed. She added, with a touch of hyperbole, that a "conscientious trader could, by starting with a bar of soap and using cigarettes and Japanese whiskey as intermediate currency, run seven cents up to a hundred and fifty-four dollars in a few days." Occupationaires were initially paid in yen; to send money home one purchased a postal order or special military check for which yen were converted to dollars. The only additional requirement was a document, completed by the remitter, listing his or her salary and any financial transactions. The veracity of these declared business dealings was seldom investigated. Moreover, an "American's inalienable right to make any extras he can," Mears reported, "was legalized by the Army ruling that any soldier . . . could export money up to twenty-five per cent more than the amount of his salary, even though it was obvious that any surplus could have been acquired only through gambling, black-market

[35] Vincent Tubbs, "Reveal 14,866 Tan GI's in Tokyo Area: Troops Attached to 75 Service Outfits," *Afro American*, 15 December 1945, 1-2; Vincent Tubbs, "Functions of Occupation Troops in Japan Outlined," *Afro American*, 19 January 1946, 8.

[36] Tamotsu Shibutani, *The Derelicts of Company K: A Sociological Study of Demoralization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 366.

activities, barter, or currency speculation." And because it required "considerable Yankee ingenuity to spend money in any large amount" in Japan, the funds flowed back into the United States.[37]

These remittances reached enormous proportions. General MacArthur's chief fiscal officer discovered that American forces were sending home eight million dollars more than their total earnings *each month*.[38] Officials were little inclined to deny their men the privilege of remitting unearned income, however. Only in July 1946, in an move to reduce Japanese black-market transactions, did SCAP begin paying occupationaires in military scrip, illegal for the Japanese to possess and the only currency accepted at PXs and by those responsible for transmitting funds stateside. By then occupationaires had mailed home $35 million more than their entire combined pay for the theater.[39] Yet the losers in this financial game were both Japanese and American, or at least those Americans not participating in the occupation and not kin to an occupationaire. The former because of the extreme imbalance of power and resources. The latter because the United States Treasury was required to make back up all currency sent by Americans overseas. Millions of dollars were monthly charged to the federal government and distributed among soldiers' families and friends stateside. African Americans in Japan were particularly well positioned to profit from the scheme because of their employment in service battalions. Sales of military goods kick-started most of the illicit revenue, and service units were in charge of their storage, transportation, and distribution. As one black journalist noted, "as long as colored troops are the guardians of goods and clothing, they will not only be the best fed

[37] Helen Mears, "You In Tokyo," *New Yorker*, 23 November 1946, 90-91.
[38] Walt Sheldon, *The Honorable Conquerors: The Occupation of Japan, 1945-1952* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1965), 108.
[39] Mears, "You In Tokyo," 90-91; LaCerda, *The Conqueror Comes to Tea*, 120-121.

and best dressed, but will always have many friends among the civilians."[40] African Americans' routine access to this such equipment outlasted the July 1946 shutdown of one financial pipeline to the United States. So too did their ability to barter for supplementary Japanese goods and services.

Finally, the occupation's first months brought confirmation that Japan would be primarily responsible for financing the American presence. SCAP authorities were more concerned with punishing the Japanese and boosting their soldiers' morale than with reining in operating expenses. Thus, during the initial ninety days of occupation, costs to the Japanese were greater than their entire armed forces budget for 1930.[41] To put it another way, expenditures in this period amounted to one-third of Japan's entire federal budget.[42] Although occupation costs declined as a percentage of the annual Japanese budget over subsequent years, they remained the government's largest expenditure. And the Japanese quickly learned they would be expected to provide much more than basic services. SCAP charged the government for items such as flowers for officers' quarters and personal telegrams and telephone calls to the United States. Expenses often approached the absurd. In 1947 the Japanese government was required to spend 820 million yen in indemnities to Japanese citizens injured by occupationaires in traffic accidents.[43] The occupation of 1945 and early 1946 made it abundantly clear that American needs and desires were to come first, while the Japanese would foot the bill.

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[40] Ollie Stewart, "Definite Advantage Seen in Limiting of Occupation Troops to Service Units," *Afro American*, 20 April 1946, 9. The article focused on occupied Germany, but its conclusions are applicable to Japan as well. See also Jorge T. Teodoro, "Majority Still Confined to Service Jobs, Some GI's in Japan Given Special Work," *Afro American*, 1 June 1946.

[41] Helen Mears, *Mirror for Americans: Japan* (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1948), 256.

[42] Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 115.

[43] Mears, *Mirror for Americans*, 256-257, note 13; Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 115.

With American control firmly established, the occupation assumed a more regulated and enduring ambiance by the summer of 1946. Throughout the year combat veterans (primarily white) departed, replaced by what one witness termed "high-school commandos," callow teenagers who "had to show they were tough," usually by harassing Japanese civilians.[44] African-American occupationaires, who often elected to reenlist rather than grapple with economic uncertainty on the homefront, were perhaps more evenly divided between mature veterans and fresh recruits. On the other hand, most of their newly minted white officers arrived determined to advance their careers through the maintenance of strict discipline and exemplary personnel administration.[45] Of greatest significance were new SCAP directives that required or encouraged the construction of greater physical and emotional barriers between occupier and occupied.

The hardening of American-Japanese segregation was one manifestation of this development. During the hectic early months of the occupation, simple pragmatism dictated most restrictions on the activities of American personnel. The combination of security concerns and Japan's acute food shortage led SCAP to place all train stations, buses, streetcars, restaurants, bars, and hotels off limits to American forces. Special rail cars, clean, uncrowded, and marked "occupying forces" (*Shinchū-gun*) were set aside for allied personnel, while the Japanese were confined to dilapidated, often windowless cars.[46] Nevertheless, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and SCAP resisted suggestions to ban all American-Japanese social relations. A policy

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[44] Quotes from this unnamed source are recorded in John Curtis Perry, *Beneath the Eagle's Wings: Americans in Occupied Japan* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1980), 176. Another contemporary noted that "the disciplined men of a wartime army are being replaced by 18-year-olds who were children when this war started." Gayn, *Japan Diary*, 80.

[45] See, for example, Cohen, *Remaking Japan*, 127.

[46] Takemae, *Inside GHQ*, 75; Cohen, *Remaking Japan*, 127; Van Staaveren, *An American in Japan*, 10. Remarkably, the military enforced no color line on its American-only coaches. See National Archives II, RG 554, Box 88, Folder 291.2 – Races.

of strict non-fraternization in occupied Germany, which lasted less than five months, had already proven a public relations disaster. MacArthur further believed such measures would be unenforceable and insulting to American troops. "They keep trying to get me to stop all this Madame Butterflying around," he complained, "[but] I wouldn't issue a non-fraternization order for all the tea in China."[47] Yet many local commanders remained unaware of his sentiments. Operating under SCAP authority, they placed additional venues off-limits to Americans, establishing a variegated system of social regulations across Japan.[48]

In 1946 the occupational command instituted a more uniform and rigid system of American-Japanese segregation. Recreational facilities reserved for occupationaires increasingly featured prominent notices reading "For Allied Personnel Only" or "Japanese Keep Out." SCAP, which employed considerable indigenous labor, mandated separate entrances for Americans and Japanese in many of its office buildings.[49] The army systematically declared one social space after another off-limits either to its forces or to the Japanese (or insisted that only one population frequent them at any given time). In March General Eichelberger announced that although the "question of fraternization has never been raised officially in the occupation . . . public displays of affection by men in uniform towards the women of any nation are in poor taste. Particularly is this so in Japan among those who were so recently our enemies and where the people have never been accustomed to such demonstrations." "The sight of our soldiers walking along the streets with their arms around Japanese girls," he continued, "is equally repugnant to Americans at home and to those in the occupation areas as well as to most Japanese." Eichelberger informed his men that such activities would "be treated as disorderly

[47] Cohen, *Remaking Japan*, 122, 123 (MacArthur quote); Wildes, *Typhoon in Tokyo*, 326.
[48] For an example, from August and September of 1945, of confusion among local commanders as to fraternization rules, see National Archives II, Box 433, Folder 250-1 #2.
[49] Takemae, *Inside GHQ*, 75.

conduct,"[50] punishable by a ten dollar fine, a night in the local stockade, and an appearance before one's commanding officer the following day.[51] The army thereafter prohibited Japanese women from riding in military vehicles or visiting single men's quarters. It moved with similar dispatch to place off-limits to all occupationaires various theaters, waterways, beaches, and even entire neighborhoods. In the words of one astute observer, "[f]raternization was not exactly illegal; there was just no legal place to fraternize."[52]

This stricter American-Japanese segregation influenced relations among occupier and occupied in two immediate ways. First, informal socializing between soldiers and civilians rapidly declined. According to a contemporary, restrictions "necessarily geared to the level of the most irresponsible eighteen-year-old GI" created "a heavy colonial atmosphere."[53] In the words of another, "most of the ordinary day-to-day contact between Americans and the native population is on a master-servant basis."[54] As one scholar of the occupation has noted, the new nonfraternization policies "permeated Japanese society like a kind of racial segregation."[55] Black troops assigned to this environment operated within a uniquely liminal space. Segregated from white Americans at work and subject to discrimination, they were offered the psychological wages of the occupation's heightened colonial ambience. Second, all but a very few American

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[50] National Archives II, RG 331, Box 433, Folder 250-1 #2. The overwhelmingly male opinion writers for Japanese periodicals indeed viewed such fraternization with distaste. See National Archives II, RG 331, Box 1225, first (unlabeled) folder. Returning Japanese soldiers also resented fraternization between Japanese women and American men, for them symbolic of their status as fallen heroes. See, for example, LaCerda, *The Conqueror Comes to Tea*, 23.

[51] "Nisei GIs in Japan Included In Public Fraternization Ban," *Pacific Citizen*, 6 April 1946, 2; "Neck In Private Or Face Stockade!: 'Public Affection' Between Soldiers, Jap Women Out," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 23 March 1946, 1. The *Afro American*, noting the imposition of such "'after dark' social equality," editorialized that "the Deep South must be chuckling to itself over this forthright adoption of its unwritten code." See "An Old Southern Custom," *Afro American*, 30 March 1946, 4.

[52] Cohen, *Remaking Japan*, 128. See also Takemae, *Inside GHQ*, 79-80.

[53] Margery Finn Brown, *Over a Bamboo Fence: An American Looks at Japan* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1951), 54.

[54] Busch, *Fallen Sun*, 25.

[55] Koshiro, *Trans-Pacific Racisms*, 21.

personnel remained blind to the plight of the most indigent Japanese. For example, in mid-1946 a Nisei working for SCAP military intelligence donned her most ragged clothes in order to inspect conditions for homeless refugees living in Tokyo's subway system. There she found countless men, women and children struggling to survive alongside rotting garbage and open latrines. Only by disguising herself as a Japanese citizen, however, was this occupationaire able to visit the subway, for military police were now stationed at the doors to prevent American entry.[56]

An extensively overhauled troop information program did little to increase awareness of Japanese socioeconomic distress. In an effort to promote understanding and reduce interpersonal friction, the army in 1946 mandated coursework on local customs. Each soldier was required to receive at least one hour of instruction per week on esoteric topics including "Japanese flower arrangements, incense burning, marriage, dress, tea ceremonies, and fishing with cormorants [a species of diving bird]." According to the chief of SCAP's Information Section, if an occupationaire "knows why the Japanese act and think the way they do, he is likely to be more amiable and polite. He'll be inclined to wave to people he passes on country roads. He won't be so quick to push a Japanese off the sidewalk." One text utilized for the Troop Information Hour contained a number of non sequiturs, including: "Like most other people the Japanese eat three meals a day."[57] (That this was perhaps not the case for most Japanese in the midst of widespread food shortages evidently did not occur to those in charge of troop edification.) Thus, however benign its intentions, the military once more failed to inform enlisted men of Japanese material circumstances. Individual soldiers would, or would not, continue to discover on their own how most Japanese survived, only now from a position of greater social distance.

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[56] Mitsu Yasuda, "In My Father's Japan," *Pacific Citizen*, 24 December 1949, 4.
[57] LaCerda, *The Conqueror Comes to Tea*, 47-48.

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In the summer of 1946 Lt. Wilford H. Rutherford, head of administrative affairs for Yokohama's Fourth Replacement Depot, was asked about the quality of new arrivals to Japan. After responding that he found the men quite satisfactory, Rutherford added, almost as an afterthought, that approximately half of the replacements were black.[58] This development, perhaps startling in hindsight, was due in part to the considerable appeal of armed service for African Americans in the immediate postwar years. Yet it was also a result of deliberate military and civilian decision making. Indeed, as African-American troops were diverted from postwar Europe to the Pacific theater, they found themselves funneled into occupied Japan.

The policy originated some years before in China. During the Second World War a story circulated among African Americans that Chiang Kai-shek specifically requested that no black troops be sent to his aid.[59] The rumor was accurate. At Chiang's urging, African-American truck battalions working on the Burma Road were prohibited from moving east of its Chinese terminus. Following the war, and with only a handful of black troops remaining, the commanding general of American forces solicited Chiang's views on the prospect of their future service in Nationalist China. In February 1946 he reported to the War Department that the Generalissimo remained strongly opposed. The reasoning was twofold. First, Chiang maintained that the Chinese Communists would "exploit [black] employment in their local propaganda stating that the Americans were withdrawing their white troops and supplanting them with their Negro troops to accomplish their materialistic designs in China." Second, and more to the point, "the introduction of Negro troops would in the Generalissimo's opinion add to

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[58] Cpl. Arthur Gottlieb, "Fresh from the States," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, Sunday Comic and Feature Section, 8 September 1946, 4.

[59] Layle Silbert, "We Export—Race Prejudice to China," *The Crisis*, vol. 55, no. 7 (July 1948), 208.

his problems for the Chinese do not accept them readily."[60] The American commander recommended to the War Department that "Negro troops not be considered for employment in the China Theater at this time." The Department agreed.[61]

The inclination to exclude black personnel from particular regions of the Pacific and to deploy them instead on the Japanese main islands remained strong in the years that followed. It first resurfaced on the island of Okinawa. General Eichelberger announced in January 1947 that the all-black 24th Infantry Regiment, 5,000 strong and stationed in Okinawa since the end of the war, would be transferred to Camp Gifu, in central Japan. Members of the regiment began departing little more than a week later, replaced by Filipino scouts.[62] The War Department provided the rationale, much accepted in the black press, that the move represented an effort to equalize opportunities within the army, improve military race relations, and initiate a gradual integration of occupation forces.[63]

It was in fact part of a much larger racial rearrangement of American forces in the Pacific, one that involved the combined Philippine-Ryukyu command (Okinawa is the largest island in the Ryukyu archipelago). Racial strife had been brewing in the Philippines since its recapture by American forces, and black personnel faced hostility from both white soldiers and

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[60] National Archives II, RG 319, Box 171, Folder 291.2, Section I, Cases 1-2. This evidence contradicts Morris MacGregor's assertion that the Chinese government objected solely to the assignment of all-black units to China, and not "to assignment of individual black soldiers up to 15 percent of any unit's strength." See MacGregor, *Integration of the Armed Forces*, 385.

[61] National Archives II, RG 319, Box 171, Folder 291.2, Section I, Cases 1-2.

[62] "Army Integrates Troops: Mixed Division Formed for Peace Duty in Japan," *Afro American*, 1 February 1947, 1; "Negro Unit Going to Japan," *New York Times*, 25 January 1947, 18; "Praised by General: 24th Joining U.S. Forces in Japan," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1 February 1947, 1, 4; L. Albert Scipio II, *Last of the Black Regulars: A History of the 24th Infantry Regiment (1869-1951)* (Silver Spring, MD: Roman Publications, 1983), 79; Takemae, *Inside GHQ*, 442.

[63] See, for example, "Army Integrates Troops: Mixed Division Formed for Peace Duty in Japan," *Afro American*, 1 February 1947, 1-2; P. L Prattis, "New Manpower Standards: Ray Proposals Plan to 'Equalize' Army," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 18 January 1947, 11; and "24th Infantry To Police Japan," *Chicago Defender*, 1 February 1947, 13. The author for the *Defender*, while accepting the military's professed motives, credited MacArthur more than the War Department.

Filipino men.[64] Tensions reached a peak in the winter of 1945-1946, with the eruption of a three-hour gun battle involving black and white troops, alongside persistent black-Filipino race riots.[65] By late 1947 a report from the Philippine-Ryukyu command complained that the "ratio of colored troops"—that is, black soldiers and Filipino scouts—"to white troops . . . already is excessive and is increasing." Notwithstanding transfer of the 24th Regiment from Okinawa to Japan, African Americans would comprise nearly 25 percent of the command's authorized strength by January 1948, a percentage "considerably in excess of the Army over-all ratio"[66] The Philippine government repeatedly objected to the presence of black servicemen and the violence it generated. Before long, President Manuel Roxas reached an informal agreement with American generals, implemented in the spring of 1948, that "Negro personnel would not be stationed in the Philippine islands."[67] As a result of such negotiations, white soldiers were redeployed to the Philippines, Filipino scouts replaced African-Americans on the Ryukyus, and black troops stationed in the Philippines were either returned to the United States or sent to Yokohama for assignment to the Eighth Army.[68] In sum, despite drastic reductions in the

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[64] See, for example, E. T. Hall, Jr., "Race Prejudice and Negro-White Relations in the Army," *The American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 52, No. 5 (March 1947), which noted that Filipino men made references to "damn niggers" (406); Pfc. John Wesley Rankin (Manila, Philippines), *Chicago Defender*, 19 January 1946, 14, who blamed white soldiers for instilling racial hostility toward blacks among the Filipino population; and "Manila Posters Ask Ouster Of Soldiers," *Chicago Defender*, 14 December 1946, 2, which reported the beating of two black enlisted men by an "an armed Filipino gang" and the appearance in Manila of "crudely drawn posters, signed 'ex-guerrillas,'" reading, "We want to abolish Negroes in this town."

[65] Billy Rowe, "Manila Disorders Blamed on Army-Sponsored Segregation," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 19 January 1946, 1, 4; "Army Starts Probe of Manila Rioting," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 19 January 1946, 5.

[66] National Archives II, RG 554, Box 2, Folder Conf. Oct.-Dec. 1947.

[67] National Archives II, RG 554, Box 5, Folder Conf. Book XI. Quotes are from a confidential 1949 summary of the agreement written by George R. Stratemeyer, Lt. General, U.S. Air Force. The State Department reached similar understandings with various host nations and territories, including Panama, British possessions in the Caribbean, and Iceland. See Sidney Walker, "Panama Bars Negro Troops: State Department Confirms Courier Exposé," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 8 December 1945, 1; and Nalty, *Strength for the Fight*, 224.

[68] National Archives II, RG 554, Box 3, Folder Conf. 1948 Bk III. See also National Archives II, RG 554, Box 88, Folder 291.2 – Races, for a January 1949 report compiled by the Far East Command that explains, "Present plans contemplate use of negro personnel in all major subordinate command areas, except the Philippine Islands and Korea." A limited number of African Americans did serve in occupied Korea until the removal of American forces in 1948 and 1949, but their exploits were largely ignored in the black press. Pvt. Manley Banks, for instance,

number of Americans assigned to Japan from 1946 onward, black figures remained relatively constant—fluctuating between 10,000 and 15,000—or declined only modestly. Thus by the start of the Korean War, the 24th Infantry Regiment not only had a full contingent of three battalions (as opposed to every white regiment in Japan), but was approximately ten percent over-strength.[69]

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At roughly the same time Lt. Rutherford described a spike in the percentage of African Americans among new arrivals to Japan, the occupation began celebrating its first anniversary. In August 1946 General Eichelberger delivered the opening salvo in a propaganda battle for best-American-military-assignment honors. "When I saw General [Dwight] Eisenhower in Washington last December," he wrote in a letter to *Time* magazine, "he wondered why I would want to come back to this 'terrible place.'" Yet when Eisenhower "came out here two months ago, he admitted that this was the best place in the world for a soldier to serve." "It is true that when we came in here we had nothing," Eichelberger continued, but "[n]ow we have 25 fine hotels in operation, golf courses, stadia, hundreds of movies, [and] some of the finest clubs I have ever seen." He closed by quoting a sign posted in front of one enlisted men's club: "You never had it so good!"[70] Shortly thereafter, Eichelberger publicly reported on the first year of occupation. He aimed to make duty in Japan "the most pleasant, most interesting and most

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complained to the *Pittsburgh Courier* that its correspondents "write about the soldiers in Japan, how they live and are being treated, but we haven't seen any articles on Korea…. It seems as though nobody knows that there are any Negro soldiers [here]." *Pittsburgh Courier*, 10 July 1948, 24.

[69] Blair, *The Forgotten War*, 48.

[70] R. L. Eichelberger, *Time*, 5 August 1946, 12. Eichelberger was writing in response to what he felt was an unfair portrait of occupation life in a previous article. See "To Learn American Ways," *Time*, 1 July 1946, 25. Marcus H. Ray, the recently appointed Civilian Aide to the Secretary of War, joined Eichelberger in his assessment of occupation life. Reporting on his 1946 tour of Pacific military installations for black personnel, Ray testified that "Japan represents the finest facilities for troop service." National Archives II, RG 107, Box 20, Folder ASAW 291.2. See also Sgt. Peyton Canary, "Aide To War Secretary Tours Japan," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 29 August 1946, p. 1.

prized assignment for United States soldiers."[71] The *Pacific Stars and Stripes*—a newspaper produced by and for enlisted men—joined the celebrations with a special magazine supplement devoted entirely to the one year anniversary. Following an excerpt from Irving Berlin's "This is the Army" ("This is the Army, Mr. Jones / No private rooms or telephones / You've had your breakfast in bed before / But you won't have it there, anymore"), the author observed that "the Army has done its best to make Mr. Berlin eat his lyrics—and they've succeeded to a somewhat spectacular point."[72] The increased emphasis on accommodations, facilities and diversions was no longer aimed solely at enlisted men, however. For as the occupation assumed greater permanence, American wives and children began relocating to Japan, first in the hundreds, eventually by the thousands.

Plans for dependent accommodations commenced soon after Japan's surrender. The *Pacific Stars and Stripes*' first article on the topic appeared in November 1945.[73] The following February the War Department announced that, with necessary housing, food and medical care now available, men of all ranks could request transfer of their dependents if they agreed to remain overseas at least one additional year.[74] Days later General MacArthur publicly affirmed his unconditional support of the plan. He added the caveat, however, that living conditions would be "those of the occupied areas and . . . not comparable in many ways with those of continental America." MacArthur implied he was speaking of and for middle-class whites, while linking occupation duty to American expansionist mythology. "It will represent a type of pioneering reminiscent of the pioneer days of our own West during the nineteenth century," he

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[71] "General Eichelberger Gives Report On First Year Of Jap Occupation," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 1 September 1946, 1.
[72] "…the First Year," special magazine, *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 2 September 1946, unpaginated.
[73] "Army Is Studying Question of Bringing Wives To Japan," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 15 November 1945, 2.
[74] "Army Plans Overseas Housing For Families," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 4 February 1946, 2.

declared in his inimitable style, "but just as those days developed the best of American womanhood, so it is believed the wives of our officers and soldiers will welcome the opportunity of sharing the hardship with their husbands."[75] With the first wave of dependents preparing to cross the Pacific in the spring and summer of 1946, military officials continued to warn of "rugged" life in the occupied territories.[76] Yet as it developed, those bound for Japan need not have worried much.

Construction of permanent accommodations began in earnest in the latter half of 1946, with an eye toward attracting wives in particular.[77] SCAP ordered the Japanese government to provide indigenous labor and building materials for American housing projects, despite the fact that 180,000 residents of Tokyo alone were living in tin shacks and other temporary shelters.[78] Having broken ground, the army established a goal of accommodating 6,000 families by the summer of 1947.[79] By 1948, 10,000 American military families were living in Japan.[80] SCAP assured its soldiers there would be no discrimination by rank. The Yokohama military-community plan called for "an equal number of officers' and enlisted men's homes," albeit "separated by a park." Housing dimensions were likewise determined by family size, rather than

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[75] "MacArthur Hopes All EM Can Get Wives to Japan," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 12 February 1946, 4.

[76] See, for example, "First Army Families To Be On Way In June," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 25 May 1946, 2, and Sheldon, *The Honorable Conquerors*, 115.

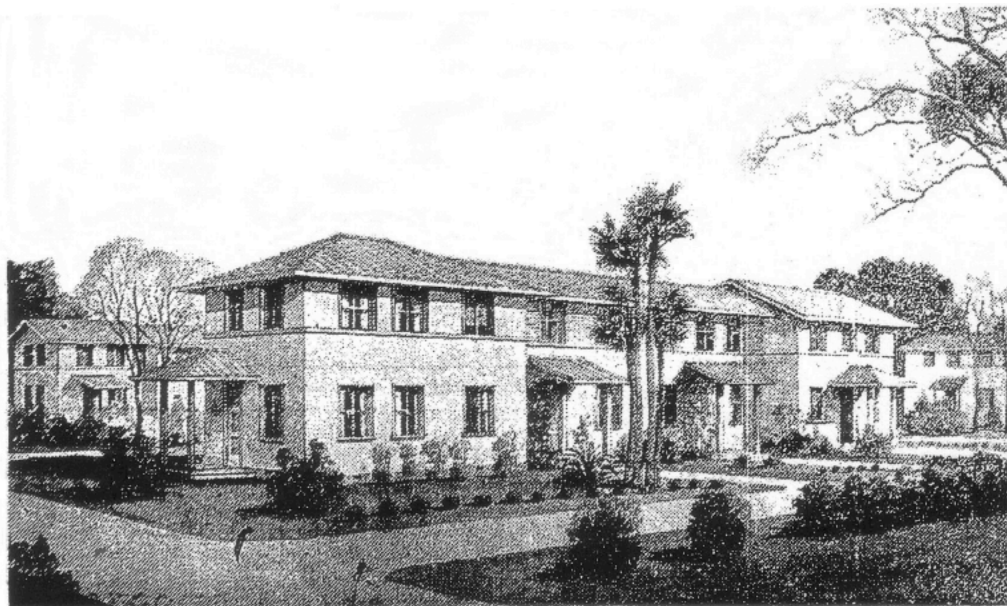
[77] Cynthia Enloe has pioneered understandings of the importance of women to foreign military endeavors. Particularly relevant here are her observations that "wives' dissatisfaction with military life can produce worrisome manpower shortages," while "[k]eeping soldiers happy on a foreign base requires keeping soldiers' wives happy." See *Bananas Beaches & Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 71-72.

[78] "Reconstruction Of Tokyo Proceeding At Slow Pace; Materials Black Marketed," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 1 March 1946, 4. According to Finance Minister Tanzan Ishibashi, since SCAP demanded immediate compliance the government was forced to purchase materials on the black market, at exorbitant prices. See Gayn, *Japan Diary*, 484. This requisitioning of local resources for housing and other facilities continued though 1948, a year when 3.7 million Japanese families still lacked homes of their own. Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 15. By 1949 it had swallowed up one-third of Japan's iron and cement, one-fifth of its steel, and ten percent of its lumber and glass. Sheldon, *The Honorable Conquerors*, 114.

[79] "Tokyo-Yokohama Dependent Housing Under Construction," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 23 June 1946, 2.

[80] Brines, *MacArthur's Japan*, 290.

military status. Col. James Truitt, chief of dependent housing for the Eighth Army Engineers, added that accommodations would be comfortable but not “luxurious.”[81] Luxury, however, lay in the eye of the beholder. Below an artist’s rendition of a four-family unit (see Figure 2.4), a correspondent for the *Pacific Stars and Stripes* informed readers that the “typical home . . . will be a modern, Western-style two-story duplex, completely furnished” with “rugs, draperies, furniture, and heating facilities.”



OCCUPATION HOME—An example of the treatment possible with the basic duplex design planned for the majority of dependent housing in Japan is this artist's drawing of a four-family unit, part of the housing project to be located west of Hibya Park in Tokyo. Each family unit will have both an upstairs and a downstairs section. Roofs will be of colored tile, exteriors of stucco and weather-board.

A Home Away From Home

Army Families Will Live In Style

Fig. 2.4, *Pacific Stars and Stripes,* 31 March 1946.

[81] “Officers and EM Get Same Housing,” *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 25 March 1946, 4.

Floor plans came in two standard models: three-bedroom, one-and-a-half bath; or two-bedroom, one bath. "[A]lthough standardization is necessary for economic and technical reasons," the author continued, "there will be local variations on the design to prevent the appearance of a 'workman's row.'" In this vein, the chief engineering officer announced an effort "to get some kind of architectural treatment without any material change in design," principally through differently colored roofs and variations in building arrangement.[82] Levittown had crossed the Pacific. As diplomat George Kennan sardonically remarked in March 1948, "I know many of the Japs deserve a worse fate than to have the tastes and habits of American suburbia imposed on them."[83]

American residential enclaves gradually achieved near total self-sufficiency. SCAP originally envisioned "complete communities"—"built by Japanese workmen to American specifications"—"including shopping centers, recreation halls, barber shops and playgrounds."[84] Indeed, occupants of these housing developments soon acquired their own bakeries, drycleaners, bus systems, newspapers, gas stations, and radio networks. Moreover, along with homes and small businesses came military sponsorship of social services. Free medical and dental care was available to all. Dependents, protected by standard GI inoculations, were provided access to hospital facilities.[85] The Army Quartermaster Corps prepared for the "proper feeding of children" by securing an initial shipment of 17,600 four-ounce cans of strained vegetables, in

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[82] Cpl. Sam Lester, "A Home Away From Home: Army Families Will Live In Style," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 31 March 1946, 2.

[83] Quoted in Michael Schaller, *The American Occupation of Japan: The Origins of the Cold War in Asia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 125. Another contemporary observed that with the arrival of dependent families, "Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny moved into Japan. So, eventually did the PTA and Boy Scout troops and clubs of all types. Churches, theatres, roof gardens and schools sprouted in the expanding communities. Saturday night dances and bridge tournaments, golf matches and 'Tokyo Bowl' football games invaded the country." See Brines, *MacArthur's Japan*, 291.

[84] John Rich, "GI Dependents To Arrive in May: Two Big Projects In Tokyo Will House U.S. Families," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 25 March 1946.

[85] "GI Dependents In Japan To Get Full Medical Care," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 30 May 1946, 1.

addition to its extant stocks of "powdered whole milk, powdered skim milk, condensed, evaporated and malted milk and similar preparations of milk products."[86] Food for dependents, even jars of caviar, began arriving by refrigerator ship from the United States, all for sale at bargain prices.[87]

For help around their new homes, occupationaires began hiring Japanese maids, with the military once again providing invaluable assistance. According to one report, "the Army, anticipating the need American families will have for trained servants," went so far as to establish "a 'Domestic Science' school" in the city of Sendai. Instructors there provided young women with a four-week course in "maidcraft," a discipline that included such topics as "courtesy, tact, cleaning, washing, mending, setting tables, serving, making beds, and doing dishes." Lessons in traditional American cooking were also included.[88] And although newly certified and self-taught domestics were in great demand, postwar Japanese poverty and unemployment kept wages remarkably low. A maid could be retained for ten dollars a month, perhaps fifteen if she spoke English well. Even single men living in barracks or quonset-hut cities hired Japanese workers to clean their living quarters, launder their clothes, and handle routine kitchen duties. American military families, some fifteen thousand of them, ultimately employed more than 25,000 servants, for an occupation whose troop strength declined to just over 100,000 by 1948.[89] Awe-struck Japanese asked one American if all housewives had maids in the United States. In response to this and similar queries, he endeavored "to portray an America of more modest means, explaining that most citizens lived more Spartan lives that did

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[86] "Dependents' Children To Get Baby Foods," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 19 June 1945, 4.

[87] Busch, *Fallen Sun*, 22-23. Occupationaires and their dependents were thus largely unaffected by the rapid rise in prices for foodstuffs in the postwar United States. See, for example, "Occupation Foods Cost Rise To Be Slower Than U.S.," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 2 November 1947, 1.

[88] Mears, "You In Tokyo," 92.

[89] Takemae, *Inside GHQ*, 75; Sheldon, *The Honorable Conquerors*, 113, 115.

occupationaires in Japan."[90] Occupation authorities had succeeded quite spectacularly in their efforts to make life in Japan comfortable for officers, enlisted men, and their dependents.

Of course, all militaries supply their forces with food, shelter, and basic services to one degree or another; what made the American occupation exceptional was its commitment to personal consumption, epitomized by the PX system.[91] With the second phase of occupation firmly underway, SCAP in October 1946 replaced the temporary Tokyo PX with a new facility, the "largest Army store in the world." According to the *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, it "rival[ed] any American department store for variety and decoration." One customer provided a tongue in cheek recipe: "Mix up Penney's, Sears-Roebuck, Woolworth's and Montgomery Ward, and toss in a touch of the open air fruit stands and the Farmer's Market in Los Angeles and the National Biscuit Company, and drop the result over a major Tokyo corner."[92] A correspondent for the *Afro American* claimed "the PX in Tokyo would put Macy's to shame both in prices and in materials offered."[93] Besides five floors of merchandise, the exchange included a children's nursery, a barber and beauty shop, and dry-cleaning service. An on-site English language school provided instruction to every Japanese salesgirl. With more than five million dollars worth of merchandise in stock on opening day, officials estimated sales of fifteen million over the ensuing

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[90] Van Staaveren, *An American in Japan*, 80. On another occasion a young officer, who in a previous life was a poorly paid schoolteacher, remarked, "It's a good life, you know. The British have had it all worked out for a long time, and there's no reason why we shouldn't, too. A regular country-club life, you know." See Mears, "You In Tokyo," 92-93.

[91] One contemporary observed that "[a]s a merchant," the army in Japan "gradually lost much of the traditional idea that military personnel should do without those things not readily obtainable." See Brines, *MacArthur's Japan*, 292. The postwar military's acceptance of an ethos of consumption and leisure, even during periods of armed conflict, may have reached a culmination during American involvement in Vietnam. For one of the very few studies of this phenomenon, see Meredith H. Lair, "'Beauty, Bullets, and Ice Cream': Reimagining Daily Life in the 'Nam" (Diss. The Pennsylvania State University, 2004).

[92] The customer concluded that one "could live in Tokyo years on end and never need to shop elsewhere." See Pat Barham and Frank Cunningham, *Operation Nightmare: The Story of America's Betrayal in Korea and the United Nations* (Los Angeles, Sequoia University Press, 1953), 126.

[93] James L. Hicks, "GI's in Tokyo Lavish Gifts on Jap Girls, Shun Own Clubs," *Afro American*, magazine section, 2 September 1950, 5.

year.[94] Seven months later, the Eighth Army Exchange was operating three main department stores—in Tokyo, Yokohama, and Osaka—while supervising and supplying ninety-two branches scattered throughout Japan. Anticipated gross sales reached fifty million dollars annually.[95]

In March 1948, the *Pacific Stars and Stripes* introduced the "P.X. Reporter," a daily feature "supplying information covering the ordinary and extraordinary items of interest" available through the exchange system.[96] One of the earliest columns playfully mocked "The Bargain Hunter," a species that "originated and grew with the American public from frontier days to the present time." Certain "Americans here in Japan," the author observed, inexplicably continued "to cast furtive subconscious glances at bulletins and papers" in search of sales announcements. Yet unlike stores in the United States, where retail markups were substantial, merchandise at the PX could often be had for prices below wholesale. "In short," declared the Reporter, "prices FIRST marked on PX goods are normally less than BARGAIN SALES PRICES stateside!"[97] Yet by this point the "Bargain Hunter" was already an endangered species. As one journalist observed, the "Christmas rush" at the local PX lasted year-round.[98] The military in Japan even sold private transportation. Periodic sales of surplus jeeps to enlisted men and non-commissioned officers "put this means of transport within the reach of many who might have [had] a hard time paying for a new car" in the United States, remarked a contemporary.[99] Servicemen likewise were entitled to ship PX merchandise home at little or no cost to themselves. In September 1947 Congress and President Truman reauthorized the mailing of gift packages, duty-free up to the first fifty dollars in value, to anyone stateside. Occupation officials

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[94] "New Tokyo PX Officially Opens, Largest in World," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 22 October 1946, 4.

[95] "Army PX System Is Big Enterprise," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, Sunday Comic and Feature Section, 11 May 1947, 5.

[96] "P.X. Reporter," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 19 March 1948, 2.

[97] "P.X. Reporter," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 30 March 1948, 2.

[98] Barham and Cunningham, *Operation Nightmare*, 127.

[99] Busch, *Fallen Sun*, 23.

therefore announced plans to provide complimentary gift-wrapping and shipping services to customers at the larger exchanges.[100]

Most impressively, the occupation literally took its PX show on the road. The Eighth Army had early recognized that the arrival of dependents at isolated military installations, far removed from metropolitan shopping centers, generated a logistical challenge. In the words of one observer, "[t]here was only one solution—take the merchandise to the outposts." The army appropriated a Japanese train of ten cars (soon expanded to eleven) and converted it into a mobile department store, complete with living quarters for the staff. A workforce of twenty-four Japanese salesgirls and stock boys labored under the supervision of American personnel. These Japanese, like their counterparts in the stationary exchanges, were clearly relegated to the service sector, when visible at all. They maintained an extensive line of merchandise ranging from women's and children's clothing to floor lamps and household appliances. After restocking and equipment inspection, the train departed a Yokohama warehouse for the hinterlands, traversing the island chain's larger waterways by ferry. "The entire circuit," explained the *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, "north from Hokkaido, south through Kyushu, would be comparable to a trip in the United States starting in New York and ending in Kansas City, fanning off to small towns for one-day stands enroute [sic]."[101] The P.-X.-Train, as it was known, arrived on schedule every six to eight weeks at station platforms across Japan. Doors opened at 10 a.m. to overflowing crowds of occupationaires eager and encouraged to purchase tax-free, American goods at discount.[102]

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[100] "PX Bought Gifts To Go Duty Free," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 7 September 1947, 4; "No Duty Limit On PX Gifts To U.S.," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 9 September 1947, 1. See also Barham and Cunningham, *Operation Nightmare*, 126-127.

[101] "P-X-Train," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, Sunday Comic and Feature Section, 8 December 1946, 5.

[102] The advent of the P.X.-Train benefited black occupationaires in particular, for outside a handful of urban centers such as Yokohama, officials endeavored to quarter African-American troops as far from major Japanese cities as possible. See Takemae, *Inside GHQ*, 130.

Black servicemen were both able and inclined to take advantage of these opportunities, which resonated strongly among African Americans at home. Exact numbers for African-American dependents in Japan are unavailable, but evidence indicates a substantial number of black occupationaires sent for their wives and children. (See Figure 2.5 for one example of the photographs of reunited families that appeared with regularity in the black press from late 1946 onward.)

AMERICANS IN JAPAN

WITH THE 8TH ARMY IN TOKYO, JAPAN, Dec. 3.—Chaplain (Captain). Rufus A. Cooper of the Tokyo Quartermaster Depot is pictured with Mrs. Cooper and their daughter, Jacqueline, in front of the chapel at TQMD. They live in the Washington Heights dependents housing project. (U. S. Army Signal Corps photo by Stone Ishimaru.

WITH THE EIGHTH ARMY IN TOKYO, JAPAN, Dec. 3.—Pictured in front of the chapel at the Tokyo Quartermaster Depot, Shinagawa, are First Lieut. and Mrs. Richard W. Bowers, left, of San Francisco, and Capt. and Mrs. E. I. Tyler, of Chicago, Ill. Mrs. Bowers landed in Japan last June. Mrs. Tyler debarked last March.
Army Signal Corps photo by Stone Ishimaru.)

Fig. 2.5, *California Eagle,* 18 December 1947.

Moreover, the introduction of revised dependent-request procedures in July 1947, which gave priority to those with at least eight months service in Japan, increased the number of eligible black personnel.[103] Press images and articles on life in Japan, in addition to personal letters home, kept black communities abreast of ever-improving material circumstances for African-American occupationaires. More to the point, such dispatches celebrated the socioeconomic benefits available through the occupation. A columnist for the *Chicago Defender*, who previously had criticized the armed services for their treatment of black personnel, entitled his spring 1947 update "Well Shut My Mouth." Reporting on life in Yokohama and in Japan generally, the author affirmed that dependents found "[p]aradise when they hit Nippon." "Their dish washing, suds busting, and scrubbing days are over for a while," he declared, for servants "are a dime a dozen and excellent." "There are bulging commissaries, western style homes with electric refrigerators, . . . [and] good transportation"—that is, some of the amenities most lacking in stateside black communities.[104]

Similar accounts appeared with regularity for years, even beyond the formal end to the occupation. With the signing of a peace treaty looming, correspondent Ralph Matthews wrote in the fall of 1951, "the saddest people in the world" were black occupation families fearing the prospect of "return to America and civilian life." "To start with," he explained, "all of the basic necessities of life—food, clothing and shelter—are provided, and to this many have added . . . frills which they could ill afford at home." Indeed, local PXs offered goods at prices less than half of those stateside, the "difference com[ing] out of the American taxpayers' pockets." As for

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[103] "Dependent Priority Change Announced For Army, WDC's," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 8 July 1947, 1. The author explained that "[r]ecent arrivals in the theater with long overseas records [and] with considerable intervening time in the U.S."—in other words, (mostly white) World War Two combat veterans who reenlisted months or years after their discharges—"have largely monopolized previous priority lists." Officials hoped to clear the backlog of requests from personnel with at least eight months in Japan within ninety days.

[104] Charley Cherokee, "National Grapevine" column, *Chicago Defender*, 1 March 1947, 15.

occupationaires' children, they attended schools that, "in many respects, are an improvement over public schools in the States," with smaller classes, more individual attention, and better-prepared teachers. The occupation thereby provided African-American servicemen and their families with an unprecedented "gravy train," "making life one grand holiday."[105] Eighteen months later *Ebony* published an admiring article on the "easy, plush life" and "lordly living" enjoyed by black Americans serving in the large garrisons maintained by the United States following the peace treaty. "Luxuriously quartered in private rent-free rooms equivalent to a first class hotel or located with their families in big near-free homes in government housing areas," remarked the author, they retained "gracious Japanese servants to look after their every need." African Americans in Japan, the piece concluded, "can and do live like kings."[106]

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As the occupation entered its third year, American-Japanese interactions revealed growing friction. The Japanese people were gradually escaping absolute destitution and acquiring a greater sense of independence, while the establishment of fully functioning dependent communities provided the American enterprise with an unmistakable, and unwelcome, sense of permanence. One journalist stationed in Japan since the end of the war accused SCAP officials of possessing "a Philippine complex," of "expect[ing] to be here for 40 years." A member of the State Department similarly reported that occupationaires "now approach being regarded [by the Japanese] as perhaps benevolent oppressors with the

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[105] Ralph Matthews, "GI's Ponder Peace Moves," *Afro American*, 22 September 1951, 8. See also Milton A. Smith, "Christmas Shopping in Japan Cheaper, Easier Than in Big New York Stores," *Afro American*, 2 December 1950, 15.

[106] "Every GI a King in Japan," *Ebony*, April 1953, 36. The article perhaps exaggerated the extent of "lordly living" for the benefit of good copy, however. One reader responded that he "spent two tours of duty in Japan as a commissioned officer and . . . never got that service." Major Randolph A. Jacobs (Fort Devens, Massachusetts), *Ebony*, June 1953, 9.

benevolence wearing rather thin."[107] Rising Cold War tensions and inter-Asian conflicts also contributed to disturbances in Japan, some of which directly involved African-American troops. Even a revision of fraternization policies, designed to encourage more equitable social relations between occupier and occupied, failed to reverse these trends.

In April 1948 serious rioting broke out in the port city of Kobe, involving not Japanese but Koreans. Few in SCAP were sympathetic to the Koreans, a despised minority in Japan, who in Kobe and other cities were confined to overcrowded ghettos. In fact, many occupationaires regarded them as a thoroughly intransigent group, "the Irish of the Far East."[108] As part of a Japanese Red Scare in the spring and summer of 1948, SCAP condoned a crackdown on both left-wing labor activity and Korean popular movements. One target was an association of ethnic Korean schools. SCAP feared that the maintenance of separate educational systems would intensify ethnic antagonisms and thereby complicate Japanese compliance with its directives. But more relevant were its suspicions that the schools were potential sources of Communist propaganda. Occupation authorities ordered the Japanese government to close these institutions by force. Korean children would be placed in Japanese schools, in which they and their homeland were routinely treated with contempt.

Several thousand enraged parents and students gathered in protest outside Kobe's prefectural office. More than one hundred and fifty then entered the building, held the Japanese

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[107] Memorandum by the Chief of the Division of Northeast Asian Affairs (Bishop) to the Director of the Office of Far Eastern Affairs (Butterworth), 18 February 1949, reprinted in Foreign Relations of the United States, 1949, Volume VII, The Far East and Australasia, Part 2 (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1976), 660-661. One study argues that by 1950, military service in Japan "came as close to traditional colonial duty as the United States would get, for white AND black troops." See Selika Marianne Ducksworth, "What Hour of the Night: Black Enlisted Men's Experiences and the Desegregation of the Army during the Korean War, 1950-1951" (Diss. The Ohio State University, 1994), 112. Emphasis in the original.

[108] Sheldon, *The Honorable Conquerors*, 65.

governor captive, and forced him to retract his school closure directive.[109] According to General Eichelberger, subsequent investigation disclosed "irrefutable proof" that the disturbance was "Communist engineered."[110] The Eighth Army's intelligence chief agreed, and proclaimed that "Communists are behind these disorders, just as they are in southern Korea." "The Japanese police are not physically able to arrest them," he continued, "so we are doing it. We are using our Kobe troops—Negro troops."[111] Black soldiers promptly arrested those Koreans occupying the prefectural office. The following day, however, in response to renewed demonstrations by thirty thousand Koreans, Eichelberger issued a shoot-to-kill order. Subsequent clashes in Kobe and the neighboring city of Osaka injured hundreds, many seriously, and a sixteen-year-old Korean boy was killed. In the days that followed thousands of Koreans and Japanese sympathizers were arrested. Japanese police, in imitation of American crowd-control practices, turned fire hoses on Korean demonstrators.[112] One black occupationaire later recalled that his unit was trained in similar methods for use against potential Japanese strikers.[113] For black troops involved in quelling such disturbances, it all must have seemed a peculiar reassignment from their traditional roles stateside.[114]

Tensions continued to rise when, at the close of 1948, the first American soldier was executed for crimes against a Japanese citizen. Stratman Armistead, a thirty-two-year-old

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[109] This summary of the origins of the Kobe disturbances is based on Takemae, *Inside GHQ*, 462-463. See also Eichelberger, *Our Jungle Road to Tokyo*, 274 for Eichelberger's account of this and similar "wild Korean outbreaks."

[110] Eichelberger, *Our Jungle Road to Tokyo*, 274.

[111] "Outbreak Seen as Red Inspired," *New York Times*, 26 April 1948, 12.

[112] "Negro Troops In World Trouble Areas," Norfolk *Journal and Guide*, 1 May 1948, 8; Takemae, *Inside GHQ*, 463-464.

[113] Emmanuel Duncan interview (2003), "Korea: The Unfinished War," a project of American RadioWorks, documentary unit of American Public Media.

[114] Two months after the Kobe and Osaka riots, members of the Los Angeles chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) were water-hosed during their tenth failed attempt to integrate a local swimming pool. See Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally*, 168. The use of members of the 24th Infantry Regiment, in January 1949, to monitor Japanese elections in six Honshu prefectures no doubt compounded the irony of black occupationaires' official duties. See Scipio, *Last of the Black Regulars*, 81.

African-American from Thomasville, Alabama, had bludgeoned to death two adults and two children in an apparent spree of attempted robberies outside Yokohama. Defended at his court-martial by a veteran of the Tokyo war crimes trials, Armistead was nonetheless sentenced to death. He was hung in December 1948.[115] Days later the same punishment was ordered for a Mexican-American occupationaire. SCAP authorities may have taken satisfaction in the view that these executions addressed repeated Japanese complaints about crimes committed by American troops, while assuaging Japanese resentment against the occupation. However, African Americans on both sides of the Pacific couldn't help but notice the color of the executed men. P. L. Prattis of the *Pittsburgh Courier* wagered that no white American would ever be hung for crimes against a Japanese national. "Even a big shot like 'Emperor' MacArthur," he angrily complained, "would not want to create a newspaper issue in this country by hanging a white American for killing a yellow Japanese."[116] Black Americans felt their soldiers were paying a greater price than their white counterparts for the occupation's duration and Japanese demands for redress.

The American command, in an effort to ensure that goodwill between Americans and Japanese "was built up in every way possible," began in September 1949 to rescind most anti-fraternization edicts.[117] SCAP was, in essence, attempting to return to its initial, much-celebrated policy. MacArthur issued orders (crafted in impeccable military dialect) "to establish in general effect as far as practicable the same relationship between Occupation personnel and

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[115] "Hammer-Murderer Kills Four Japanese Near Repple Depot," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 29 October 1947, 1; "Alabama Soldier Dies For Murder Of 4 Japanese," Norfolk *Journal and Guide*, 25 December 1948, 1; "Army Hangs GI in Japan," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 25 December 1948, 1. For Japanese allegations of lawlessness on the part African-American military personnel during the summer of 1949—allegations that are impossible to verify—see National Archives II, RG 331, Box 643, Folder 250-1 #1.

[116] P. L. Prattis, "The Horizon: Perhaps 'Emperor' MacArthur Just Doesn't Want to Come Home and Be Plain 'General,'" *Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 February 1949, 14.

[117] National Archives II, RG 554, Box 12, Staff Section Report of G-1 Section, GHQ, FEC, 1 January—31 October 1950.

the indigenous population of Japan as exists between United States troops stationed in the United States and the indigenous population of the United States."[118] His choice of phrasing ignored the fact that the stationing of black soldiers at military bases in the American South had long incited anger and violence among the indigenous white population. Nonetheless, SCAP moved swiftly to reduce off-limit areas to a minimum, abolishing most restrictions on the movement and activities of occupationaires. Approved hotels, inns, theaters and other public accommodations were thereafter in bounds for American soldiers, the ban on overnight stays in Japanese homes ended, and Japanese citizens were permitted to visit service clubs and to participate in American social activities more generally.[119] SCAP hoped to improve morale and encourage wholesome social relations with the Japanese, reducing the number of illicit encounters. Yet the damage already done was largely irreversible. "Army installations had come to be considered as centers of vice," reported one witness. Most Japanese and many occupationaires believed by this time that, aside from those areas inhabited by dependents, "prostitution, gambling, drunkenness, and crime" ran "unchecked" in and around American communities.[120] Unsavory activities were indeed common enough to elicit Japanese protest. And such perceptions would continue to fuel reality, and vice-versa, for some time.

* * *

Thus far this chapter has examined the evolving structure, parameters, and operation of the peacetime occupation and the black position within it. In order to shed further light on the distinctive African-American experience, it concludes with an examination of these soldiers' particular work and leisure. Black personnel were both integral to the American occupying force

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[118] Quoted in Wildes, *Typhoon in Tokyo*, 329-330.

[119] National Archives II, RG 554, Box 12, Staff Section Report of G-1 Section, GHQ, FEC, 1 January—31 October 1950; Cohen, *Remaking Japan*, 134; Takemae, *Inside GHQ*, 80.

[120] Wildes, *Typhoon in Tokyo*, 330.

and excluded, formally and informally, from many of its centers of power. They labored and lived under the occupation's regulations and privileges, while consigned to segregated enclaves. Interactions between African-American occupationaires and Japanese civilians were therefore shaped not only by the attitudes, beliefs and material needs both sides brought to the table, but also by the immediate demands of the occupation and a segregated military. Fundamentally, these were young men of working-class backgrounds who found themselves privileged occupiers of a heretofore caricatured people, and who sought to understand their status in a new American military possession.

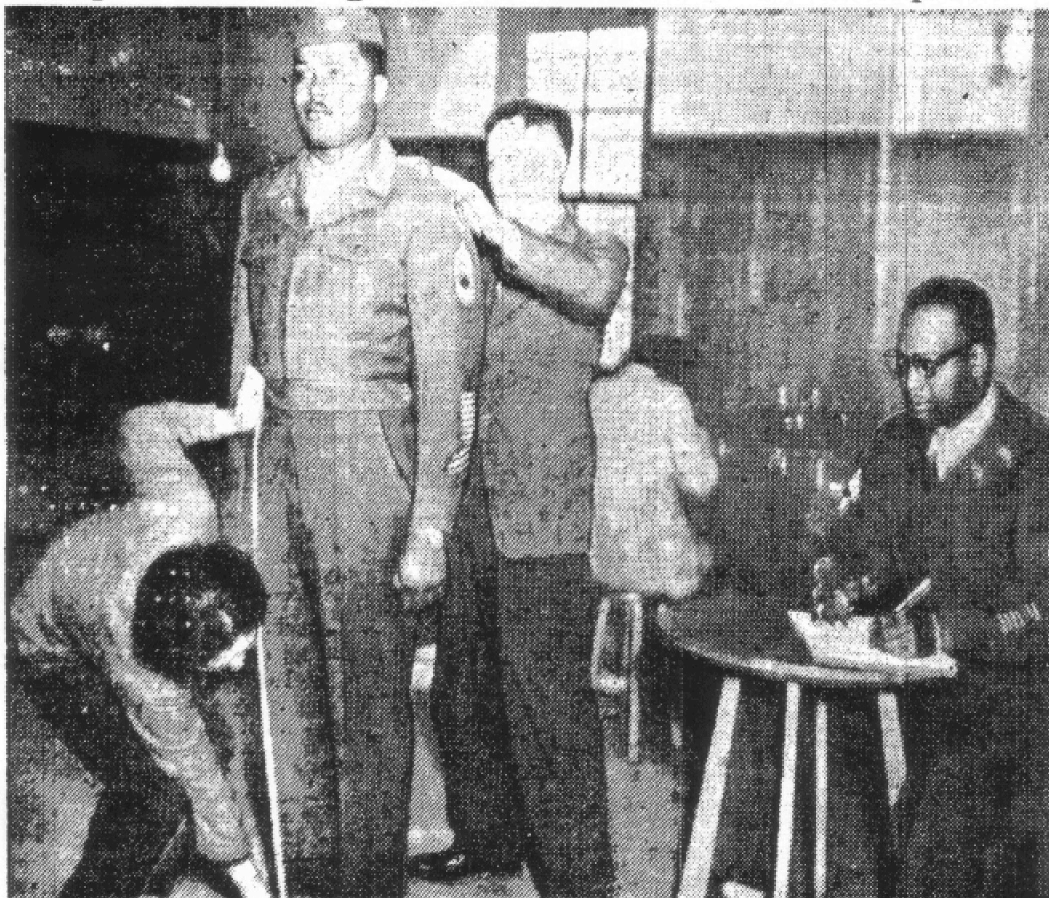
Black occupationaires were, of course, engaged first and foremost in a martial enterprise. They worked for hours each day at physically demanding tasks. African-American troops relegated to service battalions often labored on the docks of Yokohama and other Japanese ports. One soldier, who served in a rare African-American combat team, noticed that virtually every other black serviceman outside his post worked on the waterfront, moving cargo, loading and driving trucks. "I call[ed] them 'sweat battalions,'" he later explained, "'cause that's what you did, you *worked*."[121] These individuals benefited from the help of locals, however, for hundreds of Japanese stevedores sweated on the docks themselves under the supervision of black noncommissioned officers.[122] In the racial hierarchy of the occupation workplace, white personnel, particularly those in administrative positions, interacted with Japanese on the job rarely, if at all. Black occupationaires, on the other hand, because they toiled chiefly in service units, were much more likely to work alongside, or rather immediately above, large numbers of Japanese civilians. They were consequently often the first Americans the Japanese encountered

[121] Ira Neal Collection (AFC/2001/001/1189), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress. Emphasis in the original.
[122] Koshiro, *Trans-Pacific Racisms*, 52.

in a sustained manner. Power relations on the job remained unmistakable, in both the assignment of duties and the spatial arrangement of individual bodies (see Figures 2.6 and 2.7).

CALIFORNIA BOYS are serving in abundance with the Eighth Army in Gifu, Japan. Each week news of several of the boys from Los Angeles and other California communities is passed on to our readers. The duties they perform are varied, and they are a large and essential part of our occupation forces in Japan. Frequently, the first contact the Japanese have with Americans comes through association with our soldiers. Shown above is Private First Class Leo Mitchell of 1755 Twelfth Street, Oakland, a member of the Military Police Company of the 24th Infantry, observing as Japanese policemen check workers leaving the 24th's area camp at Gifu.

Fig. 2.6, *California Eagle,* 5 August 1948.



Expert Tailoring Service for Soldiers at Camp Gifu

This is the fitting room at the 24th Infantry Regiment, Camp Gifu, where every soldier's uniform is fitted free of charge. Left to right are: SFC Peter Paufry, Baton Rouge, La., and Master Sergeant James H. Armstead, New York City, non-commissioned officer in charge.

Fig. 2.7, *Afro American*, 1 January 1949.

Particularly at the more isolated military installations, such as the 24th Infantry Regiment's Camp Gifu (located 250 miles west of Tokyo), black-Japanese working relationships were virtually unmediated by the presence of white personnel.[123] There African-American infantrymen trained

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[123] One soldier wrote anonymously from the camp that, "for all practical purposes," it was "an isolated, solid colored community." See "X.Y.Z.," *Afro American*, 24 May 1947, 4. The 24th's zone of responsibility during the occupation, centered on Gifu, encompassed four prefectures with a population of six-and-a-half million Japanese. See Louis Lautier, "Lautier Says Gen. MacArthur Not to Blame for Jim Crow Policies," *Afro American*, 28 April 1951, 5.

incessantly for lack of other occupational duties, while Japanese from the surrounding population labored in camp-maintenance squads. The latter were overseen by armed, if usually genial, African-American members of the military police.[124]

The other principal duty of black occupationaires —guarding military goods—likewise entailed substantial contact with Japanese civilians, occasionally devolving into violence. Access to food and clothing rendered the large number of African-American service personnel particularly attractive to the Japanese people, especially during the occupation's bleak first years. Distributing small gifts of pilfered military supplies went far in winning praise and appreciation within local communities, yet it also reinforced the dominant position of black servicemen, since the Japanese rarely possessed anything to offer in return. Moreover, outright theft, at least by the occupied, was punished severely. Investigations by two African-American soldiers attached to a supply depot, for instance, led to the recovery of a large cache of stolen military goods and merchandise. Half a dozen Japanese members of the black market ring responsible were subsequently arrested and sentenced to lengthy prison terms.[125] Other incidents were more troubling. One service battalion in Kobe routinely clashed with thieves. A visiting African-American journalist touted the unit's prowess, claiming in the spring of 1948 that "[t]hese boys make others look like pansies." "Their sentries shoot down Japanese or anybody else swiping army goods," he added with appreciation.[126]

Of course, the occupation involved more than workday responsibilities; leisure and entertainment were as important to black servicemen in Japan as they were to American soldiers elsewhere in the world. SCAP provided its black personnel varying opportunities for diversion,

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[124] See, for example, Jessie Brown interview (2003), "Korea: The Unfinished War," a project of American RadioWorks, documentary unit of American Public Media; and Ducksworth, "What Hour of the Night," 129.

[125] "Tan Yanks Help Nip Tokyo Black Market," *California Eagle*, 2 January 1947, 4.

[126] Charley Cherokee, "National Grapevine" column, *Chicago Defender*, 13 March 1948, 17.

yet on the whole they remained inferior to those offered white troops. Regarding on-base recreation, black veterans later recalled their facilities with either resigned acceptance or great fondness, depending on location. Charles Earnest Berry of Chattanooga, Tennessee said of his camp on the outskirts of Osaka: "We didn't have the best of facilities, but we did have roofs over our heads."[127] Jessie Brown, on the other hand, who arrived at Camp Gifu in early 1949, remembered that after strenuous military exercises, "life was good" back in camp.[128] Historical descriptions of recreational services at all-black installations reflect this spectrum of amenities,[129] but crucial here is an unintended consequence of SCAP's relative neglect of African-American leisure: black men were more likely to seek entertainment and adventure among the Japanese. The arrival of dependents had increased the social isolation of many occupationaires, black and white, but as one observer noted of white military communities, "there was every diversion you could ask for. . . . You could live on one of these bases for three years, never sticking your nose outside the gates, and scarcely realize you'd ever left home. Many did exactly that."[130] Most African-American troops, on the other hand, necessarily looked off-base in search of diversion.

Black and white occupationaires still enjoyed Japanese nightlife jointly on occasion. An article in the *Afro American*, for instance, described the impressions of a black corporal returning

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[127] Charles Berry Collection (AFC/2001/001/5950), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.

[128] Jessie Brown interview (2003), "Korea: The Unfinished War," a project of American RadioWorks, documentary unit of American Public Media.

[129] One historian of the 24th Infantry Regiment writes that facilities at Camp Gifu "included the Easly Theater, which featured USO shows in addition to regular movies. The American Red Cross Club provided enlisted men with a lounge, waiting room game room, photographic laboratory, library, craft shop, canteen, a 'Little Theater,' and a patio." Scipio, *Last of the Black Regulars*, 81. For a similar description of Camp Gifu, see William T. Bowers, William M. Hammond, and George L. MacGarrigle, *Black Soldier, White Army: The 24th Infantry Regiment in Korea* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1996), 50. "Overall," the authors conclude, "life with the regiment was so pleasant that it exceeded anything many of the soldiers had ever known." In contrast, another author stresses that "[w]hite troops generally were well looked after, with their snack bars, swimming pools, barber shops, and clubs. Black troops often lacked these amenities, and pent-up tension would periodically explode into violence." See Perry, *Beneath the Eagle's Wings*, 171.

[130] Sheldon, *The Honorable Conquerors*, 150.

from more than three years of occupation duty in Tokyo-Yokohama. The twenty-one-year-old native of Mount Vernon, New York, reportedly doubted he would "ever experience the pleasure he had in exotic Japan," a place where "colored and white soldiers are working, eating, sleeping, drinking and 'balling' together, and it works out just fine."[131] Yet interracial American socializing remained extremely rare, in contrast to the occupation's chaotic early phase. White troops vigorously defended their Japanese turf, and street clashes were frequent. On Saturday nights in cities such as Tokyo and Kobe it was common for black and white soldiers, fueled by copiously available alcohol, to pummel each other before crowds of curious Japanese bystanders. General Eichelberger placed the blame for these disturbances squarely on the shoulders of black personnel, who he claimed were uniquely inclined "to get out at night in the Mohammedan heaven furnished by some millions of Japanese girls."[132] New arrivals quickly learned that the occupied territories were marked in the minds of Americans as either "white" or "black," and racial encroachment invariably provoked a violent response.[133]

In fact, most African Americans were disinclined to spend their free time among potentially hostile white personnel and the Japanese they influenced. They quickly established autonomous recreational zones, welcoming environments in which black occupationaires could enjoy themselves and their Japanese companions free from harassment. Ira T. Neal realized soon upon his arrival in the spring of 1948 that being stationed in Yokohama "was just like being here in the United States. By that I mean most of the black troops . . . were located [in the] inner-city, most of the white troops in the suburbs." And unlike downtown Yokohama, when Neal visited

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[131] Alfred A. Duckett, "Japs Teach Americans Democracy, GI Reports," *Afro American*, 22 April 1950, 12.

[132] Takemae, *Inside GHQ*, 130. See also Perry, *Beneath the Eagle's Wings*, 171.

[133] See, for example, a letter from the 1940th Engineer Aviation Utilities Company (*Chicago Defender*, 6 July 1946, 16), which recounted repeated attacks by white soldiers on black men who ventured into a Japanese "Lily-White Town"; and Jimmie Cagney Akias, *New York Amsterdam News*, 19 January 1946, 19, who wrote from the city of Nagoya that "[c]olored boys are not allowed to associate with Japanese girls in the area that is set aside for white GI's [sic]."

Tokyo he received "just the exact opposite in terms of reception—because Tokyo was mostly white troops. . . . So I was never comfortable."[134] Prejudicial behavior among the indigenous population aroused particular resentment. In June 1950 a black soldier wrote from Tokyo that "[i]n many places such as the P. X. and commissary, one can notice how the Japanese clerks in so many instances turn without question to wait on a white face first. Much of this I know to be the deep influence of the Army's southern element (which is great in number). But it galls me to the inner fibers of my very being."[135]

Within Africa-American enclaves, social relations were much more agreeable, albeit unequal. Discussing the fact that black soldiers never openly visited Japanese in their homes, one veteran later explained, "you were just [of] a different class level." Out on the town, the troops would gather together, along with Japanese girlfriends, treating the women to beer and sake and enjoying live entertainment provided by local entrepreneurs or produced by the troops themselves.[136] And these men clearly relished their unique standing in occupied Japan. Ira Neal candidly summarized the experience: "In Yokohama, [a] black man was king. Down there in the

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[134] Ira Neal Collection (AFC/2001/001/1189), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress. Neal's observations were confirmed by Red Cross worker and New York native Sylvia J. Rock, who compared Yokohama—where she encountered "the greatest concentration of colored Americans" in Japan—to Harlem. See "Japan Intrigued Jersey Girl," *Afro American*, magazine section, 13 October 1951, 7.

[135] The author further maintained that "[b]efore leaving the states, I read much about the racial situation in Europe, but nothing about it in Japan. The American public ought to know that racial discrimination here is as flagrant as it is in Georgia." This letter was cited in a widely publicized report prepared by NAACP Administrator Roy Wilkins for Secretary of the Army Frank Pace. Wilkins and the NAACP demanded "an immediate investigation of the manner in which Negro troops are treated in Tokyo and the elimination of racial discrimination so persistently reported to presently exist." National Archives II, RG 335, Box 71, Folder 291.2 Negroes (Jan '50 to [illegible]). For accounts in the African-American press of Wilkins's complaints, see "Wilkins Protests Army Bias In Tokyo, Demands Full Probe," *New York Amsterdam News*, 5 August 1950, 2, 31; "Wilkins Demands Probe of Army Bias in Japan," *Afro American*, 5 August 1950, 9; "Demand Army Investigate Discrimination In Asia," *California Eagle*, 11 August 1950, 2; and "Army Bias In Japan Hit Again," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 19 August 1950, 1, 4. The Asian-American *Pacific Citizen* editorialized that "one cannot dismiss the report lightly," but argued "if the people of occupied Japan adopt the more obvious habits of discrimination, as practiced by some of our troops, they can hardly be blamed for wanting to take on the customs of the conqueror." See "Prejudice for Export," *Pacific Citizen*, 12 August 1950, 4.

[136] Emmanuel Duncan interview (2003), "Korea: The Unfinished War," a project of American RadioWorks, documentary unit of American Public Media.

city we had all the clubs, all the women, all the whatever we wanted, we had it right there."[137] The development and gender dynamics of these Afro-Asian relationships, influenced by military policies and personal expectations, are the subject of the next chapter.

[137] Ira Neal Collection (AFC/2001/001/1189), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress. Neal further recalled that a "lot of guys reenlisted because they wanted to go back. In fact, when I reenlisted I said, 'send me back to Japan!'"

CHAPTER THREE: PAN-PAN, KEPT GIRL, BRIDE

Exactly one month after the surrender of Japan, the Baltimore *Afro American* published an informal poll on Afro-Asian intimacy. The paper's Inquiring Reporter asked five locals, "When our forces occupy Japan, do you think our soldiers should fraternize with Japanese women?" Only one respondent, Ruth Lee, answered negatively, arguing on pragmatic grounds that "[u]nder ordinary circumstances such fraternization might be wholesome for all concerned, but business and pleasure do not mix, and this occupation is definitely business. Our men are under military orders." The remaining four, evenly divided between women and men, offered variations on a theme that African-American soldiers were entitled to such relationships, which would alleviate current and future hostilities. Edgar Douglass maintained that black servicemen should seek out opportunities for fraternization "because our boys have a right to as much as any other group." "I think it would be in keeping with what any humans do when thrown together," responded Garrett Rawlings. "When races begin to intermingle we realize that there is only one human race, and men and women of one are not different [from another]." Anne Dorsey agreed: "Yes, because fraternization . . . is one of the major ways of reducing further dissension."[1] One week later, an article under the headline "Why American Soldiers Will Get Along With Japanese Girls" kept the focus of speculation on heterosexual relations with Asian women. "Fraternization is a natural outcome of close association," the author declared, "no matter whether we think of it in terms of romance or whether we think of it in terms of realism. If we

[1] "The Inquiring Reporter," *Afro American*, 15 September 1945, 4. The fifth respondent, Harriet White, replied, "I see no reason for any unfriendliness on the part of our troops. Soon, the Japanese and our boys will come to know each other." Historian Reginald Kearney has employed the same poll in order to posit a "historical affinity for the Japanese" among many black Americans, one that rendered them "natural supporters of a liberal policy of occupation." See *African American Views of the Japanese*, 123.

don't want our soldiers to fraternize with the Japanese women, we'll have to change our plans for occupation!"[2]

Such remarks hint at the initial ambivalence, even enthusiasm, with which black Americans faced the prospect of interracial sexuality in Asia, a stance analogous to their views on black participation in the occupation itself. Contemporary black discourse was likewise conspicuous for its inattention to and lack of speculation about interactions with Japanese men.[3] The focus on heterosexual relations during these first postwar months was part of a larger pattern of envisioning global Afro-Asian relations: observers deployed the trope of interracial intimacy in expressions of hope for black-Japanese cooperation within the United States as well. Ten months after the Baltimore poll, *Ebony* magazine announced—prematurely, it would turn out—the successful integration of blacks and returning Japanese Americans in Los Angeles. During the war, "Little Tokyo" had been rechristened "Bronzeville," as African-American workers and their families settled in one of the few neighborhoods available to them. Following the end of internment, many white onlookers—the Hearst Press in particular—almost gleefully predicted violence. Yet according to *Ebony*, "fearful" Japanese-American returnees encountered not hostility but a warm embrace, as "two minorities, both victims of race hate," experienced "a miracle in race relations." "It is the wedding of Little Tokyo and Bronzeville," *Ebony* declared. "It is the mating of two communities of different race, different language, different habits and custom." Sustaining the metaphor, *Ebony* confidently proclaimed that "in this blending of

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[2] Elder H. Russell, "Why American Soldiers Will Get Along With Japanese Girls," *Afro American*, 22 September 1945, 5.

[3] This rhetorical orientation was due in part to the dearth of black servicewomen in the Pacific theater, a state of affairs that continued into the postwar years. See, for example, "Halts Negro Army Enlistments, Bars WACs From Overseas Duty," *California Eagle*, 18 July 1946, 1, 11. Given the sexual politics of the time, it is unsurprising that attention remained fixed upon prospects for intimacy between African-American men and Japanese women. The question of homosexual relations between African-American and Japanese men remains to my knowledge unexplored in the scholarly literature. While potentially rewarding, the topic nonetheless lies outside the scope of this project.

common interests, Bronzeville and Little Tokyo have been betrothed. Out of a marriage of convenience has come a genuine attachment and affection between the two peoples."[4] This episode illustrates the interpretive similarities between constructions of interracial events abroad and at home and the pervasive use of intimate rhetoric to voice expectations for Afro-Asian amity.[5]

However, in less than a decade such expectations underwent a dramatic transformation. At the conclusion of World War Two, African-American thought and discourse stood in stark contrast to white racial hostility; thereafter the two evolved in opposite directions. As historians beginning with John Dower have demonstrated, white antipathy toward the Japanese, with strong cultural support, swiftly metamorphosed into a kind of benevolent paternalism.[6] Indeed, a postwar cultural offensive, one that ignored black Americans, disseminated "fables of romantic love between white U.S. servicemen and Asian women as allegories of empire," in the words of another scholar, soothing anti-Japanese prejudice.[7] During these years, the ambivalence (not to be confused with indifference) with which most African Americans viewed Asians and Asian Americans gave way to growing antagonism. Heterosexual relations remained a paramount concern, yet they fed a suspicion of Asian women's motives and a belittling of Afro-Asian relationships, which in turn hindered black servicemen's romantic investments in Japan and

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[4] "The Race War That Flopped," *Ebony*, vol. 1, no. 8 (July 1946), 3.

[5] It is interesting to note that the Japanese-American *Pacific Citizen* newspaper, in admiringly reporting on, and extensively excerpting from, the *Ebony* story, ignored its sexualized and marital imagery. See "Ebony Magazine Tells About 'The Race War That Flopped,'" *Pacific Citizen*, 13 July 1946, 5.

[6] Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 13, 301-302.

[7] Lipsitz, "'Frantic to Join . . . the Japanese Army,'" 347. See also Klein, "Family Ties and Political Obligation," 37-38. According to historian Naoko Shibusawa, "Americans in the Occupation, the media, and later film-makers employed a stereotype of Japanese women in order to offset wartime stereotypes of Japanese men. Japanese women symbolized humility over arrogance, consideration over cruelty, and loyal service over treachery. Perhaps more so than German women after the war, Japanese women served to redeem their people in the eyes of Americans, an achievement accomplished by highlighting their supposed servility, devotion, and hyper-femininity. These 'good' qualities of Japanese women, the media and image-makers claimed, explained American men's attraction toward them, members of an alien race." See "America's Geisha Ally," 30. See also Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally*, 4.

Korea. No independent variable suffices to explain this historical outcome, nor were such views uniform in development on either side of the Pacific. Nonetheless, of the numerous forces at work, four stand out as especially determinative: the lack of cultural reinforcement; the financial interests of black servicemen and their kin; ongoing military and state resistance to interracial marriage and a contemporaneous surge in militarized prostitution; and changes in America's racialized political economy. All contributed to a souring of black views of Japanese and Korean women and Asian peoples in general.

This chapter focuses on intimate relations between black soldiers and Asian women and the effects of American military policy on their development, topics that have received little scholarly attention despite the numbers involved.[8] Its three primary subjects—prostitution, dating, and marriage—overlapped to a degree. However, for the sake of clarity they are addressed thematically, in the chronological order that black soldiers—in the aggregate—encountered them. And although these activities directly involved servicemen only, as issues they engaged many times that number in a dynamic, international conversation about the black encounter with America's Asian subjects.

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In recent years scholars have produced an impressive body of historical and anthropological work on East Asian understandings of race and connotations of "blackness," with a particular emphasis on Japan.[9] The Japanese possessed a long-standing tradition of

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[8] To date, the sole scholarly work to investigate Afro-Asian sexual relations in the immediate postwar decade in a sustained manner is Lubin, *Romance and Rights*. Lubin grants that "[m]ore ethnographic work needs to be done on black soldiers' intimate relations while serving abroad" (167, note 10), but his primary concern is how "policy makers, the NAACP, and cultural workers" at home and overseas "understood the role of interracial romance and marriage as civil rights issues" (xx, 97). As we shall see, however, those outside these rarified worlds rarely if ever approached such relationships as potential fodder for civil rights activism.

[9] To my knowledge little or no scholarship has explicated the historical role, if any, of anti-black racism in Korean society, although, as Ji-Yeon Yuh notes, many postwar Korean immigrants, "[f]ueled by a desire for upward

prizing light over dark skin, which they associated with primitiveness.[10] Yet only following encounters with African enslavement among Europeans, and especially during the period of rapid industrialization (and hence "Westernization") from the mid-nineteenth century onward, did some Japanese begin to adopt a more familiar scientific racism. As a result, according to anthropologist John Russell, "the position blacks have come to occupy in the Japanese hierarchy of races not only echoes Western racial paradigms but borrows from them."[11] Thus by the early twentieth century, many Japanese, like other Asians, increasingly referred to Africans and their descendants as members of the "black slave race," notwithstanding their own vigorous protests against white supremacy.[12]

The arrival of American occupationaires, along with an influx of American popular culture, tended to bolster anti-black prejudice. White GIs were notorious, both in Japan and Europe, for spreading horror stories among civilian populations about their African-American counterparts. Japanese who had previously been warned by their government of the American

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mobility and ignorant of the American legacies of slavery, conquest, and exploitation," exhibited prejudice that "mimicked the racial hierarchy they found in American society." See Ji-Yeon Yuh, *Beyond the Shadow of Camptown: Korean Military Brides in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 160. Despite the lack of scholarship on Korea, one may assume that many if not most Koreans shared with their regional neighbors "racialized senses of belonging [that] have often been the very foundation of national identity in East Asia in the twentieth century," and which militated against intimate association with those from outside "political territories [that] have been conflated with imaginary biological entities by nationalist writers." See Dikötter, "Introduction," 2, 6.

[10] Paul R. Spickard, *Mixed Blood: Intermarriage and Ethnic Identity in Twentieth-Century America* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 43. Two venerable Japanese proverbs—*iro no shiroi wa shichinan kakusu* (a white [skin] compensates for many deficiencies), and *kome no meshi to onna wa shiroi hodo yoi* (in rice and women, the whiter the better) testify to this traditional aesthetic evaluation. The proverbs and their translations appear in Russell, "Race and Reflexivity," 5. Russell likewise notes that "in Japan as in Europe the color black has traditionally carried negative symbolic connotations (e.g. corruption, death, evil, illness, impurity)" (4).

[11] Russell, "Race and Reflexivity," 5. Michael Weiner agrees: "Given that Japan was consciously modeling its behavior in other spheres of activity on its European and North American contemporaries, it is hardly surprising that Japanese 'racial' thought drew much of its inspiration from the most advanced Western nations and developed in response to it. In the context of late nineteenth-century imperial expansion, the new Japanese national identity interacted with and was further refined through contact with the scientific 'racism' of the West." Weiner, "The Invention of Identity," 104-105. Frank Dikötter argues in a similar vein that "from the first encounter with black sailors sent by Commodore Perry in 1853 to Taisuke Fujishima's recent essay entitled 'We Cannot Marry Negroes,' blackness has become a symbol of the savage Other in Japan." See Dikötter, "Introduction," 10.

[12] Ibid., 7.

inclination for rape, pillage and murder, were now informed by white servicemen that these were the exclusive hobbies of black troops.[13] Some Japanese issued racist warnings of their own. Less than two weeks after Japan's surrender, a group identified as the National Salvation Party littered Tokyo with flyers that read, "The women of our imperial nation must not have intercourse with the black race. Those who violate this order deserve the death sentence. Therefore make absolutely sure to keep the purity of the Yamato race!"[14] In a slightly less threatening vein, one strand of contemporary folk wisdom held that impregnation by, and perhaps merely intercourse with, a black man could "stain" the womb. To wit, if a Japanese woman gave birth to a part-black child, her next—and sometimes even her third—with a Japanese father would exhibit an unwelcome tinge to the body, and thus betray her previous interracial indiscretion.[15] Finally, notions of black men's potentially dangerous sexuality persisted throughout the occupation, and continue to this day. To provide but one example, African-American soldiers have held a special fascination for Japanese purveyors of fiction, despite the fact that white GIs tend to predominate in the nation's social memory of the era. "'Blood' is . . . commonly invoked to explain the behavior of black GIs in occupation literature, especially when this behavior transgresses Japanese social norms," explains one student of the subject. "[T]he postwar Japanese discourse on blacks devotes more attention to physiological, or

[13] See, for example, Russell, "Race and Reflexivity," 20.

[14] Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women*, 146-147. As Tanaka perceptively observes, "this propaganda identified only the black race as the foreign group that would contaminate 'the purity of the Japanese blood,' not white men—perhaps a reflection of popular Japanese feelings of inferiority toward Caucasians" (147).

[15] Wagatsuma, "Mixed-Blood Children in Japan," 10. Wagatsuma is quick to add that these "independently voiced" notions were provided by "lower class Japanese with less than six years of primary education," but we may acquire some sense of how widespread they were at mid-century when we recall that it was only under the Occupation that higher education and equal educational opportunities were made available to all. See, for example, Herbert Passin, "Foreword," in Cohen, *Remaking Japan*, xvi; and Conrad Schirokauer, *A Brief History of Japanese Civilization* (Fort Worth, TX, Harcourt Brace & Company, 1993), 268-269. Moreover, the durability of such notions of racial contamination is suggested by the fact that the interviews cited by Wagatsuma appear to have occurred in the 1960s or early 1970s.

'racial,' elements (with an overwhelming emphasis on sexuality) than it does when depicting whites, who are primarily viewed as cultural beings."[16] Perhaps not surprisingly, an image of African Americans as occupying-soldiers-qua-rapists became a cliché of postwar Japanese popular culture.[17]

Given the range and extent of such admonitions and explicit threats, why were *any* Japanese women willing to associate with black occupationaires, sexually or otherwise, from the start? The simplest answer is that reality intruded upon preconception: many young women found black Americans especially kind and generous.[18] Coinciding with this discovery was the desperate need to acquire sustenance for oneself and one's family by whatever means available. An employee at an Osaka dance club explained in the spring of 1946 that she had "recently become a special dancer for Negroes and do not dance with Whites." (The job of "dancer" was one that then easily shaded into informal prostitution.) Her private description of this new life, in the stilted English of a SCAP translation, reveals both her economic motives and her understanding of racial differences among Americans: "Whites are stingy and are not profitable for us. As I come to the dance hall for money making, I am compelled to dance with black people. Negroes are far more skillful in dancing than white men and I feel quite happy."[19] Clearly, being at first "compelled" to associate with black men had not prevented this woman

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[16] Molasky, *The American Occupation of Japan and Okinawa*, 75.

[17] According to John Russell, "the black GI as rapist has become something of a staple of Japanese pornography and films about the Occupation." See "Race and Reflexivity," 23, note 5. SCAP itself endeavored to censor all Japanese media accounts of romance between servicemen and Japanese women. See Koshiro, *Trans-Pacific Racisms*, 66.

[18] Speaking of the licensed prostitution of the occupation's first months, historian John Dower explains that "[i]nitially, women designated for use by black soldiers were said to have been horrified—until they discovered that many black GIs treated them more kindly than the whites did." Yet Dower also maintains that some Japanese, "[i]n their meticulous preoccupation with race and racial hierarchy," "concluded that such relative kindness derived from the fact that black soldiers had been socialized to regard them as 'whites.'" See *Embracing Defeat*, 130.

[19] National Archives II, RG 331, Box 1225, Folder 1 [unlabeled]. This folder contains a summary of "May intercepts"—personal letters and other materials seized and translated into English—provided by the Civil Censorship Detachment, an office of SCAP's Civil Intelligence Section.

from admiring what she understood to be their particular, if stereotyped, prowess. And yet African-American generosity towards informal partners could also lead to friction with Japanese men. At the same time the Osakan dancer was extolling the virtues of black GIs, a resident of Yokohama complained privately of the roots of their "mischief": "They take away food from us and give it to their women to please them."[20] His account was undoubtedly a fabrication, given the generous rations provided occupationaires and their easy access to the ubiquitous American PXs. Much more likely is that the anonymous author was chagrined at his loss of provider status and envious of black GIs for their ability to shower small gifts upon informal sexual partners.[21] However, such resentments did not prevent a growing number of Japanese entrepreneurs from subsequently catering to the sexual desires of American men.

Two structural developments of early 1946 described in the previous chapter—SCAP's outlawing of state-sponsored (often coercive) prostitution and the promulgation of formal anti-fraternization regulations—ironically accelerated the growth of a more freewheeling sex trade.[22] For in fact neither SCAP nor the Japanese government had an interest in outlawing commercialized sex altogether. The former was concerned primarily with controlling rates of venereal disease among occupationaires (through compulsory physical examination and treatment of suspected prostitutes) and maintaining the outward appearance of respectability,

[20] National Archives II, RG 331, Box 1225, Folder 1 [unlabeled].

[21] Nor were black soldiers alone in such exchanges; white servicemen enthusiastically participated as well. As one story in the *Pacific Stars and Stripes* boasted, "the boys here say you can get an overnight wife for a chocolate bar." See Earnest Hoberecht, "While Various Geisha Deals Prevail, No 'Wife-Buying' Found in Japan," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, Sunday Comic and Feature Section, 13 January 1946, 8. Historian John Dower similarly notes that "[a]mong ordinary people, no group tapped the material treasures of the conquerors as blatantly" as women consorting with the occupationaires. "They were the recipients of goods from the U.S. military exchange posts (the famous PXs) that in those impoverished days truly seemed like treasure houses from a magic land." *Embracing Defeat*, 136.

[22] Such a result is doubly ironic given the fact that General MacArthur publicly justified the ban on fraternization as a measure to prevent sexual encounters between occupationaires and "Japanese women of immoral character" and thus to lower the rates of venereal disease among occupation personnel. See, for example, Koshiro, *Trans-Pacific Racisms*, 60.

particularly after the arrival of the first wave of dependents that spring.[23] Japanese officials likewise sought to curb the spread of venereal disease, but placed greater emphasis on protecting daughters of the upper and middle classes from unwanted sexual advances and sequestering prostitution away from polite society.[24] They also recognized the potentially vital contributions to postwar reconstruction. As one scholar has observed, "It is no exaggeration to say that it was not the textile, chemical or other industries that were rehabilitating the immediate postwar Japanese economy but the sex industry."[25] Indeed, by the end of the occupation prostitutes' earnings brought in the equivalent of $200,000,000 in foreign exchange annually, an enormous boost to the struggling economy.[26] Thus in December 1946 the Japanese Home Ministry

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[23] In June 1948 SCAP's Legal Section summarized its objections to outlawing all forms of prostitution: "SCAP will be severely criticized as attempting to impose American moral standards on a nation whose sexual mores are based on essentially different Oriental traditions. . . . [Since] involuntary prostitution [i.e., through state-sponsored brothels] has been outlawed, the occupation is concerned only with the health aspect of the problem." Two years later, the Government Section's Chief of Staff complained, "The question of prostitution in Japan has been agitated from the very beginning of the Occupation, and proposals for its suppression emanating from one Occupation source or another have become perennial. This Section has consistently held the view that the eradication of this practice is not a proper matter for Occupation concern but is a matter of social evolution within the Japanese community." Not only would such a ban "contravene the established policies of the Supreme Commander," but "[i]ssuance of a directive of such negative value and doubtful enforceability . . . would tend to undermine [MacArthur's] authority and prestige." Finally, Cold War imperatives played a crucial role in the Chief of Staff's reasoning: "[F]rom the standpoint of public relations abroad, the issuance of such a directive could not fail to invite the ridicule of the not too friendly foreign press which would in all probability characterize it as an effort on the part of the Occupation to shift the blame to the Japanese authorities for the Occupation's own failure in military discipline and moral guidance." All quotes from National Archives II, RG 331, Box 2191, Folder Solicitation of Troops for the Purpose of Prostitution.

[24] Sheldon Garon, *Molding Japanese Minds: The State in Everyday Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 198.

[25] Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women*, 155.

[26] "Is Vice Menacing Our GIs?," *Jet*, 8 May 1952, 16. The author noted this sum amounted to one half the annual cost of the war in Korea. In 1952 the Japanese Welfare Ministry counted 70,000 prostitutes primarily catering to American military personnel and calculated the industry generated $200 million annually. See Sheldon, *The Honorable Conquerors*, 117. For the same figure of $200 million, as well as a claim that it was second only to that realized from the sale of supplies for the Korean War, see Lloyd B. Graham, "Those G.I.'s in Japan," *The Christian Century*, 17 March 1954, 331. As for the economic motives of the women themselves, the evidence is ambiguous. According to one scholar, a survey of 5,225 "streetwalkers" arrested in the spring of 1946 revealed that "only 47 percent claimed to have been motivated by hardships in their lives, while fully 24 percent replied that they had taken up prostitution out of 'curiosity.'" See Garon, *Molding Japanese Minds*, 197. On the other hand, the Tokyo Metropolitan Police headquarters found in 1948 that 77.5 percent of prostitutes listed poverty as their primary motive, while the figure for a survey conducted by the Yokohama City Police in 1950 stood at 43 percent. See Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women*, 155. Nevertheless it seems reasonable to assume that economic need was a significant motive for the vast majority of women. For a different take on this question, see Scott R. Rohrer, "From

announced that because women had an inherent *right* to become prostitutes, the government would establish "red-line" districts, named for the ink color used to delineate them on police maps, where redesignated "entertainers" were to be employed in privately-owned "special bars and restaurants." This policy, with SCAP's tacit approval, remained in force for more than a decade, while estimates of the number of women so employed range from forty-five to seventy thousand per year.[27]

As state-sponsored brothels shut their doors and state-licensed ones opened theirs, Japanese and American officials expressed alarm at the appearance of tens of thousands of overt sex workers—"pan-pan" in GI parlance—who refused to be confined within the red-line zones. Some openly solicited clients near American military bases and city centers popular with occupationaires. Since such "voluntary prostitution" was not, technically speaking, illegal, the women were routinely harassed by Japanese police and American MPs (military police) but seldom arrested.[28] Off-limits and anti-fraternization directives, in effect until late 1949, were of little consequence, except, of course, to encourage prostitution. In the words of one

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Demons to Dependents: American-Japanese Social Relations During the Occupation, 1945-1952" (Diss. Northwestern University, 2006). Rohrer contends that, besides economics, "[c]uriosity or a desire to flaunt convention served as additional motives for entry into the world's oldest profession, albeit ones that Japanese and American would-be reformers found difficult to believe. According to one survey, those who had willingly lost their virginity and become prostitutes for other than economic reasons constituted the majority, and police transcripts following arrests regularly included candid admissions that some prostitutes took considerable sexual pleasure from their work" (231).

[27] A considerable number of these women were of colonial origin, Koreans and Formosans in particular, and had lost their Japanese nationality after the war. See Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 132; and Garon, *Molding Japanese Minds*, 198.

[28] Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women*, 162. One account, undoubtedly exaggerated, claims there existed "a half-mile strip of real estate stretching west from the Imperial Palace moat abutting the GHQ [SCAP General Headquarters] building to the Nomura Hotel, which quickly became known as Hooker Alley. . . . The moat around the Imperial Palace was so clogged with used condoms it had to be cleaned out once week with a big wire scoop." Robert Whiting, *Tokyo Underworld: The Fast Times and Hard Life of an American Gangster in Japan* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1999), 14. However, a less sensationalistic account, written in 1947 by a civilian occupation employee, corroborates portions of this description: The GI who "went to Yurakucho Station, directly behind the Dai-Ichi Building—GHQ Headquarters—[could take] his pick of all that was parading there." Donald Richie, *The Donald Richie Reader: 50 Years of Writing on Japan*, compiled and edited by Arturo Silva (Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 2001), 31.

occupationaire, "GIs seeking sex just went deeper into the vast off-limits areas, which MPs never visited at all. As ordinary socializing became too dangerous and difficult, soldiers were driven from innocent dating and companionship . . . into the arms of streetwalkers and from movies, inns, and ordinary homes into dangerous places where the [physical] risks . . . were far greater."[29] And these casual, commercialized sexual encounters inevitably produced children, despite the availability of prophylactics to GIs[30] and the Japanese legalization of abortion in 1948.[31] The militarized sex industry in Japan would also outlast the rescinding of anti-fraternization regulations and achieve remarkable proportions by the early 1950s. The reason may be summed-up in a word: Korea.

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Despite its early prevalence, Japanese prostitution did not become an important subject of black public discourse until after the outbreak of the Korean War, and then only belatedly. Cohabitation with, and real or prospective marriage to, Japanese women captured the bulk of such attention, and continued to do so. African-American scrutiny of militarized prostitution in fact began on the Korean peninsula, and only later migrated across the Sea of Japan. Not surprisingly, given the black press's overarching role as an advocate for African-American interests, in neither case did such accounts rebuke black servicemen for participating in these all-

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[29] Cohen, *Remaking Japan*, 129.

[30] Again, the military's principal concern was the prevention of disease, not pregnancy. As one Armed Forces Information and Education Division publication explained, "Prostitution is widespread in Japan. Japanese prostitutes, as those in all parts of the world, are usually infected with venereal diseases. . . . The best rule in the Orient is a rule that makes sense anywhere: Keep away from prostitutes and pickups. That is the best way to avoid a venereal disease. The next best way is to use prophylaxis properly and promptly." See *A Pocket Guide to Japan* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. government Printing Office, 1950), 53.

[31] Japan legalized abortion through the 1948 Eugenic Protection Law, with SCAP's approval (many American officials argued the measure would help rebuild the Japanese economy by controlling overpopulation). Substantial revisions to the law in 1949 and 1952 greatly increased its availability: the former made Japan the first nation to allow abortion for socioeconomic reasons; the latter did away with the need for women to obtain permission from a special review committee. Until the mid-1950s, however, access to contraception and adequate information regarding its use remained rare. See Norgren, *Abortion before Birth Control*, 3, 43-44, 83.

American activities. They instead evinced a new understanding of commercialized sexuality as both acceptable and necessary for the effective execution of American military endeavors, at least those in Asia.

Within weeks of their arrival, African-American journalists and soldiers were routinely describing Korean women as both sexually unavailable *and* unattractive. Their alleged unavailability may seem odd, given that the arrival of the American forces five years previously had precipitated the establishment of numerous camptowns catering to the sexual desires of occupation forces.[32] And of course such sexualized power relations have remained a fundamental element of the American-Korean relationship through the present. Historian Bruce Cumings has written of "the continuous subordination of one female generation after another to the sexual servicing of American males, to the requirements of a trade in female flesh that simply cannot be exaggerated. It's the most common form of Korean-American interaction."[33] Yet the temporary removal of American forces in 1948-49 and the social chaos of war had momentarily disrupted this pattern. One month into the conflict, the *Pittsburgh Courier* reported that "fighting in Korea will be no fun. Word comes back that the whisky is poison and the women taboo as far as men from the outside world are concerned."[34] As the war continued, black

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[32] According to historian Ji-Yeon Yuh, women who serviced American soldiers in 1945-46 "were dubbed *yang galbo* (Western whore). As militarized prostitution, American style, expanded throughout Korea, other terms were added: *yang gongju* (Western princess) and *yang saeksi* (Western bride). The use of 'princess' and 'bride' to describe these women can be seen as a rhetorical gesture that acknowledges the material comfort and glamour symbolized by the United States while ridiculing the women's efforts to achieve it by selling their bodies to American soldiers." At the same time, these women have been described in Korean society "as a necessary evil since their existence safeguards the chastity of the 'virtuous' women." See *Beyond the Shadow of Camptown*, 19-21. Black men were part of this first contingent of American soldiers, but as we have seen, they were ignored by the black press in favor of those serving in Japan.

[33] Bruce Cumings, "Silent But Deadly: Sexual Subordination in the U.S.-Korean Relationship," in Saundra Pollock Sturdevant and Brenda Stoltzfus, eds., *Let the Good Times Roll: Prostitution and the U.S. Military in Asia* (New York: The New Press, 1992), 169. In the first forty years of America's presence on the peninsula, more than one million Korean women reportedly worked in the military sex industry. See *The Women Outside: Korean Women and the U.S. Military*, dirs. J.T. Takagi and Hye Jung Park, Third World Newsreel, c 1995.

[34] "Yell for Action: Morale of Race GIs High," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 29 July 1950, 4.

soldiers discovered that many young women fled from "liberated" cities, where one might find "many men and old women—but few girls." Besides, urban guerilla warfare made city streets dangerous at night, and thus rendered "the mechanics of girl hunting a bit difficult." On-limits recreational facilities likewise appeared at first glance especially tame.[35]

Some black observers went so far as to blame the lack of sexual access to local women for the military's poor initial showing in the conflict. Journalist Ralph Matthews declared that "[t]hose who know Korea will . . . tell all and sundry that there was less fraternization between Korean girls and GIs than in any country where our forces are spread around the globe. They will dare you to turn up any brown babies . . . and they will swear that prostitution is almost nil in Korea. They will be absolutely right, and therein lies the Korean-American sex problem." Mathews portrayed both a lack of sexual outlets and "overindulgence" as demoralizing to military personnel. He and his informants debated "whether the girls themselves were responsible or whether they were afraid of reprisals which came quick and sure from Korean men," while acknowledging that the widespread use of racial epithets ("gook" in particular) had produced "bitter resentment and hatred . . . for the American soldiers," which led "Korean youth [to] set up rigid vigils over their women." The opportunity to contrast the lot of combat personnel with that of occupationaires proved irresistible. Although "Japan, too, has a strict code of behavior, GIs still had more latitude, due to the highly developed westernization of Nippon. A fast-moving, modern city, Tokyo is well supplied with brothels, cabarets and even theatres where a lonesome soldier can enjoy female companionship."[36]

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[35] Milton A. Smith, "Korean Belles 'No Trouble,' Says Smith," *Afro American*, 16 December 1950, 13; Milton A. Smith, "GIs Spurn Korean Gals, Wait For Jap Lassies," *Chicago Defender*, 16 December 1950, 46.

[36] Ralph Matthews, "How Sex Demoralized Our Army in Korea," *Afro American*, 5 August 1950, 7.

Open and organized prostitution quickly reestablished itself in Korea, although the allure of Korean women remained contested. By early September 1950 a group of black soldiers detailed the establishment of a cryptically-named "Special Service Center" for foreign military personnel. Curious, the men paid a visit, and inside "found the most attractive girls, called 'comforters' here." Yet black GIs, like their white counterparts, more often remarked upon the alleged unattractiveness of Korea and its people. Many objected to the peninsula's widespread poverty, lack of sanitation, and unfamiliar odors. In the words of a black serviceman from Newark, "There's nothing these dames can do for me. I don't like the way they look and I hate the way they smell. They don't wash often enough for me[,] and I would not wash either if I had only cold water, no towel and an unheated outside privy."[37] Fear of venereal disease likewise deterred some. A reporter for the *Chicago Defender* noted that "[b]ecause of the new germ killing anti-biotics and other safeguards a few GIs are straying," but assured his readers that "no permanent relationships are built up." The very ubiquity of sex workers in wartime Korea—combined with a dearth of Korean "girlfriends"—disturbed some black soldiers. One anonymous serviceman from Washington, D.C. explained, "it isn't the VD that bothers me, it's the fact that these girls are street walkers." He conceded that by no means all Korean women were prostitutes, "but the only ones I meet are."[38] For the next three years this fact defined most Afro-Asian heterosexual encounters in Korea.

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[37] Milton A. Smith, "GIs Spurn Korean Gals, Wait For Jap Lassies," *Chicago Defender*, 16 December 1950, 46. As another journalist explained, "Along with the homeliness go some other factors that have the effect of a cold shower on the average doughboy. They are: dirtiness of apparel and dirtiness of the exposed portions of the body. Then there are the stinking straw-thatched, flea-ridden hovels from whence the women come." See L. Alex Wilson, "Note to Wives, Sweethearts," "Front Line Grapevine" column, *Chicago Defender*, 9 September 1950, 6. For more on the alienating effects among African-American personnel of such poverty and human misery in Korea, see Chapter Five.

[38] Smith, "GIs Spurn Korean Gals," 46. One author claims that "because of the high incidence of VD, Korea was defined as the most venereal war in American history." See Callum A. MacDonald, *Korea: The War Before Vietnam* (New York: The Free Press, 1986), 224.

American personnel soon learned they might, if lucky, earn a vacation to Japan. "Without a sexualized 'rest and recreation' (R&R) period," historian Cynthia Enloe has asked, "would the U.S. military command be able to send young men off" on long tours of duty?[39] Those in charge of directing the Korean campaign evidently believed they could not. Combat troops became entitled, theoretically at least, to one five-day leave in Japan for every six weeks of frontline service.[40] Particularly as the war settled into a stalemate, this form of "R&R" acquired an array of alternative, and sexually explicit, definitions: "Rock and Ruin"; "Rape and Run"; "Rape and Restitution"; and so on.[41] ("For drawing room talk," advised the compilers of an unofficial *Dictionary of Rice Paddy Lingo*, "use 'seeing the shrines or playing golf.'")[42] Perhaps most popular among enlisted men was the term "I&I"—"Intercourse and Intoxication." According to one observer, "Perhaps nowhere in the world in the early Fifties were those two states easier to achieve for a man of limited means as they were in Japan."[43] By March 1951, a "concerned" General Headquarters, Far East Command assembled a voluminous, "secret"

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[39] Cynthia Enloe, "It Takes Two," in Saundra Pollock Sturdevant and Brenda Stoltzfus, eds., *Let the Good Times Roll: Prostitution and the U.S. Military in Asia* (New York: The New Press, 1992), 23.

[40] Actual numbers, at first relatively limited, steadily increased. According to an FEC report, "The Japan Rest and Recuperation Program, originally providing for the return of 200 troops per day from Korea, was increased to 300 daily on 10 February 1951. During the month of February, 6,895 Army personnel alone were given five days' rest and recuperation here in Japan. . . . The interest by commanders of all echelons in the Rest and Recuperation Program has resulted in continued improvement of all aspects of its operation." National Archives II, RG 554, Box 12, Staff Section Report of G-1 Section, GHQ, FEC, for 1-28 February 1951.

[41] Center for the Study of the Korean War (Independence, MO), Box A.1025-A.1130, Folder 1049 ("Rock and Ruin"); David H. Hackworth, with Julie Sherman, *About Face* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 170 ("Rape and Run"); E. J. Kahn, Jr., *The Peculiar War: Impressions of a Reporter in Korea* (New York: Random House, 1952), 12 ("Rape and Restitution"). Such alternative definitions were not limited to Americans, however. Canadian soldiers referred to their own leave policy as "rape and rampage," while one later characterized the prevailing attitude among those on R&R as "Why fight? … Drink and fuck instead." See Brent Byron Watson, *Far Eastern Tour: The Canadian Infantry in Korea, 1950-1953* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 135.

[42] The dictionary dates from 1951. Center for the Study of the Korean War (Independence, MO), Box A.1025-A.1130, Folder 1049.

[43] Sheldon, *The Honorable Conquerors*, 239. See also T. R. Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War: A Study in Unpreparedness* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1963), 503.

compendium of "[c]onduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline of R&R personnel in Japan," but otherwise took no direct action.[44]

As hundreds of thousands of Americans passed through Japan, to and from the war or on short-term leave, African-American combat soldiers, occupationaires and journalists took note of dramatic changes to the expanding commercial sex industry.[45] Speaking euphemistically in terms of "commodity prices," reporter Ralph Matthews revealed that "the biggest gripe that soldiers in Japan have about inflation concerns the high cost of love. The biggest complainers are old Far East men who have been stationed here since the occupation." "I've been around here since 1947," one black serviceman groused, "and things were good until all these young squirts, who have never been away from home before, started . . . shelling out yen by the fistful."[46] Readers of the *Afro American* encountered reports of "streetwalkers in abundance trying to pick up a lonesome soldier" in Tokyo, a development "so acute since the outbreak of the Korean War that no girl from a respectable Japanese family would be caught on the Ginza

[44] In recognition of the benefits to morale of leave in Japan, however unruly, General Headquarters never contemplated canceling the R&R program. Rather it decreed merely that "personnel apprehended for conduct prejudicial to good order and discipline will have [the] remainder of R&R leave canceled and will be returned to [their] organization by [the] most expeditious means." National Archives II, RG 554, Box 747, Folder 250-1 #1 Morals and Conduct FEC Secret 1951.

[45] Approximately 1.8 million Americans served in the Korean theater during the war, according to "U.S. Military Korean War Statistics," http://koreanwarmemorial.sd.gov/U.S.Forces/MIA_KIA.htm (accessed 10 June 2007). The conflict dramatically increased the number of military personnel stationed in both Korea and Japan. As of 1 July 1950 there were 294 enlisted men in Korea and 83,411 in Japan. One year later these figures had risen to 215,293 and 100,497, respectively. "Statistical Data on Strength and Casualties for Korean War and Vietnam," US Army Center of Military History, Historical Manuscripts Collection, file number 2-3.7 AD.M.

[46] Matthews explained that he first became aware of this development when he "came upon a soldier exchanging heated words with a comely Nipponese lass in a darkened side street just off Ginza. . . . 'Can you image that dame,' snapped the soldier, . . . 'asking me for three thousand yen (approximately $10)? Why, before the Korean War broke out, you could get the best of them for two bucks.'" Ralph Matthews, "GIs Sing 'Inflation Blues': Spiraling Cost of Love is Joe's Biggest Gripe," *Afro American*, 8 September 1951, 14. As African-American servicewomen began trickling into the Far East, they too noted the abundance of prostitution, while simultaneously calling into question the background of any Japanese woman who associated with military personnel. As one WAC explained, "The truth is we are more ashamed and disgusted than anything else because we know that the girls they pick are mostly professional prostitutes and even the ones that aren't are from the poorest families. [Enlisted men] get away with murder, because, to a girl who never had but one kimono in her life, even a $2 dress is a windfall." See Ralph Matthews, "Wacs and Pom Poms Wage War in Yokohama: GIs Counter-Attack in Battle of Sexes," *Afro American*, 22 September 1951, 8.

[the city's main shopping district] after dark."[47] The streets surrounding the Yokohama Service Club were portrayed as "the favorite cruising beaches for the local Pom Poms [a variation on pan-pan]," the entire area "infested with Geisha houses, speakeasies and beer halls."[48] One black GI provided an apt summary of the ethos of many enlisted men, regardless of race: "A guy on short-term leave hasn't got a lot of time to waste jockeying for position. With the native girls you . . . just keep looking until you find something that looks good, make a fast play and you are all set. No calling up begging for dates, no long courtships and promising to marry and all that sort of thing."[49] African Americans stateside easily could have envisioned Japan as one large brothel.

The formal end to the occupation only reinforced these developments. The San Francisco Peace Treaty and the Japan-United States Security Treaty, both signed in September 1951, took effect the following April. Although the peace treaty officially brought the occupation to a close, the security agreement granted the United States control over Okinawa, the right to maintain "security forces" throughout the home islands (two years later there were at least 34 army camps, 38 air bases, two naval bases and a number of smaller installations), and the right to help quell internal disturbances at the Japanese government's request, all while prohibiting Japan from providing military facilities to any other country without the United States' prior consent. And for the next fifteen months the ongoing war in Korea ensured that countless soldiers would be granted leave in Japan or stationed there awaiting orders. At the same time, the peace treaty transferred to the American government one half the cost of maintaining its armed forces

[47] Ralph Matthews, "Fifth Avenue of Tokyo: The Ginza Most Fabulous Shopping Area In World," *Afro American*, 12 January 1952, 9.
[48] Ralph Matthews, "Matthews Writes of GIs in Japan: Soldiers from 18 States Are Found in Yokohama," *Afro American*, 22 September 1951, 8.
[49] Matthews, "Wacs and Pom Poms Wage War in Yokohama," 8.

(previously the Japanese had borne virtually the entire expense of the occupation). As free public transportation and sightseeing ended and the largest recreational facilities shut down due to belt-tightening by the American military, Japanese entrepreneurs picked up the slack.[50]

American critics thereafter shifted their focus to the "rough conditions" of the "enormous red-light districts . . . organized, staffed and run by the Japanese."[51] One journalist decried the fact that servicemen were "increasingly turning to recreation offered by profit-seeking Japanese who operate beer halls, bars, red-light resorts and strip-tease shows."[52] By the conclusion of the Korean War the small community of Chitose served as a prominent symbol of the perceived vice pandemic. One contemporary account described its newly assigned commander as "shocked to find 564 houses of prostitution, 66 beer halls, and 'hundreds of lesser sucker traps and deadfalls.'" These disreputable establishments operated so flagrantly that to the Japanese Chitose was known as "the world's most evil town," to Americans as "the sex circus."[53] African-American publications similarly accused the Japanese, and Japanese women in particular, of taking moral and economic advantage of servicemen. Less than a month after the peace treaty went into effect, for example, *Jet* magazine reported on an global "prostitution menace" and Japan's uniquely "monstrous" variant: "An international army of prostitutes has leeched itself onto U.S. GIs. . . . They are the legion of female sex merchants, who, as camp followers, manage to turn up in vast numbers wherever large groups of GIs with American dollars in their pockets are stationed."[54]

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[50] Molasky, *The American Occupation of Japan and Okinawa*, 6; Graham, "Those G.I.'s in Japan," 330.
[51] James A. Michener, "The Facts About the GI Babies," *Reader's Digest*, March 1954, 9.
[52] Graham, "Those G.I.'s in Japan," 331.
[53] Wildes, *Typhoon in Tokyo*, 330.
[54] "Is Vice Menacing Our GIs?," *Jet*, 8 May 1952, 14-16.

Two structural constraints inhibited the formation of long-term, romantic partnerships: America's racist immigration laws barring entry and naturalization for most Asian peoples; and the military's active discouragement of serious relationships with, let alone marriage to, Asian women. For the first two years of the occupation, SCAP routinely called occupationaires' attention to the fact that American law prohibited the immigration of "persons not having a preponderance of White, African, or Chinese blood."[55] Servicemen, constantly reminded of the practical—and personal—effects of the 1921 and 1924 Immigration (or "Oriental Exclusion") Acts, could not have remained unaffected by the knowledge. Their seemingly certain inability to bring foreign partners home with them likely convinced a good number to approach their relations with Asian women casually and with little thought toward eventual marriage. Yet in late summer 1947 a glimmer of hope appeared. On June 18th President Truman signed an amendment to the 1945 Soldier Brides Act that enabled racially ineligible alien wives to immigrate. There was, however, a catch: couples had only 30 days, from July 23rd to August 21st, in which to navigate the SCAP bureaucracy and then to marry, while brides were required to arrive in the United States by year's end. In total 823 weddings were performed.[56] Once this brief window closed it would not be reopened until August 1950, after the Korean War had separated many couples.[57]

[55] Exactly one month after Japan's surrender, SCAP issued Circular No. 70, GHQ AFPAC, regarding marriage in the occupied territories and the implications of American immigration law. In December 1945 the Adjutant General's Section recommended that "the attention of all personnel contemplating marriage with aliens be invited to Par 3, AFPAC Cir 70, especially to that part concerning the exclusion from immigration to the U.S." of non-Chinese Asians. National Archives II, RG 331, Box 433, Folder 250-1 #2. See also Koshiro, *Trans-Pacific Racisms*, 156-157.

[56] Koshiro, *Trans-Pacific Racisms*, 157; Rohrer, "From Demons to Dependents," 125. According to Mike Masaoka, national legislative director of the Japanese-American Citizens League, the House Judiciary Committee inserted the 30-day provision precisely "in order not to promote marriages" between servicemen and Japanese citizens. See "Senate Passes Amendment To Soldier Brides Act," *Pacific Citizen*, 19 July 1947, 1.

[57] A second window to immigration, Public Law 717 (the "Soldier Brides Act"), was enacted in August 1950. It expired the following February, and after a month-long interval, was replaced with legislation that remained in force until 19 March 1952. These three moments of opportunity totaled merely 19 months of the entire six-and-one-half-

Legal barriers to Asian immigration provided military authorities one rationale for opposing stable relationships. The Department of the Army, having granted theater commanders supreme authority to approve marriage requests, certainly did not intend to retain servicemen married to foreigners in their posts. As Assistant Secretary of War Howard C. Peterson explained in January 1947, overseas marriages were "authorized to take place only a reasonable period of time prior to the anticipated departure of the American citizen from the occupied zone. This qualification and restriction was found necessary to keep from placing in jeopardy the judgment and loyalty of persons representing this Government in occupied territory and executing the responsibilities of this Government in the occupation program."[58] Such a policy had obvious ramifications for soldiers in Japan. A spokesman for SCAP's Legislative and Liaison Division announced in October 1949 that, because "[e]xperience in occupied countries has proven that it is not feasible to retain service personnel in the theater after marriage to a foreign national," "were approval granted to such a marriage, it is readily apparent that the family would immediately be separated by reason of the soldier's transfer to another station outside the Far East Command." The author added self-righteously that SCAP authorities "have

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year occupation. Only after the Immigration and Nationality (McCarran-Walter) Act went into effect in December 1952 were Asian military brides placed on the same legal footing as their European counterparts. See Rohrer, "From Demons to Dependents," 125, 129; "President Signs Bill to Extend GI Brides Act," *Pacific Citizen*, 31 March 1951, 3; Janet Wentworth Smith and William L. Worden, "They're Bringing Home Japanese Wives," 19 January 1952, 81; Graham, "Those G.I.'s in Japan," 330; Peter Kalischer, "Madam Butterfly's Children," *Collier's*, 20 September 1952, 17; and James A. Michener, "The Facts About the GI Babies," *Reader's Digest*, March 1954, 7. The only remaining option for enlisted personnel involved acquiring passage of a private law, specific congressional legislation for the benefit of a foreign individual or group of related foreigners. According to one historian, "Between 1947 and 1950 the U.S. Congress passed approximately two hundred private laws for the benefit of Japanese war brides and their children." Although African-American Chicago Representative William L. Dawson was a sponsor of such legislation, the exact number of successful black petitioners for private laws during these years is unknown. See Rohrer, "From Demons to Dependents," 127. The reluctance of SCAP authorities to approve a marriage even after securing a congressional promise of private legislation is evident in a November 1949 letter from the Adjutant General, Far East Command, to Representative Jacob K. Javits: "The policy has been to discourage such marriages. . . . It would therefore be necessary that any legislation waiving current immigration regulations . . . be passed by Congress prior to the granting of military permission for [a] marriage." National Archives II, RG 554, Box 115, Folder 291.1 1949.

[58] Peterson's remarks are from a letter to Senator Joseph H. Ball. National Archives II, RG 107, Box 20, Folder 291.1.

consistently held that to grant permission to marry when the wife cannot enter the United States would be to flaunt the sanctity of the marriage ceremony." As a result, General MacArthur continued to refuse all marriage applications in the absence of "very unusual circumstances," a category that did not include the presence of a child.[59]

Military commanders were also motivated by concerns for the maintenance of SCAP's perceived legitimacy and by notions of inherent ethno-racial traits. Assistant Secretary Peterson claimed that any study of the marriage "problem" in Japan "must necessarily include a consideration of religion, immigration laws, prestige of our occupation forces, and popular Japanese reaction to various courses of action." A "liberalization of regulations relative to marriages," he continued, "would not necessarily result in the enhancement of prestige of Japanese women. Japanese women associating in marital relations would inevitably be ostracized by many of their people. It is also believed that such marriages, if contracted, would have a high rate of divorce, separation, and desertion, resulting also in the lowering of prestige of Japanese women and marriage."[60] More creative in its reasoning was another Legislative and Liaison Division pronouncement. "The Japanese are a very gregarious people who need and require companionship in order to be happy," explained a letter to Senator Claude Pepper. Its

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[59] "The fact that a baby may be involved," the spokesman disclosed, "is considered not to be sufficiently unusual to warrant approval." See "Letter from the Legislative and Liaison Division to Senator John C. Stennis," National Archives II, RG 407, Box 363, Folder 291.1 1-1-49 – 31 Dec 50. Ray Falk, a correspondent for the North American Newspaper Alliance, reported that one SCAP memorandum declared, "Policy: Military—No one will be reenlisted if married to a Japanese national." This barrier to reenlistment would have appeared particularly threatening to young black men materially invested in continued military service. Falk likewise claimed that "[b]rigadier generals, who give final approval to all marriages in their units [before such requests are forwarded to SCAP headquarters], consider a Japanese-American wedding a disgrace to their record." "How many more were wedded in a Japanese sake ceremony," he added "without notifying the American authorities . . . is unknown." See "Most of Summer Marriages Between GIs, Japan Girls Not Faring Well, Says Writer," *Pacific Citizen*, 1 November 1947, 2.

[60] National Archives II, RG 107, Box 20, Folder 291.1. One scholar contends the Japanese themselves contributed to American thought and action on the matter. Opposition to intermarriage, in this argument, provided "yet another occasion for diplomatic collaboration in tolerating mutual racism. Their mutual hatred of miscegenation drew them closer. . . . Both countries looked upon mixed marriage as a social evil, a threat to public health, safety, morals, and the general welfare." Koshiro, *Trans-Pacific Racisms*, 159.

author, speaking of an individual serviceman pursuing the possibility of marriage, "visualize[d] much unhappiness for him. Because of the fact that his wife would not be accepted, she then would lack the social contacts which, as I have stated before, Japanese people need."[61] The sum effect of such practices and opinions was, in the words of one study, "to prevent intermarriage wherever possible and encourage GIs to opt for informal, unstable relationships," which has endured as the "consistent policy of the U.S. Army throughout its activities in Asia." After the legal barriers to immigration by Asian military brides were permanently dissolved, in late 1952, servicemen continued to encounter unsympathetic commanders who sabotaged relationships by means of personnel transfers and other, more subtle forms of pressure.[62]

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The suicides of black Private Charles Kinchelow and his unnamed Japanese lover became a minor *cause célèbre* in the early spring of 1947. Distraught over Kinchelow's impending rotation to the United States, the two poisoned themselves in a roadside Shinto shrine. "Undoubtedly he would have liked to marry her and bring her back to the United States," the *Pittsburgh Courier* opined indignantly, "but apparently that was forbidden by the all-wise and undoubtedly prejudice-free American high officials. So, rather than be separated forever, the two young brown people chose death." Not merely SCAP policy but the entire history of white male behavior in East Asia became a target of censure. "How different this is from the traditional attitude of the white men in the Orient," the author continued, "as set forth in Puccini's 'Madam Butterfly' and Pierre Loti's 'Madame Chrysanthemum,'" two tales of abandonment by American and European men of young Japanese women. "This has been the

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[61] National Archives II, RG 407, Box 363, Folder 291.1 1-1-49 – 8/31/49.

[62] Spickard, *Mixed Blood*, 135, 410, note 23. See also Koshiro, *Trans-Pacific Racisms*, 198.

white custom in the Orient and Africa. . . . It is an attitude which has contributed much to the effectiveness of the slogan 'Asia for the Asiatics' and to the downfall of white imperialism." The young couple's suicide, in this view, was symbolic of Afro-Asian solidarity in contrast to global white arrogance. "Had the whites in the Orient showed the respect and affection for womanhood that Private Kinchelow so dramatically displayed," the editorial concluded, "the whole history of the Pacific might have been different, and for that matter so might the history of the rest of the world."[63] Black correspondents characterized this personal tragedy as so poignant that it inspired others, even white occupationaires, to do likewise. Within weeks a *Chicago Defender* columnist claimed that "[i]nvestigators probing the suicide deaths of a Japanese girl and her white GI lover in Japan learned from the girl's friends that she had become deeply impressed" by the actions of the doomed couple.[64]

Over the next few years, however, this narrative of mutual empathy gradually declined. Ten months later the same *Defender* columnist began to speak of black soldiers "feathering their nests . . . with pretty Japanese 'coibitoes'"—i.e., *koibito* (roughly, "lover"), a term common among occupationaires—women "not to be confused with geisha girls," that is, female providers of purely commercial entertainment. These "coibitoes," he later explained, were simply a manifestation of the "Oriental custom" of concubinage. The author portrayed "[t]hose 10,000 Negro soldiers stationed in Japan" as merely captivated by "native heartthrobs who look pretty, wait on them hand and foot, are faithful and demand little." Such relationships were allegedly no longer predicated on lifelong commitment: "GI Joe . . . says the Negro gals will be right there on

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[63] "Shades of 'Madam Butterfly,'" *Pittsburgh Courier*, 22 March 1947, 7.
[64] Charley Cherokee, "National Grapevine" column, *Chicago Defender*, 24 May 1947, 17.

Central Ave., and South Parkway, and Lenox, when his tour in heaven is over and he returns to the States."[65]

In fact, many black servicemen continued to agonize over threats to their romantic interests while struggling for legal recognition of their partners. Corporal George D. Brown, stationed in Kyoto, wrote the NAACP Legal Committee for assistance after several years as an occupationaire. In his unit of fewer than one hundred men, at least eight, including Brown, had "become fathers to children born of Japanese mothers." Yet because "the laws of the Army and of the country make it almost entirely impossible for GIs to marry women of Japanese blood," he and others "suffering from broken hearts" were "left helpless when they inquire[d] for advice or consideration from authorities."[66] There remains no record of a reply from the NAACP, a failure to act that probably came as no surprise to Brown, for many servicemen believed the Association reluctant to intervene in such matters.

The men of the all-black 77th Engineer Combat Company submitted a similar complaint to Charles M. Bussey, their African-American commander. As Bussey later recalled, stationed at Camp Gifu "[m]ost of the troops had 'hooches,' rooms in the village they shared with their girlfriends or their wives," the latter partners in locally approved Shinto marriages "unregistered and unsanctioned by the U.S. Army and by the Department of State." At an impromptu company meeting in the spring of 1950, he was addressed by his First Sergeant: "[S]everal of the men have applied to marry Japanese girls, some as long as two years ago. . . . There's no reason for these delays except for the standard prejudice of the State Department. It's no secret they always give us a bad time when it involves non-Negro women." The men contemplated alerting the NAACP, even though "[i]t's not the kind of issue they'd like to fight [for], . . . cause every

[65] Charley Cherokee, "National Grapevine" column, *Chicago Defender*, 6 March 1948, 17, and 24 July 1948, 17.
[66] Papers of the NAACP, Part 9, Series B, Reel 15, Frames 167-168.

Negro soldier that marries a foreign woman means some Negro woman doesn't get married." Bussey continued to exert what pressure he could, but to no avail. "Meanwhile the Korean War came along," he recalled, "and swooped up some of the men who had so long ago petitioned for marriage. They were gobbled up in that war."[67]

That war, which the United States actively joined in early July 1950, severed countless relationships, even among black servicemen neither killed nor captured. During the first three months of hostilities, four divisions and dozens of smaller combat units and service battalions, including the all-black 24th Infantry Regiment, were shipped to the fighting. More than 50,000 soldiers, or roughly half of all American servicemen, had left Japan. Death, surrender, rotation stateside for the seriously wounded (with often a mere 48-hour stopover in Tokyo), and the near impossibility of obtaining leave during the war's desperate first weeks kept many from ever again seeing their Japanese girlfriends. Even the opening of a second immigration window for Asian military brides in August seemed for many to have arrived too late. Any petition for marriage already in the works was automatically declared void if the groom-to-be was killed, regardless of prior living arrangements or the performance of locally sanctioned marriage rites. And those men transferred directly to the United States and of limited means were often helpless in their desire to rejoin Japanese partners.[68]

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[67] Charles M. Bussey, *Firefight at Yechon: Courage & Racism in the Korean War* (McLean, VA: Brassey's (US), Inc., 1991), 72-73, 63, 65.

[68] Peter Kalischer, "Madame Butterfly's Children," *Collier's*, 20 September 1952, 17; Janet Wentworth Smith and William L. Worden, "They're Bringing Home Japanese Wives," 19 January 1952, 81; Rohrer, "From Demons to Dependents," 125. In March 1954 author James Michener, as part of an effort to counteract "the cruelest lies being circulated by the Communists," claimed that "as soon as Occupation rules permitted, our representatives quietly went to ward offices and signed the record books on behalf of any soldier who had been ordered elsewhere but whose Shinto marriage had produced a permanent home marked with love and children." Moreover, "the GI himself can take the same steps if he can get to Japan," albeit at a cost of $1,500. Michener added that the armed service had begun subsidizing such travel and had already arranged free transportation for "more than 100" men. A later study concluded that the "evidence overwhelmingly contradicts" Michener's assertions. See James A. Michener, "The Facts About the GI Babies," *Reader's Digest*, March 1954, 5, 8; and Burkhardt, "Institutional Barriers, Marginality, and Adaptation," 526.

In the fall of 1950, however, once the prospect of utter defeat transformed into the illusion of a quick, decisive victory, African-American speculation quickly turned to an anticipated deluge of black-Japanese weddings.[69] Certain avenues of communication had remained open between these men and women, even during the worst of the fighting. In addition to sending mail, for example, a group of women from Camp Gifu and Naka contributed 10,000 yen (approximately $26) toward the purchase of delicacies for men of the 24th serving on the front lines.[70] *Afro American* correspondent James L. Hicks toured the Gifu area and reported in early November that he "found an amazing number of 'Brown Babies' fathered by men now fighting in Korea." Recent financial hardships had led some of their mothers to abandon their children, but "highly informed persons" predicted the "[w]holesale marriage of colored GIs to Japanese women when the 24th Infantry Regiment returns to Japan."[71] A soldier of the 24th stationed in Korea told reporter Robert J. Sloan that of the regiment's 388 men in the process of applying for permission to marry, sixty already had children with their Japanese partners, while perhaps another fifty were soon to be born. Ominously, however, more than a dozen women already had lost boyfriends to the war. A week later the *Amsterdam News* announced that "one of the Gifu 'brides,' whose tan GI husband was killed in action, has committed suicide, taking her infant daughter with her. . . . She bundled the four-months-old infant on her back and walked into a lake to drown."[72] Even James Hicks closed his otherwise upbeat assessment on a

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[69] For more on the ebb and flow of the war, see Chapter Five.

[70] James L. Hicks, "Japanese Boost 24th's Morale," *Afro American*, 9 September 1950, 13.

[71] James L. Hicks, "Many 24th Men Eye Brides in Japan," *Afro American*, 4 November 1950, 1. An article in the *Chicago Defender*, discussing the financial hardships of these women, explained that Japanese racial prejudice made it extremely difficult for a "Japanese girl who associates with a Tan GI . . . to find employment." L. Alex Wilson, "Why Tan Yanks Go For Japanese Girls," *Chicago Defender*, 2nd News Section, 11 November 1950, 1.

[72] Robert J. Sloan, "Tan GI Tells Why: I Want a Japanese Wife," *New York Amsterdam News*, 11 November 1950, 2, 32; Robert Sloan, "Gifu Girls Say: 'We Make Better Wives,'" *New York Amsterdam News*, 3, 27. A *Chicago Defender* correspondent likewise discussed one possible result of the death of a father in Korea: "Under such conditions, it is said, it would not be surprising if [Japanese girlfriends] destroyed the children to prevent

foreboding note: "Some claim that the Army will sidestep the matter by keeping the regiment out of Japan until after the marriage deadline passes."[73] The 24th would, in fact, remain in Korea for almost another year due to the desperate need for manpower on the peninsula.

Nevertheless, expectations for a swift end to the fighting and the reunion of black-Japanese couples triggered an international debate over the exact nature of these relationships and the motives of Japanese women. Its proximate cause was a lone article tucked away in the *Afro American*'s magazine section. Written by the prolific Hicks, it focused ostensibly on conflicts between servicemen and the small number of female personnel recently assigned to the theater. Yet it set ablaze long-smoldering concerns over the meaning and consequences of Afro-Asian intimacy. As its author later noted with some surprise, "[n]o other stories which this reporter wrote during four months in the Far East . . . provoked such widespread comment both in America and abroad as the ones which depicted . . . the attitudes and actions of the GI's toward Japanese women." Indeed, "many persons both military and civilian had jumped into the controversy," while black newspapers across the country joined the fray.[74] Lay pundits were particularly keen to add their two cents.

What began as verbal sparring over questions of courtesy and romantic availability quickly metastasized into an interrogation of Japanese morals and material ambitions. At first glance little of the article's content seems particularly inflammatory. Hicks began with typical battle-of-the-sexes fare: "Colored women on civilian duty . . . are being ignored by colored soldiers . . . to the point that many of the women swear that once they get 'stateside' again, they

further suffering and to save face." L. Alex Wilson, "Why Tan Yanks Go For Japanese Girls," *Chicago Defender*, 2nd News Section, 11 November 1950, 1.

[73] James L. Hicks, "Many 24th Men Eye Brides in Japan," *Afro American*, 4 November 1950, 1. Lt. Col. Harry F. Lofton, commanding officer of Camp Gifu, fretted over the potential repetition of the "brown baby" situation of postwar England and Germany if the 24th was demobilized in Korea. See L. Alex Wilson, "Why Tan Yanks Go For Japanese Girls," *Chicago Defender*, 2nd News Section, 11 November 1950, 1.

[74] James L. Hicks, "Officer Says Our Girls in Japan Not Attractive," *Afro American*, 25 November 1950, 13.

will never speak to a colored soldier who has been stationed in Japan." The cause of such inattention was the *musume* (literally, "daughter"), or "moose" in standard American slang. "Boiled down to plain bare facts," Hicks reported, the black soldier "out on the loose in Japan [has] found that the morals of the Japanese girls coupled with the fact that he is here as a conqueror of the Japanese people, make it far more easy for him to have a 'good time' by dating Japanese girls than going around with his own." Even the enlisted man, because of his salary and status as an American soldier, could afford to "maintain a 'Moose' and still take care of his other obligations." Hicks painted a vivid portrait of "lavishly dressed Japanese girls who are wearing the very latest clothes from the States at the expense" of their African-American boyfriends. A good number of couples had also decided, in the author's words, to "shack up." "Many of them, virtually all of them before the [Korean] war, . . . bought homes in Japan," he explained, "and whenever time permitted, and there seems to have been plenty of time, the GI spent it at his home with his Moose."[75] With this, Hicks inadvertently opened the floodgates of public controversy.

Predictably, most soldiers defended their actions and, to a lesser degree, Japanese in general. A "deeply incensed" Lieutenant L. Clinton Moorman, station in Korea and engaged to a Japanese citizen, called the story "degrading to the soldiers sincerely interested in Japanese women." Moreover, he informed the *Chicago Defender*, despite the presence of a few bad apples, the "type of Japanese girl" he and his men dated seriously was "loyal, devoted, thrifty,

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[75] The author included a remark that black occupationaires "virtually own the Japanese girls," but it was their reported material support of girlfriends that caught readers' attention. James L. Hicks, "GI's in Tokyo Lavish Gifts on Jap Girls, Shun Own Clubs," *Afro American*, 2 September 1950, magazine section, 5. African-American women, on the other hand, were said to eschew intimate contact with the Japanese. "An extensive check on the love affairs of American Negro women in Japan," explained a *Chicago Defender* correspondent, "revealed they spurn the Japanese men. Two very attractive women told me in a convincing manner that any thought of having a Japanese as a boy friend causes cold chills. GIs now in Japan confirmed this." See L. Alex Wilson, "Why Tan Yanks Go For Japanese Girls," *Chicago Defender*, 2nd News Section, 11 November 1950, 1.

and a good home-maker. Always YOU come first in her life."[76] As public information officer for the 24th, Moorman also protested directly to Hicks. "Any number of the fellows would be married to Japanese girls if it were not for the present law," he maintained in an open letter. "But yet many have married by Shinto fashion," while others "have what many states in America honor—common law marriages." He closed his missive with a prescient lament: "The United States has finally permitted the fellows to marry. Do you think [your] article places their future wives in a decent light?"[77] Sergeant Sidney Joulon, also on duty in Korea, attempted to clarify the role of black servicemen in Asia, insisting that they "are not here as conquerors but as ambassadors of democracy and good will" (a common assertion at mid-century).[78] As for the "lavishly dressed" girlfriends of popular belief, Joulon maintained that the gift of a "10 cent handkerchief" was enough to win the appreciation of a young Japanese woman.[79]

As 1950 came to a close, however, and especially as the war continued to separate black-Japanese couples, servicemen increasingly disavowed these relationships. Frederick J. Bryant wrote from Philadelphia to describe his own prior experiences in Japan. Having arrived in late 1945 for occupation duty, he "doubt[ed] seriously that conditions [had] changed" since his return to the United States. "Love," he explained, "does not enter into the picture, except in very few instances." Nor would lesser affection, if it existed to any great extent, survive the end of war in Korea. "The boys who come back home (the fortunate ones)," he predicted, "will release forever

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[76] Wilson, "Why Tan Yanks Go For Japanese Girls," 1.

[77] James L. Hicks, "Officer Says Our Girls in Japan Not Attractive," *Afro American*, 25 November 1950, 13. An enlisted member of the 24th, by then fighting in Korea, complained, "It's not just us. [Hicks'] article should have pointed out that the white soldiers are doing the same thing." See James L. Hicks, "Japanese or American Girls: Which? Why?," *Afro American*, 7 October 1950, 1, 2.

[78] See, for example, Douglass Hall, "Tan Yanks Nation's Best 'Good Neighbor' Envoy," *Afro American*, 24 June 1950, 20 (published on the eve of the Korean War); and Milton A. Smith, "Tan GIs in Korea Envoys of Good Will," *Afro American*, 3 March 1951, 1.

[79] Joulon concluded with an unfortunate automotive analogy: "[I]f you buy a car you will want it to look good, won't you? You will probably buy some miscellaneous accessories for it, too." See Sgt. Sidney Joulon, "On Romance In Japan: Sergeant Defends Soldiers' Actions," *Afro American*, 14 October 1950, 4.

their feelings for foreign companionship" and "marry good American girls."[80] While Bryant's words provided gentle reassurance to those concerned about the conduct and welfare of servicemen abroad, others were more pointed in their remarks. Private Elmer Neely wrote from Yokohama in February 1951 after having "read numerous articles on the relations between the American Negro soldier and Japanese women. They seem to be to the effect that Negro GIs are falling heels over head in love with every other Japanese girl they run across." To the contrary, Neely, who was engaged to someone stateside, doubted "if 2 per cent of the soldiers in this country are that much concerned over any Japanese girl or woman." His stance was not, he claimed, due to any personal animus, but rather to the fact that "their personal standards are just far off from those of our better women. Those Japanese women who take advantage of what they see in the GI do it at a fluctuating price that has nothing to do with genuine affection."[81]

Responses to the Hicks article and the situation it described were not confined to military personnel. Ethel Payne, who became one of the most celebrated black journalists of the twentieth century, first introduced herself to the general public by contributing to the outcry.[82] Born in Chicago, Payne arrived in Japan in 1948 and began work as a hostess at an army Service Club. Thirty months later, as director of the occupation's Club Seaview in Yokohama, she was approached by *Chicago Defender* correspondent L. Alex Wilson. What "technique" employed by Japanese women, he mused, "so inspires American GIs and have won so many of their hearts?" Payne, by then a strong opponent of such courtships, framed her response in terms of Asian mendacity. "By tradition," she asserted, "the Japanese woman is submissive. To the man

[80] Frederick J. Bryant *Afro American*, 4 November 1950, 4.

[81] Pvt. Elmer Neely, *Pittsburgh Courier*, 24 February 1951, 12.

[82] Payne worked for the *Chicago Defender* for twenty-seven years, routinely needled President Dwight Eisenhower, reported on civil rights activism from the Montgomery Bus Boycott to the 1963 March on Washington, traveled to Vietnam to cover the experiences of black soldiers, and was finally hired by CBS in 1972, where she provided editorial commentary for a decade.

of her choice . . . she presents a convincing [but] superficial respectfulness and affection." "Musume," she added, "has played it cool. She'd been doing a lot of thinking since her emancipation. Her very helplessness has been a powerful weapon and an asset to her and she is using it fully."[83]

One week later Payne's first article for the *Defender*, adapted from her diary, appeared under the front-page headline "… Japanese Girls Playing GIs For Suckers: 'Chocolate Joe' Used, Amused, Confused."[84] Occupation duty, it explained, had been an "idyllic [p]aradise" until the Korean War intervened, "an escape from the irking confinement of the social caste system and segregation" of the United States, where "the lowliest private with his base pay of $80 could live like a king." The Japanese themselves, once recovered from the "shock" of seeing a black man in uniform, "found him a good deal more 'soft to the touch,' kinder and [more] generous" than his white peers. Moreover, "already disciplined by a thousand years of Emperor worship and iron military control," the populace "recognized authority and bowed to it." African-American servicemen, after settling in and "set[ting] up housekeeping," endured occasional "shack shakes" until, with the assistance of local girlfriends, they acquired housing "off the beaten path and safely removed from the prying inquisitiveness of the MPs." However, Payne informed her readers, it was all a ruse, one that enabled Japanese women to exploit their partners and, by extension, African Americans who depended upon military remittances. "Suziko San," she claimed, used her "helplessness . . . to the hilt. . . . From then on, it was open dikes. One had to

[83] In this view she was seconded by Thelma M. Scott, also of Chicago, who interjected during the interview: "There is no comparison between the deceit of the Japanese woman and that of the American." Wilson, "Why Tan Yanks Go For Japanese Girls," 1.

[84] Payne later explained she gave her diary to the *Defender*'s L. Alex Wilson, who, upon his return to Chicago and without her permission, had an article published under her byline. And with that, the "newspapers were just jumping off the stands. Circulation . . . boomed because people were fascinated by this. . . . It was just so explosive." See interview with Ethel Payne by Kathleen Currie, Women in Journalism oral history project of the Washington Press Club Foundation, 8 September 1987, 31-32, in the Oral History Collection of Columbia University and other repositories.

have a woman's ration card at the PX, but this could be arranged. . . . Gradually, [she] took over completely." Japan's flourishing black market in goods and currency further abetted her financial schemes: military scrip could be converted into yen, then resold for precious American dollars. Thus because "Suziko San was a clever operator, she soon handled Joe's pay envelope."[85] The line separating rapacious prostitution and genuine affection could not have been more indiscernible.

The dispute became so rancorous that the *Pittsburgh Courier* decided to publish a front-page rebuttal entitled "Most American Women Say: 'Let GIs Wed Japanese Girls.'" "The hue and cry about our GI Joes wishing to marry Japanese girls," its author insisted, "has dwindled down to a 'so what' attitude in general according to scores of women . . . from coast to coast. If our boys find love and romance in far off Japan, let them have it, is the consensus." Opposition to Afro-Asian relationships was, in this argument, the result of class-based provincialism. Thus "sophisticated," "cosmopolitan" black Americans had "not as yet viewed with alarm or risen in arms over the projected marriages." Yet even an article devoted to acceptance of, or at least indifference to, the issue could not entirely ignore dissent. A majority of Atlanta residents interviewed remained adamantly opposed to such marriages. Two, in the author's words, "said that it was all right for boys to leave 'brown babies' over there, but they should not marry!"

[85] Ethel Payne, "Says Japanese Girls Playing GIs For Suckers: 'Chocolate Joe' Used, Amused, Confused," *Chicago Defender*, 18 November 1950, 1. One might contrast these attitudes with those expressed in the wildly popular "Babysan" cartoons of occupationaire Bill Hume, which reflected a more benevolent economic paternalism increasingly common among white Americans. In a collection of his work published in the United States, Hume explained with delight the Japanese girlfriend's essential character: "Now Babysan is not a gold-digger. She is—in her strange and unusual way—sincere. She brings the sunshine to her boyfriend's life and she expects, naturally enough, to be rewarded for her efforts. She likes to be remembered on her birthday and such special occasions, on each and every American holiday, and on the Japanese holidays, of which there is a seemingly endless list. But the day that pleases her most, and the one time when she must be remembered, is payday." See Bill Hume and John Annarino, *Babysan: A Private Look at the Japanese Occupation* (Columbia, MO: American Press, 1953), 32.

Nonetheless, the *Courier* remained tentatively optimistic that "tolerance is rapidly taking the place of the former resentful attitude toward overseas girls."[86]

Black servicemen and civilians never fully settled the controversy, however, and it remained a sore point for years to come. In response to an *Ebony* article on the growing plight of illegitimate Afro-Asian children, which noted that one primary cause was an inability to obtain permission to marry, a soldier stationed in Germany wrote in December 1951 that the source of the problem was in fact the upbringing and behavior of Japanese women. "If you will check on the birth and sex rate in Japan," Private Frank Topsail explained from Nuremberg, "you will find that most of the girls . . . are very sexually over-trained."[87] Even an otherwise sympathetic magazine profile, published two-and-a-half year later, cast these women in a less-than-flattering light. In addition to the "many hardened prostitutes, driven into alliances with GIs through hunger or greed," those involved with Americans were either "simple farm girls excited by the kindness and generosity of foreigners" or "restless women . . . who left their homes and sought honest jobs. Finding none, they easily slipped into the comfortable, free roles of 'occupation wives.'"[88]

A pair of brief vignettes—both from the occupation's immediate aftermath—spotlight the struggles of black servicemen seriously involved with Japanese women. Curtis James Morrow,

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[86] "Most American Women Say: 'Let GIs Wed Japanese Girls,'" *Pittsburgh Courier*, 18 November 1950, 1, 5.

[87] The article in question reported that "[t]here are three feeble-minded [children] and two children who are the results of rapes. None of these is of Negro ancestry." Topsail thus added gratuitously that, given the precocious sexuality of young Japanese women, "I really cannot believe that most of those rape cases, if so, are on the soldiers' part." See "War Babies of Japan: Shunned and deserted, more than 2,000 racially-mixed youngsters face tragic future," *Ebony*, September 1951, 17, 21; and Pvt. Frank A. Topsail, *Ebony*, December 1951, 8. How Topsail reached his conclusions remains unclear. He may have previously served in Japan and witnessed the widespread prostitution surrounding American military installations, or perhaps been joined in Nuremberg by black soldiers transferred from the Far East. Yet given the patterns of postwar American military service, which generally involved service in one theater for several years before discharge or rotation stateside, such explanations appear unlikely. More plausible is that Topsail was simply well acquainted with—and then a participant in—the lively public debate over social conditions in Japan and the role played by African Americans in them.

[88] "Letters Of A Dying Mother To Her Brown Baby," *Ebony*, July 1954, 16-17.

at eighteen a veteran of the Korean War, was assigned to Ashiya Airbase on the southern Japanese island of Kyushu in June 1952. For three months he enjoyed the diversions of military life in post-occupation Japan. "I was simply fascinated by the Japanese women and they with me," Morrow explained in his memoir. "Of course, much of their fascination could've had to do with economics. In 1952-54 their average monthly salary was $50. . . . As a [private first class] my monthly pay was $115 or twice the salary of a laborer; plus I had no other expenses. At my request the army automatically deducted money from my salary for allotment checks, which they sent to my family on a monthly basis. All I didn't give to the [Japanese] women, I partied away." One night he met a young woman named Kaeko, with whom he began a relationship that lasted nearly two years. "The ones I had patronized before meeting her," he recalled, "were straight-out whores or bar-girls. She was what we GIs call[ed] a kept girl, which means she'd just wait until she met someone that cared enough for her to take care of her." Although their life together "was like being married," Morrow hesitated to apply for permission to wed, in part because of word from the United States of the difficulties encountered by mixed-race couples. Moreover, both he and Kaeko recognized the precariousness of their circumstances: "We were well aware that our being together depended on world politics. My life as a soldier in reality wasn't mine to call the shots. I could be ordered to pack up and ship out on a moment's notice, without even being granted leave to tell her good-bye."[89]

In time, however, they grew quite close, and Morrow reluctantly began to investigate what red tape stood in their way. His initial findings were not encouraging. Morrow's white commanding officer also persuaded him to rethink the matter: "Hell, when you return to America and lays eyes on your own women again," he advised, "you'll be glad as hell you remained

[89] Morrow, *What's a Commie Ever Done to Black People?*, 107-109, 121.

single. I suggest you return to the States, then decide what you want to do. . . . If you still feel the same about this woman, you will find a way to return and get her or you could send for her to join you in the States." The interview, which unfolded as Morrow suspected it would, left him "with a strange sense of relief." Upon returning to work he discussed the matter with a fellow black soldier, who seconded the officer's reasoning. "You know the way I look at it," counseled the GI, "every place supplies its own. So why get hung up here in gook-land." Morrow agreed, although he sought to extend his tour in order to continue the relationship. His request denied, the couple was permanently separated.[90]

Jessie Brown, after a tour of duty at the Korean front, was reassigned to Yokohama, processing replacements for the ongoing conflict. "At that time," he recalled half a century later, "guys was marrying the girls, bringing them home. I had known this girl before [the war], and she joined me where I was stationed after we came back, and we stayed together until it was time to leave. But we decided we want to get married." Nonetheless, Brown hesitated, for reasons beyond the woman's unresolved divorce from a previous husband. "I like the girl," he told himself, "but why bring someone from that far away, of another race, all the way back to America, and get here—and what's going to happen when she want to go back to see her people? I'm not financially able." Brown nevertheless decided to make an inquiry with his sergeant major, "a white guy from Atlanta": "He listened to everything I said and said, 'You want to get married.' I said, 'Yeah.' He went and got my records. He pulled them out and looked at them. He said to me, 'You're on your way home. And if you don't catch that plane you're going to pay $600 for the seat.'" After experiencing firsthand one of the American military's less subtle methods for derailing a relationship, Brown bade his girlfriend a hasty farewell with promises to

[90] Morrow was honorably discharged at Fort Sheridan, Illinois, in June 1954. Ibid., 130-131, 133-135.

return. "But on the way from there," he recalled of the flight home, "I was glad the sergeant did that for me, 'cause in a way I got back and grew up." Yet fifty years later a tone of uncertainty, and perhaps regret, crept into Brown's voice: "I wouldn't have wanted to bring her from over there to here. I don't think I would have."[91]

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Exact figures for Japanese and Korean military brides of black servicemen unfortunately are unavailable, although the historical record does offer clues. The Immigration and Naturalization Service, while it recorded the total number of foreign brides admitted to the United States until 1951, neglected to designate husbands' racial categories. The American government likewise failed to preserve most of its overseas consular records. Thus estimates for all Japanese brides vary widely, ranging for the years 1945 to 1960 from 35,000 to just over 50,000.[92] If one applies a rate of 10 percent, which the military labored in vain to impose as a quota for African-American enlistments, the number of black-Japanese marriages over these fifteen years, all other factors being equal, was at least 3,500. The total for the period under consideration here would of course have been considerably lower.

More reliable figures exist for the windows to Asian immigration opened before enactment, in December 1952, of the McCarran-Walter Immigration Act. The Associate Press reported that of the 823 marriages conducted in the summer of 1947, fifteen (1.8 percent) involved African Americans.[93] During the combined eighteen months of the second and third

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[91] Brown was discharged in 1953 and within six months married and began to raise a family in the United States. Jessie Brown interview (2003), "Korea: The Unfinished War," a project of American RadioWorks, documentary unit of American Public Media.

[92] Lubin, *Romance and Rights*, 167, note 10; Rohrer, "From Demons to Dependents," 534.

[93] Fifty-four of the 823 brides were Okinawan, the rest from Japan's main islands. The AP's figures were recorded in numerous contemporary accounts, among them "Most of Summer Marriages Between GIs, Japan Girls Not Faring Well, Says Writer," *Pacific Citizen*, 1 November 1947, 2; and Lucy Herndon Crockett, *Popcorn on the Ginza: An Informal Portrait of Postwar Japan* (New York: William Sloane Associates, Inc., 1949), 147.

windows, following the outbreak of war in Korea, a total of 8,381 American-Japanese weddings occurred. One survey conducted by the Tokyo Consul General found that 12 percent—or slightly more than 1,000—of the husbands were African-American.[94] For all the attention paid the subject of black-Japanese marriage, the numbers were in fact relatively small.

Moreover, military approval of a marriage did not automatically confer citizenship—and therefore permanent residence in the United States—upon an Asian bride. The saga of African-American Sergeant Alexis Porche and Miyo Matsumoto is instructive. Following a wedding conducted under Shinto rites, the couple struggled for years to secure formal recognition by the American military government. As the process dragged on month after month, Miyo became pregnant, adding still greater urgency to their negotiations. Two months after the birth of their daughter, Mayumi, occupation authorities finally relented and declared the couple officially married. Under long-standing American military practice, Porche was promptly transferred back to the United States, in early 1952, although he managed to secure American citizenship for his daughter. Miyo, on the other hand, was granted only temporary visitation rights—a six-month visa—to live with her husband and child. Thus even state-sanctioned marriage failed to guarantee the long-term viability of Afro-Asian families.[95]

The number of legally recognized black-Korean marriages was even smaller during these years, although once again precise figures remain elusive. In 1951 a mere eleven Korean women entered the United States as wives of American citizens, mostly servicemen.[96] At least one of the marriages conducted that year involved a black soldier. Sergeant James Barbee, of

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[94] Of the remainder, 15 percent were reportedly Nisei and 73 percent white. Peter Kalischer, "Madame Butterfly's Children," *Collier's*, 20 September 1952, 17.

[95] Nothing more was written of the Porche family, although it seems likely that Miyo was eventually granted American citizenship, particularly once the McCarran-Walter Act equalized the legal status of all foreign military brides. "With Little Daughter: Japanese Bride, GI Win Home," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 8 March 1952, 1, 5.

[96] Yuh, *Beyond the Shadow of Camptown*, 47.

Evansville, Indiana, had been a school teacher in the Virgin Islands before joining the 376th Engineer Construction Battalion in Korea. According to a reporter for the *Afro American*, "[i]t was his teaching experience which led to his romance with [Hejung] Hong, who was an instructor of languages at a local school established by the Catholic missionaries." The couple planned a small, quiet ceremony performed by the company chaplain, but once word of the event spread, more than a thousand soldiers and Koreans prepared and took part in a lavish wedding. One reason for the elaborate festivities was the boredom endemic to military service, even in wartime. With the Korean front by then stabilized and the fighting largely confined to static trench warfare, Barbee's comrades "were hungry for excitement and were determined to make the wedding the biggest thing in Korea since the retreat from the Yalu" River the previous winter. More significant was the duo's exotic status. "Although marriages between Japanese girls and GIs are quite common," explained the reporter, "unions between soldiers and Koreans are a rarity." The two did, however, honeymoon in the United States: immediately following the ceremony Barbee was notified of his impending rotation stateside.[97]

Difficulties associated with the return of servicemen with Asian wives repeatedly prompted concern. Particularly threatening to American-Japanese marriages was an often dramatic decline in living standards. Shichinosuka Asano, editor of the San Francisco *Nichi-Bei Times*, explained during an interview in Japan that financial strains were contributing to larger adjustment problems. As reported in the Japanese-American *Pacific Citizen*, Asano claimed "many of these 'unhappy brides' shared the popular mistaken impression . . . that all people in the United States live as sumptuously as American military officers in Japan."[98] Whether their parents were wealthy or not, most had enjoyed relatively comfortable material circumstances

[97] Ralph Matthews, "1,000 Cheer Sarge and Korean Bride," *Afro American*, 1 December 1951, 14.
[98] "Many Japanese War Brides In U.S. Unhappy, Says Editor," *Pacific Citizen*, 24 June 1950, 1.

because of boyfriends' and husbands' overseas pay and PX access. Rotation stateside usually meant a reduction in household income and an increase in living expenses such as housing and transportation. As one scholar has found, those servicemen who reentered civilian life seldom acquired well-paying jobs at first, a problem especially acute for young black men economically displaced by postwar reconversion. A nation-wide housing shortage also forced many couples to join relatives in cramped quarters. In recognition of the potential for marital discord, the Red Cross in 1951 began sponsoring courses for Asian military brides on the economic realities of American life at mid-century. Because "most of these girls will go to the farming and poorer sections of the United States," Red Cross personnel endeavored to prepare them for the "Sears, Roebuck form of existence rather than the Vogue pattern."[99]

The existence of varying state anti-miscegenation laws vexed officials in charge of assigning to domestic posts those who elected to remain in the military. The laws of a serviceman's home state were first considered by authorities when they weighed a marriage application, on the assumption that men would stay put once mustered out of service: an occupationaire from Idaho was much less likely to obtain official permission than one from Illinois.[100] All such statutes came into play when a soldier was up for rotation stateside. One memorandum circulated within the Adjutant General's Career Management Division attempted

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[99] Spickard, *Mixed Blood*, 141, 137-138. Spickard also provides a summary of the socioeconomic backgrounds of Japanese military brides: "More than half of the Japanese population lived in rural areas in 1945, yet most of the women who married American men came from the big cities of Tokyo, Yokohama, Osaka, and Fukuoka. Since those areas housed the main concentrations of Occupation troops, it is not surprising that it was mainly women from those areas who married American men. The fathers of these women included few farmers, but otherwise they ran the gamut of Japanese society from corporate magnate to day laborer, with especially large numbers of small proprietors. Their occupational distribution was thus typical of the urban population of the time. These women averaged ten years of education—just about the norm for Japanese women. Thus, there was not much in their backgrounds to separate the war brides from other Japanese women" (126-127).

[100] As of September 1951, fifteen states—Arizona, California, Georgia, Idaho, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Virginia and Wyoming—had laws prohibiting marriages between whites and Asians. In 1948 the Supreme Court of California ruled the statute unconstitutional, but the law remained on the books. See "Outmoded Marriage Laws," *Pacific Citizen*, 15 September 1951, 4.

to tackle the intricate structure of the "Miscegenation Laws of [the] Various States of the Union." "In order to prevent embarrassment to personnel involved," it cautioned, Army policy provided assignments consistent with each state's legislation governing interracial marriage. Furthermore, "[a]ssignments inadvertently made which conflict[ed]" with that policy would "be corrected by reassignment to a State where no question of legality of cohabitation is involved." In order to assist personnel directors in adhering to the rules, the memorandum helpfully included a list of twenty-eight states along with a legend elucidating each one's specific injunctions against intermarriage. None, however, addressed the issue of Afro-Asian marriage directly.[101]

Indeed, the unanticipated questions that arose from these unions appeared particularly confounding. A 1953 study of American-Japanese couples included consideration of the unique predicament of two black husbands. Both had remained in the military and were thus, according to the author, "to a certain degree, protected from some of the problems that Negroes with Japanese wives might encounter in civilian life." Although the two couples had encountered few problems in Ohio, one of the men puzzled over what would occur if they traveled to "Georgia or Mississippi."[102] That same year African-American journalist Enoc P. Waters accused the army of "fail[ing] to take into consideration cases where Negro soldiers took unto themselves Oriental brides." Operating within an American racial situation "already complex enough," "officials frequently were at a loss as to what to do with a Negro married to a Japanese girl in a state where interracial (meaning white and Negro) marriages are prohibited by law." The inhabitants of an

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[101] Only the reported laws of Texas ("Marriage between persons of different color grounds for annulment") and Idaho and Utah ("Marriage between persons of different color is void") were conceivably applicable. National Archives II, RG 407, Box 129, Folder AG 291.2 Race 1-1-54 – 6-30-54.

[102] Leon K. Walters, "A Study of the Social and Marital Adjustment of Thirty-Five American-Japanese Couples," (masters thesis, The Ohio State University, 1953), 80-81. Another black-Japanese couple, while traveling through the American South, found that although the wife was allowed to stay in segregated hotels her husband was forced to sleep in their car. See Spickard, *Mixed Blood*, 143.

unnamed “southern community,” Waters related, upset over the black-Japanese couple living in their midst, complained to military authorities. In a delicious irony, the local post commander, unsure of standard operating procedure in such a case, provided the enlisted man and his wife with luxurious on-base accommodations traditionally reserved for high-ranking officers.[103]

The fluid nature of American racial classifications contributed to the confusion. In April 1952 *The Crisis* magazine broadcast “an extraordinary racial transformation, one reminiscent of Hitler’s generosity when he made the Nipponese ‘honorary Aryans’”—“In Oklahoma a Japanese is white.” The state government reached this conclusion while pondering the case of a Japanese citizen eager to enroll at all-black Langston University. The young man in question had been impressed by the Langston graduates he met in Tokyo, and after receiving a scholarship through an international student exchange system wrote Governor Johnston Murray of his wish to attend the university. Because Japanese-Americans were then attending the state’s white public schools, Murray requested a decision from his attorney general, who ruled that Japanese people were “white” for the purposes of Oklahoma’s segregation laws. Admission to Langston was denied. “This irrationality,” complained *The Crisis*, “opens up all sorts of complications and could lead to some very fantastic situations. Oklahoma, for instance, has a law forbidding Negroes and whites to marry each other. What happens then to a Negro GI who returns to Tulsa with his Japanese bride? How do you classify the offspring of a Negro-Japanese union? What percentage of Japanese ‘blood’ is needed to make one officially Japanese? . . . It is all very sad—or funny.”[104] Ludicrous though it may have seemed, the Langston case was not an isolated incident. It was instead emblematic of tectonic shifts in the American racial landscape,

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[103] Enoc P. Waters, “Kicked into Luxury,” *Chicago Defender*, 10 September 1953, 10.
[104] “Looking and Listening . . .,” *The Crisis*, vol. 59, no. 4 (April 1952), 233.

circumstances that contributed to an often chilly reception for Afro-Asian partners and to their segregation from and within African- and Asian-American communities.

It was in fact the great misfortune of these couples to begin arriving at precisely the moment a new domestic racial order was becoming evident. The postwar socioeconomic gains of Asian Americans and their "rehabilitation" in the minds of many white Americans proceeded hand-in-hand. They also irked many African Americans, particularly in light of the interracial power relations—black over Asian—then in operation overseas. Immigration policy became one of the first battlegrounds. Columnist J. A. Rogers complained to his readers in March 1949 of an early version of what three years later became the McCarran-Walter Act. The bill tied the removal of barriers to Asian immigration—"a good move" in Rogers' estimation—to severe restrictions on immigration from the West Indies. "Are we to take it that the degree of color prejudice in this country must be kept at its present height," he asked, "so that what is lifted off the Oriental be saddled on the Negro?" Racial advancement, it seemed, was a zero-sum game. Rogers also noted the global politics at play: "Of course, the lightening of the prejudice against the Oriental is to win his favor against communism in the East[,] but as for Negroes they don't count."[105] The Cold War struggle for hearts and minds appeared to favor Asians, but not as of yet the interests of black people.

Closer to home, observers could not help notice the differing socioeconomic fortunes of black and Asian Americans. "Now, eight years after Pearl Harbor," protested journalist Joseph D. Bibb, "Japanese people in the United States are held in higher esteem than those of a darker

[105] J. A. Rogers, "Rogers Says: Bill Favors Oriental Immigration at Prices of Restricting Negroes," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 19 March 1949, 15. The 1952 McCarran-Walter Act did, in fact, establish an immigration quota of 100 per year for each British, French and Dutch colony in the West Indies. See, for example, "President Is Right," *Afro American*, 5 July 1952, 4; P. L. Prattis, "We Should Help Give The McCarran Act the Treatment It Deserves," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 17 January 1953, 6; and Walter White, "Truman's Report On Immigration Exposes Bigotry And Weaknesses In McCarran Act," *Chicago Defender*, 7 February 1953, 11.

hue." And higher esteem was intertwined with material advancement. "The Japanese have been released from their compounds and concentration [camps]," Bibb continued. "They go where they please, live as they will, and hold higher type jobs than do other colored Americans." Even their kin overseas seemed to benefit: "Japanese silks, crockery and other oriental [sic] commodities are now on our shelves and counters and the so-called dastardly sneak blow delivered by the 'yellow-bellied devils' has been all but forgiven, if not forgotten." Meanwhile, the black American—or "the colored American," in Bibb's now exclusionary terminology—remained a second-class citizen. "The Japs," he declared, "are accorded more freedom and liberty than he."[106] Claude A. Barnett, founder of the influential Associated Negro Press, voiced similar complaints regarding the behavior—and upward mobility—of Japanese Americans one year after the Korean armistice. In response to a light-skinned acquaintance's claims of personal friendliness on the part of Japanese Americans, Barnett replied, "Is there any possibility that your color looks so much like theirs that they do not identify you with [the] black race?" "When the Japanese were driven out of California and put in concentration camps," he insisted, "the only people who succored them, or the principal people who did, were colored folk." And still, "[w]hen the ban was lifted no one could have been more coolly indifferent to colored people that those same Japanese when they were permitted to return to Little Tokyo in Los Angeles and

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[106] Joseph D. Bibb, "After Pearl Harbor: If a Colored American Groans, He Is Branded As an Agent of Moscow," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 17 December 1949, 14. Less than three years later, Bibb began parroting an increasingly prevalent model-minority rhetoric, likely alienating many of his readers while increasing resentment of Asian Americans. During World War Two, he explained, Japanese-Americans "suffered far more grievously than did the much-maligned members of the darker minority. But the Japanese were shrewd, solemn and long-suffering. Slowly but surely they made their way into new localities. Quietly and unassumingly, they went about their business. Their conduct has been exemplary. They kept themselves immaculately neat and clean. They dressed soberly and quietly. . . . While many of the darker minority have been boorish, shiftless, inebriate, belligerent, and unreliable, the Japanese—also under constant and continuous surveillance—have been dependable, sober, peaceful, ambitious and ingratiating." Joseph D. Bibb, "They're Amazing: Colored Americans May Profit by Watching the Behavior of Japanese," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 23 August 1952, 6. The Secretary of the conservative Chicago Urban League's Public Education Department subsequently praised Bibb's assessment. See F. T. Lane, *Pittsburgh Courier*, 13 September 1952, 11.

other areas to reclaim their possessions."[107] It was into this tense milieu that Afro-Asian couples disembarked in the early 1950s.

Not every couple encountered hostility; a handful were enthusiastically welcomed. Sergeant Nelson Forbes, for instance, settled upon a lifetime career as a military policeman before he met Michako. "When we decided to get married," he later explained, "of course I wondered how things would be here, especially for her. I tried to tell her about the differences—for a colored man, I mean." Moreover, in the wake of access to "army-of-occupation markets," his wife was reportedly "terrified" by domestic grocery prices. Interviewed in a decrepit Seattle housing project, all they could afford at the time, she was also asked about homesickness. "Sometimes," Michako replied with a knowing smile, "but not so much as Forbes is. He's the one who wants to go back to Japan." Fond memories aside, the couple experienced relatively smooth integration into their new community. "We haven't had any trouble," Forbes claimed. "The neighborhood kids, colored and white, too, are through this house all the time; and the white wives help [Michako] out."[108] This verdict was reiterated to a point in a *Jet* magazine article which inquired in early 1952 if "the marriages that blossomed in war ruins [have] been able to stand the peacetime stresses of life in U.S. Negro communities." "Part of the answer is found occasionally in newspaper headlines of divorce and even violence," the author admitted, but "another answer is also given in the quiet, peaceful and happy homes of many interracial couples in big cities across the land."[109]

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[107] Claude A. Barnett papers, Chicago Historical Society, Box 364, Folder 5: Race Relations—Asian-Americans (Including Hawaii), Correspondence, 1932-1960.

[108] William L. Worden, "Where are Those Japanese War Brides?," *The Saturday Evening Post*, 20 November 1954, 39.

[109] "What Happened to the War Brides?," *Jet*, 17 January 1952, 18-19.

Nonetheless, black journalists increasingly emphasized such couples' physical and emotional isolation, in stark contrast to trends in white media coverage and the experiences of white-Japanese couples.[110] Voluntary seclusion, in these accounts, began before they crossed the Pacific. One correspondent deemed those yet to leave Japan "a clannish lot [who] spend much of their spare time visiting with each other."[111] Once in the United States, such Japanese military brides, like their Korean counterparts, were routinely shunned by other Asian Americans. "The Nisei seem to prefer to identify themselves with whites," complained one, "and shy away from associations with Negroes."[112] Of course, most Japanese women married to Americans—white, black or Nisei—encountered similar rejection.[113] Those with black husbands, however, found that distinctions soon emerged among the brides themselves. Many were unable to maintain longtime friendships with women married to white military personnel. "It seems that the

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[110] Of course, many white Americans held fast to their wartime hatreds of the Japanese and were hostile toward military brides, but, as Caroline Chung Simpson has written, "the postwar popular media's changing view of Japanese war brides projects them as an early form of the Asian American model minority. The 1950s transformation of the Japanese war bride from an opportunistic and ignorant alien seeking to penetrate the suburban affluence of white America to the gracious and hard-working middle-class housewife was an early exemplar for achieving the integrated future in America, a halcyon story of domestic bliss and economic mobility." "Consonant with the later flowing of the model minority myth of Asian American success," she adds, "the adulation visited on the Japanese war bride . . . gained its immediate momentum from the changing dynamics of black-white relations in America. . . . In the mid-1950s, Japanese American war brides were still 'women stepping into terra incognita,' only now their national and racial difference had the potential to redeem rather than to agitate the fraught racial landscape of America." See Simpson, "'Out of an obscure place': Japanese War Brides and Cultural Pluralism in the 1950s," *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 10.3 (1998), 49-50, 68-69. Historian Robert G. Lee agrees: "The Americanization of the Asian war bride—Orientalism domesticated—was the Cold War narrative of ethnic assimilation and domesticity that could restore credibility to the 'American creed' that reconstructed the American family as modern, universal, and multi-ethnic, if not exactly multi-racial. In this tale of Americanization, the Oriental woman was transformed from dangerously transgressive into a symbol of domesticity and a stalwart for a restored postwar patriarchy." Robert G. Lee, *Orientals: Asian Americans in Popular Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999), 162.

[111] "The Truth About Japanese War Brides," *Ebony*, March 1952, 20.

[112] "The Loneliest Brides in America," *Ebony*, January 1953, 17.

[113] One study found that, "[i]n general, Japanese Americans quickly withdrew their welcome from Japanese wives of American men, whether the husbands were Nisei or non-Japanese Americans. Especially those women married to White and Black men were stigmatized as immoral women. They were denied access to many Japanese American community institutions." See Spickard, *Mixed Blood*, 145.

Japanese girls who married white soldiers got very high hat when they came to America," grumbled one indignant wife, "and drew a color line on us and our husbands."[114]

Encounters within African-American communities were similarly fraught with tension. *Ebony* in early 1953 reported that the brides, condescendingly described as "exceedingly unsophisticated young women . . . writing seemingly childish letters to their relatives back home," "have found the gadgets wonderfully baffling, the spaces vast[,] but the in-laws and friends have turned out to be the most aloof people they ever met. The wives have received half-hearted welcomes . . . and been unable to make new friends." Newly-arrived families were therefore inclined to "live in a tiny Japanese-Negro world of their own," collectively forming "one of the strangest social cliques in Negro communities."[115]

Such sensational journalistic accounts are confirmed by the impressions of Afro-Asian family members conveyed in later years.[116] Velina Hasu Houston, whose recollection of confinement in a New York City attic begins this dissertation, mined her early experiences for a career as a playwright. Dramatic license notwithstanding, one encounters in her work an arresting portrayal of the community discord that greeted most Afro-Asian couples. In *American*

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[114] "The Loneliest Brides in America," *Ebony*, January 1953, 17.

[115] Ibid., 24, 17, 18. The article accompanied a photo-spread of life in one small community in Indianapolis, described as "[t]ypical of the tiny settlements of Negro-Japanese couples scattered across the U.S." (17). As for black-Korean couples who arrived in the early 1950s, their numbers were simply too small to attract an equivalent degree of public scrutiny, and thus to produce much in the way of a historical record. Historian Ji-Yeon Yuh, however, has conducted fieldwork that reveals striking similarities. Focusing primarily on a later period, Yuh nonetheless documents ongoing ostracism from Korean-American and African-American communities. Women married to black men, she discovered, "tend to suffer greater and more blatant ostracism from other Koreans. The general view is that women married to blacks . . . married into the dregs of foreign society and that such women must therefore also have come from the dregs of Korean society." These wives have therefore been treated as former prostitutes much more often than their peers married to white Americans. Yuh likewise found that black-Korean couples socialized almost exclusively with one another. See *Beyond the Shadow of Camptown*, 160, 212.

[116] The conclusions reached in these pages differ from those of Paul R. Spickard, who argues "[m]ost Black Americans seemed to have had sympathy for these women of color and welcomed them to their communities." See *Mixed Blood*, 143. Historian Scott Rohrer concurs: "Blacks . . . seemed generally more sympathetic toward and welcoming to these new women of color among them, although some African American women expressed resentment toward war brides for 'trespassing' on 'their' male territory." See "From Demons to Dependents," 561.

Dreams (1984), a former occupationaire (closely modeled on Houston's father) returns to New York with his Japanese wife following the Korean War. The two promptly encounter rejection by immediate family, in-laws, and friends. "I heard all about you Japs," erupts one character at news of the marriage, "waitin' in the streets for our boys to give you the American dream." Although the play ends on a tentatively optimistic note (the couple departs to begin a new life when the soldier is reassigned to the "neutral"—military-speak for sparsely populated—state of Kansas), their New York sojourn may have caused permanent estrangement from various friends and relatives, as was the case in the author's family.[117] And these formative experiences opened interpersonal rifts that could endure for decades. Some thirty years on—at roughly the same time Houston was composing her play—a sociologist discovered lingering resentments among black-Japanese couples. Not only did they continue to eschew the company of blacks into the early 1980s, but, to the interviewer's surprise, both wives *and* husbands expressed equivocal, at times hostile, views of African Americans in general. "Most," the author concluded, "still are bitter about their encounters."[118]

Lastly, oral and written accounts of couples' various difficulties reached Asia with increasing frequency, discouraging many from pursuing marriage in the first place. *Jet* reported in January 1952 that some wives, "unable to adjust to America," had returned on their own accord, while others, refusing to join their partners stateside, fruitlessly strove to arrange passage to the United States for their children.[119] Curtis Morrow, whose hesitant inquiries into marriage came to naught, recalled encountering black servicemen who returned with their spouses

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[117] Velina Hasu Houston, *American Dreams* (1984), Electronic Edition by Alexander Street Press, L.L.C., 2005, © Velina Hasu Houston, 1997, http://alexanderstreet2.com/bldrlive/ (accessed 2 November 2006), 53, 80.

[118] Thornton, "A Social History of Multiethnic Identity," 102-104. Thornton hypothesizes that their racial attitudes were the result of beliefs about "blacks the couple[s] picked up from white America," class bias encouraged by "such a middle-class environment as the military," and/or the "negative" "experience[s] most of the women had with blacks" (103-104).

[119] "What Happened to the War Brides?," *Jet*, 17 January 1952, 20.

"because of the opposition they were forced to deal with in the States; some even took their discharges in Japan rather than return to America."[120] The popular Japanese newsmagazine *Woman's Asahi* featured an article on military wives living in the United States. Those married to black men were, it claimed, "the most unhappy brides in the world."[121] For sailor Edward A. Coble, the revelations featured in *Ebony*'s 1953 story on "The Loneliest Brides in America" confirmed a distressing trend. A veteran of two-and-a-half years of service and fiancé to a Japanese woman, Coble wrote home to protest the "highly un-American treatment" afforded these couples. "[W]e find the effect of this manifest unfriendliness on the part of American Negroes becoming more and more apparent in Japan," he revealed. "Knowledge of the cool reception that most of them can expect from the relatives and friends of their fiancés is driving more and more Japanese girls to refuse the marriage proposals of devoted Negro sweethearts." A handful of couples might avoid the problem by electing to remain in Japan, he granted, but for "those of us who have ambitions and responsibilities that make eventual return to the U.S. mandatory, it is a sorely perplexing state of affairs."[122]

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Perplexing as the larger transformation from ambivalence and cautious hope to hostility and widespread disdain may have appeared at the time, this chapter has illuminated its multiple, mutually reinforcing origins. The simplest lesson to derive from this narrative is that foreign occupation and civil war were not, generally speaking, conducive to interracial goodwill, particularly among those competing for resources administered by a third party, in this instance an American military government, and later, American civil society. It was a quirk of history

[120] Morrow, *What's a Commie Ever Done to Black People?*, 118.

[121] William L. Worden, "Where are Those Japanese War Brides?," *The Saturday Evening Post*, 20 November 1954, 133.

[122] Edward A. Coble, *Ebony*, April 1953, 8-9.

that these were the conditions under which the first large-scale Afro-Asian interaction since the turn-of-the-century took place. Furthermore, even the most intimate relations rarely occurred in isolation; an international black audience articulated its own associations between interracial encounters abroad and socioeconomic reshuffling at home. And finally, those overseas sexual relationships that so commanded black communities' attention had one more vital outcome: a generation of bi-racial children.

Chapter Four: A Brown Baby Crisis

Less than two months after the landing of American forces, white occupationaire Frank Turner attended a rare Japanese dinner party. Following several rounds of sake, Turner felt the gathering's increasing gaiety provided an opportune moment to pose a "delicate question": how did the Japanese feel about burgeoning interracial fraternization? Turner's Japanese host assumed the role of spokesperson and, according to a letter Turner wrote a colleague stationed in China, "did not hesitate to denounce it emphatically." In light of language barriers, racial differences, and lingering wartime hatreds, his host continued, the American soldier was interested merely in a fleeting dalliance. This fact would become inescapable the following June, when "a prodigious crop" of American-Japanese children arrived. For years, perhaps decades, he concluded, these children "would be a constant reminder of American excess and Japanese folly." The room fell silent as the guests solemnly nodded in agreement.[1]

This repudiation of an anticipated deluge of biracial children was not confined to Japan's miniscule upper crust; the issue also engaged a large swath of Japanese eking out a living. During the occupation's inaugural year, for example, SCAP censors intercepted a letter passing along rumors of countless mixed-blood offspring. Not only were "twenty thousand women in Yokohama intimately related with Allied soldiers," but word had arrived of "thirteen thousand hybrids" expected in the central region of Kansai. The anticipated birth of Afro-Asian children

[1] Otis Cary, ed., *Eyewitness to History: The First Americans in Postwar Asia* (New York: Kodansha International, 1995), 121-123.

was particularly distressing to the author: "It is enough to make one shudder when one hears that there are three thousand Japanese women with Negro children in Yokohama."[2]

As much as Japanese citizens quickly pondered the fate of these "brown babies" (as they were known to African Americans), black audiences stateside only gradually became apprised of the situation. What was perhaps the first account appeared, almost as an afterthought, in the black press in January 1947. Ensconced in a column summarizing items of interest in the field of domestic race relations was a brief report from a meeting of the Anthropological Society of Washington. Dr. Gordon T. Bowles, considered a leading authority on Japan, revealed that of the growing number of biracial occupation children, "a large proportion were American Negro-Japanese."[3] This account, however pithy, marked the public start of what would be apprehended a brown baby "crisis" in the Pacific, involving the plight of Afro-Asian children residing in often hostile communities overseas. As their predicament became evident, African-American discussion of the issue increased in detail, frequency, and indignation on their behalf.

This crisis—one initially dominated by the Afro-Asian children of Japan but gradually encompassing those of Korea as well—was the latest in a series of quandaries precipitated by African-American military service at mid-century. One arose in Britain during and immediately after World War Two; a second in occupied Germany. By the late 1940s and early 1950s, East Asia was attracting widespread attention as the site of a new generation of biracial children, individuals of often ambiguous national belonging and citizenship. What made this brown baby crisis unique, and how did it influence black citizens' attitudes toward their military's Asian hosts? Certainly there was a disparity in initial numbers. Historian Petra Goedde notes that of the 94,000 German occupation babies, between two and three thousand were *Mischlingskinder*,

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[2] LaCerda, *The Conqueror Comes to Tea*, 23-24.
[3] Alfred Smith, "Adventures in Race Relations," *Chicago Defender*, 4 January 1947, 15.

offspring fathered by African-American soldiers.[4] Black sociologist St. Clair Drake found approximately 1,200 such children in Britain, out of 70,000 GI babies by 1949.[5] In contrast, by the early-to-mid-1950s the number of brown babies in Japan and Korea was perhaps 500 apiece (various factors make it extremely difficult to arrive at reliable estimates). Nonetheless, despite this relatively small cohort of Asian brown babies, or perhaps because of uncertainty over precise figures, there existed the *perception* of an enormous problem such that public discussions of the Asian crisis mirrored those concerning Europe.

There was, however, a gulf between portrayals of the treatment afforded these children overseas. Indeed, given previous African-American rhetoric regarding the genocidal racism of Nazi Germany, the injustices of British colonialism, and the uncertain appeal of Japanese calls for "colored" solidarity,[6] it is striking that in the postwar era there emerged an unmistakable hierarchy of reported treatment of brown babies: Germany securely on top; Britain a close second; and Japan (soon to be joined implicitly by South Korea) unquestionably in the cellar. This hierarchy was no mere journalistic conceit: it hewed closely to reality.[7] Although European

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[4] Goedde, *GIs and Germans*, 111.

[5] "British Families Adopt Brown Babies: Illegitimate Tots Left Behind by Negro GIs Finally Find Homes," *Ebony*, March 1949, 22. For the figure of 70,000, see James A. Michener, "The Facts About the GI Babies," *Reader's Digest*, March 1954, 6.

[6] For one of many recent works highlighting wartime black condemnation of not only Nazi Germany but also the British Empire, see Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire*, esp. Chapter Two, "Democracy Or Empire?" (22-43). For a discussion of scholarship emphasizing pro-Japanese sentiment among African Americans in the first half of the twentieth century, see this study's Introduction.

[7] For reasons of economy and scope this dissertation does not provide a detailed analysis of African-American engagement with the brown baby crises of Germany and Britain. Nonetheless, a handful of examples are in order. One sociological study of Germany's brown babies, completed in early 1949, summarized its findings thus: "In Japan, many women who have borne children to American servicemen—white or Negro—are reported to have 'saved face' by abandoning the child, or by resorting to infanticide. In England, most of the mixed babies have been given up by their mothers, and as public charges they present a serious problem to British welfare officials. . . . The Germany picture is quite different. To a German mother, not only is infanticide unthinkable, but even separation is rarely considered. Of the 2,100 Negro German babies, almost all remain with the mother." Vernon W. Stone, "Germany Baby Crop Left by Negro GI's," *The Survey*, vol. LXXXV, no. 11 (November 1949), 581-582. For a discussion of this study, see Goedde, *GIs and Germans*, 111-112. The American military reached a much similar conclusion regarding the attitudes of German mothers toward their mixed-race children. See, for example, "European Command, Historical Division, Extract from 'Negro Personnel in the European Command, 1 January

treatment of mixed-race children may not have been universally benign, those in Asia often suffered extreme hardship. Japanese and Korean individuals and communities time and again shunned and even physically attacked Afro-Asian offspring due to racial prejudice and monoethnic notions of national identity, and because these children stood for many as living reminders of military defeat and occupation. Moreover, in contrast to African-American endeavors vis-à-vis European brown babies, no sustained campaigns arose for the support and adoption of biracial children in Asia.[8] Similarly, the Cold War imperatives that encouraged

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1946-30 June 1950,' chapter IV, Training of Negro Troops and Chapter V, Morale and Discipline," in MacGregor and Nalty, *Basic Documents*, Vol. VIII, 170. Of course, some positive black coverage of developments in Europe doubled as criticism of American racial segregation. Walter White of the NAACP, in a September 1952 press release coinciding with the entry of Afro-German children into the German public school system, announced that despite that nation's "enormous racial indoctrination" of the past, it had "recovered" from the "virus of racial superiority," presumably in stark contrast to the Jim Crow South and elsewhere in the United States. See Yara-Colette Lemke Muniz de Faria, "'Germany's "Brown Babies" Must be Helped! Will You?': U.S. Adoption Plans for Afro-German Children, 1950-1955," *Callaloo*, 26.2 (2003), 352 (I thank Victor Padilla for drawing my attention to this article). For additional examples of generally positive African-American media coverage of European treatment of brown babies, see "Survey Shows Most Europeans Want to Keep Tan Babies," *Afro American*, 27 November 1948, 5; "British Families Adopt Brown Babies: Illegitimate Tots Left Behind by Negro GIs Finally Find Homes," *Ebony*, March 1949, 19 ("These brown babies, shunned and maltreated in the postwar austerity years, are being gradually and successfully adopted by white English families and being brought up as British citizens"); "Fraulein Mothers Of 'Brown Babies' Love 'Em Fiercely," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1 July 1950, 12; and "Brown Babies Adopted By Kind Germany Families," *Jet*, 8 November 1951, 14-16. One notable exception to this trend is Allan Gould, "Germany's Tragic War Babies," *Ebony*, December 1952, which lamented, "It is particularly distressing to German mothers with Negro children that their nation, still suffering from a 'master race' complex, has many 'wrong' [i.e., white supremacist] Americans in charge" (78). The article further noted, however, that "[d]espite the cost in spiritual and social as well as financial standing, most German mothers would prefer to keep their children." It likewise prompted a letter from Germany recounting discussions among black servicemen over the article, which the writer complained gave "a distorted picture of the situation": "It is a rather wild claim to maintain that Germany is 'still suffering from a master race complex.' This statement ignores our successful efforts to replace Nazi ideology by liberal and Christian conduct." See Ernst A. Teves, *Ebony*, April 1953, 10. Finally, for an analysis of the race and gender dynamics of American responses to the brown babies of Europe, see Brenda Gayle Plummer, "Brown Babies: Race, Gender, and Policy after World War II," in Brenda Gayle Plummer, ed., *Window on Freedom: Race, Civil Rights, and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1988* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

[8] See, for example, discussions of the so-called "Brown Baby Plan," through which many black-German children were adopted by African Americans, in de Faria, "'Germany's "Brown Babies" Must be Helped! Will You?,'" 342-362; and Plummer, *Rising Wind*, 208. Regarding Great Britain, see James L. Hicks, "How You Can Help 'Wild Oats' Babies," *Afro American*, magazine section, 27 November 1948, 3 (on the efforts, inspired by the plight of British brown babies, of the New York-based World's Children Foundation); "Dads of British War Babies Can Claim Tots," *Chicago Defender*, 21 February 1948, 4 (which quotes the Committee for Aid to British Brown Babies); and "60 Tan Yank Tots To Be Brought Here," *Chicago Defender*, 29 May 1948, 1, 4 (on the contributions of the Chicago Organizing Committee of the British Brown Babies Fund). For information on the Bronx-based American Committee to Aid the Italian-Negro GI Babies, see Papers of the NAACP, Part 9, Series A, Reel 8, Frame 349.

cultural celebrations of American adoption of Asia orphans and abandoned white-Asian children—the latter in light of Communist charges of Euro-American imperialism and irresponsibility in the Third World—did not extend to Afro-Asian children.[9] As a result, their plight was taken up by private individuals and local institutions abroad in a handful of desultory initiatives, as opposed to international agencies and popular campaigns. Finally, most black Americans found the legal and economic requirements for adoption of Afro-Asian children too daunting, while others turned instead to the needs of African-American orphans at home.

Consequently, most of East Asia's brown babies faced prospects of either formative years spent in isolated orphanages and adulthoods within hostile communities, or dispersal across the globe. Not only would the human ties that bound black and Asian communities be attenuated or severed, but the perceived—and often real—mistreatment of Afro-Asian children and young adults triggered recurrent and growing resentment among African Americans. These circumstances not only inhibited the development of Afro-Asian parental commitments but enhanced a sense of insurmountable difference between African-American servicemen and Asian civilians.

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Like their Japanese hosts, occupationaires received conflicting reports on the number of GI babies. In March 1946 the *Pacific Stars and Stripes* published the initial findings of the

[9] Christina Klein argues that in the face of "a set of interconnected obstacles to a popular sense of political obligation to Asia: absent families ties, ignorance about Asia, and a history of racism," early Cold War "middlebrow culture played a crucial role in cultivating a sense of political obligation to Asia. Middlebrow producers took on the task of educating Americans about Asia . . .; in the process, they imaginatively resolved the barriers to obligation that could not be so easily remedied in the political realm. While the effects of seventy-five years of anti-Asian immigration laws could not easily be undone, middlebrow culture symbolically created the family ties with Asia that these laws had prevented from existing in reality." See Klein, "Family Ties and Political Obligation," 37, 38. As evidence Klein points specifically to the advertising strategies of the Christian Children's Fund (CCF), founded in 1938, in American print media (44-50). However, a close perusal of more than half a dozen of the most popular black periodicals from 1945 through 1953 has uncovered no advertisements by CCF or any similar group. See also Klein, *Cold War Orientalism*, passim.

Tokyo-Yokohama Metropolitan Police Board. Officials there estimated that at least 14,000 illegitimate American-Japanese children would reside in their bailiwick alone by mid-June. The Japanese head of the Criminal Investigation Section placed that figure at 15,000, and explained that the total for all of Japan would undoubtedly be several times greater.[10] Less than a week later, servicemen were told to disregard both estimates. According to Sgt. Charles Bull, writing in the serviceman's newspaper of record, "[e]xtensive news investigation reveals the fact that the figure of 14,000 misses the mark of truth by a wide margin. In fact, there are no actual figures available whatsoever."[11] No one, it seemed, knew anything about the extent of phenomenon, although they remained certain of its existence.

Two years later journalist Darrell Berrigan attempted to rectify the situation. He revealed estimates of the number of occupation children (between one and four thousand), but explained, "[T]here are no official figures. There never will be so long as the Allied authorities have anything to say about it." To admit that a problem existed, or to allow others to conduct their own investigations, would have tarnished SCAP's carefully crafted image of a perfect occupation. Moreover, Berrigan complained, the American occupationaire was free from any official responsibilities for his child: "He can, if he feels like it, admit paternity and make an allotment to the child or its mother. Apparently he does not wish to do this, for GHQ, Tokyo, has never had such a request and no policy has been established regarding allotments or soldier responsibility for paternity in this theater." Berrigan concluded his exposé with a ham-fisted attempt to shame both irresponsible occupationaires and white readers of the *Saturday Evening Post*, highlighting the sole known instance of a father sending care packages to a Japanese

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[10] "Police Predict 14,000 GI Babies By June," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 10 March 1946, 1.
[11] Sgt. Charles Bull, "'Babies' Story Not Confirmed," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 16 March 1946, 1.

mother: "This faithful American, by the way, is a Southern Negro."[12] Infuriated SCAP officials immediately revoked Berrigan's press credentials and ousted him from the country. Making his way to Thailand, he died shortly thereafter.[13]

Berrigan had touched upon two subjects—paternity and citizenship—that would define the lives of a generation of American-Asian children. The policies that led servicemen to abandon their Asian children were certainly in keeping with American military practice around the globe. In occupied Germany, for instance, military government decrees provided that "no individual in the military service will be required or requested to admit paternity but in a case of voluntary admission on his part and a specific expression of desire to furnish financial or other assistance to the woman involved."[14] Beginning with its turn-of-the-century acquisition of the Philippines, the United States refused to provide either social welfare benefits or citizenship to biracial children in Asia, in distinct contrast to the British, French and Dutch.[15] The chief of SCAP's Legal Section counseled that because of a February 1946 order preventing Japanese civil courts from exercising jurisdiction over Allied personnel, Japanese women could not initiate paternity suits. Moreover, an interested father could establish paternity and thus the American citizenship of his child through a state court only *after* his return to the United States

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[12] "Unfortunately," he added, "the girl turned the baby over to an orphanage long ago and has been profiting handsomely from the black-market sale of the food and clothing. Now the American is returning to Japan, and the frightened girl is trying to adopt a new baby to have for her boy friend [sic] to see when he arrives." Darrell Berrigan, "Japan's Occupation Babies," *Saturday Evening Post*, 19 June 1948, 24, 118.

[13] Elizabeth Anne Hemphill, *The Least of These: Miki Sawada and Her Children* (New York: Weatherhill, 1980), 92. See also Koshiro, *Trans-Pacific Racisms*, 161-162.

[14] Goedde, *GIs and Germans*, 95. According to historian Brenda Gayle Plummer, "The U.S. government in 1952 amended its policy to permit soldiers to recognize their children by German mothers. The recognition had to be voluntary and approved by the commander-in-chief of U.S. forces in Europe. After the peace treaty with West Germany went into effect, German women could bring suit to establish paternity and collect child support." See *Rising Wind*, 208.

[15] Burkhardt, "Institutional Barriers, Marginality, and Adaptation," 534.

(he would then need to provide for his dependent's transportation across the Pacific, of course).[16] The legal, economic, and logistical difficulties involved in such a convoluted process—in essence requiring a father to adopt his child from thousands of miles away—are self-evident. And finally, the pre-1952 ban on immigration for those with at least fifty percent Asian blood enabled the Immigration and Naturalization Service to prevent entry for many biracial children.[17]

Japanese and Korean law and culture likewise rendered these individuals perceptually foreign or legal non-entities within their home societies. In the former, patriarchal nationality laws stipulated that mixed-race children could receive Japanese citizenship only if their American fathers failed or refused to acknowledge paternity, thereby saddling them with a lifetime stigma of illegitimacy. Yet because of popular racial attitudes and an enduring myth of Japanese ethnic purity, the legal status of such citizens was in direct contrast to prevailing beliefs in their essentially foreign identities.[18] In Korea circumstances conspired to enhance this virtual statelessness. Birth registration was legally required to be done under the surname of the father (only in 1968 would a mother be granted the right to register an illegitimate child in her family registry), but in most cases the American father had long since departed (and regardless, it was nearly impossible to force him to admit paternity). Not having been registered with a local

[16] National Archives II, RG 331, Box 1260, Folder 291.1 #2, Marriage, Parentage & Nationality, 1949-51. As of September 1952, the right to file paternity claims in Japanese civil courts against American personnel of the post-occupation "security forces" was still being debated. Peter Kalischer, "Madame Butterfly's Children," *Collier's*, 20 September 1952, 18. See also Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally*, 41.

[17] Rohrer, "From Demons to Dependents," 128-129. British and German GI babies were also subject to immigration quotas, yet these were much greater than the post-McCarran-Walter-Act quotas for Asian nations.

[18] As a result of the threat of statelessness, many Japanese mothers immediately declared their children illegitimate, even when the identity of the American father was known. See Stephen Murphy-Shigematsu, "Multiethnic Lives and Monoethnic Myths: American-Japanese Amerasians in Japan," in Teresa Williams-León and Cynthia L. Nakashima, eds., *The Sum of Our Parts: Mixed-Heritage Asian Americans* (Philadelphia: Temple University press, 2001), 209; and Spickard, *Mixed Blood*, 155-156.

census, mixed-blood children were without any official record of their existence.[19] And their evident illegitimacy, according to a study, was one of the most significant criteria contributing to their subsequent social marginality. Moreover, among people of a self-described "single race" (*tanil minjok*) nation, such children were clearly outsiders.[20] The postwar terms for mixed-race offspring in both Korea—"the twisted" (*t'wigi*) and "Yankee bastard" (*yangk'i sekki*)—and Japan—"illegitimate children of the U.S.A." (*Amerika no otoshigo*), "children sent by the war" (*senso no moshigo*), and "international orphans" (*kokusai koji*)—testify strongly to the lack of a sense of responsibility for them within their host nations.[21] Those fathered by black Americans, as we shall see, were subject to even harsher epithets. Their physical characteristics coded them as "black" and thus even more manifestly foreign to Japanese and Korean societies, while in the eyes of American officials they were "Asian" and thus essentially alien to the United States.

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By the time of Darrell Berrigan's article, a handful of institutions were caring for white- and black-Japanese children. In a letter to NAACP headquarters, Masurao Hosokawa solicited financial assistance for the proposed St. Maria Home, a private Christian orphanage designed to shelter at least one hundred American-Japanese children. The author lamented that of the "3,490 half-breeds throughout Japan" (84 percent of their fathers American, 83 percent soldiers), only 480 were housed in approximately 100 institutions designated for their care. Half were being

[19] Sveinung Johnson Moen, *The Amerasians: A study and research on interracial children in Korea* (Seoul: Taewon Publishing Co., 1974), 36. Historian Ji-Yeon Yuh, speaking of this ongoing problem, explains that because of the double stigma attached to illegitimate, mixed-race offspring, "such children are often not registered in the family registry, the only way to register births and gain legal personhood in Korea. Because paternity usually cannot be proven and fathers rarely cooperate, the children cannot be registered with American authorities either. This in effect leaves them stateless." See *Beyond the Shadow of Camptown*, 246, note 74.

[20] Hurh, "Marginal Children of War," 13-14. As Hurh explains, "The term *minjok* has no English equivalent. Its meaning is closer to *Volk* in German than "race" in English" (14, note 5).

[21] Korean terms are from Hurh, "Marginal Children of War," 14; Japanese from Hiroshi Wagatsuma, "Identity Problems of Black Japanese Youth," in Robert I. Rotberg, ed., *The Mixing of Peoples: Problems of Identity and Ethnicity* (Stamford, CT: Greylock Publishers, 1978), 128, note 1.

raised by their mothers alone. It remains unclear whether the Home was ever constructed, and no record exists of a reply from the NAACP.[22] More established was the Our Lady of Lourdes Home in Yokohama, likewise built specifically for occupation babies. By the late spring of 1948 it had already reached a capacity of 130 residents. Two-and-a-half years later it housed 165 children, nearly one-third of whom a *Pittsburgh Courier* correspondent estimated to be Afro-Asian.[23]

Among African Americans abroad and at home, former socialite Miki Sawada quickly became the public face of Japanese efforts to find a solution to that nation's brown baby crisis. Granddaughter to the founder of the Mitsubishi firm and married to a Japanese ambassador, Sawada learned of the urgent plight of American-Japanese offspring through various media accounts in the summer of 1946: the body of an Afro-Asian infant found floating in a river; a Eurasian child discovered dead in the street. Such accounts acquired a sense of immediacy four months later, during a train ride through Gifu Prefecture. A thin bundle fell from the overhead luggage rack and landed in Sawada's lap; inside she discovered the body of another Afro-Asian child. Determined to provide for the welfare of abandoned biracial children, Sawada in early 1948 founded the Elizabeth Saunders Home—named for a British governess who had remained in Japan during the war—thirty miles north of Yokohama. Although the Home was originally entrusted with only three children, five years later it housed 118, of whom 103 had been fathered by Americans. At least thirty-four were Afro-Asian.[24] Like her counterparts at the Lourdes

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[22] Although undated, the letter most likely was sent in 1948 or 1949. Its location in an office file labeled "United States Army, 'Brown Babies in Europe,' 1945-49" suggests the low priority given Afro-Asian children by the NAACP. Papers of the NAACP, Part 9, Series A, Reel 8, Frame 456.

[23] Darrell Berrigan, "Japan's Occupation Babies," *Saturday Evening Post*, 19 June 1948, 117; Frank Whisonant, "Brown Babies OK in Japan," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 2 December 1950, 1.

[24] Hemphill, *The Least of These*, 11, 80-81, 84 (It should be noted that the author was an acquaintance and admirer of Sawada, and her account tends toward the hagiographic.); Junesay Iddittie, *When Two Cultures Meet: Sketches of Postwar Japan, 1945-55* (Tokyo: The Kenkyusha Press, 1960), 148. Sawada had previously owned the

Home, Sawada was adamant that the children be segregated from Japanese society, educated in English-language schools if possible, and eventually sent to the United States or some other Western nation.[25] And despite her good intentions and tireless promotion of material assistance for her children, Sawada could be difficult. One coworker charitably described her as a "very emotional woman," convinced that the children's mothers were prostitutes who had passed along their moral turpitude, and prone to immediately expel those she found unruly.[26] Sawada was also no stranger to Japanese anti-black prejudice, as would become evident in the years ahead.

Nonetheless, Sawada and her peers initially enjoyed support for their endeavors from black occupationaires and journalists grateful that anything was being done to care for Afro-Asian children. Sailor Robert Thornton wrote *Ebony* from Europe with "orchids to Miki Sawada" and encouragement "to keep up the good work that she and her helpers are doing."[27] Local servicemen offered more tangible aid. One reporter, noting that "the city of Yokohama abounds with brown babies," explained the difficulties in acquiring food, medical care, clothing, and school supplies. Because the cash-strapped Japanese government provided meager funds—no contributions from SCAP or the American government were mentioned—black occupationaires stepped up to the plate. According to the supervisor of the Lourdes Home, patrons of the all-black Golden Dragon Club were the largest and most consistent donors:

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estate, which was commandeered by the Japanese army for use as an officers' club and later by Allied Occupation forces. SCAP allowed her to purchase the home because of the charitable purposes involved. Given this history, explained one black journalist, "many Americans question Mrs. Sawada's motives. They say her interest in children is but a sham she used to get back her ancestral home. Others say that Mrs. Sawada is bitter against the Americans because she lost her son in a naval battle. These people say she maintains the home as an affront to the American people for the home proves, without a shadow of a doubt, that American GI's [sic] used Japanese girls." See Milton A. Smith, "Unwanted Babies Find A Home In Japan," *Afro American*, 6 January 1951, 3.

[25] Sawada faced strong but merely rhetorical opposition to her policies from Col. Crawford F. Sams, chief of SCAP's Public Health and Welfare Section: "The kindest thing that we can do is not to segregate them. They have to stay here after we've left." See Darrell Berrigan, "Japan's Occupation Babies," *Saturday Evening Post*, 19 June 1948, 117-118.

[26] Wagatsuma, "Mixed-Blood Children in Japan," 13.

[27] Robert Thornton, *Ebony*, December 1951, 8.

servicemen offered cash monthly to the club's director who in turn delivered the funds to the Home. She added that a few inquiries had been made about adoption (which was then reportedly "impossible") and expressed hope that an eventual peace treaty would clarify the children's legal status. In the city of Oiso, the Saunders home had "practically been adopted by the Twenty-fourth Regiment," in the words of the same journalist. When stationed in camp the men had frequently traveled to play with the children, and after rotation to the war in Korea several continued to send monthly donations.[28] Nevertheless, some servicemen recognized the deficiencies inherent in such ad hoc relief efforts. Thomas H. Pettigrew wrote the Executive Secretary of the NAACP from Korea in the spring of 1951 to suggest an international "Brown Babies Fund," supported by contributions from black military personnel stationed around the world. The men in his own unit had already expressed a willingness to make regular donations. After declaring that he "had never fathered one of these children," Pettigrew explained that as "a member of the Armed Forces, there are limitations to what I can do," and proposed that the NAACP take charge of the endeavor. It appears he never received a response, and no such fund came into existence.[29]

In the case of a father rushed to the Korean front, the results could be particularly distressing. African-American Sergeant First Class Robert Dickerson married Mieko Oishi in a Japanese ceremony (unrecognized by military authorities) while serving with the occupation. Their first child, Juanita, was born in early 1949; Tanya, their second, several weeks after Dickerson was ordered to Korea. By the time of her birth he was reported missing in action and

[28] Frank Whisonant, "Brown Babies OK in Japan," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 2 December 1950, 1, 4. See also "Repair Toys for Japanese Orphans," photograph, *Afro American*, 14 January 1950, 6, which depicts three black soldiers "[r]epairing toys for Japanese orphans at Yokohama's Golden Dragon Club" (the term "orphan" being loosely applied, according to the conventions of the time, to any child missing one or both parents and residing in an institution).

[29] The letter was filed under "United States Army, 'Brown Babies in Europe,' 1950-55." Papers of the NAACP, Part 9, Series A, Reel 8, Frame 521.

presumed dead. Oishi, ill and traumatized, wrote her mother-in-law to report that she had been cut off from her family for marrying an American and wished to bring the children to the United States. Latonia Dickerson replied from Buffalo with a poignant explanation that "[y]ou and the children are the only ties I have left with my son," and began inquiries into obtaining visas. The results were dispiriting. A correspondent for the *Chicago Defender* referred Latonia to the Buffalo Veterans Administration, whose chief attorney noted his lack of jurisdiction and directed her to the American Red Cross, where a liaison worker pointed her in the direction of the local International Institute, which then began the arduous process of attempting to cut through State Department red tape. The historical record ends at this point, but given the inability to establish paternity following Dickerson's death, his daughters' lack of any claim to American citizenship, and ongoing barriers to Asian immigration, it is doubtful the two ever joined their extended family in the United States.[30]

A pair of African-American celebrities did momentarily highlight the growing quandary. Boxer Joe Louis, shortly after his loss to Rocky Marciano, departed for a six-week goodwill tour of Asia in late 1951, sponsored by the Shriners. In Japan, he presented the Lourdes Home with a check for 34,000 Yen (almost $95 at the contemporary exchange rate), part of his proceeds from exhibition bouts at American military bases and Japanese arenas. Louis continued on to Taiwan, where he dined with nationalist Chinese political and military leaders and accidentally knocked-out his scheduled Taipei opponent while shadow-boxing. He stopped again in Japan during his return journey, visiting hospitalized Korean War veterans and delivering to the Lourdes Home Christmas gifts and a second check for 54,000 Yen ($150), donated by the Tokyo branch of the VFW. Louis also staged a benefit fight for the Saunders Home, raising enough money for an

[30] Lois Austin, "Missing Yank's Mother Begs U.S. For His Children, Japanese Wife," *Chicago Defender*, 2 December 1950, 18; "GI's Mother Wants Tots, Japanese Wife in America," *Afro American*, 9 December 1950, 1.

additional cottage—to be named in his honor—on the orphanage grounds. A visit of thanks by Miki Sawada and four black-Japanese children to Louis's Tokyo hotel was featured in *Jet* magazine's "The Week's Best Photos" section.[31] Two years later expatriate entertainer Josephine Baker, a personal friend of Sawada, flew to Japan for a series of concerts to benefit the Saunders Home. She gave twenty-two performances during her three-week stay and visited often with the children (see Figure 4.1).[32]

Fig. 4.1, from Hemphill, *The Least of These*, 108.

[31] "Thousands in Tokyo Cheer Louis on Arrival for Three-Week Tour," *New York Times*, 15 November 1951, 45 (the "three-week tour" referred to the Japanese leg of his journey); Ralph Matthews, "Louis Aids Japan Brown Babies," *New York Amsterdam News*, 22 December 1951, 2; "Joe Louis Returns Home From Far East Tour," *Jet*, 27 December 1951, 55; "Louis Returns, Learns of California Bans," *Jet*, 3 January 1952, 65; "Backstage," *Ebony*, April 1952, 12; "The Week's Best Photos," *Jet*, 17 January 1952, 35. See also Plummer, *Rising Wind*, 208.

[32] Hemphill, *The Least of These*, 97-98.

Yet despite the material support provided, and the spotlight briefly shone on Japanese efforts to assist mixed-blood children, these endeavors were ultimately limited in their influence on black public opinion.

Indeed, by the time Joe Louis was touring the Far East, the African-American media had for some time featured suggestions of the immorality of these Japanese mothers, concurrent with a much larger rhetorical assault on Japan for its mistreatment of Afro-Asian children. As with the debate over the motives of Japanese girlfriends, Ethel Payne led the charge. In late 1950 she reported on the "crop of sloe-eyed curly topped brown babies, the numbers of which constitutes a major sociological, biological and psychological phenomena [sic]." There seemed little chance, she explained, that their fathers would be returned to Japan after the war. Noting the irony of a situation in which the one-drop rule traditionally used to define Americans as legally black could not be used to circumvent exclusionary immigration laws, Payne declared such offspring "children without a country." As for their mothers, Japanese women had once "even displayed [an] eagerness to have babies as this meant a stronger hold upon the soldier and increased financial support," yet with such assistance no longer forthcoming, she predicted, most would abandon their children. Payne then turned to the question of Japanese racial attitudes and their implications for the children's futures. "Under the occupation," she explained, "the Japanese have no choice but to give to all of the representatives of the Supreme Commander the respect and obedience which their presence demand[s]." Nevertheless, the military's flagrant segregation of African-American personnel had made a strong impression, while a "thousand years of [a] rigid caste system . . . has not made for tolerance and understanding by the Japanese people." Payne claimed that investigation into an unnamed Japanese orphanage for mixed-race

children revealed that gifts of food and clothing were distributed solely to the offspring of white GIs.[33]

The following months witnessed several articles in this vein. One African-American periodical suggested that the mothers of black-Japanese children were of questionable morality by highlighting an infant who refused to fall asleep unless loud jazz was played, since the "baby had been weaned in a rough night club."[34] Another bemoaned the general licentiousness of the occupation while noting that the mother of two biracial half sisters "had a succession of GI lovers" and had since become "a street girl."[35] The *Afro American* in January 1951 reproduced photographs of black-Japanese children discovered in the Saunders Home under the headline "Starved, Mistreated and Abandoned, These Unwanted Babies Found Home in Japan" (see Figure 4.2).

Fig. 4.2, *Afro American*, 13 January 1951.

[33] Ethel Payne, "Says Japanese Girls Playing GIs For Suckers: Says Fate That Awaits War Babies Is Tragedy of Yank Oriental Unions," *Chicago Defender*, 25 November 1950, 12. One black occupationaire responded to the story by acknowledging "the 'brown baby' problem," but asking, "what do you expect to happen in a land where the problem of food is more important than morals? And the females outnumber the men 10 to 1? They naturally follow the line of least resistance." See Waldo E. Williams, *Chicago Defender*, 13 January 1951, 6.

[34] "War Babies of Japan: Shunned and deserted, more than 2,000 racially-mixed youngsters face tragic future," *Ebony*, September 1951, 21.

[35] "Victims of Loose Morals in Japan," photograph, *Afro American*, 3 February 1951, 5.

The accompanying text noted that one was the lone brown baby of the Home adopted by an American couple in Japan, while another had survived attempted infanticide.[36] Reporter Milton Smith similarly explained that in addition to the "[s]pindly legged, diseased babies that have been picked up in fields, in the Imperial Palace Moat, in public toilets and in shoe boxes at railroad stations," "[m]any have died from starvation, murder and neglect."[37] Sawada herself later revealed that approximately twenty-five mixed-race infants taken in during these years perished quickly due to pneumonia or prior malnourishment.[38] Those who survived, the black press informed readers, faced harassment from a very young age. *Jet* magazine featured a photograph of two distraught black-Japanese orphans who had been taunted and physically attacked by local youngsters, claiming that "[f]ull blooded Japanese children dislike racially-mixed children."[39]

In 1951, customarily optimistic *Ebony* magazine published perhaps the most widely-read account of Afro-Asian children. Its article, entitled "War Babies of Japan: Shunned and deserted, more than 2,000 racially-mixed youngsters face tragic future," described the "plight of more than 2,000 illegitimate children of Japanese mothers and American GI fathers, a large percentage of them Negro soldiers." Indeed, ten months after the first black occupationaires landed, a "curly-haired, brown-skinned Japanese citizen was born. With his birth the 'race problem' began in Japan." As the author explained, not only did SCAP ignore the children of its

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[36] "Starved, Mistreated and Abandoned, These Unwanted Babies Found Home in Japan," photograph, *Afro American*, 13 January 1951, 13.

[37] The author, paraphrasing Miki Sawada, added that the "children of the conquerors have a cruel time in Japan, and there is no future in this island country for them," while "those with colored fathers have the [even] tougher time." Milton A. Smith, "Unwanted Babies Find A Home In Japan," *Afro American*, 6 January 1951, 3.

[38] The interview took place in December 1977. See Burkhardt, "Institutional Barriers, Marginality, and Adaptation," 526.

[39] "The Week's Best Photos," *Jet*, 13 December 1951, 33.

own personnel, but due to unwarranted legal restrictions only seven Afro-Asian children had been adopted by black couples in the previous six months. Not one Japanese family, the author pointedly added, had adopted such children. Aside from the "many" GI fathers who had been thwarted in their attempts to marry, few escaped censure in this account: "It is a story of the wholesale abandonment of children not only by their mothers but by an entire nation [i.e. Japan] as well as by the occupying army which created the problem." Most ominously, because "the Japanese people are as race-minded as Georgia whites, the children of the conquerors are already feeling the cruelty of race prejudice."[40] Reaction among readers was swift. One African-American sailor stationed in Europe lamented the inexplicable lack of compassion among the Japanese for the abandoned children in their midst. Perhaps some day, he indignantly concluded, they "will realize that the kids are human just like they are and should be treated as such."[41] Catherine Daniels wrote from Miami to express her sympathy for the children and to suggest they be removed from Japan. Why, given that "our soldiers were the direct cause of the tragedy," was the American government unwilling to provide financial or other assistance "whereby they may grow up with the feeling that they 'belong'"?[42]

Afro-Asian children theoretically could enter the United States most expeditiously—and often only—by means of a private bill, specific congressional legislation intended for a single alien or a small group of related foreign individuals.[43] Yet in addition to the mastery of civics

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[40] "War Babies of Japan: Shunned and deserted, more than 2,000 racially-mixed youngsters face tragic future," *Ebony*, September 1951, 15, 17-18, 21.

[41] Robert Thornton, *Ebony*, December 1951, 8.

[42] Catherine Daniels, *Ebony*, November 1951, 6.

[43] The 1945 War (or Soldiers) Brides Act made no provision for children, step-children, or adopted children to enter the United States with their married parents. See "Ask House Group to Drop Race Restrictions in GI Brides Bill," *Pacific Citizen*, 19 February 1949, 3. According to one historian, "No children of Japanese descent came to the U.S. via the December 1945 War Brides Act. Only 503 Japanese total had entered the country through normal immigration channels between the end of the war and June 30, 1947. The eighty-two entering in fiscal year 1947 (ending June 30, 1947) included only one minor child. Excluding private laws, only five Japanese children of

required of a serviceman, his relatives, or interested families to initiate and monitor the process, members of Congress were never uniformly sold on the tactic. Just over a decade after World War Two, even the prolific Congressman Francis Walter (co-sponsor of the McCarran-Walter Immigration Act) had submitted private bills admitting barely 350 Japanese and American-Japanese children for adoption, at a rate of roughly 35 per year.[44] Others, however, remained adamantly opposed to the admission of nonwhite minors, whatever the means. In the spring of 1947 arch-segregationist Representative John Rankin of Mississippi, responding to rumors that 5,000 British brown babies (half the purported total) were to be shipped to the United States, took to the floor of the House to condemn the entry of "a lot of illegitimate half-breed colored children from England." They were, Rankin sneered, "the offspring of the scum of the British Isles," most likely having inherited "the vices of both races and the virtues of neither."[45]

In September 1951 Rankin again raised objections, this time to consideration of a private bill to admit Pascal Nemoto Yutaka, a half-white Japanese orphan from the Lourdes Home adopted by an American couple stationed in Japan. "[I]t is about time we put a stop to flooding our country with foreigners in this way," he thundered. Although admittedly unaware of the specifics of the case, Rankin added that the nation's "immigration laws should not be set aside. . . . By going beyond the quota limit and bringing in these people, this country is being literally flooded with un-American elements, a vast number of whom are today undermining and trying

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American citizens received permission to enter the U.S. during fiscal 1950, and just eleven the next year." Conflating Japanese women and children, the author notes that through private legislation 728 entered the United States between late 1945 and fiscal 1948. "The next year alone the number rose to 488, then leapfrogged to 1,498 in fiscal 1950, 3,580 in fiscal 1951, and 4,312 in fiscal 1952." The majority of these individuals were likely Japanese military brides. See Rohrer, "From Demons to Dependents," 137-138.

[44] Koshiro, *Trans-Pacific Racisms*, 199.

[45] The figure of 10,000 mixed-race children was, of course, widely exaggerated. "Britons Deny Plan to Ship Babies," *Afro American*, 3 May 1947, 1-2. See also "Adventures in Race Relations" feature, *Chicago Defender*, 12 July 1947, 17.

to wreck this Government and to destroy the American way of life." When a colleague patiently explained that Pascal was only three years old, hardly of age to engage in subversive activities, Rankin held fast: "They always have some kind of excuse for going around the immigration law and bringing these people in."[46] Two weeks later, after an outpouring of censure and ridicule, Rankin relented, but gave notice of his continued vigilance in response to "this undesirable infiltration": "I am opposed to breaking down our immigration laws and flooding this country with riffraff of the Old World [sic]. This is being done today, and as far as I am individually concerned, I am going to watch all these cases from now on and try to stop the flood of undesirable aliens who are now being admitted into this country, many of whom have wormed their way onto the Federal payroll."[47] The contretemps was one of several developments that, particularly in the months to come, likely gave pause to those promoting adoption of Afro-Asian children.

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A series of events in 1952 and 1953 largely determined this cohort's future. Most obviously, the miniscule quotas for Asian immigration imposed by the 1952 McCarran-Walter Act appeared to preclude mass adoption. More generally, the end of the occupation enabled the Japanese to vent their pent-up frustrations openly. The Peace Treaty's terms, which ensured that American military personnel remained stationed on the archipelago indefinitely, produced considerable irritation often sublimated into hostility toward biracial, and particularly Afro-Asian, children. Circumstances in South Korea, on the other hand, differed in important respects. The end to active combat in mid-1953 increased fraternization between American

[46] "Rep. Rankin's Objection Bars Entry for 3-Year Old Child," *Pacific Citizen*, 29 September 1951, 1.
[47] "Rep. Rankin Drops Objection, Pass Bill to Admit Child," *Pacific Citizen*, 13 October 1951, 3.

servicemen and Korean women, while the shaky armistice guaranteed the long-term presence of the American military, as in Japan. In both nations it abruptly became clear that as hosts to American servicemen they would bear the brunt of responsibility for mixed-race offspring. However, black-Korean children began to appear in substantial numbers at the same time the Asian brown baby crisis was slipping from the black media's radar. They were also more likely than their Japanese counterparts to be confined to the shadows of the innumerable camptowns hugging American military bases. Greater visibility in Japan and concomitant black protest against their treatment were offset by the near invisibility of the situation in Korea and more extensive severing of kin and adoptive relations. Meanwhile, African Americans' evolving domestic priorities, and the uneven racial logic of the Cold War, fundamentally crippled the case for Afro-Asian adoption.

One of the first undertakings of the post-occupation Japanese government was to conduct a formal census of American-Japanese children, precisely what SCAP had long prohibited. On the eve of the April 1952 transfer of sovereignty, Tokyo's *Yomiuri* newspaper, the nation's largest, claimed that American servicemen had fathered 200,000 mixed-race offspring, a figure that, however exaggerated, captured the imagination of readers and much of the Japanese media.[48] Part of the problem in acquiring an accurate count was that after so many years of near anonymity these children and their mothers were difficult to track down; another was their dispersal throughout the home islands, notwithstanding the large number concentrated in the

[48] "Japanese Paper Says GIs Father 200,000 Babies," *Jet*, 28 February 1952, 17. Indeed, despite the subsequent availability of more precise, and much reduced, figures, popular Japanese belief, reinforced by press accounts, held that the total was, or would eventually reach, 200,000. See, for example, Iddittie, *When Two Cultures Meet*, 147; and Peter Kalischer, "Madame Butterfly's Children," *Collier's*, 20 September 1952, 15. The latter author complained that the Japanese press was "now exploiting a hitherto censored topic with the zest of a small boy discovering a naughty word." Miki Sawada herself was convinced that 200,000 GI babies existed. See Koshiro, *Trans-Pacific Racisms*, 164.

Toyo-Yokohama area.[49] By the spring of 1952 the Japanese Children's Bureau completed the first official census, with a final tally of 5,002 biracial children. The following August the Ministry of Welfare produced an almost identical result, along with statistics revealing approximately 700 Afro-Asian offspring and nearly 100 of unknown racial background.[50] During the next several months various government ministries issued additional reports, with sums for mixed-blood children ranging between 3,289 and 3,925.[51] Nevertheless, the figure of 5,000 occupation babies appears most accurate, and among them at least 400 black-Japanese children and likely more than 700.[52] Both totals increased steadily as the American military presence endured over the following decades, an outcome the Japanese anticipated.[53]

In the more frank post-occupation atmosphere, public dialogue swiftly turned to the fate of the victor's human traces, particularly those of African-American ancestry. One debate, appearing in the pages of academic monthly *Jidō shinri* (roughly, "child psychology"), was atypical in including criticism of proposals to "send back" mixed-blood children to the United States. According a chronicler of this discussion, "[d]espite official preachments on democracy, one participant pointed out, American society segregates black people. Half-back children

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[49] One American visitor, for instance, encountered two children "with café-au-lait skin and tightly curled hair" in the small fishing village of Zenibako, forty minutes by train from Sapporo, where a regiment of black troops had been stationed for a short period following the war. See Brown, *Over a Bamboo Fence*, 114.

[50] Koshiro, *Trans-Pacific Racisms*, 164.

[51] According to one American journalist, an official nationwide survey revealed that as of 1 February 1953 there were 3,289 children abandoned by foreign fathers, the majority of these American. Graham, "Those G.I.'s in Japan," 330. The Japanese Division of Health and Welfare Statistics maintained that as of the same date there were 3,490 biracial children, at least 400 of them Afro-Asian. Koshiro, *Trans-Pacific Racisms*, 164, 266, note 17. Author James Michener in March 1954 cited a "searching census of all identifiable GI babies born in Japan before February 1, 1953" that claimed 3,925 GI babies, a figure Michener maintained "should be increased by about 1200 to represent children whose births have been hidden for family reasons." See "The Facts About the GI Babies," *Reader's Digest*, March 1954, 6.

[52] For one historian's acceptance of the 5,000 figure, see Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally*, 41. The proportion of Afro-Asian children in the censuses cited above ranged from 11.5 percent to more than 14 percent.

[53] Eight days before the transfer of sovereignty the *Tokyo Times* ran an editorial, entitled "The Problem of Half-Breeds," which noted, "The number of half-breeds will be on the increase in view of the stationing of United States forces in Japan for a relatively prolonged period." See Peter Kalischer, "Madame Butterfly's Children," *Collier's*, 20 September 1952, 15.

would be adopted by black Americans and, once sent 'back' to the United States, would very likely be absorbed into black society, remaining forever segregated from white society and persecuted by it. Since Japanese people are also colored, . . . the Japanese might have a better chance of successfully merging these half-black children into the mainstream."[54] On the other hand, *Jet* magazine claimed, the same influential Japanese newspaper promoting the figure of 200,000 GI babies "urged that these waifs 'with blue eyes or black faces' be sent to the U.S." In the words of this *Yomiuri* editorial: 'America is a melting pot of races, so these orphans would not be as forlorn there as here in Japan.'"[55]

The latter argument proved more convincing. One Japanese human-interest story of early 1953 emphasized the essential biological obstacles to absorption within mainstream Japanese society. The author, a professor at Waseda University, began by pondering why the children's mothers—"almost exclusively 'women of the streets'"—had been attracted to black servicemen in the first place. The problem lay in their confusion of African Americans with the admirable qualities of American life: "Suppose those negro [sic] soldiers of the American army had come direct from their original home, Africa, without the background and support of American culture, would they have appealed to the Japanese girls…? Certainly not. We must attribute it to the prestige of [American] culture. Those untutored, unschooled, unfortunate girls of postwar Japan must have taken it for granted that because the coloured [sic] soldiers belong to the U.S. Army they are not much worse than the white ones." The author concluded with a shudder at the demographic implications for Japan of "[t]he black blood [that] now runs in the veins of some children." The number of these offspring, he insisted, "though very small at present, is bound to

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[54] Koshiro, *Trans-Pacific Racisms*, 193.

[55] "Japanese Paper Says GIs Father 200,000 Babies," *Jet*, 28 February 1952, 17. *Yomiuri* evidently was joined by another of Tokyo's most influential newspapers in calling for the removal of black-Japanese children to the United States. See "Negro Japanese Babies Coming To U.S.," *Jet*, 6 March 1952, 14.

follow the Malthusian law. What would happen in one hundred, two hundred, five hundred years? God knows."[56] Such popular alarm received the imprimatur of official Japanese science one year later, when the Ministry of Welfare's Institute of Population Problems released a report confirming the view that race-mixing produced intellectually deficient offspring.[57]

Cultural developments during the occupation's twilight and after likewise rendered it more certain that Afro-Asian children would be relegated to the margins of Japanese society. On the one hand, evolving Japanese terminology for biracial individuals in general appeared to augur a more tolerant attitude. The occupation-era expression *ainoko*, literally "a child of sex" and considered derogatory, could be applied to both animals and humans, and evoked notions of impurity, illegitimacy and destitution. It was gradually replaced in post-occupation public discourse by the more neutral *konketsuji* ("mixed-blood child"), although the birth of such children and the "problem of the konketsuji" (*konketsuji mondai*), that is, their unwelcome and allegedly disreputable existence, were routinely cited as evidence of the social problems caused by America's ongoing military presence.[58] On the other hand, new cultural artifacts reinforced a perception of black peoples as residing not only beyond the margins of national inclusion but perhaps the human species as well. SCAP itself played a hand in this process. In early 1952 officials at an occupation-sponsored Civil Information and Education Library prominently advertised the acquisition of *The Story of Little Black Sambo*, much to the consternation of black observers.[59] Helen Bannerman's book, although introduced to Japan decades earlier, failed to capture much attention until 1953, when a Japanese publisher released a new version, "complete

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[56] The piece appeared in either the English-language daily *Japan Times*, available in both Japan and the United States, or the *Waseda Guardian*, an English-language student newspaper for the university. See Iddittie, *When Two Cultures Meet*, 147, 152-154.

[57] Koshiro, *Trans-Pacific Racisms*, 170.

[58] Murphy-Shigematsu, "Multiethnic Lives and Monoethnic Myths," 210-211.

[59] Hugh M. Smythe and Mabel M. Smythe, "Report From Japan: Comments on the Race Question," *The Crisis*, vol. 59, no. 3 (March 1952), 159.

with 'pickaninny' illustrations." Japanese consumers have since snapped up more than 120 editions.[60] Five years later, the domestically-produced *Dakko-chan* doll hit store shelves, immediately becoming Japan's top-selling toy and a common household item. It was, in the words of one scholar, "a highly caricatured jet black figure with big eyes and huge red lips, sold with a pole" up which the doll could be made to scurry. Into the 1990s the Japanese continued to purchase 100,000 *Dakko-chan* dolls per year.[61] Such characterizations of black peoples, moreover, meshed well with the popular epithet *kuronbo* ("a black one") and its connotations. It is, according to anthropologist Hiroshi Wagatsuma, a belittling, even derogatory, term, with the diminutive suffix *bo* meaning "little one" and implying childishness.[62]

Post-occupation Japan thus appeared to many as particularly inhospitable to Afro-Asian children. Even former SCAP officials voiced concern. As a onetime Chief of Labor Education pleaded in 1953, "If any of the mixed-blood children of the Occupation should be adopted it is these Negro-Japanese mixed-blood children—and as rapidly as possible before they are scarred too deeply by racial exclusion." He urged they be endowed with "special American citizenship" and placed with families "in selected areas of the United States," since in Japan "they seem to be marked for bias and discrimination." They could thereby reach adulthood "inside a multi-lingual, multi-cultural, multi-national"—and thus presumably welcoming—society. "While

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[60] Russell, "Race and Reflexivity," 13.

[61] Millie Creighton, "*Soto* Others and *uchi* Others," 222. Similarly, "[i]n the mid-1980s, *Chibikuro Sanbo* (Little Black Sambo) dolls produced by the Japanese company Sanrio, became a huge fad. . . . After continued public outcry, mostly from non-Japanese, the dolls were finally removed from the market."

[62] The other contemporary Japanese term, *koku-jin* ("black person"), is more neutral in tone. Wagatsuma, "The Social Perception of Skin Color in Japan," 154-155.

America is no Heaven for obviously Negro children," he concluded, "I am sure their fate will be happier."[63]

Miki Sawada certainly agreed. Already she had encountered threatening protests against her efforts on behalf of American-Japanese children: thugs stoned Sawada and an employee as they walked through town one evening; and an outraged schoolmaster subsequently burst into the Saunders Home to deliver a tirade of abuse, accusing Sawada of "shamelessly contributing to the delinquency of his students."[64] When the seventeen oldest Saunders children, three of them Afro-Asian, reached school age in the spring of 1952, parents of the local PTA effectively prevented their entry into the public school system.[65] Thus the following autumn, after an initial rebuff from American officials in Japan,[66] Sawada set out for a three-month fund-raising and lobbying tour of the United States, with an emphasis on outreach to the African-American community.[67] Indeed, the tour cemented her relentlessly self-cultivated image among black opinion makers as the representative at large for the interests of American-Japanese and Afro-

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[63] Richard L-G. Deverall, *The Great Seduction: Red China's Drive to Bring Free Japan behind the Iron Curtain* (Tokyo: International Literature Printing Co., 1953), 111. Deverall was by then serving as the Representative-in-Asia of the Free Trade Union Committee of the American Federation of Labor.

[64] Hemphill, *The Least of These*, 88.

[65] In response to such opposition, the Oiso board of education offered to provide the children with a separate classroom. Sawada opted to construct her own school on the grounds of the Saunders Home. Koshiro, *Trans-Pacific Racisms*, 178.

[66] According to her biographer, Sawada began planning her trip shortly before the occupation came to a close, only to be "strangled in red tape and put off by excuses, causing her to suspect that the American authorities had no intention of letting her leave Japan. Sure enough, her application for a visa was turned down. By this time, however, [her husband] was the Japanese representative to the United States. She again requested a visa, noting that her husband was accredited to the United Nations with the rank of ambassador." Only then was she permitted to leave the country. See Hemphill, *The Least of These*, 94.

[67] See, for example, Koshiro, *Trans-Pacific Racisms*, 189: "[Sawada] made a special effort to reach the black community and to ask their help in adopting half-black children. She paid courtesy visits to prominent black American public figures such as Rev. Mordecai Johnson, president of Howard University, Roy Wilkins of the NAACP, Hubert T. Delany, justice of the Domestic Relations Court of the City of New York, and others."

Asian children.[68] However, Sawada was notably unsuccessful in a more tangible pursuit: her plan to bring along ten black-Japanese youngsters for adoption never materialized.[69]

A letter of introduction to Walter White of the NAACP, written on the eve of her arrival, reveals much about Sawada's intentions, prejudices, and general state of mind. She began by calling attention to the need for "definite action" on behalf of "the unwanted Eurasian children who have been abandoned by their irresponsible parents." Her goals were to raise funds for technical-education scholarships and the construction of a vocational school and to secure an expansion of Japan's immigration quota. Not only had the convoluted overseas adoption procedures limited to roughly 35 the number of Saunders Home children placed with occupation families, but the "public attitude in Japan has changed toward these children from the very day the Occupation ended. People who had awakened to the fact that they had mistaken degenerated morals for democracy do not hesitate to give vent to their feelings by turning their wrath on these unfortunate children," whose number Sawada now placed at over 100,000. She enclosed clippings from her Japanese radio speeches, in which she chastised "the irresponsible GI's [sic]" and depicted the "miserable half-breed children" as "born of sin, of ignorance, of carelessness; they are literally unwanted by both parents; a nuisance to the whole world." As for the "chocolate-colored infant"—a phenomenon "never before known in Japanese history"—its birth "affor[ed] a hair-raising sight." Moreover, Sawada had warned her Japanese audiences, the mixed-blood individual was criminally inclined. In Honolulu, Singapore and Hong Kong, she

[68] One indication of her success in this regard, as well as of the relative lack of institutional support for Afro-Asian children, may be found in a newspaper's response to a query about contributing "foreign aid to the brown babies in Germany and Japan," published at the conclusion of Sawada's tour: "You may contact Mrs. Micki [sic] Sawada at the Saunder's [sic] Home. . . . For the German brown babies, contact your nearest child welfare agency." See The Williamettes, Mrs. L. Young, president, *Chicago Defender*, 29 November 1952, 10.

[69] The original figure of ten black-Japanese children was subsequently winnowed to five—three part-white and two part-black— adopted by American families. Immigration officials then refused to grant entry permits for any of them. See "Negro Japanese Babies Coming To U.S.," *Jet*, 6 March 1952, 14; and "Japanese 'Foster Mother' Arrives in U.S.," *Jet*, 25 September 1952, 15.

insisted, "the highest percentage of criminals is among the Eurasians. . . . Under the circumstances that exist in Japan . . . [t]here is no doubt that the same record will be repeated here." The only viable option was for American-Japanese offspring to remain segregated from Japanese society and to be sent elsewhere as soon as possible.[70]

In most respects Sawada's tour was a failure. Notwithstanding the donations and publicity, Sawada had been unable to surmount "the hard wall of the Immigration Laws," as she complained at the conclusion of her trip.[71] Moreover, non-military couples and American orphanages remained legally prohibited from accepting American-Japanese children, despite the willingness of several to care for them.[72] "Would it not be possible," she suggested to the NAACP's Roy Wilkins, to have legislation "presented in congress naming eight or ten children from my orphanage—instead of just one baby, thus hastening their entry? Would it not be possible to have a separate quota for children born during the OCCUPATION"?[73] Sawada likewise failed to interest the United Nations in her cause, *Jet* magazine reported, since according to UN officials "illegitimate babies were left by armies all over the world and there is no reason to make a special case before the world body of the problems of Japanese-American babies." Nonetheless, upon her return to Japan she voiced cautious optimism that the incoming Eisenhower administration might relax immigration restrictions.[74] Legislative action had become all the more pressing since the United States made clear its intention to maintain a sizeable military presence on the home islands. As Sawada reminded Wilkins, America's enormous new airbases were depriving countless Japanese farmers of their livelihoods: "These

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[70] Papers of the NAACP, Part 9, Series A, Reel 8, Frames 532-540.

[71] Sawada's words are from a November 1952 letter to African-American congressman William L. Dawson of Chicago, quoted in Hemphill, *The Least of These*, 120.

[72] James A. Michener, "The Facts About the GI Babies," *Reader's Digest*, March 1954, 9.

[73] Papers of the NAACP, Part 9, Series A, Reel 8, Frame 550.

[74] "Hope New GOP Congress Will Relax Ban On Jap-Negro Babies," *Jet*, 22 January 1953, 20-21.

farmers are unfit to earn their living by another trade. Now they have learned it is far more lucrative to send their daughters away to these airbases. . . . This means the babies still continue to come."[75]

The following summer a panacea seemed to arrive, driven in part by the need to counter Soviet propaganda denouncing American intervention in Korea. As the war drew to a close, Congress enacted the Admission of Orphans Adopted by United States Citizens and Refugee Relief Acts, which together authorized nonquota immigrant visas for up to 4,000 "orphans"—that is, children under the age of ten deserted by one or both parents or surrendered for adoption (they also need not officially have been declared "refugees").[76] Unlike previous acts, these authorized adoption beyond the confines of Europe.[77] Hence they appeared to supersede the private-bill system. Yet 4,000 was a remarkably small figure considering the total number of adoptable children—fathered by Americans or not—living within the bounds of America's far-flung military domain. By the spring of 1954 only 300 of Japan's roughly 5,000 occupation babies had been adopted by American families.[78] Not until 1957 did amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act authorize unlimited entry for alien orphans adopted by American citizens before June 1959, at which point the provisions were renewed for one year.[79]

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[75] Papers of the NAACP, Part 9, Series A, Reel 8, Frame 551. A nearly identical warning appears in Sawada's letter to congressman Dawson. See Hemphill, *The Least of These*, 120.

[76] Koshiro, *Trans-Pacific Racisms*, 190; Lloyd B. Graham, "Those G.I.'s in Japan," *The Christian Century*, vol. LXXI, no. 11 (19 March 1954), 330; de Faria, "'Germany's "Brown Babies" Must be Helped! Will You?,'" 356.

[77] These earlier statutes included the War Brides Act (1945) and the Displaced Persons Act (1948). See Klein, *Cold War Orientalism*, 174-175.

[78] Lloyd B. Graham, "Those G.I.'s in Japan," *The Christian Century*, vol. LXXI, no. 11 (19 March 1954), 330. A racial breakdown of these children was not included in Graham's report. However, he added that approximately 100 black-Japanese children not residing in institutions were by then *registered* for adoption by foreigners. Yet historian Yukiko Koshiro notes that as of January 1955 the Tokyo-based American Joint Committee for Assisting Japanese-American Orphans, a semiofficial organization established in October 1952 and representing various groups including the Christian Children's Fund, had sent only 15 children to the United States under the Refugee Relief Act's provisions. See Koshiro, *Trans-Pacific Racisms*, 185, 199.

[79] Klein, *Cold War Orientalism*, 175; Hemphill, *The Least of These*, 121. According to Hemphill, by the end of the decade two hundred American-Japanese children had left the Saunders Home for families in the United States.

Because such children could now be adopted without need of a private bill and endless paperwork, their unprecedented availability set off an East Asian adoption boom. As historian Christina Klein notes, "passage of the 1953 and 1957 acts permanently shifted the primary countries of origin from Europe to Asia"; by 1963 Americans had adopted nearly 9,000 Asian children, the majority of them from war-torn South Korea.[80]

Yet this upsurge in popularity centered on Korean war orphans (in the literal sense of the term), and much less on American-Korean, American-Japanese, or, at the very bottom of the list, Afro-Asian children.[81] While white American families evinced virtually no interest in adopting Afro-Asian orphans, African Americans became much less responsive to such appeals. *Ebony* revealed in a rare article of 1955 that 300 Korean brown babies, "offspring of Oriental-Negro romances that flowed between battles and faded with the first hint of armistice," had become available for adoption. "Not only would the youngsters benefit enormously by coming to the U.S.," the author continued, "but, in the words of a Foreign Service aide in Korea, their adoption 'would effectively counteract any drop in America's prestige in this part of the world.'"[82] It is important to note the anemic use of such strategic considerations, for despite the occasional reference to American "prestige" in Asia by those discussing Afro-Asian offspring, Cold War logic did not require assuming responsibility for children fathered by *non-white* Americans. In March 1955 the Coordinator in the Far East for the Refugee Relief Program wrote Walter White from Taiwan to discuss the growing number of GI babies in Japan and Korea. There were between 500 and 1,000 such children in Korea, a nation in which, he claimed, "racial discrimination is said to be more pronounced than anywhere else in the world. About fifty

[80] Klein, *Cold War Orientalism*, 175.

[81] See, for example, Hurh, "Marginal Children of War," 15, Table 3, which indicates the striking international adoption preference for white-Korean over black-Korean children, from 1955 through 1966.

[82] "How To Adopt Korean Babies," *Ebony*, September 1955, 31.

percent of the children are negroid [sic] and it has been extremely difficult to find American homes for some of these orphans." Because of the inability to interest Americans, black or white, in adopting these children, the author suggested, as he had during a conversation with Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. of Harlem, that White make use of his contacts within the African-American community to publicize their dilemma.[83]

Such desultory pleas were indicative of a shift in black adoptive priorities. In addition to longstanding economic and legal barriers to adoption, fading black media coverage of Afro-Asian children, and lack of a direct connection between their predicament and American prestige in the region, there arose a vigorous campaign to encourage domestic black adoption. It began at precisely the moment Sawada initiated her awareness-raising offensive and the Refugee Relief Act inspired hopes in some for a massive babylift. Already some black Americans were exasperated with appeals for their assistance (and, perhaps, with Asian and European devotion to racial purity). One New York woman wrote the *Pittsburgh Courier* in autumn 1952 to vent her displeasure: "I am thoroughly disgusted with Negro publication[s] continually wailing over the plight of 'brown babies' in Germany and Japan. … Don't we have enough mulattoes in our race now[?] Aren't we tired of other races making ours the dumping ground of the world?"[84] That same year journalist Ethel Payne composed a four-part series for the *Chicago Defender* advocating adoption of African-American orphans. In the inaugural story she quoted a supervisor for the Atlanta Child Welfare Association who estimated there were between 30,000

[83] Papers of the NAACP, Part 9, Series A, Reel 8, Frame 615. Like the unnamed Foreign Service aide quoted in *Ebony*, the author added that he and Congressman Powell had agreed that "apart from the very pressing need of the children who would benefit enormously in every instance, immeasurable good will [sic] would be generated throughout Free Asia, thereby effectively counteracting America's drop in prestige in this part of the world." Note again the lackluster appeal to Cold War logic.

[84] Claudette Debarre, *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1 November 1952, 11.

and 50,000 black children in need of permanent homes.[85] *Ebony* enlisted in the campaign with a July article entitled "Why Negroes Don't Adopt Children," in which the author lamented that "[b]ecause of misinformation concerning the adoption process, economic factors and deep-seated prejudices about taking 'other people's children,' only 3,000 Negro babies (only 4 per cent of the total U.S. adoptions) are adopted each year."[86] The Urban League took up the cause the following year, making African-American adoption a priority from 1953 to 1958.[87] In 1957 Alexander J. Allen, Executive Director of the League's Pittsburgh branch, tackled the imbalance between an abundance of black orphans and the relatively small number of financially qualified black applicants. He remarked, with more than a hint of resentment, that the "concept of an 'over-supply' of Negro children has reality only in relation to the premise that Negro children are to be placed only in Negro homes. It is an interesting commentary on prevailing American attitudes on race that white families are able to adopt across international racial lines, for example the fairly widespread adoption of Korean war orphans, but it is not yet possible to give serious or widespread consideration to domestic interracial adoption."[88] By the mid-1950s, as black interest in international adoption waned and Afro-Asian children approached the age at

[85] Ethel Payne, "Parents Wanted! Why Not Adopt A Baby?," *Chicago Defender*, 12 April 1952, 1, 2; Ethel Payne, "Parents Wanted: Why Not Adopt A Baby?," *Chicago Defender*, 19 April 1952, 1, 2; Ethel Payne, "Why Not Adopt A Baby?," *Chicago Defender*, 26 April 1952, 1, 2; Ethel Payne, "Why Not Adopt A Baby?," *Chicago Defender*, 3 May 1952, 1. A photo caption in the final installment explained that the father shown had been stationed in Japan for two years and served in the Korean War, before adopting an African-American child in Chicago.

[86] "Why Negroes Don't Adopt Children," *Ebony*, July 1952, 31.

[87] Rickie Solinger, *Wake Up Little Susie: Single Pregnancy and Race before Roe v. Wade* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 198. According to Solinger, "The League's intention was to increase the number of placements using three strategies. First, the League planned to demonstrate the ways that black unmarried mothers were prevented by punitive-minded officials and agencies from expressing a desire to put their babies up for adoption. Second, the League wanted to publicize the existence of black babies without permanent families. Third, it intended to make clear the tactics used by agencies to screen out and discourage black couples trying to adopt babies."

[88] Alexander J. Allen, "A Commentary on a Study of Negro Adoptions," in David Fanshel, *A Study in Negro Adoption* (New York: The Child Welfare League of American, Inc., 1957), 89.

which they became inadmissible as orphans under American law, hopes for securing placements within African-American communities appeared increasingly illusory.

Most mixed-race Koreans and Japanese thus confronted an adolescence and early adulthood marked by harassment and discrimination in their home societies. In Korea, domestic adoption was severely restricted on both cultural and socioeconomic grounds. According to one sociologist, "the traditional system of intra-kin preferential adoption, the relative lack of socioeconomically qualified adoptive parents, the insular character of [the] social ethos[,] which tends to discourage a generalized social welfare, and the cumbersome bureaucratic process" rendered it infeasible. Moreover, a mother's assumed, prior, or ongoing work as a *yang saeksi* ("prostitute engaged with American soldiers") enhanced the stigma attached to her children.[89] Many black-Koreans therefore grew up and congregated within the camptowns that flourished adjacent to American military installations, living mostly hidden from view.[90] The daughters of a Korean War era prostitute and two different black servicemen, for example, became prostitutes themselves at an early age. Although indistinguishable from their fellow Koreans in speech, customs and habits, they rarely ventured beyond the camptown in which they worked and lived.[91]

In Japan, by contrast, militarized prostitution underwent a significant decline as the nation rebounded economically, and few American-Japanese offspring became commercial sex

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[89] Hurh, "Marginal Children of War," 18, 13-14. Korean orphanages near uniformly refused to care for mixed-race children. One survey revealed that three quarters of American-Korean offspring remained with their mothers at least through adolescence. See Moen, *The Amerasians*, 69-70. The author, born in Oslo, Norway, arrived in South Korea as a church and social worker and eventually became director of the Pearl S. Buck Foundation Opportunity Center for mixed-race children (15).

[90] Such was overwhelming the case according to one study of 1,300 American-Korean adolescents and young adults: "There is a great deal of pimping and blackmarketeering among the Amerasians, especially around the military compounds, and many of the youths make their living this way." See Moen, *The Amerasians*, 41, 72.

[91] Katharine H. S. Moon, "South Korean Movements against Militarized Sexual Labor," *Asian Survey*, vol. 39, no. 2 (Mar. – Apr., 1999), 313.

workers. Nonetheless, they too endured discrimination in education and employment, often being relegated to menial work at low wages on or near American military bases. The Japanese media thus began to portray their lives as disreputable, if not sordid. Mainstream society treated those of black-Japanese parentage as pariahs, close to the hereditary *eta* (literally, "full of filth") caste, and, like survivors of the atomic bomb, as ritually polluted.[92] Many of the children absorbed not only their society's prejudices but also their mothers' resentments. The letters written by a woman dying of tuberculosis to her black-Japanese infant, for example, foreshadowed Afro-Asian adults' conflicted views on their fathers and on black peoples generally. Although her partner had appeared dependable and trustworthy, she explained, since his rotation stateside he had "spiteful[ly]" failed to provide financial assistance or to return as promised. "Was the fact that I was not able to detect this cold streak in him," she mused, "the root of all our unhappiness?" She nonetheless expressed a yearning for her child to be "brought up in the Negro society of [her] father's country," since in Japan she would be subject to "the cold eyes of society as an occupation child."[93] There were scant prospects for acceptance either at home or by the United States.

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With most Asian communities overtly hostile, and Americans seemingly indifferent, several of those charged with providing for Afro-Asian children hit upon emigration to South America. These Korean and Japanese schemes of the late 1950s and 1960s were remarkably

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[92] Murphy-Shigematsu, "Multiethnic Lives and Monoethnic Myths," 210; Spickard, *Mixed Blood*, 152-154.

[93] "Letters Of A Dying Mother To Her Brown Baby," *Ebony*, July 1954, 16-20, 25. The couple met in June 1950, at which point the unidentified woman was "working for the Occupation Forces, attached to the PX. I met your father there, as he was also working in the same office, but by February 3, 1952, he left for the States by ship from Yokohama. He was here only a year and eight months, and at the time he left, I was eight months pregnant." She nonetheless contradictorily urged her child to "keep a warm spot in your heart for your father. He is just a GI in the American army, and has to go wherever he is ordered." The serviceman, likewise unidentified in this account, was rumored to have been reassigned to Germany after his return to the United States (17-18).

similar in both their particulars and their impracticality. The postwar South Korean government quickly established diplomatic relations with several South American nations, forging agreements favorable to group emigration for the purpose of establishing expatriate agricultural communities. No records exist as to the number of American-Koreans able to take advantage of these opportunities, but, given their urban backgrounds and educational disadvantages, few would have met host nations' requirements that applicants be proficient in agriculture, mechanics, or engineering. For this reason one church-based social worker, with no trace of irony, suggested instead that these abandoned children of American military personnel seek socioeconomic opportunities through armed service for the United States. "[O]ne possible method" of securing cooperation between the South Korean and American governments, he proposed, "would be to recruit the physically fit young Amerasians into the U.S. Army and then channel them through … military service into full citizenship. Through the U.S. military, the young Amerasian would also get the opportunity to learn a skill he so sorely needs to make him competitive in the new community [i.e., the United States] he is going to settle in upon completion of his military term."[94]

In Japan such proposals were only slightly more substantive, primarily because of the government's longstanding practice, dating from the turn of the century, of facilitating international migration. Confronted by a perceived overpopulation crisis, Japan had entered into agreements with several South American countries, Brazil and Peru chief among them, eager to develop their interior regions with cheap Japanese labor. Most migrants thereby secured employment as contract laborers on coffee and sugar plantations, a substantial number eventually becoming land-owning employers in their own right. This sponsored migration continued into

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[94] Moen, *The Amerasians*, 82, 84.

the 1930s and ballooned with the economic dislocations of the global Great Depression. By the outbreak of World War Two, nearly a quarter of a million Japanese had emigrated to the region; by the early 1950s perhaps 400,000 persons of Japanese descent lived in Brazil alone.[95] Thus there seemed to exist a ready-made community capable of absorbing American-Japanese offspring. The selection of South America as a site for mixed-race resettlement may too have stemmed from the Japanese tendency, beginning in the early 1930s, to dismiss such migrants as "human discards" (*kimin*).[96]

As early as 1952, the Japanese media circulated reports of a move to send groups of occupation children to Brazil for adoption by Japanese farmers in need of labor.[97] Yet once again it was Miki Sawada who pioneered a scheme, this time a quixotic project to hack a refuge for American-Japanese out of the Amazon basin. After rejecting Hawaii (in her words "a paradise for mixed-blood children") because of American immigration law, she settled upon Brazil. "There were no segregation or racial problems there," Sawada maintained, "and the vast land was waiting for cultivation. I visited Brazil in 1954 and went to twenty-four communities where there were Japanese immigrants. From São Paulo to Paraná, from field to jungle, I sought a paradise for my children—or rather, a place where they could make a paradise for themselves."

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[95] Elmer R. Smith, "Japanese in the Americas: Race Relations in Brazil," *Pacific Citizen*, 26 April 1952, 5; Elmer R. Smith, "Japanese in the Americas: Immigrants In Brazil," *Pacific Citizen*, 3 May 1952, 5; Yoko Sellek, "*Nikkeijin*: The phenomenon of return migration," in Michael Weiner, ed., *Japan's Minorities: The Illusion of Homogeneity* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 178, 187, 206, note 6. See also Elmer R. Smith, "Japanese in the Americas: Assimilation of Nipponese Immigrants Delayed in Brazil," *Pacific Citizen*, 10 May 1952, 5; and Elmer R. Smith, "Japanese in the Americas: Nipponese Immigrants Find Future in Brazil's Economy," *Pacific Citizen*, 17 May 1952, 5.

[96] According to historian Louise Young, "In the debate over Manchurian colonization, . . . support gathered from the proposition that Manchurian settlers represented 'true colonists' who, unlike emigrants [to Brazil and Peru], were 'expanding the national territory of Japan.' . . . *Eknomisto* (The Economist) phrased the distinction between the old and new colonists as follows: 'South American emigrants are the detritus of human society (*jindō ni modoranai kimin*) but Manchurian emigrants represent a kind of national investment." See "Rethinking Race for Manchukuo: Self and Other in the Colonial Context," in Frank Dikötter, ed., *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (London: Hurst & Co., 1997), 169-170.

[97] Peter Kalischer, "Madame Butterfly's Children," *Colliers*, 20 September 1952, 15.

However, the residents of these immigrant communities, although generally supportive of Sawada's original efforts in Japan, were reluctant to welcome biracial laborers. As one bluntly informed her, "Our present positions are the result of our work, and we don't want to be disturbed by your mixed-blood children. Take back all the money you've raised here but confine them to the four islands of Japan."[98]

Undaunted, Sawada returned in 1961 and selected the Amazon jungle's Tomé-Açu region as the site in which to construct her grand design. Scraping together her financial resources, and with aid from the Pearl Buck Foundation in Philadelphia, Sawada purchased 350 acres of land the following year and established the St. Stephen Farm. Back at the Saunders Home she constructed an "Amazon Classroom" in which to train boys for their future lives abroad. Finally, in 1965, the first seven teenagers embarked for Brazil, where they toiled on the Farm's pepper plantation. A few years later another small contingent joined them. The plantation's facilities remained crude (lacking, for instance, electricity) and the venture merely limped along, in part because these individuals, like their Korean counterparts, possessed little agricultural training or experience. In the words of Sawada's sympathetic biographer: "The jungle proved a tough enemy, and the young people who came there were not really pioneers of peasant stock. They were educated, urban youngsters—typical of the postwar generation." By the mid-1970s only a dozen or so Saunders Home children lived in the community.[99]

Afro-Asian Japanese were largely unwilling to participate, while African-American observers were ambivalent about, if not openly hostile toward, Sawada's plan. Indeed, few of the Saunders Home children accepted the proposal with alacrity, and those of African-American ancestry who protested too vehemently elicited comments that betrayed Sawada's racism. One

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[98] Hemphill, *The Least of These*, 140-141.
[99] Ibid., 141-143; Wagatsuma, "Mixed-Blood Children in Japan," 12-13.

black-Japanese boy, slated to be sent to Brazil, resisted moving to the "jungle of a primitive country." He wished instead to pursue a career in music in Japan. "Like all the other black people," Sawada publicly opined, "his body is filled with rhythms. The sound of drums makes his body wave and dance. It makes his ancestor's blood excited."[100] The Brazilian government, meanwhile, rejected proposals for black-Japanese immigration, for reasons not entirely clear. As one African-American journalist derisively remarked in 1967: "Looking for an easy solution, the Japanese seized upon immigration as the perfect panacea for its mixed-blood problem, and made Brazil the target country. But that myth exploded this summer when Mrs. Sawada was turned down after three attempts to send part-Negro boys there." Acknowledging that neither Japan nor the United States had welcomed Afro-Asian children with open arms, the author insisted the Japanese bore the weight of liability: "The first responsibility and the lasting solution lie with Japan where the problem started; where the problem is. Not with Brazil where mixed blood is common . . ., nor with the United States, for the mores of these young adults are set; their language, culture and habits are Oriental."[101]

* * *

By the late 1960s and 1970s a generation of Afro-Asian teenagers and young adults clung to a precarious existence. The most reliable estimates put the number of American-Korean offspring at roughly 12,000, half of whom by then resided elsewhere. Given the foreign adoption preferences described above, it seems highly probable that the overwhelming majority of black-Koreans were among the 6,000 living in South Korea.[102] The racial breakdown

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[100] Commenting on an unruly black-Japanese girl two years later, Sawada similarly claimed that "[v]iolent temper and uncontrollable emotion are common among Negroes and cannot be altered by changes in environment. Perhaps we should speak of 'fate of blood.'" See Wagatsuma, "Mixed-Blood Children in Japan," 13.

[101] Era Bell Thompson, "Japan's Rejected," *Ebony*, September 1967, 54.

[102] Hurh, "Marginal Children of War," 12-13.

provided by one local advocate for mixed-race individuals yields a figure in excess of 1,500 Afro-Asian children and young adults in South Korea as of the early 1970s.[103] For Japan, the extant statistics are somewhat more reliable. Notwithstanding the government's newfound reluctance to confront the issue, which threatened generally friendly relations with the United States at the height of the Vietnam War, media estimates in 1968 placed the number of mixed-race individuals at between twenty and thirty thousand, of whom perhaps 4,000 were part-black.[104]

Despite ongoing discrimination, poverty and neglect in South Korea, a handful of mixed-race young adults enjoyed brief moments of celebrity. Notably, their bursts of success occurred in entertainment and athletics, fields traditionally providing occupational outlets for minorities in the United States. Biracial Koreans became closely linked in the public imagination with inborn talent for music and acting.[105] Several well-received pop singers emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, much of their popularity deriving, in one historian's words, "from the exotica associated with their perceived foreignness."[106] Yet most black-Koreans, male and female, were ensnared by the vice economies that surrounded American military installations, catering to another generation of servicemen. Even within these communities, mixed-race individuals divided along Western racial lines, with black-Koreans relegated to the bottom of the prostitution industry. Pearl Buck, the prolific chronicler of Asia for Americans, established an Opportunity Center in

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[103] Moen, *The Amerasians*, 68, 110. Moen supplied a figure of 27 percent fathered by black Americans in conjunction with the South Korean government's official statistic of 2,300 mixed-race Koreans, yielding a total of 621 Afro-Asian offspring. However, as explained above Korean census practices dramatically skewed governmental data, which should be viewed with considerable skepticism. For a detailed discussion of the mathematical calculations used to arrive at the figure of 6,000 mixed-race individuals in South Korea circa 1970, see Hurh, "Marginal Children of War," 12-13.

[104] Era Bell Thompson, "Japan's Rejected," *Ebony*, September 1967, 44, 46; Wagatsuma, "Identity Problems of Black Japanese Youth," 120; Perry, *Beneath the Eagle's Wings*, 171-172; Spickard, *Mixed Blood*, 151; Koshiro, *Trans-Pacific Racisms*, 214.

[105] Moen, *The Amerasians*, 71.

[106] Yuh, *Beyond the Shadow of Camptown*, 162.

the late 1960s, consisting of dormitories and a vocational school, yet due to a lack of American and Korean support the latter shut its doors within two years.[107] Indeed, most Koreans proceeded to ignore black-Korean offspring, their mothers, and the mixed-race women who continued to become camptown prostitutes.[108]

Japan went through its own "mixed-blood boom" (*konketsuji bumu*), yet this too was limited to a coterie of fortunate individuals. As the first generation of American-Japanese approached adulthood, talent scouts descended upon high schools known to enroll mixed-blood teenagers, signing up women and men for fashion modeling and acting. A certain sexual fascination, incongruously mixed with feelings of physical revulsion, arose from their exotic personas and risqué portrayals in Japan's gossip columns. Others prospered as singers, dancers and athletes. The daughter of an African-American military policeman, for example, excelled in high-school track and field and aspired to represent Japan at the 1968 Mexico City Olympics.[109] The majority, however, were shunned by mainstream society. As one anthropologist observed, "such celebrities are only a handful. Notwithstanding the exotic careers enjoyed by the 'elite,' a great many youngsters, particularly those of Negro parentage, are harassed with racial prejudice and social discrimination."[110]

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[107] Moen, *The Amerasians*, 15, 61, 64.

[108] According to political scientist Katharine H. S. Moon, "since the mid-1980s, a group of Korean women and men have sought to recognize and publicize the plight of U.S. military camptown (*kijich'on*) prostitutes as victims of debt bondage and objects of foreign domination. Yet [this movement] never generated or received the kind of public recognition and support, both domestic and international, that the *chongsindae* [i.e. the World War Two-era Japanese "comfort system"] movement has garnered. . . . [The latter] has generally refused to acknowledge the plight of U.S. camptown prostitutes as being parallel to that of *chongsindae* survivors, based on the view that the *kijich'on* women voluntarily service(d) soldiers whereas the latter did not." See Moon, "South Korean Movements against Militarized Sexual Labor," 311-312.

[109] Murphy-Shigematsu, "Multiethnic Lives and Monoethnic Myths," 211; Wagatsuma, "Mixed-Blood Children in Japan," 11; "'Brown Baby' Olympic Hopeful From Japan," *Ebony*, October 1966, 58, 60.

[110] Wagatsuma, "Mixed-Blood Children in Japan," 11. See also Perry, *Beneath the Eagle's Wings*, 172; Thornton, "A Social History of a Multiethnic Identity," 35; and *Doubles: Japan and America's Intercultural Children*, video recording, (© Theodore R. Life, Jr., 1995), which highlights the unpleasant recollections of black-Japanese who grew up in Japan.

Ebony magazine thus revisited Japan's mistreatment of its Afro-Asian citizens in the late 1960s (see Figure 4.3).

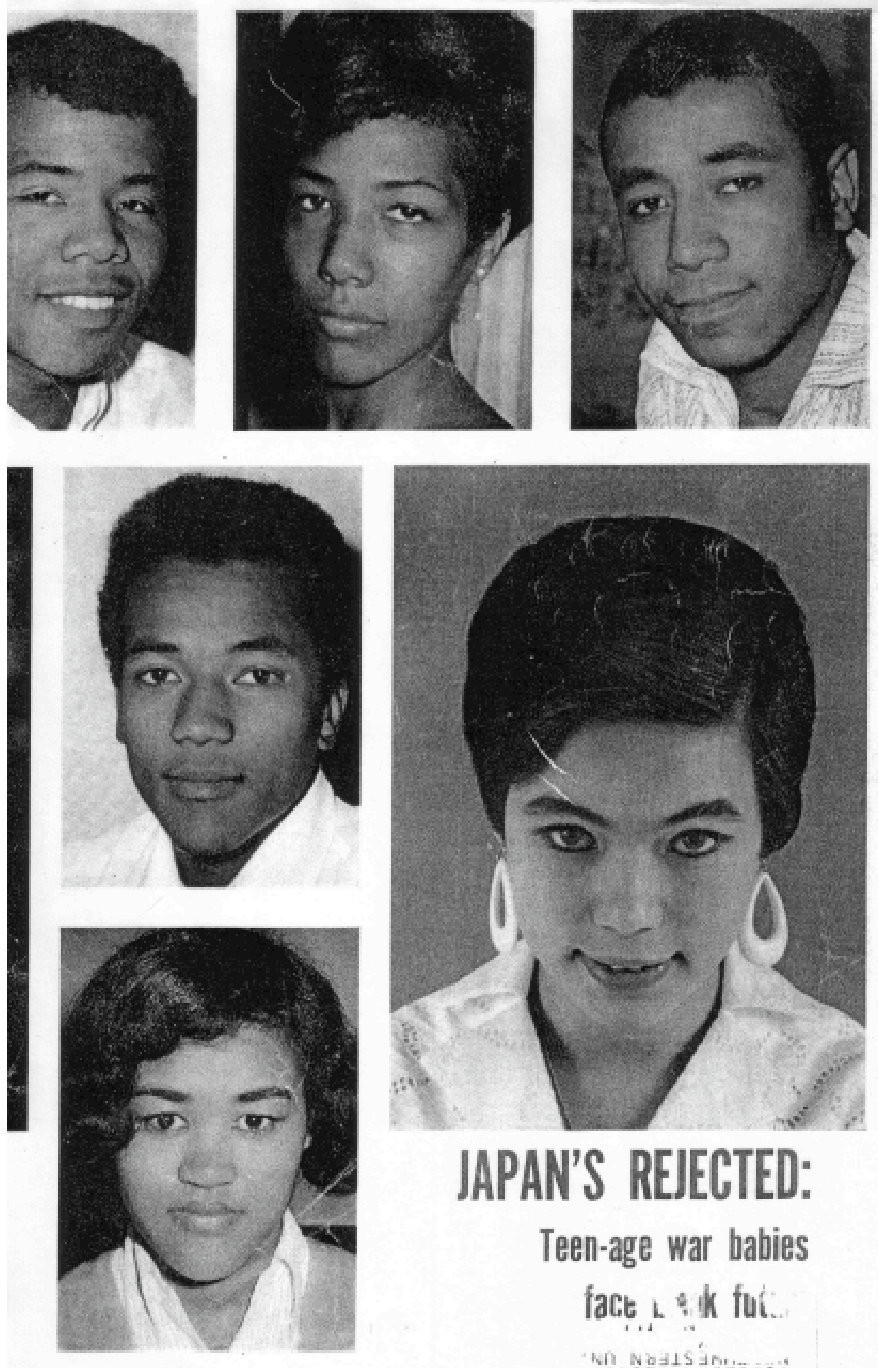

Fig. 4.3, *Ebony*, September 1967 ("Teen-age war babies face bleak future")

Its September 1967 cover story, "Japan's Rejected"—published at the same time brown babies in Vietnam were beginning to attract stateside attention (see the Epilogue)—contained a litany of criticisms similar to those voiced by black Americans fifteen years earlier. Reporter Era Bell Thompson opened with the tale of nineteen-year-old Kayoko, a black-Japanese domestic in the home of Jack Burton, an African-American cook stationed at an Air Force base outside Tokyo. Jack and Louis Burton had hoped to adopt Kayoko and bring her to the United States, but Kayoko's age disqualified her from "orphan" status, while her lack of education and limited occupational skills rendered her an unlikely candidate for immigration. In other words, the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, which ostensibly opened the door to American-Asian offspring, often sealed it shut through its "family reunification" provisions—such young adults were not legally related to their American fathers—and its skill-based preferences. Nonetheless, for the time being Kayoko enjoyed emotional support and financial stability.

Yet as Thompson made clear, even this partial success story was highly unusual. As "social outcasts that no Japanese will wed [and] that few employers will hire," black-Japanese were "fighting a hopeless battle in a hostile world." The author portrayed Japan as "still a racially monolithic nation; its people a closed society," who clung to an "attitude of race and class superiority." Indeed, the nation was one in which life itself was unappreciated: "In Japan, where abortion is both cheap and legal, where disgrace is worse than death, countless thousands of [American-Japanese] infants were murdered during the occupation. Only half lived to reach the age of five." Miki Sawada too came in for censure, at least implicitly. Citing her experiences with a "promiscuous" seven-year-old girl, Sawada insisted that "[a]ll Negro girls develop earlier than white girls; they are more highly sexed." And while a childhood spent in an

orphanage was "abrasive" enough, for Afro-Asian Japanese was "added the curse of being labeled *kurombo* [sic] (nigger) and *hitokui kinshu* (cannibal), as well as 'Yank.'" Protested one eighteen-year-old: "We never became Americans and people won't admit that we are Japanese." As "[a]liens on both sides of the Pacific," Thompson concluded, "the teen-agers face an adulthood that is a dead-end street."[111]

Elaborate racial dynamics shaped reaction to the article. The white director of an adoption program for Korean orphans (many fathered by Americans) sought to exploit an anticipated African-American backlash against the Japanese. He agreed in a letter to *Ebony* that most black-Japanese were "already hurt to a cruel degree," and pointed to the "many younger children who can be helped in Korea." Although insisting "I wouldn't want to sidetrack anyone who can and will help one of these children from Japan," he stressed that Korean orphans "can still be adopted, with enough years left to learn 'love' instead of 'rejection.'"[112] African-American reader Evans Crosby, recalling "a series of recent articles in newspapers and magazines nationally extolling the virtues of the Japanese," commended Thompson for showing "the second side of the coin. It's not very pleasant!" He called for political pressure in the form of a letter-writing campaign to Japanese diplomatic personnel along with threats of economic retaliation. "Japan is seeking dollars to bolster its economy and its foreign exchange. Black people here in America especially are consumers on a grand scale of things Japanese." Therefore, the mere "hint of a boycott of Japanese merchandise in the U.S. similar to the Jewish

[111] Era Bell Thompson, "Japan's Rejected," *Ebony*, September 1967, 42, 44, 46, 49-50. The author also claimed that various pieces of legislation, including the Refugee Relief Act, facilitated the "escape" of more than 700 black-Japanese children to the United States, but the source for this unlikely figure remains unclear (49). Further evidence of the article's tone and intent may be found in *Ebony*'s response two years later to a black serviceman's complaint that "[w]hen it comes to hate and prejudice towards the Afro-American military man, Japan ranks 'head and shoulders' at the top of the list, rivaled only by Hawaii." "Japanese race prejudice" the editor replied, "was duly spotlighted in EBONY's 1967 September cover story, 'Japan's Rejected,' dealing with the plight of Japan-born 'brown babies.'" See *Ebony*, August 1969, 23-24.

[112] John E. Adams, Executive Director, Hold Adoption Program, *Ebony*, January 1968, 12.

boycott of German goods in the 1930s," Crosby reasoned, "could help re-mold the attitude of the Japanese toward these children who through no fault of their own are victims of prejudice."[113] Emotions were easily rekindled some fifteen years after the occupation came to a close.

* * *

If the Japanese side of this Asian brown baby crisis received greater African-American scrutiny and censure, that imbalance was due in part to the smaller and less visible cohort of black-Korean offspring. Yet it was also the product of a different focus of attention among black servicemen, the African-American press, and their stateside audiences in the early 1950s. Rather than emphasize intimate relations with Korean women or the misfortunes of mixed-race Korean children, they instead foregrounded the role of black soldiers in a military conflict that pitted them against Asian men, women and, on occasion, children. Popular black discussion focused on the racial politics of war on the Korean peninsula, where for the first time in fifty years African Americans participated directly in the wholesale slaughter of an Asian foe.

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[113] Evans Crosby, *Ebony*, December 1967, 14.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE RACE OF COMBAT IN KOREA

"Today France is using the black Senegalese to conquer Viet-Nam, and Britain has used troops of every race and hue to hold the remains of her empire," charged W.E.B. Du Bois in 1952. "Perhaps worst of all today is the use of American Negro troops in Korea." The effect on African Americans—"almost forced to be the dumb tools of business corporations" coveting East Asia and "in a sense compelled to murder colored folk who suffer from the same race prejudice"—he continued, would inevitably exacerbate black-white enmity at home. Most lamentably, the war was "bound to leave a legacy of hate between yellow nations and black."[1] Du Bois' allegations were wide of the mark on two counts. First, the initial proximity of black combat troops to Korea was the result of no economic conspiracy. African Americans' keen interest in peacetime military service and policymakers' desire to keep them out of postwar Europe channeled many black soldiers to occupied Japan and, from there, to a war that caught the United States off guard. Second, American intervention on the Korean peninsula led to neither widespread black protest nor an appreciable uptick in domestic conflict between black and white Americans. And yet, Du Bois' suggestion of a Korean legacy of Afro-Asian antagonism was prophetic. The war swiftly unveiled the interracial tensions festering within America's East Asian military empire.

This chapter explores how American involvement in Korea—where large numbers of black soldiers clashed with Asian peoples for the first time since the 1899-1902 Filipino

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[1] W.E.B. Du Bois, *In Battle for Peace: The Story of My 83rd Birthday* (New York: Masses and Mainstream, 1952), 179.

insurgency—brought the question of Afro-Asian cooperation or conflict to a head.[2] It begins by examining the contours of this war, the century's third deadliest (after World Wars Two and One). The features of this regional civil conflict—many of which foreshadowed subsequent American military endeavors, particularly in Vietnam—are crucial to understanding African Americans' thoughts on their role in the United States' expanding Asian protectorate. American tactics, rather than a reflexive antipathy toward Koreans, encouraged African Americans to reject calls for non-white solidarity. In particular, the military's embrace of firepower to counter a North Korean and Chinese manpower advantage fostered a dehumanization not only of the enemy but of the United States' Korean allies. Moreover, American counter-insurgency tactics, along with an apparent South Korean apathy toward, if not clandestine collaboration with, their ostensible opponents, exacerbated servicemen's distrust of all Koreans.

The chapter then analyzes African-American public debates over the racial politics in play. Was Korea, as several prominent activists initially claimed, a race war pitting a "white," imperialist United States against fellow people of color? Did the presence of black troops negate these allegations? Cold War propaganda and domestic suppression of dissent certainly

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[2] As this author was initially surprised to discover, African-American reactions to American intervention in Korea differed strikingly from those typically highlighted by historians of black service in the turn-of-the-century Philippines. According to William B. Gatewood, Jr., African Americans on the homefront "displayed considerable sympathy for the independence movement among the Filipinos, whom they identified as 'our kinsmen' and 'our colored brothers,'" while black soldiers "were usually solicitous in their treatment of Filipino civilians and often identified with them racially." See Gatewood, *"Smoked Yankees" and the Struggle for Empire: Letters from Negro Soldiers, 1898-1902* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1971), 12, 14. Jack D. Foner likewise asserts that "[d]uring their stay in the Philippines, the black soldiers associated 'on terms of equality' with the local population." See Foner, *Blacks and the Military*, 91. Most recently, Gerald Horne has argued that because of African-American ambivalence regarding the Spanish-American War and its aftermath, "[i]t became increasingly difficult to launch wars with soldiers of color in the vanguard." See "Race from Power: U.S. Foreign Policy and the General Crisis of White Supremacy," in Brenda Gayle Plummer, ed., *Window on Freedom: Race, Civil Rights, and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1988* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 49. For slightly more critical assessments of claims of African-American solidarity with the Filipino people, see Astor, *The Right to Fight*, 78; and Piero Gleijeses, "African Americans and the War Against Spain," in Earnestine Jenkins and Darlene Clark Hine, eds., *A Question of Manhood: A Reader in U.S. Black Men's History and Masculinity, Vol. 2, The 19th Century: From Emancipation to Jim Crow* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), 337. Also note that, as explained in Chapter Two, widespread black-Filipino strife following the Second World War led to an informal agreement to ban all African-American personnel from the Philippine islands.

contributed to black support for American intervention, yet many African Americans sincerely believed in the necessity of military action against what appeared flagrant communist aggression. Even more important were characterizations of Korea and its people in the African-American media, characterizations that took shape *before* army integration commenced in earnest in the spring of 1951. During the conflict's first months, black correspondents and other observers spent considerable time merely introducing readers to life on a peninsula unfamiliar to most Americans. Their preoccupations with alleged Asian "cruelty," Korean poverty, and South Korean fecklessness did much to alienate a homefront audience from enemy and ally alike.

The chapter concludes by examining black servicemen's experiences. By the time an armistice was signed, more than 25,000 African-American soldiers were stationed in Korea, fifteen percent of the army's strength there.[3] Over the previous three years, several times that number had served in the war in all branches of the American military.[4] How did they interpret their wartime service, interpretations that, given an absence of World War Two military censorship, more freely informed family and friends stateside?[5] Caught in the midst of a brutal civil war, where the lines separating friend from foe and combatant from civilian were porous, most were quick to view all Koreans with distrust and contempt. Many also extended their anger

[3] "25,000 in Korea! Truce is signed, fighting ends," *Afro American*, 1 July 1953, 1.

[4] The war occurred within a four-year period during which roughly 220,000 black men were inducted through Selective Service, nearly 13 percent of the total and thus a clear instance of overrepresentation in the draft calls. These individuals would have been assigned to American units around the globe, Korea included. See Paul T. Murray, "Blacks and the Draft: A History of Institutional Racism," *Journal of Black Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1 (September 1971), 68; and "Draft 3 Negroes To One White In Montgomery, Ala.," *Jet*, 13 November 1952, 5. Moreover, notwithstanding the outbreak of war black men maintained a strong interest in enlistment, volunteering by the hundreds at recruiting offices across the country. See Chapter One and, for example, "25,000 Negroes Face Draft; Thousands of Others Volunteering," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 22 July 1950, 1. Yet because the various services were already desegregated by the start of the conflict, or, in the case of the army, began the process shortly thereafter, records on the precise number of black Korean-War-era veterans remain incomplete. Nonetheless, according to the 1990 census there were at least 339,000 still alive, nearly forty years after the war. See http://www1.va.gov/vetdata.docs/KW2000.doc (accessed 10 December 2007).

[5] Information that Korean War letters home were largely free from the military censor's eye was obtained during conversations with employees of the National Archives during the summer of 2005. Unfortunately, no public holdings of letters from black servicemen in Korea appear to exist.

to the Japanese—whom a good number encountered during the ongoing occupation—even though few black soldiers had fought in the Pacific, suggesting that World War Two's racial legacy and the occupation's increasingly tense atmosphere predisposed black soldiers to conflate the two populations. Overall, service in Korea encouraged African Americans to share the same racialized attitudes toward Asian peoples held by their white counterparts, as well as to identify with America's broader regional ambitions.

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In the predawn hours of 25 June 1950, approximately 135,000 North Korean People's Army (NKPA) soldiers attacked South Korea across the 38th parallel, the arbitrary border agreed upon by the United States and the Soviet Union at the conclusion of World War Two.[6] Many of the NKPA troops and officers were veterans of the Chinese Civil War, having helped defeat Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists. At the time, there were 482 American military advisors in the Republic of Korea (ROK), remnants of an occupation that had arranged separate elections in the South, assisted the government of Syngman Rhee—an authoritarian anti-communist educated in the United States—as it suppressed a popular left-leaning nationalist movement, and trained and armed the South Korean military. The NKPA, fighting against an ill-equipped and poorly-

[6] An analysis of the regional origins of the Korean War is beyond the purview of this study. However, it should be noted that the war followed months of incursions by both North and South Korean forces. Suffice it to say that neither side accepted the division of their nation. As two scholars have explained, "the question most often asked about the Korean war is 'Who started it?' No one asks who started the Vietnam war, or the civil war in China. Yet all these conflicts were the same in essence—a civil war fought between two domestic forces: a revolutionary nationalist movement, which had its roots in tough anti-colonial struggle, and a conservative movement tied to the *status quo*, especially to an unequal land system." Jon Halliday and Bruce Cumings, *Korea: The Unknown War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), 10. For the definitive account of the war's deep-rooted causes, see Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Volume I: Liberation and the Emergence of Separate Regimes, 1945-1947* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), and Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Volume II: The Roaring of the Cataract, 1947-1950* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990).

motivated South Korean army half its size, took the southern capital of Seoul three days after the war began. It appeared poised to conquer all of South Korea in a matter of weeks.[7]

Within days the Truman administration chose to intervene. Unwilling to seek a congressional declaration of war, it swiftly maneuvered to have Britain and France introduce a United Nations resolution in early July establishing a "unified command" (the Soviet Union, temporarily boycotting the world body over its refusal to seat Communist China, was unable to veto the measure). This "United Nations Command," as it came to be known, although ostensibly subject to UN authority and operating under the UN flag, was in effect an American enterprise. In fact, the resolution requested that the United States designate a commander—Truman tapped Douglas MacArthur in Japan—and recommended "that all Members providing military forces and other assistance" make them "available to a unified command under the United States." Only the final clause suggested any restrictions on American autonomy, proposing that the United States provide the Security Council with "reports as appropriate" on the course of the war.[8] The resulting coalition force consisted of military units from only sixteen of the UN's sixty member nations, with the United States providing most troops on the ground. Indeed, excepting the Republic of Korea, the American military commitment was ten times that of all others combined (the latter figure plateaued at about 6 percent during the conflict).[9]

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[7] David Halberstam, *The Fifties* (New York: Villard Books, 1993), 66; Marilyn B. Young, "The Age of Global Power," in Thomas Bender, ed., *Rethinking American History in a Global Age* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 286; Barton J. Bernstein, "The Truman Administration and the Korean War," in Michael J. Lacey, ed., *The Truman Presidency* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 410, 413; Astor, *The Right to Fight*, 350.

[8] Bernstein, "The Truman Administration and the Korean War," 410-411; I. F. Stone, *The Hidden History of the Korean War*, 2nd ed., (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1969), 78-79.

[9] Besides the United States, the nations contributing land, air or sea forces were Great Britain, Canada, Turkey, Australia, Thailand, the Philippines, France, Greece, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Columbia, Belgium, Ethiopia, South Africa, and Luxembourg. See Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War*, 445-446; and Bernstein, "The Truman Administration and the Korean War," 411. See also Eric F. Goldman, *The Crucial Decade: America, 1945-1955* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), 175, for a contemporary account of growing unease and resentment among Americans at home over the relative size of the United States' military contribution.

The United States' overwhelming commitment to the war did not, however, guarantee that sacrifice would fall equally upon all Americans. This was to be a "limited war," a "police action" as President Truman inopportunely characterized it. Virtually all of the first Americans to arrive on the peninsula, including those of the all-black 24th Infantry Regiment, came directly from occupation duty in Japan. As of 1 July 1950, there were slightly more than 80,000 enlisted occupationaires; one month later that figure had plunged to 45,000, roughly equal to the number of soldiers then fighting in Korea. (Many of those en route from Japan, because of the administration's rhetoric and poor reporting from the front, assumed their duties would consist primarily of crowd control and military policing.) As servicemen from the United States entered the Korean pipeline, Japan became the staging area for the war, and the number of occupation personnel quickly rebounded. One year later the totals for Japan and Korea were 100,000 and 215,000 respectively, numbers that held steady for much of the rest of the war. Mobilization of the reserves began less than a month into the conflict, at first voluntarily but by early August on a compulsory basis, as the need for bodies outpaced the number of volunteers. Truman likewise authorized the armed forces to restart the machinery of Selective Service for whatever level of manpower might prove necessary. In five months the army doubled in size; by June 1951 it had swollen to 1.6 million men.[10]

The introduction of the draft notwithstanding, those assigned to fight were strikingly homogeneous in socioeconomic background. Korea was primarily a working-class war. College-student deferments, for example, remained available throughout the conflict. Those on

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[10] Astor, *The Right to Fight*, 350-351; "U.S. Military Korean War Statistics," http://koreanwarmemorial.sd.gov/U.S.Forces/MIA_KIA.htm (accessed 1 June 2007); Linda Witt, Judith Bellafaire, Britta Granrud and Mary Jo Binker, *"A Defense Weapon Known to Be of Value": Servicewomen of the Korea War Era* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2005), 67; Stone, *The Hidden History of the Korean War*, 82; MacGregor, *Integration of the Armed Forces*, 430.

the ground were thus relatively young and poorly educated, particularly after the war's first year when recalled veterans of World War Two rotated home. Few were over twenty-one years of age; less than a third had high-school diplomas. This demographic imbalance did not go unnoticed or unchallenged. Reporter Edward R. Murrow joined a growing chorus branding Korea a "poor man's war" when he charged in the spring of 1951 that American draft policies favored an "intellectual elite." Former Assistant Secretary of Defense John Hannah entered the fray, conceding two years later that too often "the son of the well-to-do family goes to college and the sons of some of the rest go to Korea." The issue became so contentious that in the summer of 1951 a pair of Illinois draft board members resigned in protest of a deferment policy they maintained was "un-American and represents class discrimination." Such claims received quantitative backing soon after the war. The "number of Detroiters who died, were captured, or were reported missing in Korea," two social scientists observed in 1955, "varied directly with the relative economic or racial standing of the city areas from which the men stemmed."[11]

Yet whatever their deprivations relative to Americans stateside, these soldiers enjoyed comfortable wealth compared to the Korean civilians they encountered. The city of Pusan, on the southeastern coast, became the entry point for virtually all American servicemen. Before the conflict it was a bustling and pleasant port city of 400,000 inhabitants. An influx of war refugees caused its population to swell to three times that number in a manner of weeks. Homeless and impoverished refugees constructed sprawling shanty towns on the city's outskirts, in which many lived ten or more to a room without running water. Cooking took place outside over open fires, often adjacent to a communal privy. Where no facilities existed—often the case early in the

[11] Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War*, 610; Susan D. Moeller, *Shooting War: Photography and the American Experience of Combat* (New York: Basic Books, 1989), 261; Albert J. Mayer and Thomas Ford Hoult, "Social Stratification and Combat Survival," *Social Forces*, vol. 34, no. 2 (December 1955), 155.

conflict—they had no choice but to relieve themselves in stagnant, vermin-infested gutters. The war, in effect, had converted Pusan into an enormous slum. Veterans claimed they smelled the city from miles out at sea, well before it had come into view. Once they stepped foot on the docks the combined sensory effect was often overwhelming.[12]

Adding to the disorienting juxtaposition of foreign poverty and American wealth was the military's continued emphasis on personal consumption, even in the midst of a war whose outcome remained uncertain. As in Japan, commanders sought to maintain morale through appeals to material self-interest. By mid-August, less than two months into the conflict, the army opened its first Korean post exchange, in Pusan. The three-story facility, formerly occupied by South Korean military police, was dedicated with an official ribbon-cutting ceremony. Its stock of food, reading material, toiletries and other personal items, explained a soldier-journalist, expanded daily. And throughout the war, in response to ongoing concerns about troop motivation, commanders assigned combat units their own mobile PXs, which lugged tax-free radios, watches, and cameras from one battle to the next.[13]

As the first wave of Americans moved north to meet the new enemy, their optimism was sorely tested. The weather was sweltering, the hottest Korean summer in local memory. Lacking a steady supply of clean water, some GIs resorted to drinking from rice paddies that had been fertilized with human excrement. The resulting intestinal ailments exacted an alarming toll. Especially troubling was the performance of America's South Korean allies. The ROK army of 100,000 disintegrated to less than 20,000 after the fall of Seoul, as soldiers simply dropped their weapons and surrendered or retreated. American servicemen moving up the peninsula

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[12] Robert T. Oliver, *Verdict in Korea* (State College, PA: Bald Eagle Press, 1952), 102-103; Watson, *Far Eastern Tour*, 56-57.

[13] Pfc. Leonard Turner, "First Army PX Opens in Pusan," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 28 August 1950, 2; Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War*, 256.

encountered streams of South Korean troops headed in the opposite direction, some in appropriated American vehicles. The result was an abiding bitterness among officers and enlisted men who believed they were fighting and dying for a people too cowardly—or too disloyal—to do the same.[14]

Partly in response to the ROK army's disappointing performance, MacArthur in August ordered field commanders to integrate South Koreans into their units. (The policy was announced much to the disgust of African Americans well-aware of ongoing military segregation: the *Pittsburgh Courier* declared it an "insult" to every black citizen).[15] At first conducted on an experimental basis, the program soon became institutionalized. ROK troops eventually constituted nearly one-quarter of each platoon; by war's end more than twenty thousand were serving in American combat units. Yet despite reports that South Korean replacements would "in general do everything the GIs do and [be] treated identically," in practice they were relegated to duties that encouraged contempt among and mistreatment by UN forces. ROK soldiers were not required to go on often dangerous patrols, and when in reserve they were free from having to "pull KP" (kitchen police). The South Korean government likewise established the paramilitary Korean Service Corps (KSC) in July 1950 to provide laborers to each unit on the front line. KSC members, known to their American GI overseers as "chogie bearers," were routinely forced to carry physically punishing loads of supplies. Where

[14] Halberstam, *The Fifties*, 74; Moeller, *Shooting War*, 259. For an account of the ROK army's early reputation for unreliability and cowardice among Canadian servicemen as well, see Watson, *Far Eastern Tour*, 60-61. Years later General Matthew Bunker Ridgway, commander the 8th U.S. Army in Korea until he replaced MacArthur as head of United Nations forces in April 1951, remained troubled by the performance of the ROK army. During a 1969 interview, when recalling his disappointment with the South Koreans' martial efforts, Ridgway speculated that perhaps the "fanatical" NKPA was using drugs. As recounted by historian Bruce Cumings, "[h]is interviewer, a Vietnam veteran, told him the North Koreans sounded 'about the same' as the Vietcong." See Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Volume II*, 693 and 902, note 74.

[15] "Using Koreans as replacements in American Army units in Korea while American Negroes are still restricted to jim-crow units," its editorial page argued, "is an insult which burns deep into the soul of every black American." See "An Insult in Korea," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 2 September 1950, 1, 4.

KSC laborers could not be found, American units simply dragooned able-bodied Korean civilians to serve as porters.[16]

Notwithstanding its members' disdain for both South and North Korean martial prowess, the outgunned and outmanned American military quickly found itself fleeing headlong down the peninsula. Its actions during the war's first three months consisted, in the words a contemporary, of "frantic retreat amid savagery."[17] The civil and revolutionary nature of the conflict and the North's use of guerrilla tactics ensured it was a very dirty war. So too did the United States' decision to reintroduce its World War Two policy of destroying civilian targets in order to deny support to the enemy. GIs routinely encountered peasants, including women and children, "retreating" along their flanks as if refugees, only to bring down withering fire on American positions with weapons concealed beneath their clothing. Local partisans organized roadblocks and ambushes to harass withdrawing UN forces. The NKPA often drove civilians into American lines to camouflage infantry attacks, while enlisting children as ammunition carriers. Such methods, in addition to encouraging suspicion of all Koreans, led American forces to retaliate by burning suspect villages to the ground, at times destroying hamlets merely to prevent potential use by guerillas. Larger communities believed to harbor leftist elements were forcibly evacuated, their populations driven south at gunpoint.[18]

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[16] "Unification in UN Army: S. Koreans in Yank Ranks," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 25 August 1950, 1; "An Insult in Korea," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 2 September 1950, 1; Watson, *Far Eastern Tour*, 62, 64, 68-69; Moeller, *Shooting War*, 261; Louis Baldovi, ed., *A Foxhole View: Personal Accounts of Hawaii's Korean War Veterans* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), xxiii, 61, 68.

[17] Goldman, *The Crucial Decade*, 175.

[18] Moeller, *Shooting War*, 255; Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Volume II*, 687, 690-691. The most notorious American attack on Korean civilians occurred in July near No Gun Ri, 100 miles southeast of Seoul, where at least 250 men, women and children were killed or wounded. See, for example, "G.I.'s Tell of a U.S. Massacre in Korean War," *New York Times*, 30 September 1999, 1, 16; Elizabeth Becker, "U.S. to Revisit Accusations Of a Massacre By G.I.'s in '50," *New York Times*, 1 October 1999, 3; and Elizabeth Becker, "Army Confirms G.I.'s in Korea Killed Civilians," 12 January 2001, 1, 6.

Information regarding the conflict's disturbing aspects, moreover, was freely available to audiences stateside. The author of an August report published in *Life* and *Time* magazines, for instance, lamented the necessity of American tactics (while simultaneously calling for greater efforts to win hearts and minds) and predicted their inevitable use in future Asian wars. American soldiers, fighting in "a land and among a people that most of them dislike," were involved in "an *especially* terrible war." Detailing various "acts and attitudes of the utmost savagery," he described "the blotting out of villages where the enemy *may* be hiding; the shooting and shelling of refugees who *may* include North Koreans . . ., or who *may* be screening an enemy march upon our positions, or who *may* be carrying broken-down rifles." America's Korean allies came in for particularly harsh treatment. The South Korean police and marines upon whom UN forces were relying for communication with the civilian population and detection of guerillas were "brutal": "They murder to save themselves the trouble of escorting prisoners to the rear; they murder civilians simply to get them out of the way or to avoid the trouble of searching and cross-examining them." (The author was quick to insist, however, that the South Korean army had fought with "great bravery and effectiveness.") And yet for all the conflict's ugliness, he concluded, "our men in Korea are waging this war as they are forced to wage it *and as they will be forced to wage any war against the Communists anywhere in Asia*."[19] According to this interpretation, the American way of war in Korea was now a model for the entire continent.

Among American troops, confusion, anger and resentment registered through disparaging characterizations of Korea and its people. Many bitterly complained of the nation's underdevelopment. "I'll fight for my country," remarked one corporal from Chicago, "but I'll be

[19] John Osborne, "Report From The Orient: Guns Are Not Enough," *Life*, 21 August 1950, 77, 82. Emphasis in the original. See also John Osborne, "The Ugly War," *Time*, 21 August 1950, 20-21.

damned if I see why I'm fighting to save this hell hole."[20] Use of the epithet "gook" was ubiquitous from the start. The term has a lengthy pedigree in the history of American intervention in Asia and the Pacific. A linguistic cousin to "goo-goos" or "gu-gus," used by servicemen to refer to Filipino insurgents at the turn of the century, the term emerged in its current form in Korea. During the brief American occupation after World War Two, the military distributed language guides with phonetic spellings of phrases for Korea (*hankuk*) and the United States (*mikuk*). Occupation personnel dropped the prefixes and applied the epithet to all Koreans, a practice adopted by combat forces five years later.[21] One contemporary reported that if American troops remarked upon "a dead Korean body of whatever sex, uniformed or ununiformed, it was simply 'dead Gook' or 'good Gook.'"[22] As a *New York Times* journalist explained, such usage was problematic at a time when UN forces were engaged in "a combination of war and revolution" that required securing the sympathies of the populace.[23] From MacArthur's Tokyo headquarters came an August 1950 article that compared servicemen who used "gook" to "the small minority of Americans" who uttered similar epithets at home, both groups "unwittingly guilty of 'Giving aid and comfort to the enemy.'"[24] Such admonitions, reiterated throughout the war and after, had little effect.[25]

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[20] Goldman, *The Crucial Decade*, 177.

[21] Lee, *Orientals*, 190; Fradley H. Garner, *New York Times*, 2 August 1950, 23; Eric Larrabee, "Korea: The Military Lesson," *Harper's Magazine* (November 1950), 51.

[22] Reginald Thompson, *Cry Korea* (London: Macdonald & Co., 1951), 44. As historian John W. Dower notes, the "war hates and race hates of World War Two . . . proved very adaptable to the cold war. Traits which the Americans and English had associated with the Japanese . . . were suddenly perceived to be really more relevant to the Communists." See Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 309.

[23] Walter Sullivan, "G.I. View of Koreans as 'Gooks' Believed Doing Political Damage," *New York Times*, 26 July 1950, 1, 5.

[24] "GI's Warned Not to Use Word 'Gook,'" *Afro American*, 2 September 1950, 5.

[25] In September the army issued a similar booklet enjoining personnel to refrain from using the word term. See "New Weapons," *Pacific Citizen*, 23 September 1950, 4. Nearly six years later the Department of Defense's Office of Armed Forces Information and Education produced *A Pocket Guide to Korea*, again cautioning against its use and explaining, "Treat the Koreans as you would your neighbor back home, and you will find that courtesy and respect

With UN forces pushed to a defensive perimeter in Korea's extreme southeast and awaiting reinforcements, American military commanders opted to rely on air power, generating tremendous casualties.[26] Napalm quickly became a weapon of choice. A jellied mixture designed to burn into the skin for hours, it was first used toward the end of World War Two. But in Korea, one American chemical officer enthused, "[n]apalm mix has really come into its own."[27] Pilots, several African-American, began dropping enormous quantities on targets across Korea, carrying out a policy that persisted throughout the war. By late August American planes were delivering 800 tons of bombs per day, much of it pure napalm. After three months of fighting, the United States had expended nearly eight million gallons, in addition to 97,000 tons of conventional explosives.[28] The following March an officer blithely explained that "[o]n an average good day" American forces used more than 60,000 gallons both as an anti-tank weapon and against "enemy personnel."[29] Few pilots expressed unease about their assignments, in part

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for the other fellow has its compensations in Korea as it does in Kalamazoo." See Center for the Study of the Korean War (Independence, MO), Box A.0210-A.0249, Folder 210, *A Pocket Guide to Korea*, 34-35.

[26] As historian Michael Sherry has observed, "the use of American air power [in Korea] reprised many of the motives, methods, and results seen in the war with Japan (with Japan now providing the air bases)." See Sherry, *In the Shadow of War*, 181. For a rare, and quite tame, example of domestic criticism of American policy—"[T]he nearest American headquarters, in which political sophistication has never been at a premium, [chose] to apply strategic bombing before its consequences had been assessed"—see Eric Larrabee, "Korea: The Military Lesson," *Harper's Magazine* (November 1950), 54. According to journalist Tom Engelhardt, "For much of the war, the ratio of Communist to UN casualties stood somewhere between 20:1 and 14:1." See Engelhardt, *The End of Victory Culture: Cold War America and the Disillusioning of a Generation* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), 61-62.

[27] Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Volume II*, 917, note 146; John G. Westover, *Combat Support in Korea* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1987), 240 (chemical officer quote). The officer continued, "You very rarely see a flight of fighter-bombers take off in which at least one plane doesn't have two napalm tanks—and usually all have them." See also "'It's Just Like Gasoline…': FAF Napalm Builders Speed Up Bomb Attacks," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 28 August 1950, 2, for an upbeat account of the weapon's effects.

[28] "Tan Fliers Over Korea," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 8 July 1950, 1; "25 Negro Fliers Now Over Korea," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 15 July 1950, 1; McCoy and Ruetten, *Quest and Response*, 233; Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Volume II*, 707; Marilyn B. Young, "Korea: the Post-war War," *History Workshop Journal*, vol. 2001, no. 51 (Spring 2001), 113.

[29] Westover, *Combat Support in Korea*, 81.

because every Korean seemed a potential target.[30] It was also quite popular with troops on the ground. African-American combat engineer Robert Lewis Chappel recalled years later that "every afternoon . . . our jets would come in and hit those valleys. And we'd watch and we'd pat and rave and clap our hands. . . . It's just a thrill to see how American planes come in . . . and hit those hills and that fire just roll."[31] The Korean people, of course, had misgivings. During president-elect Dwight Eisenhower's tour of the front in late 1952, the National Christian Council of Korea fruitlessly requested that as a means of protecting civilians—and "from the religious standpoint"—the American military's indiscriminate use of napalm be "reconsidered."[32] All told, in three years the United States dropped more than 30,000 tons of napalm on a peninsula about the size of Minnesota.[33]

Following an amphibious landing behind enemy lines in mid-September 1950, UN forces broke out of their defensive positions and advanced on Seoul, destroying much of what remained standing along the way. "The war was fought without regard for the South Koreans," noted a 1951 British military almanac, "and their unfortunate country was regarded as an arena rather

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[30] An American journalist's conversation with one pilot is worth quoting at length for its insight into how the Korean war, and wars in general, look from the air: "[The captain] had developed the most respect for napalm, simply because of the destructive power with which this jellied gasoline is endowed. He had no particular compunctions about using it against human beings, whom it is apt to turn into blazing torches. 'The first couple of times I went in on a napalm strike,' he told me, 'I had kind of an empty feeling. I thought afterward, Well, maybe I shouldn't have done it. Maybe those people I set afire were innocent civilians. But you get conditioned, especially after you've hit what looks like a civilians and the A-frame on his back lights up like a Roman candle—a sure enough sign that he's been carrying ammunition. . . . Besides, we don't generally use napalm on people we can see. We use it on hill positions, or buildings. And one thing about napalm is that when you've hit a village and have seen it go up in flames, you know that you've accomplished something. Nothing makes a pilot feel worse than to work over an area and not see that he's accomplished anything.'" See Kahn, *The Peculiar War*, 131-132.

[31] Robert Chappel Collection (AFC/2001/001/188), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress. For another example of an enlisted man praising napalm's effectiveness against enemy personnel and emphasizing its visual impact, see James E. Saunders, "Devil's Brew," *Pacific Stars and Stripes* Review, Far East Weekly, 23 September 1950, 4.

[32] "Korean Christians Are Troubled in Spirit," *The Christian Century*, vol. LXIX, no. 53 (31 December 1952), 1515.

[33] During the Second World War, the American military used approximately 14,000 tons, primarily across the Pacific Theater. Both totals, of course, pale in comparison to the 400,000 tons dropped on Southeast Asia during America's ten years of active fighting in Vietnam. See Moeller, *Shooting War*, 265.

than a country to be liberated."[34] Members of the 24th Division, attacking back into a South Korean city, belted out an irreverent tune: "The last time we saw Taejon, it was not bright or gay, / Now we're going back to Taejon, to blow the goddam place away!"[35] Continuously harassed by guerillas and snipers during the push north, American troops encountering the slightest resistance called in bombers, tanks and artillery to blot out entire towns before moving in to liberate them.[36] In late September Seoul endured the same treatment, despite American promises to the contrary. "The coolness of the welcome received by the liberators," explained a United Press dispatch from the city, "is understandable in the light of the millions of dollars worth of damage" (not to mention the needless loss of civilian life).[37] The war for the South was all but over, at a cost of 20,000 American casualties: approximately 3,000 dead; nearly 14,000 wounded; and 3,877 missing in action. The NKPA lost perhaps 70,000 troops. The statistics for South Korea were staggering: 110,000 soldiers and civilians killed; 106,000 wounded; 57,000 missing; 314,000 homes destroyed; and 244,000 damaged.[38]

Flush with victory, MacArthur and the Truman administration then made a fateful decision: North Korea would be invaded, despite Communist Chinese warnings that a drive to its border would be considered a hostile act. The goal was to unify the entire peninsula under a government friendly to the United States, a move that, if accomplished quickly enough, would render moot any UN inclination to restore the *status quo ante*. Thus did the United States make its first attempt at Cold War "rollback" (as opposed to mere containment). In early October American forces crossed into North Korea and made a dash for the Yalu River, the border with

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[34] Quoted in Stone, *The Hidden History of the Korean War*, footnote, 312-313.
[35] Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War*, 254.
[36] Thompson, *Cry Korea*, 94. At the time, MacArthur reported that thirty percent of UN troops were employed against guerillas in South Korea, whose number he placed at thirty to thirty-five thousand. See Halliday and Cumings, *Korea*, 146.
[37] Quoted in Stone, *The Hidden History of the Korean War*, 114.
[38] Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War*, 256; Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Volume II*, 707.

China. The apparent disintegration of the NKPA appeared to promise an end to the war by Christmas. Army drivers reportedly played "chicken" with North Korean civilians as they sped north. All of Korea seemed in reach. And then came the crash. In late 1950 a reconstituted NKPA, along with several hundred thousand members of a new Chinese People's Volunteer Army (PVA), completely surprised, and proceeded to rout, the UN coalition. A despondent Secretary of State Dean Acheson called it the "worst defeat of U.S. forces since Bull Run."[39]

With the United States forced into a second embarrassing retreat back down the peninsula, military commanders and servicemen responded with stepped-up attacks on Korea and its people. Enemy tactics again contributed to the destruction. In addition to hiding among the wandering columns of refugees, North Korean and Chinese troops were given to occupying isolated villages far behind the front lines—after herding the inhabitants into the surrounding hills—and setting up ambushes. In response, wary officers ordered the obliteration of several ostensibly "friendly" villages, producing yet more refugee columns. Many American soldiers, distrustful of their Korean allies, blamed the "gooks" for the humiliating sight of a military that had defeated Imperial Japan being routed by a peasant-based and presumably inferior military force. The country's meager infrastructure became one object of their resentment. Troops used the windows of Korean buildings, costly power-line insulators, and scarce livestock for target practice with their rifles. Attacks on civilians reached alarming proportions. Across the front and well to the rear there were near nightly incidents of looting, assault and rape. One disturbing outbreak of disorder took place in Seoul, quashed only by a curfew and the firm assistance of American military police. In January 1951 General Matthew Ridgway, commander of the Eighth Army in Korea, ordered his staff to work on an extensive program of troop orientation

[39] Macdonald, *Korea*, 109; Acheson quoted in Engelhardt, *The End of Victory Culture*, 64.

and information, with an emphasis on proper deportment. One of the first pamphlets, tackling the ongoing propensity of truck and jeep drivers to see how close they could come to civilians without actually striking them, was entitled “How to Alienate Friends and Eliminate People.”[40] In March Ridgway issued a directive, to be read to “all troops as soon as possible” and reiterated at least once a month, condemning such assaults: “Under the guise of military authority some men have shown an utter disregard for law and human decencies, committing violent, oppressive and otherwise objectionable acts upon members of the Korean population.” Although he vowed to “apprehend and punish those responsible,” no record exists of widespread prosecutions.[41] Meanwhile, in early January, Seoul fell once again to the enemy.

As the sense of crisis reached the homefront, voices in Washington began to speak ominously of the need to use “weapons of mass destruction.” Serious policymakers suggested conducting nuclear, chemical and/or biological strikes on North Korea and, perhaps, mainland China. According to historian Bruce Cumings, the Truman administration came closest to using atomic weapons in early April 1951. Two months later the Joint Chiefs discussed deploying tactical nuclear warheads on the battlefield. Similar suggestions arose throughout the war.[42] And these bipartisan proposals enjoyed growing support among Americans frustrated by the lack of a decisive victory. A Gallup poll conducted the following November found 51 percent of respondents in support of dropping atomic weapons on “military targets,” up from 23 percent at the start of the conflict.[43] Although no nuclear bombs were dropped, once China intervened

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[40] Norman Bartlett, ed., *With the Australians in Korea*, 3rd ed. (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1960), 54; MacDonald, *Korea*, 216; John Dille, *Substitute for Victory* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1954), 127-130.

[41] National Archives II, RG 554, Box 747, Folder 250-1 #1 Morals and Conduct FEC Secret 1951.

[42] Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Volume II*, 747, 750-751.

[43] Engelhardt, *The End of Victory Culture*, 64. Public support for the war itself is, and was, difficult to gauge. Engelhardt maintains that by February 1951 only 39 percent of Americans polled supported American participation in the conflict, a figure that continued to drop (64-65). The author of a study of American wars and public opinion,

General MacArthur ordered the elimination from the air of every "installation, factory, city, and village" between the border and his retreating troops, rendering most of North Korea a wasteland.[44]

UN forces eventually rallied, fighting their way to a shifting front in the peninsula's midsection, roughly along the 38th parallel, where the war began. As before, they treated South Korea more as a combat arena than a land and a people to defend, its population centers potentially hostile territory. During Senate hearings in the spring of 1951, the Chief of Bomber Command testified that "the entire, almost the entire Korean Peninsula is just a terrible mess. . . . Just before the Chinese came in we were grounded. There were no more targets in Korea."[45] One South Korean communiqué summarized the accumulated damage: "Fifty-two of our fifty-five cities are missing."[46] UN forces once again bombarded Seoul, previously home to one-and-a-half million, before recapturing it in mid-March 1951. Investigators reported that South Korea's capital, having changed hands four times since the start of the conflict, was at least fifty percent destroyed. In the words of a correspondent for *The New Yorker*, "It was just about as inert as a city could become, short of altogether ceasing to exist."[47] A physicist on secret assignment for the Defense Department, pondering Seoul's destruction in the course of saving it,

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on the other hand, argues that "[b]y the time the 'mistake' questions were again posed in the last days of 1950, support for the war had dropped some 25 percentage points [from 77 percent the previous July]. . . . *More striking than the drop in support caused by the Chinese entry is the near-absence of further decline for the remaining 2 ½ years of war*." Thus, he concludes, "Chinese intervention seemed to shake from the support ranks those who were tenuous and those who felt that they could support a short war, but not a long one." Emphasis in the original. See John E. Mueller, *War, Presidents and Public Opinion* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1973), 51-52. The latter interpretation appears most likely: the war divided the American public almost exactly in half, but as it dragged on month after month those in both camps, who remained largely free from personal sacrifice, increasingly screened out news from the front.

[44] Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Volume II*, 753.

[45] Marilyn B. Young, "Korea: the Post-war War," *History Workshop Journal*, vol. 2001, no. 51 (Spring 2001), 113.

[46] Oliver, *Verdict in Korea*, 101.

[47] Kahn, *The Peculiar War*, 28-29.

wondered if it was possible to remove a city's inhabitants without obliterating its infrastructure. Samuel Cohen later invented the neutron bomb.[48]

During the spring and summer of 1951, as both sides consolidated their positions, the conflict settled into static, trench-warfare slaughter. The American army, in a departure from tradition, inaugurated a point-based rotation system (i.e., the more time spent on the front line, the sooner a soldier's Korean tour of duty would end). In late June the UN command signaled its willingness to discuss truce terms, although the contentious negotiations dragged on for two years. In the meantime enormous conventional armies were reduced to lobbing world-war levels of ordnance at each other. By 1953 more artillery shells had been fired than in all of World War Two. The United States continued to deploy its superior air power, while ground forces fought savage battles for limited objectives along an essentially stable front. UN casualties initially trebled.[49] As the stalemate endured, American servicemen vented their frustrations openly. One lieutenant exclaimed in a Seoul bar: "This is the damndest war. We can't win, we can't lose, and we can't quit."[50] Yet the incoming Eisenhower administration was not sure it wanted the war to end, despite public claims to the contrary. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, asked in private how he would feel if the fighting stopped immediately, replied, "We'd be worried. I don't think we can get much out of a Korean settlement until we have shown—before all Asia—our clear superiority by giving the Chinese one hell of a licking."[51]

The transition to stalemate brought its own difficulties for American enlisted men and officers. Infiltration and guerilla warfare continued to plague the South. Guerrillas had become

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[48] Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Volume II*, 752.

[49] Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War*, 500, 503-504, 636; Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Volume II*, 757; Halliday and Cumings, *Korea*, 159-160.

[50] Keyes Beech, *Tokyo and Points East* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1954), 206.

[51] Halliday and Cumings, *Korea*, 197.

so proficient in blowing up railroads that the main link between Pusan and Seoul was considered hazardous. One popular quip held it was the Republic of Korea in the daytime, but North Korea at night. The American command moved to wipe out all resistance in late 1951 with an operation revealingly dubbed "Rat Killer." Although such large-scale operations were soon handed over to the Korean National Police (under the supervision of American advisors), servicemen were routinely assigned to so-called "skunk hunts," rounding up all civilians without proper credentials for a given area.[52] A black market in military supplies also thrived, abetted by the American reliance on Korean labor. Virtually every UN tent and bunker had a Korean "houseboy" or soldier to attend to laundry and housecleaning chores. Some workers were compensated with items from the PX, which they in turn sold; others stole whatever they could, infuriating their GI employers. Many servicemen, however, actively participated in the wholesale theft of American military goods. At the supply depots entire shipments of cigarettes, rations, and gasoline were diverted to the underground economy. At one point the army was reportedly forced to purchase its PX items on the black market.[53]

Among American troops, illegal drugs were becoming popular. Heroin was freely available throughout South Korea and wherever soldiers congregated while on R&R in Japan.[54] A confidential report by general headquarters noted in August 1951 that the problem of drug abuse had "reached such proportions" that an alarming number of military personnel were

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[52] "The Savage, Secret War In Korea," *Life*, 1 December 1952, 25; Paik Sun Yup, *From Pusan to Panmunjom* (McLean, VA: Brassey's (US), Inc., 1992), 181-183; William D. Dannenmaier, *We Were Innocents: An Infantryman in Korea* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1999); 88. As one enlisted man later recalled, "We had mixed feelings about the people who infiltrated the area. . . . The war had so completely destroyed the country that the Koreans had no way to make a living. Some of these infiltrators were simply people trying to get back to their homes, to see if anything remained. Others were struggling to scratch out illicit livings by doing our wash, or sewing, or prostitution, or anything that would permit them and their families to survive" (Dannenmaier, 88).

[53] Kahn, *The Peculiar War*, 146, 169; Dudley J. Hughes, *Wall of Fire: A Diary of the Third Korean Winter Campaign* (Central Point, OR: Hellgate Press, 2003), 44, 60, 100; Dannenmaier, *We Were Innocents*, 68-69; Dille, *Substitute for Victory*, 129; Beech, *Tokyo and Points East*, 134.

[54] Bowers et al., *Black Soldiers, White Army*, 53-55; MacDonald, *Korea*, 224.

"rending themselves unfit for military duty."[55] Yet venturing into South Korean towns in search of drugs, commercial sex or more wholesome diversions was often physically dangerous. Officers instructed their men not to walk on Seoul's streets alone at night and required them to carry loaded weapons at all times for self defense. Some GIs reported being stoned by irate civilians.[56] "These days it is more dangerous for Americans in South Korean cities than on the front-lines," one soldier wrote his sister late in the war. Servicemen responded by attempting to make light of the circumstances, facetiously asking why so many of their allies were implacably hostile despite the fact that, with American firepower, "[t]heir fields have been plowed, their trees have been pruned, and their houses have been air-conditioned."[57]

And so continued a war that Senator Albert Gore, Sr. called the "meat grinder of American manhood."[58] It finally, mercifully came to a close in July 1953, with the signing of an armistice (the two Koreas technically remain at war). The meat grinder consumed nearly 35,000 American lives. For the Chinese and Korean people it was a catastrophe. Estimates of the number of Chinese soldiers killed range from one to three million. South Korea lost perhaps 1.3 million soldiers and civilians, more than 5 percent of its population. In the North, which endured the heaviest and most sustained bombing in history, there were roughly two million civilian dead, or 20 percent of the prewar population, a proportion higher even than that for Poland or the Soviet Union during World War Two. For the entire peninsula civilians accounted for *seventy percent* of total casualties (by comparison, the figures for World War Two and Vietnam were 40

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[55] National Archives II, RG 554, Box 747, Folder 250-1 #1 Morals and Conduct FEC Secret 1951. The file also contains a December 1951 report listing six Japanese hotels openly selling narcotics.

[56] Hughes, *Wall of Fire*, 44; Dannenmaier, *We Were Innocents*, 123, 158.

[57] Dannenmaier, *We Were Innocents*, 123.

[58] Sherry, *In the Shadow of War*, 181.

percent and 28 percent, respectively). In just three years more than three million Koreans perished.[59]

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However much most Americans attempted to ignore the mess in Korea, for black citizens the war was of particular interest. A contentious debate over its racial aspects erupted in the African-American media immediately following the outbreak of hostilities. The North Koreans played no small part in generating the controversy, using every opportunity to highlight the racial composition of the opposing forces. The peninsula was soon littered with pamphlets charging, among other things, that "under the orders of a Southern U.S. President, U.S. planes are bombing and strafing COLORED PEOPLE in Korea."[60] The introduction and widespread use of segregated, all-black units provided excellent propaganda fodder for "Seoul City Sue," the North Korean radio equivalent of World War Two's "Tokyo Rose" and "Axis Sally."[61] This announcer targeted African-American troops as well, asserting in at least one early broadcast—which made the front page of the *Pittsburgh Courier*—that black soldiers should desert or refuse to fight since "we are all of the colored race."[62] At the same time white officers circulated rumors that a

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[59] Halliday and Cumings, *Korea*, 11, 200; Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War*, 446; Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Volume II*, 770 and 919, note 23.

[60] Goldman, *The Crucial Decade*, 176. See also Walter White, "Remember June 25, 1950; Date May Prove Important To All Negroes," *Chicago Defender*, 9 September 1950, 7, which reprints the statement with slightly different wording.

[61] See, for example, Bogart, *Project Clear*, 51.

[62] Frank Whisonant, "'Go Back Home!' Seoul City Sue Tells Negro GIs: 'Koreans Are Colored, Too,' She Says," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 9 September 1950, 1. North Korean troops also deployed a disorienting tactic, early in the war, of donning captured American uniforms, darkening their faces, and attempting to pass themselves off as black servicemen in order to infiltrate African-American positions. See, for example, "N. Koreans Use 'Blackface' Ruse to Confuse 24th Infantry," *Afro American*, 12 August 1950, 3; and Bradford Laws, "How Can You Tell Friend From Foe Plagues Tanks [sic]: 'Red' Soldiers Use Black Face in War," *Afro American*, 26 August 1950, 14.

black military chaplain had advised his men not to attack an enemy of "color," illustrating the interracial mistrust North Korean appeals initially helped perpetuate.[63]

The decision to intervene did, in fact, precipitate fierce attacks on the Truman administration, primarily from a sizeable portion of the black left hostile toward American foreign policy.[64] Some framed it as an imperial undertaking. At a rally in Madison Square Garden sponsored by the Civil Rights Congress in late June 1950, activist and entertainer Paul Robeson declared that "the Negro people . . . know that if we don't stop our armed adventure in Korea today—tomorrow it will be Africa."[65] Another commentator, noting the arrival of American military advisors in South Vietnam that same year, incredulously asked, "Will Americans be dying there next?"[66] Most criticism, however, emphasized the racial politics at work. Among the black press, the leftist *California Eagle* was the primary organ for those declaring Korea a war of color. One columnist accused the United States of seeking "to enforce

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[63] No direct evidence of the sermon in question exists, strongly suggesting the rumor was apocryphal. See Bowers et al., *Black Soldiers, White Army*, 78.

[64] The emphasis here is on the African-American public sphere. Determining aggregate black opinion of the war, on the other hand, presents several difficulties. As the author of one study explains, "First, blacks represent only 10 or 15 percent of the population, and thus the size of the black sample in a national survey is rather small. Second, like other groups largely in the lower classes, they tend to be underrepresented in the sample. . . . Third, they live, at least for the Korean period, disproportionately in rather remote rural areas thus increasing sampling difficulties. . . . [And finally,] black men are severely underrepresented in many of the surveys, particularly from the Korean period." See Mueller, *War, Presidents and Public Opinion*, 147, note 13. What little evidence exists does suggest that southern blacks were less supportive of American intervention than southern whites. According to one study, "A significant minority apparently agreed with the relatively well-to-do Negro businessman and veteran of Korea, who wondered why 'we were so excited about saving such a crummy country and bunch of people.'" See Alfred O. Hero, Jr., *The Southerner and World Affairs* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1965), 522. The overall uncertainty of the data has not dissuaded historians, when they have paid the question any attention at all, from emphasizing black opposition to the war and its racial implications, however. See, for example, Plummer, *Rising Wind*, 206-207; Gerald Robert Gill, "Afro-American Opposition to the United States' Wars of the Twentieth Century: Dissent, Discontent and Disinterest" (Diss. Howard University, 1985), 68-81, 296-304; and Matthew Edwin Mantell, "Opposition to the Korean War: A Study in American Dissent" (Diss. New York University, 1973), 53-56. Yet a random sampling of opinion among black Philadelphians early in the war revealed support for American intervention by a ratio of three to two. See "The Inquiring Reporter," *Afro American*, 5 August 1950, 4. This admittedly limited data, along with the evidence presented below, suggests African-American opinion may in fact have been divided in a manner similar to that of white Americans.

[65] Philip S. Foner, ed., *Paul Robeson Speaks: Writings, Speeches, Interviews, 1918-1974* (Larchmont, NY: Brunner/Mazel, 1978), 252.

[66] Raphael Konigsberg, "Truman, Tell The Truth!," *California Eagle*, 7 July 1950, 6.

its racial theories throughout the world," its servicemen "inoculated with the virus of color hatred [and] zealously throw[ing] themselves into battle against native Koreans."[67] Another decried an "irony of ironies, the land of jimcrow [sic] . . . using colored troops to shoot down other colored folk seeking their freedom!"[68] Arguments to the contrary elicited equally vehement condemnation. One editorial accused African Americans who downplayed the question of race in Korea of "passing for white . . . mentally."[69] Colorblind representations of the war similarly led the American editor of *The Korean Independence* to condemn "a large section of the Negro press daily propagandizing the Negro people" with "jingoism designed to inculcate . . . support for the American invasion of Korea."[70]

Private citizens labeled the war an imperial, racist endeavor as well. One of the milder protests, written to the Baltimore *Afro American*, centered on the long-term consequences of "our trigger-happy haste to rush into Korea." Its author, observing that the South Koreans appeared reluctant to resist their northern countrymen, inquired if the American-dominated war effort might precipitate a global "war of the color line."[71] Others were more pointed. One woman took the *Chicago Defender* to task for portraying criticism of American intervention "as

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[67] John M. Lee, "The Peace Plot," *California Eagle*, 7 July 1959, 7.

[68] Raphael Konigsberg, "In Honor of The American Revolution," *California Eagle*, 14 July 1950, 6. He added, "They can't give us jobs, so they offer us guns. They can't give us homes, so they offer us caves. They can't give us life, so they offer us death." A subsequent editorial echoed Konigsberg's sentiments, observing that African-American soldiers were "fighting colored troops in Korea who would also be subjected to the indignities of Jimcrowism [sic] were they here in America." See "Jim Crow Fights In Korea," *California Eagle*, 1 September 1950, 6.

[69] "Passing for White," *California Eagle*, 1 September 1950, 6. Ellipses in the original.

[70] Diamond Kim, *The California Eagle*, 21 July 1950, 6, 8. A much smaller minority of relatively conservative black elites also opposed American intervention. The *Pittsburgh Courier*, for instance, became disenchanted with American participation in a war it initially supported. In the words of one editorial, "We don't believe the Asians want us. We don't think they are interested in our democracy or our way of life. . . . We believe that our Government [sic] should find some way to get out of Asia, including Japan, and leave Asia to the Asiatics. They will then have the job of taking care of themselves." See "Mobilization for What?," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 23 December 1950, 6. For a brief discussion of black Republican criticism of the Truman administration and the war, see Plummer, *Rising Wind*, 207.

[71] J. H. Jenkins, *Afro American*, 15 July 1950, 4.

Red propaganda," bluntly calling the paper's arguments "white washed [sic] lies."[72] The presence of black troops in Korea was dismissed as camouflage for malevolent intent. As one writer argued, their "use" was an example of "the crassest hypocrisy of a white supremacist, imperialist, American government."[73] A Bostonian flatly declared, "No Negro who has done any thinking would desire to go overseas and kill people who, like himself, have been exploited for centuries."[74] Even a few black servicemen chimed in. One year into the conflict, fifty-four anonymous members of an all-black laundry company—a unit that, significantly, had remained stateside—insisted the United States could not "possibly bring freedom to colored people in other countries [when] we are not free at home."[75]

On the other hand, a larger (or at least more vocal) segment of the African-American public championed American intervention or rejected talk of a race war. Such support came primarily from a large swath of liberal and centrist black opinion. Of course, their position stemmed in part from a desire to appear patriotic in light of a crystallizing Cold War consensus on American foreign policy.[76] Yet it also reflected a strong conviction that Korea represented an unprovoked attack against a peaceful American ally. Labor leader A. Philip Randolph, for instance, appeared at a July 1950 pro-war rally in Harlem and, in the words of the *New York Times*, called upon "Negroes throughout the country to give the United States and the United Nations moral and material support to halt the march of communism toward world conquest."[77]

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[72] China Goodman, *Chicago Defender*, 26 August 1950, 6.

[73] Mel Williamson, *Afro American*, 11 November 1950, 4. See also A. Peter Spaulding, *Afro American*, 16 September 1950, 4; and John O. Killens, *Afro American*, 7 April 1951, 4.

[74] Roy C. Wright, *Pittsburgh Courier*, 27 January 1951, 11.

[75] Men of 857th, *Afro American*, 4 August 1951, 4.

[76] For a discussion of works emphasizing this interpretation, see the Introduction.

[77] "Negro Backing Urged: A.P. Randolph Asks Support of U.N. and U.S. in Korea," *New York Times*, 22 July 1950, 5. Randolph was joined in this argument by the NAACP's Walter White, who wrote that the war was "one between an aggressive totalitarianism and an imperfect democracy whose most grevious [sic] weaknesses are the sins of colonialism and race." See Walter White, "Remember June 25, 1950; Date May Prove Important To All

The participation of African American ground forces provided crucial political ammunition for a range of war supporters. The *Chicago Defender* repeatedly emphasized this theme. One columnist explained that black soldiers were "putting color into what otherwise would be a war of whites against colored."[78] Two front-page articles stressed the political benefits that would accrue to the United States if it commissioned an African-American general and assigned him to the Korean battlefield.[79] *Ebony* magazine devoted its sole editorial for October 1950 to the question, "Is It A War Of Color?," succinctly replying, "Color is not involved." Again the deployment of black soldiers was key. "The Negroes of the courageous 24th Infantry Regiment," its author maintained, "gave the most dramatic reply to Communist 'war of color' propaganda and 'Negroes-won't-fight-Russia' claims by Paul Robeson."[80] Even the South Korean government monitored the discussion. Pleased with what it had seen, it too recognized the symbolic value of black military service. Its Consul General to the United States visited the

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Negroes," *The Chicago Defender*, 9 September 1950, 7. The Republican-leaning editorial page of the *Pittsburgh Courier*, although it came to oppose American participation following the entry of China, was adamant on this point: "In the interest of national survival the United States must oppose the new slavery of totalitarianism just as it fought the old slave traffic and drowned the slave system in blood on its own soil." See "Korea: Background of the War," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 August 1950, 14. In response to these and other statements, Benjamin Davis, Jr., African-American communist and former member of the New York City Council, allegedly accused White and his ilk of "betrayal of the Negro who are [sic] fighting against the same white racist ruling class that seeks to subdue the colored people of Korea, China, [and] Viet-Nam, together with the black people of Africa and the West Indies." See Walter White, "Attacks Disclose Walter White Has A Strength He Never Suspected," *Chicago Defender*, 13 January 1951, 7.

[78] "It's Now Or Perhaps Never," "National Grapevine" column, *Chicago Defender*, 5 August 1950, 6. See also "24th Adds Yechon To Victory List," *Chicago Defender*, 29 July 1950, 1.

[79] "Negro General For MacArthur," *Chicago Defender*, 15 July 1950, 1; "24th Holds As Reds Step Up Pressure," *Chicago Defender*, 29 July 1950, 1.

[80] "Is It A War Of Color?," *Ebony*, October 1950, 94. "The Communist are not the first in their attempt to use race and color as an effective propaganda device," added the author. "During World War II, the Japanese tried the same technique. Their agents played upon Negro nationalism and through a call for the solidarity of colored peoples had several fanatic so-called pro-African groups working in their behalf." Reader response to Ebony's claims appears to have been generally positive, particularly among military personnel abroad. Airman James Bryant wrote from Honolulu to praise the editorial and to stress the "harmony and companionship" he encountered in his integrating branch of the armed forces. See James E. Bryant, *Ebony*, December 1950, 6. One soldier wrote from Korea to express "how much the fellows and myself appreciated" the magazine's stance. See Pfc. Thomas Felton, *Ebony*, March 1951, 10. The sole published dissent came from a resident of Los Angeles. He inquired, in response to the magazine's dismissal of North Korean claims that the United States was bombing a non-white population, if Koreans were now to be "classed as white people?" See Chester Jones, *Ebony*, December 1950, 6.

offices of the *Afro American*, which approvingly paraphrased his contention that the "gallant participation of colored American fighting men in the Far Eastern conflict gives the lie" to claims Korea "is a 'race war.'"[81]

Fig. 5.1, *Afro American,* 15 July 1950.

[81] The official further expressed the belief—which, as we shall see, was more than a tad optimistic—that black citizens, "fighting for their freedom, should have a special affinity for the problems of my people who have been oppressed and subjugated for years." Moreover, he praised the recent history of black-Korean intimacy: "Asserting that his people feel race barriers are artificial, he cited the fact that a number of tan GIs married Korean girls after World War II and were eagerly accepted by native people when they settled down in Korea to live and raise families." See "Tan Yanks' Action Cited: Consul Refutes Charge Korea Battle Race War," *Afro American*, 29 July 1950, 19. For a much different take on mid-century Korean racial attitudes, see Chapters Three and Four.

Notwithstanding this acrimonious debate over the conflict's racial significance, black citizens across the political spectrum were eager to deplore racist rhetoric among white Americans. The mainstream media on occasion belittled more than one racial group at a time. One radio bulletin, broadcast coast-to-coast in July 1950, described a new rocket that "went through the Koreans like a pickaninny goes through a watermelon." African-American listeners vehemently condemned the remark.[82] However, it was soldiers' widespread use of racial epithets—"gook" in particular—that drew the most criticism.[83] During the war's first months, African-American journalists took note of an almost immediate adoption of the term to indicate the enemy. One August editorial complained that the epithet, "coined to indicate utter contempt . . . not for the Russians who may be backing them, but for the little brown men alone," was "being popularized." It added, erroneously, that servicemen for the time being had stopped short of applying it to their South Korean allies.[84] Other accounts more accurately described indiscriminate use of the term.[85] As an editorial in *The Crisis* lamented, "such phrases as these fall easily from the lips of our soldiers."[86] A September 1950 pronouncement from General MacArthur declaring "gook" insulting to Asian peoples helped mollify these critics, although, as one editorial bitingly suggested, "While he is about it, he might frown on any and all epithets applying to race."[87] And yet African-American journalists were not above disparaging the North Koreans and Communist Chinese. One reader of the *Pittsburgh Courier*, in the context of articles adopting the language of the white press to describe "hordes" and "swarms" of enemy

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[82] "Commentator Slurs Negroes And Koreans," *California Eagle*, 28 July 1950, 2.

[83] Although conservative iconoclast George Schuyler scoffed at what he felt was unnecessary hand-wringing over use of the term "gook"—he branded the North Koreans "gorillas"—his was a rare public dissent. See George S. Schuyler, "Views and Reviews," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 1 March 1951, 7.

[84] "Koreans won't Like This," *Afro American*, 26 August 1950, 4.

[85] See, for example, Lucius C. Harper, "Dustin' Off the News," *Chicago Defender*, 6 January 1951, 7; and the sympathetic short story "Gook Girl," *Afro American*, magazine section, 14 October 1950, 14.

[86] "Is This White Chauvinism?," *The Crisis*, February 1951, 103.

[87] "Why Not All, Mac?," *Afro American*, 23 September 1950, 4.

troops, protested in early 1951 that "we Negroes too often use the language of our oppressors and condemners. Only recently, a black American soldier, on his return from Korea[,] referred to the North Koreans as 'savages.'"[88]

Indeed, as the trickle of reported African-American casualties became a grim stream, portrayals of the North Korean soldier increasingly assumed a derogatory cast. Because African Americans at first constituted more than one in four of those on the front lines, hometown newspaper rolls of the dead, wounded and missing included many more black citizens than during previous wars.[89] Tales of North Korean atrocities abounded, along with reports that their soldiers were fueled with drugs.[90] Black journalists searching for ways to describe the enemy began deploying such terms as "treacherous," "ruthless," "crafty," and "fanatical."[91] One recounted bloody hand-to-hand fighting between members of the all-black 24th Infantry Regiment and a unit of "slant-eyed North Korean Reds."[92] Another quoted a Tennessee private

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[88] The author further remarked, "Since the Korean war [began], Americans have used the term 'gooks' in referring to the Koreans just as they use 'nigger' in designating Negroes. . . . One can understand white men in their arrogance using such terms, but to find Negroes who rightly resent it when the term 'natives' is used in reference to Africans applying derogatory epithets and terms to other colored peoples is distressing." See Artemus Brown, *Pittsburgh Courier*, 27 January 1951, 11.

[89] For the statistic on black soldiers at the front, see Lipsitz, *A Life in the Struggle*, 44. For an instance of media coverage highlighting the large proportion of African Americans wounded in combat, in this case an August 1950 report revealing that at least 30 percent of those lying in Tokyo General Hospital were black, see Frank Whisonant, "Wounded Tan GIs Await Second Crack at 'Reds,'" *Pittsburgh Courier*, 26 August 1950, 1. One month later the paper ran an article entitled "Tan GIs Pack Wounded List." See *Pittsburgh Courier*, 21 October 1950, 4. With African Americans overrepresented among ground forces throughout the war, their casualty rates remained high. As *Ebony* noted in the spring of 1951, "Because Negro servicemen are getting more into front line combat in this war, a higher proportion of their names is appearing on the list of dead and missing than in any other war Americans have fought. While the Army and Navy do not give any racial breakdown of casualties, pictures in a Chicago newspaper of 204 dead and missing in the Chicago area shows 44 of the casualties were Negro—more than 20 percent of the total although Negroes comprise only 10 per cent of the city's population." See "The Last Days of a Navy Pilot," *Ebony*, April 1951, 15.

[90] See, for example, "GI Tells of Korean Atrocities," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 28 October 1950, 2; and "Horrors in North Korea," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 22 August 1953, 6.

[91] Frank Whisonant, "Wounded Tan GIs Await Second Crack at 'Reds,'" *Pittsburgh Courier*, 26 August 1950, 1 ("treacherous"; "ruthless"); Bradford Laws, "Hills and Infiltration Main Korean Obstacles," *Afro American*, 9 September 1950, 13 ("crafty"); James L. Hicks, "24th Quickly Learns New-Style Fighting," *Afro American*, 5 August 1950, 3 ("fanatical"). These examples represent merely a handful of the countless articles using such stock terms.

[92] "Negro GIs First Heroes," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 29 July 1950, 1.

who described enemy soldiers scaling the rugged Korean hills "like monkeys."[93] Once the Chinese entered, they too were routinely caricatured. Media accounts began to speak of a distinctive, and utterly foreign and uncivilized, Asian way of war. According to one reporter, to "Oriental Peoples" "the enemy is an enemy, and they treat him accordingly, indifferent to the nice conventions with which Western peoples are familiar."[94] Claimed another, "There's something about Asiatic concepts of fighting that impels them to come whooping down hillsides in great hordes."[95] Unsurprisingly, these wartime stereotypes insinuated themselves into black popular culture. A January 1953 blues recording, for instance, portrayed the Chinese as, in the words of one specialist, "ruthless rice-eating killers."[96]

Adding to the dehumanization of the Asian enemy were accounts of African-American military prowess. In the face of pervasive white attacks on the performance of all-black units in Korea, African-American publications celebrated their martial exploits.[97] One mark of distinction was the ability to generate a high enemy body count. The *Pittsburgh Courier*, one of the largest and most influential black newspapers, splashed its front pages with graphic headlines including "Mows Down 30 Reds In One Day," "Eagle Eye GI Shoots 55," and "Tan GIs Kill 200." The latter included a soldier's macabre account of a Korean human-wave attack: "There were some cut in two and others with their heads and hands blown off. But they kept coming until we nearly shot all of them up."[98] The paper subsequently heralded sergeant Arthur Dudley,

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[93] Bradford Laws, "Hills and Infiltration Main Korean Obstacles," *Afro American*, 9 September 1950, 13.

[94] "Fight or Die Is Army's Decision," *Afro American*, 12 August 1950, 9.

[95] Vincent Tubbs, "Korea Is Not the Place For a Modern War," *Afro American*, magazine section, 19 August 1950, 3.

[96] van Rijn, *The Truman and Eisenhower Blues*, 89. The song was "Wartime" by guitarist "Homesick" James.

[97] For a summary of the controversy over exaggerated reports of black cowardice and insubordination, especially among the 24th Infantry Regiment, see Astor, *The Right to Fight*, 350-373.

[98] Bradford Laws, "Mows Down 30 Reds In One Day: GI Wipes Out Enemy Column," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 5 August 1950, 1; "Eagle Eye GI Shoots 55," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 2 September 1950, 1; Frank Whisonant, "Tan GIs

a recipient of the Distinguished Service Cross "credited with killing nearly 100 Red troops," as the "No. 1 Hero of [the] Korean War."[99] *Jet* magazine featured a Silver-Star winning private from Louisiana who "single-handedly killed Chinese Communists 'right and left' while protecting his white Georgia battalion commander."[100] One especially gruesome account offered a celebratory portrayal of soldier Curtis Pugh's encounter with a small band of North Koreans: "The first of the four enemy troopers was shot by Pugh at a distance of less than ten feet. The second one had his rifle taken away from him by Pugh, who shot him in the head; the third suffered a bashed-in skull with a rifle butt, and the fourth was strangled to death."[101] The final act of strangulation received two additional paragraphs of vivid description.

The contributions of African-American support units attracted similarly positive attention. However, because of the military's scorched-earth policies, as well as its multiple retreats in the early going, such accounts centered on the destruction of Korean property, regardless of provenance. In September 1950 correspondent James Hicks profiled a combat engineer unit responsible for destroying the South Korean community of Yechon, "a city about the size of Santa Monica." The African-American lieutenant in charge stressed that while it was not typical army practice to wantonly destroy civilian assets, everything of potential military or commercial value, food included, had to be burned. Hicks, noting that "Koreans virtually live on rice," described how the engineers put the torch to 300,000 tons, enough to feed the city for a

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Kill 200," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 2 September 1950, 1, 4. See also William A. Fowlkes, "Georgia GI in Korea Mows Down 55 Reds," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 30 September 1950, 1.

[99] Sgt. Dudley: No. 1 Hero of Korean War," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 25 November 1950, 2.

[100] "GI Kills Nine Reds to Save Life of White Georgia Officer," *Jet*, 2 April 1953, 16.

[101] Frank Whisonant, "One GI Mops Up Four Koreans," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 7 October 1950, 5 (idiosyncratic punctuation in the original). The *California Eagle* was alone among major black newspapers to deplore the tendency of media outlets, regardless of race, to trumpet the number of enemy killed: "Every day we hear over the radio, or read in the big headlines of the number of Chinese 'Reds' that have been killed. The number is given gloatingly, as if the narrator were smacking his lips at the torture inflicted by our troops upon the people of another nation and another color." See "The Korean War," *California Eagle*, 8 February 1951, 4. The paper ceased publication two months later.

year. The unit proceeded to level Yechon's 40,000 buildings, lumber yard and hydroelectric plant. The piece's tone, however, was more matter-of-fact than mournful. "Every GI in embattled South Korea," Hicks explained, "would like to burn one of the squalid enemy infested villages."[102]

As this example suggests, portrayals of the South and its destitute population were often just as disparaging as those of the enemy. Among journalists the most popular trope for the physical environment was an alienating concoction of decay, wretchedness and affliction, a characterization that coalesced remarkably early. Readers of the *Afro American* encountered a rash of articles in the summer and fall of 1950 highlighting the traditional Korean use of human waste as fertilizer. The "infamous sugar carts"—as GIs dubbed vehicles for collecting the yields of outhouses—reportedly "prowl[ed] the streets at all hours of the day."[103] One account described ubiquitous open sewers lazily emptying their contents into the rice paddies, where, in the author's estimation, "the real filth of Korea begins." Not only could one supposedly smell a Korean village a football field away,[104] but soldiers were forced "to march knee-deep in mud and human excreta."[105] Another piece quoted a serviceman on his fellow soldiers' disgust with the peninsula's "filth and disease."[106] As for the weather, it was a "literal hell," made all the worse through "bombardments by lice, bugs and leeches."[107] Korean living arrangements likewise appeared to promote infestation (fleas were routinely cited). One headline unequivocally

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[102] James L. Hicks, "Death of a City," *Afro American*, 2 September 1950, 13.

[103] "Korean Assignment 'No Bed of Roses'; Too Much Lacking," *Afro American*, 29 July 1950, 7.

[104] James L. Hicks, "This Is Korea: Natives, Cows, Dogs, Chickens Live in Same Huts, Conditions Shocking," *Afro American*, 30 September 1950, 12.

[105] "Fight or Die Is Army's Decision," *Afro American*, 12 August 1950, 12. According to another correspondent, the soldier in Korea "has to crawl through mud and slime, and wade knee-deep in water every time he gets off the roads. . . . And as often as not he finds himself bedding down on ground that has been studiously and intentionally fertilized with human excrement." See Vincent Tubbs, "Korea Is Not the Place For a Modern War," *Afro American*, magazine section, 19 August 1950, 3.

[106] "Korean Vet Discovers U.S. Democracy Rising," *Afro American*, 17 November 1951, 9.

[107] "Fight or Die Is Army's Decision," *Afro American*, 12 August 1950, 12.

deemed Korea the "Filthiest Place in [the] World."[108] Another sensationally claimed that "Natives, Cows, Dogs, Chickens Live in Same Huts, Conditions Shocking." The latter's content is worth quoting at length for what it reveals about the tenor of such exposés: "Over here in Korea, we correspondents have a saying that if the whole world was a pig, Korea would be the pig's tail—only we don't say tail. To begin with, Korea is the most dirty, the most stinking, the most filthy place on God's earth this writer has ever laid eyes on. And the veteran world traveling correspondents here agree with me—they say its is much more filthy than Arabia. . . . What makes this true? The Koreans themselves."[109]

Indeed, the repulsive aspects of the landscape appeared inextricable from its inhabitants. Most black coverage of the Korean people characterized them variously as barbaric, cunning, or ungrateful. Correspondents routinely fell back upon imagery of the American West and Native Americans.[110] (The comparison was common among white observers as well).[111] One simply

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[108] James L. Hicks, "24th Quickly Learns New-Style Fighting: AFRO's Hicks Tells How Writers Fare in 'Filthiest Place in World,'" *Afro American*, 5 August 1950, 3.

[109] James L. Hicks, "This Is Korea: Natives, Cows, Dogs, Chickens Live in Same Huts, Conditions Shocking," *Afro American*, 30 September 1950, 12. The *Afro*'s editor(s), presumably uncomfortable with so derisive a portrayal of America's ally, intervened with an unusual preface suggesting that Koreans were not predisposed to create an unhealthy environment. "The same primitive living conditions Mr. Hicks describes in Korea," an "editor's note" explained, "may be found in many parts of the world which have not had our opportunities for economic advancement." Nonetheless, this was the only instance of editorial intervention among the periodicals examined here. An un-annotated piece in the *Chicago Defender*, for instance, had this to say about the alienating effects of Korean poverty: "What do UN troops think of Korea? They put it this way: All the world is a pig. And Korea is that portion of the hog covered by the pig's tail. . . . The villages [and] huts of these people for the most part are unsanitary. They are worse than anything found in the ghettoes of Chicago, Detroit, or New York. The interior of the homes are bare when compared with the plantation shacks of Dixie. . . . Due to lack of sanitation, almost every village or city emits a nauseating smell. . . . GIs fighting in the country have no love for the hell-hole. Their big ambition is to get out of the pig's sty, as soon as possible." See "Story Of Korea Is Shocking Saga Of A Nation Living In The Past," *Chicago Defender*, Gary Edition, 23 December 1950, 33.

[110] "Many sights in Korea will remind Americans [of] the West of home," explained one photo caption, "like this woman carrying her child, who resembles an American Indian on a reservation." See *Afro American*, 29 July 1950, 7. One correspondent similarly maintained that the "country and concepts of the inhabitants are better suited to the skirmishes of cowboys and Indians." Mixing his metaphors, he later claimed that "the plebian Asiatic"—Koreans included—was "no more concerned about his country's political complexion than a Kentucky hillbilly." See Vincent Tubs, "Korea Is Not the Place For a Modern War," *Afro American*, magazine section, 19 August 1950, 3.

[111] See, for example, Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Volume II*, 691 and 901, note 65.

declared Koreans "semi-primitive," "immature economically [and] politically."[112] An apparent Korean indifference or brutality toward one another seemed especially cruel. Journalist Ralph Matthews reported seeing "mothers kick and cuff toddling tots and hit them with clubs."[113] Milton Smith, writing for both the *Afro American* and the *Chicago Defender*, provided two variations on the theme that black servicemen believed Koreans to be "cruel, mean and backward" and thus "do not respect the Koreans, north or south, that they meet."[114] As one of his headlines declared, they were a "Cruel People: 'Rather Be Negro In Ala. Than Korean In Seoul,' Says GI."[115] Most were also not to be trusted. Reports of attacks by "friendly" civilians, even elderly women, were common. "You don't know who is who," one soldier was quoted as complaining, "until you shoot one and find that he has been hanging around your unit all the time as a friend."[116]

Above all, the Korean people appeared unappreciative of American sacrifices, black and white. African-American correspondents found their "questionable value as allies" and the absence of a suitable "welcome" in southern cities retaken from the enemy particularly unsettling.[117] The "Korean attitude toward Americans is so hostile," alleged the *Pittsburgh*

[112] "Story Of Korea Is Shocking Saga Of A Nation Living In The Past," *Chicago Defender*, Gary Edition, 23 December 1950, 33.

[113] Ralph Matthews, Sr., "Rambling Thoughts of a War Reporter," *Afro American*, 24 November 1951, 14.

[114] Milton A. Smith, "No Welcome Mat Out for U.S. in Korea," *Afro American*, 26 December 1950, 13. The author included a black soldier's observation that "[t]hese babies don't pay much attention to each other's miseries."

[115] Milton Smith, "Cruel People: 'Rather Be Negro In Ala. Than Korean In Seoul,' Says GI," *Chicago Defender*, Gary Edition, 23 December 1950, 32. Although Smith provided a touch of cultural relativism, explaining that "[a]ccording to native custom a person who saves another person's life must take care of him," overall both pieces were unsympathetic in tone.

[116] Frank Whisonant, "Old Woman Sneaks Behind UN Line, Fires on Our GIs," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 30 September 1950, 3. See also James L. Hicks, "Tan Lads in 14 Days of Continuous Battle," *Afro American*, 5 August 1950, 2.

[117] "What We Face in Korea," *Afro American*, 15 July 1950, 4 ("questionable value as allies"); Milton Smith, "Cruel People: 'Rather Be Negro In Ala. Than Korean In Seoul,' Says GI," *Chicago Defender*, Gary Edition, 23 December 1950, 32.

Courier, "that they follow Americans in the streets and spit at their heels."[118] One journalist disclosed that he and his colleagues were taken aback to discover "a significant number" of the people Americans were supposedly saving "unanimous in one thing: They wanted American troops, regardless of color, to get out of Korea!"[119] Finally, and contradictorily, some accused the South Koreans of needlessly prolonging the conflict—and thus generating additional black casualties—out of greed or sloth. In late 1952 reporter J. A. Rogers gave voice to an embittered veteran who complained South Koreans "don't want the war to end as they 'never had it so good.'"[120] Moreover, the military's extensive use of indigenous labor, although it provided a meager income to the impoverished population, often led to abuses. Black soldiers routinely supervised gangs of Asian workers (as in occupied Japan), with all the attendant conflicts over productivity and accusations of malingering.[121] The greatest difficulty for a sergeant from New Orleans, for example, was "getting work out of his Korean laborers," since they "have no sense of patriotism so far as this war is concerned." "Sometimes I have to get real tough," he calmly explained to a visiting journalist in late 1951, since "I am determined that these Gooks are not going to mess up my schedule and cost me my stripes" (that is, a military promotion).[122] These and myriad other reports of daily life on the peninsula informed stateside audiences just how rarely the identities and interests of black servicemen and their Korean allies coincided.

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[118] "An Insult In Korea," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 2 September 1950, 4.

[119] L. Alex Wilson, "Reveals Facts About North Koreans' Alleged Contempt For Negro GIs," *Chicago Defender*, 10 March 1951, 38.

[120] J. A. Rogers, "Korean Vets, Fed Up With 'Useless War,' Want To Come Home and Forget," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 15 November 1952, 7.

[121] One twenty-two-year-old Second Lieutenant from Virginia, for example, supervised more than 75 local workers. See Milton A. Smith, "Va. Officer Feeds 15,000 Daily In Korea," *Afro American*, 9 December 1950, 13.

[122] Ralph Matthews, "Meets A GI In Korea Who Does Not Gripe!," *New York Amsterdam News*, 22 December 1951, 11.

As late as October 1952 readers of the *Pittsburgh Courier* could contemplate a rare letter alleging that most African Americans held a "sneaking admiration" for the Koreans—"a non-white people"—whose ongoing struggle against the United States "tends to boost our racial self-respect."[123] In other words, Korea was indeed a race war, one that compelled black citizens to side with their nation's adversaries in the Asian world. Yet this was a position that, if measured by press content, enjoyed dwindling public support. African-Americans on the homefront had encountered scant media coverage lending credence to unifying "war of color" talk. And among the tens of thousands of black soldiers who fought in the war, the argument would have appeared preposterous, to put it mildly.

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For the men of the 24th Infantry Regiment, the reassignment from Japan to Korea in July 1950 got off to a rocky start.[124] Some came close to rioting when their commanders at first denied permission to visit Japanese girlfriends and children one last time.[125] When members of the 24th began streaming into the port of Moji, Japan en route to the conflict, chaos reigned. An unknown number of enlisted men, abruptly uprooted from their comfortable lives as occupationaires and unsure of what to expect, slipped away for one last night on the town. Vague but alarming reports soon reached division headquarters that drunk and disorderly troops were assaulting civilians. Local police subsequently lodged a formal complaint, alleging that perhaps 100 servicemen had injured scores of Japanese citizens and left at least one dead. Yet because the men eventually rejoined their units, and the departure for Korea occurred on

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[123] Jose Garcia, *Pittsburgh Courier*, 11 October 1952, 11.

[124] The 24th was one of the first African-American units thrust into the conflict. For a list of several more, which together represented thousands of black servicemen, see "Tan Troops on Move to Korea," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 15 July 1950, 1.

[125] Astor, *The Right to Fight*, 351.

schedule (and, presumably, because the incidents were low on the military's list of priorities), commanders were disinclined to pursue the matter. A hastily arranged investigation dismissed the complaints as apocryphal or exaggerated.[126]

The men stepped foot on the Korean peninsula brimming with confidence that the military that had decisively conquered Japan would make short work of an upstart peasant army.[127] "This policing of the commies of North Korea," claimed one enlisted veteran of World War Two, "should end almost as abruptly as it started."[128] Their optimism quickly faltered. The sight of South Korean troops fleeing to the rear as the 24th moved up to defensive positions generated immediate disgust, as well as concern. In place of cheering crowds were taciturn civilians staring ominously as they passed. Supposed refugees began attacking from the rear.[129] Many soldiers soon felt nothing but contempt for allies who failed to behave the way America's dominant Cold War narrative insisted they would. And in Korea contempt could become lethal. Lieutenant Charles Bussey, whose unit would shortly destroy Yechon, witnessed one of his men snipe an elderly South Korean on a bet. Although "murder had been committed," Bussey chose not to report the incident: "I could see the press and the holier-than-thou rear-echelon officers browbeating another 'nigra soljuh,'" he confessed years later, "and smearing this crime on every other Negro in the theater of operations. . . . I felt for the old Korean man lying dead in the road ahead of me, but in my order of priorities it was his life against the lives of ten thousand black

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[126] Bowers et al., *Black Soldier, White Army*, 79-80.

[127] Lyle Rishell, *With a Black Platoon in Combat: A Year in Korea* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1993), 25.

[128] "'Let's Get This Mess Over and Go Home,'" *Pittsburgh Courier*, 5 August 1950, 5. White servicemen displayed similar cockiness in the early going, only to be surprised by the enemy's tenacity. "Before I came over here," explained one sergeant in early 1951, "I thought these Chinks and North Koreans . . . was crazy as hell—a bunch of gooks jumping the American Army after we'd just whipped the Japs and Germans. All I can say now is 'Kill them before they kill you.'" See Kahn, *The Peculiar War*, 93.

[129] Rishell, *With a Black Platoon in Combat*, 29-32.

soldiers who didn't deserve the ignominy."[130] Bussey's decision was painful to make, certainly, but it did nothing to counter a growing sense that, when push came to shove, Korean lives were expendable.

'Talk, Jack!'—These grim-visaged American troops mean just that ("Talk; Jack!") as they question North Koreans found near U. N. lines. Infiltration by "civilians" is a serious menace to operations and the GIs are taking chances on no one slipping through — Keystone Photo.

Fig. 5.2, *Pittsburgh Courier,* 26 August 1950.

[130] Bussey, *Firefight at Yechon*, 116-118.

Similarly unpleasant encounters between African-American soldiers and Korean civilians occurred throughout the war. Seventeen-year-old Curtis Morrow arrived in December 1950 to find not only the Chinese routing American forces, but colder weather than he had ever experienced, the "winter air heavy with the smell of burning flesh, garlic, and gunpowder." Morrow and his comrades, constantly hungry during the retreat south, scoured the countryside for food. While manning a roadblock to screen refugees, they were approached by a group using an ox to transport their meager belongings. Morrow ordered them at gunpoint to unload the animal and then shot it. His platoon butchered the ox and later cooked it along with some confiscated rice. They discarded the intestines, which the starving Koreans scrambled to eat raw. Fearing a riot, Morrow and his men threatened to shoot them on the spot.[131]

Even as the war settled into a stalemate relations remained tense and often dangerous. Charles Berry, assigned to a trucking company, hauled supplies from Pusan to the front lines. One day a Korean boy ran up to one of the vehicles, called out "GI!" and, raising his arms, dropped two grenades. The explosion killed everyone inside. Following the young suicide bomber's attack, Berry ordered the men in his squad to use lethal force if approached by suspicious civilians. Military authorities "told us to be nice and stuff," he later explained. "But I told my people . . . 'if they come up, shoot 'em.' I said, 'Your life is worth more than theirs.'"[132] Outwardly friendly indigenous employees could prove just as threatening. Fifty years after the war one veteran recalled a South Korean who "had been staying there in our tent, washing our clothes, you know, our houseboy." A map of the entire camp was eventually found in the young man's pocket, implicating him as a spy. Noting that his erstwhile houseboy was taken in custody

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[131] Morrow, *What's a Commie Ever Done to Black People?*, 4, 9.

[132] Charles Berry Collection (AFC/2001/001/5950), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.

to the rear, the veteran implied he was executed by his American captors or South Korean personnel.[133]

Views on the official enemy were, of course, even more antagonistic, although most black servicemen evidently made a qualitative distinction between their Chinese and North Korean adversaries. "This was indeed a strange war," one later remarked. "[T]here were no noble ideals to defend. . . . Our mission was to carry out orders, to survive and to return home."[134] And from December 1950 onward the primary order was, as another understood it, "to kill as many Chinese as possible."[135] And yet Chinese forces earned at least a modicum of respect for their conformity to standard military techniques. Although they persisted in "com[ing] off the hill[s] like Indians"[136]—drug use, again, was the prime suspect—they were "normal soldiers, in the sense that when they saw they couldn't do something they'd pull back."[137] The North Korean combatant, on the other hand, was despised for his guerilla tactics and apparent fanaticism. North Korean commanders, at least during the initial drive to unite the peninsula, had little use for prisoners. Black servicemen witnessed or read of a disturbing number of their American comrades discovered bound and executed.[138] Combat engineer Robert

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[133] Samuel King interview (2002), "Korea: The Unfinished War," a project of American RadioWorks, documentary unit of American Public Media. King described the incident with his informal employee immediately before launching into a recollection of American soldiers executing prisoners, examined below.

[134] Wilbert L. Walker, *We Are Men: Memoirs of World War II And The Korean War* (Baltimore, MD: Heritage Press, 1972), x.

[135] Tomedi, *No Bugles, No Drums*, 127.

[136] Samuel King interview (2002), "Korea: The Unfinished War," a project of American RadioWorks, documentary unit of American Public Media.

[137] Tomedi, *No Bugles, No Drums*, 186. For another example of a black soldier singling out the Chinese for their relatively "subtle and humane" treatment, in this case of American prisoners of war, see Ethel L. Payne, "Prisoner For 31 Months In Korea, Wounded Chicagoan Is Back Home," *Chicago Defender*, 10 October 1953, 3.

[138] See, for example, Samuel King interview (2002), "Korea: The Unfinished War," a project of American RadioWorks, documentary unit of American Public Media; "Without A Chance," photo caption, *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 12 July 1950, 1; "UN Delegates Shocked By Murder of Prisoners," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 12 July 1950, 1; "Barbarity on Hill 303," photo caption, *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 19 August 1950, 1; Frank Emery, "7 More Yank GIs Found Murdered By North Koreans," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 19 August 1950, 1; and Don Whitehead, "Reds Massacre American Prisoners," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 23 October 1950, 1.

Chappel recounted how, for the remainder of the war, "they still had Koreans that was taking communication wire and catching guys on guard duty and choking them. . . . And they would take some guys and . . . tie them with barbed wire, riddle their bodies with barbed wire."[139] During open combat, explained Lieutenant Beverly Scott, "[t]hey'd come right into your [fox]hole, try and shoot you or stab you or bite you if they didn't have a weapon. Just fanatical as hell. . . . [B]ut it was just to distract us while more of them were trying to sneak around us somewhere else." The North Koreans, Scott declared, "were vicious people. They mutilated bodies. They shot prisoners. Just nasty, nasty people."[140]

Many black servicemen were thus disinclined to treat prisoners of war humanely. Although Private Curtis Morrow claimed he never heard his fellow soldiers express hatred for the North Koreans or Chinese—"although some may have done so"—they openly pondered whether or not to accept an enemy's surrender. Aware of the value that army intelligence placed on acquiring captives to interrogate, Morrow reasoned he "might not kill him if there happened to be an officer around." All the same, he recoiled at the thought of a hypothetical prisoner "sitting the rest of the war out in some prison camp while I am still up here fighting." "When discussing the question with members of my squad," he concluded, "all agreed that under the same circumstances they too would kill the prisoner."[141] For others the topic was less speculative. After stumbling upon several Americans shot execution-style, individuals in Samuel King's unit vowed to retaliate in kind. "[A] lot of times when we captured the enemy,"

[139] Robert Chappel Collection (AFC/2001/001/188), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.

[140] Tomedi, *No Bugles, No Drums*, 187. White soldiers recorded similar distinctions between their Korean and Chinese adversaries. In the words of one, "We quickly learned to have no sympathy for the North Koreans. They brought a viciousness to war that was unmatched by the Chinese." See Dannenmaier, *We Were Innocents*, 47.

[141] "I never murdered anyone in cold blood," Morrow subsequently insisted. "Everyone I ever killed (knowingly) was a soldier like myself and held a weapon aimed in my direction." Morrow, *What's a Commie Ever Done to Black People?*, 39, 41, 63-64.

King later revealed, "we didn't take them back to no concentration camp. Took them to the side over here." After contending he never actively participated in the killings, King noted that one soldier in particular "would always volunteer to take the prisoners back, and they would always jump [him] and try to take his gun" and wind up dead. Everyone knew the soldier's claims were spurious, but "he always had a story and nobody ever investigated." Yet King, given what he had seen of the enemy's methods, was not one to judge his fellow serviceman harshly.[142]

On Their Way to Prison Compound Behind Lines

Prisoners captured by Capt. Lavon Smith of the 159th Field Artillery are hauled away to prisoner of war compound behind the lines. Note the man guarding prisoners rides facing them on engine of jeep. Driver is Cpl. Arthur B. Worrell of 242 W. 123rd St., NYC.—(U.S. Signal Corps photo.)

Fig. 5.3, *Afro American,* 9 September 1950.

[142] Samuel King interview (2002), "Korea: The Unfinished War," a project of American RadioWorks, documentary unit of American Public Media.

Those African-American soldiers taken prisoner later in the war and held at North Korean prison camps were often singularly embittered. James Thompson, raised on a family farm in Arkansas, moved to Detroit before being drafted in 1941. After serving in the Pacific theater he elected to remain on active duty. Assigned to a howitzer battalion in Korea, Thompson was captured by the Chinese north of Pyongyang in late 1950 and detained for nearly three years. As he noted in his memoir, "I had little experience with people of Chinese ancestry" before Korea. Thompson was thus surprised to conclude that "mild mannered, innocent looking, polite little Chinese civilians"—such as the few he had encountered in American movies and San Francisco's Chinatown—"become vicious fanatical maniacs during times of war." He likened this intellectual reorientation to his thoughts on the Japanese. Conflating the experiences of the small number of black soldiers who saw combat in the World War Two Pacific and the much larger cohort pitted against Asian troops in Korea, Thompson explained,

> Japanese and black soldiers on the battlefields didn't lay they weapons down, run and embrace each other, and begin discussing the solidarity of Third World Peoples. When those little suckers came running through those jungles shouting 'Banzai' they were after my ass, black or white, that wore an American uniform. That Third World stuff is fine for radicals preaching on the streets of New York, but on the battlefields it isn't worth a god damn. Anyone who has ever witnessed a group of Communist Chinese running fanatically down a slope in Korea knows all too well they aren't making color distinctions. . . . It was ass kicking time, not an ethnic reunion.[143]

There were, in other words, no internationalists in American foxholes.

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[143] James Thompson, *True Colors: 1004 Days as a Prisoner of War* (Port Washington, NY: Ashley Books, Inc., 1989), xxv, xxvii- xxviii, 11, 25-26, 108. Thompson's memoir was, in part, a rebuttal to allegations circulated during and after the war that black POWs received preferential treatment as an award for, or successful inducement toward, collaborating with the enemy (xxviii; 61; 131). Congressman Charles Rangel of New York, himself a veteran of the Korean War, applauded Thompson in a foreword for "graphically detail[ing] truths . . . about P.O.W. treatment by third-world captors being color-blind" (xii). As Thompson's memoir makes clear, although the North Koreans and Chinese routinely sought to create an *impression* of race-based collaboration, both for its propaganda value and in order to sow discord among captured Americas, their treatment of prisoners was almost uniformly harsh.

* * *

Three years after the signing of the Korean armistice, Private Matthew Holden, Jr. took time off from his duties in South Korea to write Claude Barnett, founder of the Associated Negro Press. Holden described an environment indicating "that Americans will . . . serve here for many, many years." (The United States maintains a strong military presence on the peninsula to this day.) "Race relations in this command," he continued, "[are] a curious phenomenon. The difficulties are not white-negro so much as American-Korean. . . . Korean soldiers work with us, and Korean civilians work for us. In general, there is no open conflict[,] but our people do not . . . show that appreciation, sympathy, understanding, and respect for Koreans which our presence as guests and our role as allies ought to require." Particularly troubling to Holden were ample, everyday indications that African-American personnel were "not a whit more appreciative of Koreans and their problems than whites are."[144]

Indeed, as this project suggests, the exacerbation of Afro-Asian tensions was due not only to open warfare but perhaps just as much to black citizens' direct participation in the projection of American power. The interracial hostilities aggravated by Korea were also products of the United States' expanding hegemony in Asia. And such would be the underlying framework for later American military endeavors. Throughout the Cold War and beyond, American troops have been often deployed against or stationed amongst "colored" but non-African peoples in the decolonizing world. Virtually all these American uses of overt force, moreover, have taken place in the context of revolutionary or civil wars (some precipitated by the United States itself). Several of the historical actors examined here, for instance, elected to remain on active duty long enough to serve in Vietnam. And during these military actions the United States utilized one

[144] Claude A. Barnett papers, Chicago Historical Society, Box 197, Folder 7: Asia, Correspondence, 1942-65.

final innovation of the Korean War: a racially integrated army. African Americans henceforth enjoyed growing opportunities to fight for their country, only under circumstances and against enemies not of their choosing.

EPILOGUE: MILITARY DESEGREGATION IN A MILITARIZED WORLD

The Korean War entrenched America's national security state. This culmination was most apparent in the maintenance of an enormous global military apparatus. The number of citizens under arms provides one metric for grasping the extent of American militarization. During the conflict the army more than doubled in size to 3.5 million men and women, supported by a yearly military budget that jumped from $15 billion in 1950 to some $50 billion by 1953. Notwithstanding an inevitable decline in personnel following the armistice, the army in the late 1950s remained fifty percent larger than its prewar incarnation. The total for all branches of the armed forces thereafter held steady at approximately 2.6 million personnel, stationed across the globe, though the start of America's war in Vietnam.[1] Korea likewise precipitated or crystallized military, economic and political commitments throughout Asia, including aid to the French in Indochina, to the Filipino government in its struggle against the communist Huk insurgency, to the Nationalist Chinese government on Formosa (Taiwan), and to an economically resurgent but militarily subordinate Japan.[2] And finally, massive national security expenditures (the Pentagon was by then the world's largest employer), along with the Eisenhower administration's ostensible commitment to fiscal restraint, precluded any substantial expansion of New Deal

[1] Halliday and Cumings, *Korea*, 204; Sherry, *In the Shadow of War*, 196; Arthur A. Stein, *The Nation at War* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 35.

[2] Sherry, *In the Shadow of War*, 182. Historian Thomas J. McCormick notes that the Korean War inaugurated a quarter-century-long era during which "Soviet-American competition took on a more militaristic flavor, and its heightened focus on the periphery gave the contest a more global, less Europe-centered context." See McCormick, *America's Half-Century: United States Foreign Policy in the Cold War and After*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 99. And according to historian Ron Robin, Korea "preordained future American entanglements in Asia." See Robin, *The Making of the Cold War Enemy: Culture and the Politics of the Military-Intellectual Complex* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 8.

social programs.[3] The United States had truly become a warfare-welfare state, its armed forces and defense industries providing critical employment opportunities to disadvantaged citizens.

The war and its lingering consequences thus sustained African Americans' socioeconomic dependence upon militarization and foreign intervention. Annual black earnings relative to whites had fallen five points, to 52 percent, during post-World War Two reconversion. Only through the militarized economic boom of the Korean War era did they rebound, to 56 percent, by 1953.[4] Some black leaders counseled skepticism regarding the correlation. Three months into the war, one columnist pronounced himself "gravely alarmed at the growing dominance of the military in the affairs of this nation."[5] Yet five weeks later, on the same editorial page, a second countered that after years of declining black fortunes, war-production plants again beckoned: "Here is a golden opportunity for the colored worker to gain new laurels . . . and better his own condition."[6] The Baltimore *Afro American* registered a related shift in understanding. Its editorial cartoon for mid-August 1950 represented a traditional distinction between military service and economic opportunity (see Figure 6.1). Above depictions of black men at the head of a queue for "guns" and at the end of another for "jobs," it asked, "If First in One, Why Not in the Other?"

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[3] See, for example, Hogan, *A Cross of Iron*, 365, 371, 418.

[4] Robert Fredrick Burk, *The Eisenhower Administration and Black Civil Rights* (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1984), 90. According to another study, "[o]fficial nonwhite unemployment stood at 4.5 percent in the last year of the war, rose to 13 percent in the recession of 1958, and remained above 10 percent until the escalation of the war in Vietnam." See Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), 267.

[5] P. L. Prattis, "The Horizon," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 23 September 1950, 6.

[6] Joseph D. Bibb, "Good Conduct," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 28 October 1950, 7.

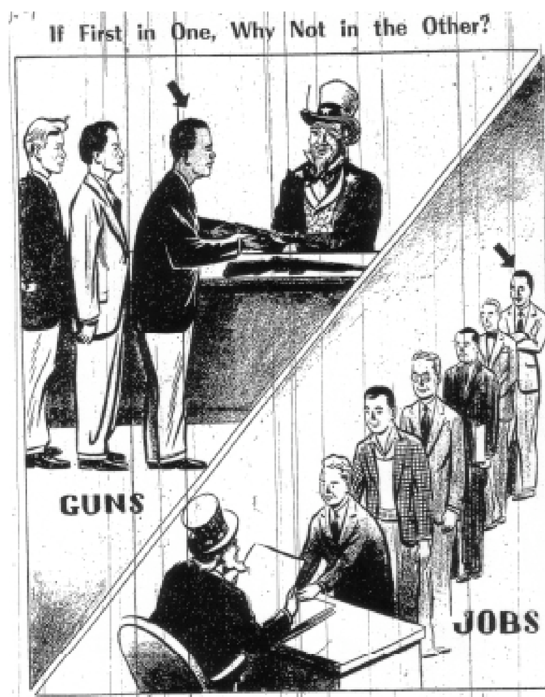

Fig. 6.1, *Afro American,* 19 August 1950.

Two contemporary images, however, reflected a new reality, in which “Total Mobilization” and a “Major Preparedness Program” meant militarization and employment proceeded hand-in-hand (see Figures 6.2 and 6.3).

Fig. 6.2, *Afro American,* 22 July 1950.

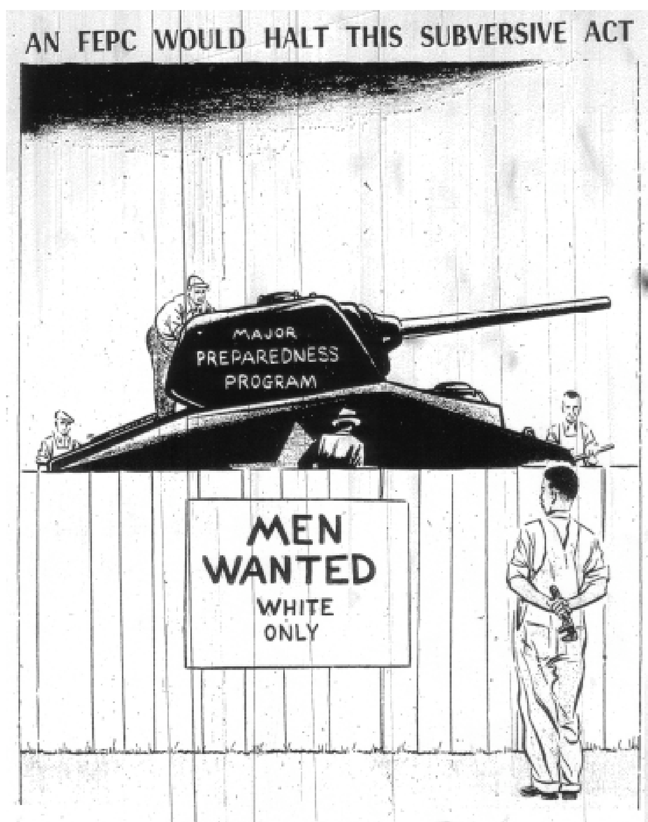

Fig. 6.3, *Afro American,* 23 September 1950.

An accompanying editorial called for federal legislation to tackle racial discrimination in employment—a revived Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC)—in light of the "pressing need for speed in our re-armament program."[7]

Enlistment, of course, remained the most direct way to take advantage of such opportunities. During the decade after World War Two, close to two million black citizens served in the military.[8] To place this figure in perspective, the nation in 1950 contained 15 million black men and women.[9] Robert Chappel of Laurens County, South Carolina, who enlisted in the army at the height of the Korean War, later described the appeal of a military career despite the dangers involved: "I appreciated whatever happened because . . . being a sharecropper and a farmer, I had no other way of going in life." Chappel served for more than two decades.[10] African-American enthusiasm for voluntary service, however, continued to distress military commanders, despite the recruitment challenges posed by an era of economic expansion. "What worries me," revealed a brigadier general shortly after the war, "is that a military career for a Negro is now about the top he can get. It worries me whether we are going to have a predominantly Negro military service."[11] The armed forces attempted to stave off this possibility as the decade progressed by releasing black personnel at a rate well out of proportion to their numbers. In 1957 and 1958, for instance, African Americans accounted for over 40 percent of army discharges. Yet a decade later, and with the added effect of Selective Service,

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[7] "FEPC Urgently Needed Now," *Afro American*, 23 September 1950, 4.

[8] Michael Lee Lanning, *The African-American Soldier: From Crispus Attucks to Colin Powell* (Secaucus, NJ: Carol Publishing Group, 1997), 241.

[9] *U.S. Census of the Population: 1950*, Vol. II, Part I, *United States Summary* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1952), 87.

[10] Robert Chappel Collection (AFC/2001/001/188), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.

[11] Quoted in Nichols, *Breakthrough on the Color Front*, 157.

more than one in ten soldiers was black.[12] The trend outlasted Vietnam and the draft: in 1981 an astonishing number—some 42 percent—of African Americans educationally and physically eligible to serve were in the military.[13]

The rapid desegregation[14] of the army in Korea nourished such professional interest, notwithstanding the military's attempts at secrecy about it.[15] Officers recognized their orders to desegregate would be least difficult to enact in Asia, where off-base Jim Crow laws were not at issue and opportunities for black-white heterosexual intimacy virtually nonexistent.[16] Military expediency in the face of mass casualties also dictated the process. Limited integration of combat units began two months into the war, as commanders accepted individual black replacements to plug holes in the front lines. (A *Pittsburgh Courier* cartoon gently lampooned the privilege afforded black servicemen of sitting "right up in front" of a war zone. See Figure 6.4.)

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[12] Foner, *Blacks and the Military*, 202.

[13] Bogart, *Project Clear*, xxvi.

[14] "Desegregation" may be more apt in this context than "integration," which implies a degree of equality of treatment and access to resources, as well as interracial affinity, that varied considerably from one unit to the next. However, for reasons of style the two are here used interchangeably.

[15] A 1956 report by the army's Historical Division on desegregation in the European Command sought to justify the attempted "Publicity Blackout": "The Department of the Army saw no need for publicizing the projected integration program [in Europe]. Far from precluding adverse reaction, releasing special publicity would invite criticism. The Army wanted the program to proceed quietly and as a routine matter without fanfare or publicity because this was the procedure followed in Korea." See Morris J. MacGregor and Bernard C. Nalty, eds., *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces: Basic Documents*, Vol. XII: Integration (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1977), 256. Nonetheless, African Americans stateside were generally better informed than their white counterparts of the ad hoc integration taking place in Korea early in the war. See below and McCoy and Ruetten, *Quest and Response*, 234.

[16] "[I]t is evident that integration in areas other than the Far East Command, particularly in the United States," Secretary of the Army Frank Pace, Jr. wrote to a stateside admirer in early 1952, "will present problems of greater magnitude and variety than those encountered in Korea and Japan." National Archives II, RG 335, Box 206, Folder 291.2 Negroes June. Department of the Army officials evidently were instructed to provide this explanation verbatim. See, for example, "Army Integration Depends on Korea," *Afro American*, 24 November 1951, 14.

Fig. 6.4, *Pittsburgh Courier,* 9 September 1950.

Such haphazard policies accelerated and quietly became routinized during the winter and spring of 1951; by May, 61 percent of the Eighth Army's combat infantry companies along the front were integrated. Desegregation was also spreading to stateside basic training (from which many inductees would be sent directly to Korea), and shortly extended to the 30,000 black soldiers

stationed in Europe.[17] In a July 1951 press release the army at last disclosed its intention to disband the 24th Infantry Regiment and to desegregate the entire Far East Command.[18] Fifteen months later the Assistant Defense Secretary declared army integration complete in East Asia. By war's end, more than 90 percent of the 200,000 black soldiers stationed across the globe were serving in integrated units, alongside more than 100,000 in the desegregated Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps. The last all-black army unit disappeared in October 1954. By then, desegregation was encompassing servicemen's dependents as well. Months before the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the military successfully integrated all federally funded, on-base elementary schools, even those in the Jim Crow South.[19] It had, of course, required a war to effect this revolution in military affairs. (General Omar Bradley, among others, granted that Korea had hastened integration by more than a decade.) Nonetheless, in just over four years one of the nation's most conservative and undemocratic institutions had achieved complete desegregation (and ahead of schedule at that), unexpectedly launching itself into the vanguard of civil rights reform.[20]

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[17] Mershon and Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines*, 223; Astor, *The Right to Fight*, 392; McCoy and Ruetten, *Quest and Response*, 238; Foner, *Blacks and the Military*, 192; "Army Ends Segregation Of GIs In West Germany," *Jet*, 26 June 1952, 13.

[18] "Army to End Segregation in Asia Command, Closing History of Its Last Negro Regiment," *New York Times*, 27 July 1951, 2. According to a contemporary account, following this announcement "the Army clammed up again. It ordered overall integration in Europe and throughout the continental United States, but did not announce it. Only months after these additional steps were under way did word begin to filter into newspapers; the full impact of the Army's actions did not become generally known until the end of 1953." See Nichols, *Breakthrough on the Color Front*, 138.

[19] Nichols, *Breakthrough on the Color Front*, 189. The author tentatively suggested that "the military's successful racial integration program—particularly its smoothly functioning non-segregated schools—could temper the southern reaction to a Supreme Court decision against segregated education" (200). See also "Negro Progress in 1953," *Ebony*, January 1954, 22; "New Army Upsets South's Traditions," *Ebony*, September 1954, 18; and Astor, *The Right to Fight*, 417.

[20] "Defense Aid Says Armed Forces Jim Crow Dying Out," *Jet*, 30 October 1952, 6; "Good News From the Army," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 24 October 1953, 6; Nichols, *Breakthrough on the Color Front*, 97; 201-204; Bogart, *Project Clear*, 279.

This is not to suggest that military desegregation in Korea came off without a hitch. Before the war some black civilians objected to integration for fear of harassment by white officers and enlisted men.[21] Once in the service many remained wary of their new comrades in arms. Leroy Stewart, "brought up in a segregated society," was surprised and more than a little uneasy to find himself assigned to an integrating unit.[22] Others doubted any interracial goodwill would outlast the conflict. "It might work in Korea," allowed one, since a "[w]hite man is your friend as long as you're protecting his ass. [But] [i]n the States . . . it's different."[23] Remarked another, decades later: "We knew then, as now, that outside of combat we could never depend on whites for support."[24] Adding to these doubts—in addition to reports of racial violence stateside[25]—were ubiquitous signs of white racism. The Confederate flag quickly spread throughout Korea as a popular symbol of resistance to integration during the fall of 1951.[26] (The NAACP's Walter White noted with grim humor that Korean and Chinese snipers, unaware of the flag's history, assumed it signified the presence of a high-ranking officer and responded accordingly.[27]) Desegregation clearly had not rendered the army an interracial utopia.

Nevertheless, African Americans within and without the military now viewed their nation's armed forces as a paragon for civilian society. In late 1950 Raymond Brown of

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[21] See, for example, "The Inquiring Reporter," *Afro American*, 4 December 1948, 4.

[22] Leroy Stewart interview (2003), "Korea: The Unfinished War," a project of American RadioWorks, documentary unit of American Public Media. Another enlisted man, stationed with an all-black unit in the spring of 1951, balked at the prospect of serving with whites for similar reasons: "I would rather be with colored people all the time. . . . I am from Arkansas and it's just part of my training." See Bogart, *Project Clear*, 51.

[23] Bogart, *Project Clear*, 129. See also Cpl. Walter Langston, *Ebony*, May 1953, 11.

[24] Astor, *The Right to Fight*, 393.

[25] See, for example, "Yanks Bitter Over Reports From U.S.A.," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 19 August 1950, 1; "Bias Report Cites Bombing In Florida," *New York Times*, 30 December 1951, 16; and "Anti-Bias Record of 1952 Assailed," *New York Times*, 4 May 1953, 23.

[26] Alex Rivera, Jr., "Rebel Flags Flood U.S.!," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 22 September 1951, 1; Ralph Matthews, "Rebel Flags Flooding Korea," *Afro American*, 1 December 1951, 1. One November 1951 military inspection report on an integrating, previously all-black artillery battalion recorded three complaints by enlisted men of a Confederate flag flown above an officer's tent. See National Archives II, RG 338, Box 494, Folder Inspection File for 1951.

[27] Walter White, "Confederate Flags! A Fad Or Revival of Fanaticism," *Chicago Defender*, 6 October 1951, 7.

Georgia, then "engaged in the offensive against Chinese aggression," wrote the *Chicago Defender* that "since I have been in the army, it has been my grateful privilege to experience . . . relief from complete racial servitude as exists in the South."[28] One year later sergeant Paul Shaw pointed to the "remarkable and unbelievable change [that] has occurred in race relations during the short period" of military integration as evidence that "we Americans are at last learning to live in peace and harmony with one another."[29] The striking juxtaposition created by on-base integration in the American South strengthened the case for the military as a guide for civilian life. In response to *Ebony*'s September 1954 story "New Army Upsets South's Traditions," a soldier stationed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, asked, "If we can work, sleep, eat and play together on an Army post—why not in town?"[30] The harmonious military portrayed in the article, wrote a resident of Muskegon, Michigan, constituted "real DEMOCRACY." "I can't understand why the state of Georgia or Washington, D.C., or even my home Muskegon," he protested, "isn't the same as the army camp in Georgia."[31]

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[28] Pfc. Raymond Brown, *Chicago Defender*, 6 January 1951, 6.

[29] Sgt. Paul L. Shaw, *Ebony*, October 1951, 11. Shaw's remarks were prompted by an editorial that described a "military which . . . has a no-riot record to boast of. During the last war when segregation was the order of the day, any number of soldier outbreaks occurred regularly in Army camps as well as Navy bases. There have been none to speak of during the mobilization for the Korean war. The reason is simple: integration." See "Why No Race Riots?," *Ebony*, May 1951, 100.

[30] A/3c D. I. Whitfield, *Ebony*, December 1954, 6.

[31] Cottrial Frazier, *Ebony*, December 1954, 6.

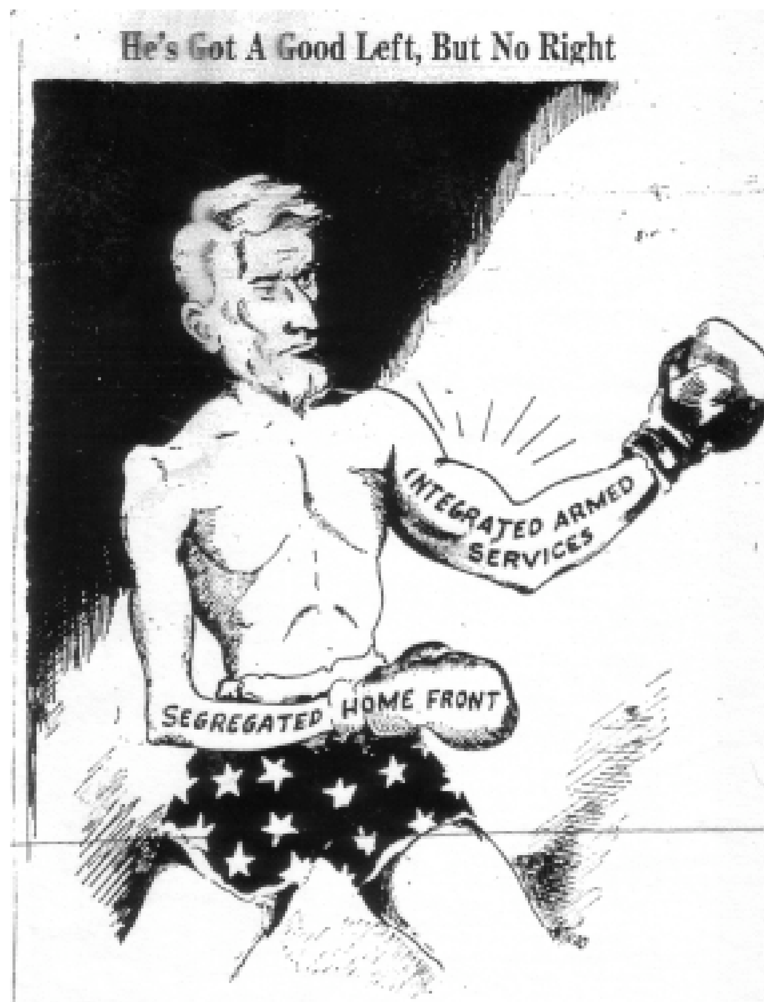

Fig. 6.5, *Afro American,* 18 April 1953.

These individuals were joined by a chorus of black commentators. The Baltimore *Afro American* editorialized that Korea had enabled black Americans "for the first time" to serve their nation "as first-class citizen soldiers."[32] Correspondent L. Alex Wilson, acknowledging that the "costly achievement" of army integration was "not born altogether of plan, but of necessity," nonetheless hailed the "tragic Korean conflict" as "another milestone in the forward march of the

[32] "The Lesson of Korea," *Afro American*, 8 August 1953, 4.

Negro . . . toward complete integration in the democratic way of life."[33] Wilson had earlier cast warfare itself as "the purgative of race hate among comrades on the front lines," and argued that Korea proved black and white Americans could "work together and fight shoulder to shoulder—and LIKE IT, IF LEFT ALONE."[34] Indeed, the black press repeatedly emphasized the interracial brotherhood supposedly born of the conflict (see Figure 6.6).

[33] L. Alex Wilson, "Korea War Integrates U.S. Army," *Chicago Defender*, 30 July 1953, 5.

[34] "The bloody Korean War," he further maintained, "has done more to wipe out Jim Crow in the Army than any other campaign—civilian or military—during the past 30 years." See L. Alex Wilson, "Bombs, Brass and Brotherhood: Integration Is Forced To Test By War In Korea," *Chicago Defender*, 3 February 1951, 2.

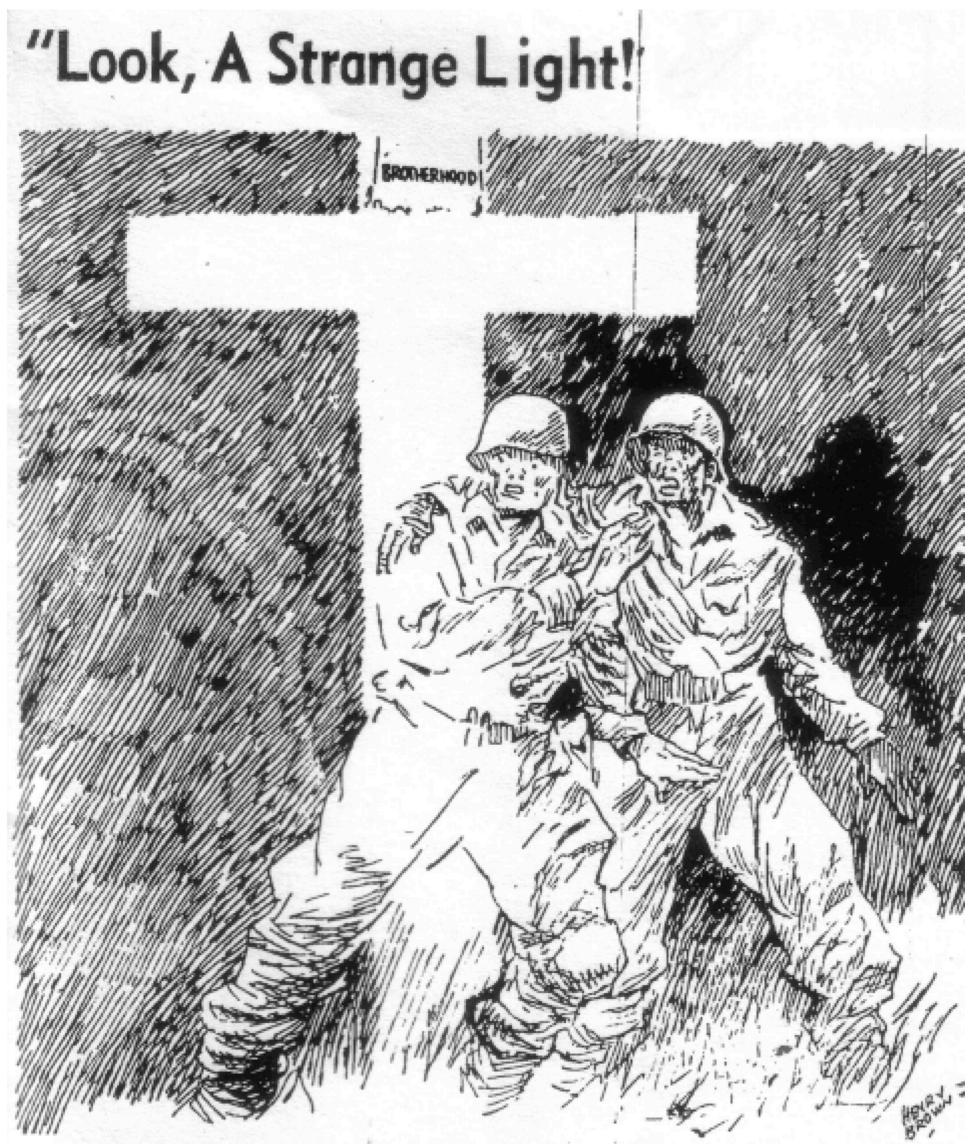

Fig. 6.6, *Chicago Defender,* 3 March 1951.

One journalist declared an integrated air base in Japan, from which pilots were flying devastating sorties against Korean targets, "one of the most peaceful and democratic communities that Americans have ever lived in."[35] Although "[n]o one likes the idea of benefiting through war and the misery it brings to millions of people," explained the *Chicago Defender*, Korea had

[35] Frank Whisonant, "Yokota Air Base Is Perfect Model Of Race Harmony," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 25 November 1950, 2.

proven to all Americans that "colored and white men can work and fight side by side to their mutual benefit."[36] This realization was expected to bear societal fruit as well. When word of the army's formal integration program reached the United States in 1951, it immediately raised African-American hopes for advances on the domestic front.[37] Roy Wilkins of the NAACP, speaking before a New York audience, argued that after ten years of "either open war or a war economy," the line separating military from civilian affairs was vanishing: "When millions of young men wear the same uniform, train together . . . and learn through the rating system . . . to recognize individual merit rather than mere color, the carry-over to civilian life and activities will be tremendous."[38]

In fact, despite—or rather because of—subsequent lulls in civil rights advances during the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations, martial desegregation ushered in a more than decade-long era of good feelings between black Americans and the military. Although prejudice and discrimination persisted in the armed forces, not only military officialdom but much of the general public, black and white, deemed the program an unconditional triumph.[39] According to one recent study, army integration—"widely assumed to have resolved all major racial problems

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[36] "Integration: a beneficial by-Product [sic]," *Chicago Defender*, 13 August 1953, 11.

[37] See, for example, Enoc P. Waters, "Adventures in Race Relations," *Chicago Defender*, 3 February 1951, 7; and "General Ridgway Steps Forward," *Chicago Defender*, 11 August 1951, 6.

[38] Roy Wilkins, "Undergirding the Democratic Ideal," *The Crisis*, December 1951, 649-650. The *Pittsburgh Courier* insisted two years later that "the education effect of this revolution"—i.e., army integration—"cannot be exaggerated." See "Good News From the Army," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 24 October 1953, 6. Walter White agreed: "The significance of desegregation in military units extends far beyond the boundaries of life within the armed forces. . . . The white youth who has shared a barracks, a tent, or a foxhole with a Negro youth . . . will find nothing surprising or disheartening in the fact that such a person has moved into the house next door to his own, or that his children are going to school with children of a different skin color. . . . Similarly, and of no less importance, Negro GIs who have almost inevitably come . . . to distrust white people en masse, will have learned before they return to civilian life that in true brotherhood race and skin color have no pertinence." See Walter White, *How Far the Promised Land?* (New York: The Viking Press, 1955), 102-103.

[39] Major Wardell C. Smith, interviewed during the height of the Vietnam War, recalled, "When I came into the Army in 1956, everything was quiet. No one was raising any hell about the prejudice and discrimination going on. The Negro soldier didn't know which way to go as far as speaking out against it." See Wallace Terry II, "Bringing the War Home," *The Black Scholar*, November 1970, 12.

in the American military"—became "a popular symbol of enlightened governmental action."[40] Civil rights organizations and the black press, historically the most vociferous critics of racism in the military, were reluctant to find fault with a formally integrated institution during an era of white massive resistance. The Baltimore *Afro American*, surveying the state of American race relations in May 1960, spoke only of "great strides" in the armed forces since the late 1940s.[41] Such reticence was not, however, solely the product of willful ignorance. Up through the mid-1960s the armed forces endured none of the large-scale protests and race riots that had erupted with grim regularity before Korea.[42] Military and other government officials also received the fewest complaints of racial discrimination since the early days of World War Two.[43] Black servicemen had sent Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. of Harlem some 5,000 letters of protest annually up through Korea. By the mid-1960s that figure had plummeted 70 percent, with most pertaining to discrimination off-base.[44] Such relative racial tranquility and opportunities for African-American advancement certainly made the military a perennial recourse for black men facing a dubious civilian job market. In 1965, for example, the African-American reenlistment rate stood at more than 45 percent, three times the rate for whites.[45] And this situation, in turn, made it that much easier for the Department of Defense to sustain its recruitment and retention numbers. It strongly suggests that black enlistments equipped the

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[40] Mershon and Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines*, 252-253.

[41] Alan L. Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates, 1945-1964*, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998), 203, note 2. With little organized pressure from civil rights advocates for military reforms, it was another two years before President John F. Kennedy established the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunity in the Armed Forces. See McCoy and Ruetten, *Quest and Response*, 249.

[42] Mershon and Schlossman, *Foxholes and Color Lines*, 262.

[43] MacGregor and Nalty, *Basic Documents*, Vol. XII, 299.

[44] Charles C. Moskos, Jr., "Racial Integration in the Armed Forces," *The American Journal of Sociology*, September 1966, 141.

[45] Andrew J. Huebner, *The Warrior Image: Soldiers in American Culture from the Second World War to the Vietnam Era* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 185.

United States to maintain its global military network without resort to universal, and hence socially disruptive, conscription.

Finally, the African-American military presence in Asia remained robust, and with it many of the attendant strains on Afro-Asian social relations. In 1960, five years after the celebrated Afro-Asian Conference convened in Bandung, Indonesia to promote cooperation between African, Middle Eastern, and Asian states,[46] black Congressman Charles Diggs, Jr. toured military installations in Japan, Okinawa and the Philippines. He returned denouncing the discrimination practiced by local communities.[47] "Typical charges" from African-American servicemen, he declared, included "shabby and offensive treatment . . . in clubs and bars, [and] outright refusal of service." Racial segregation in one Okinawan town was reportedly "maintained through a system of reprisal, intimidation, and physical violence" by both white servicemen and their Asian hosts. Diggs' recommendation that unit commanders place offending establishments off-limits to all personnel largely fell on deaf ears.[48] Three years later, African Americans stationed near Misawa, Japan took matters into their own hands, staging sit-ins to end discrimination in the city's forty-two entertainment venues that refused to serve black customers. The Japanese proprietors retaliated by threatening to hire local toughs to forcibly eject the protestors. Although the standoff ended peacefully once the owners relented, patron-client relations undoubtedly remained tense.[49]

Many of the historical actors given voice here likewise served through America's escalating intervention in Vietnam, a conflict that revived controversies generated by African-

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[46] See, for example, Plummer, *Rising Wind*, 247-256.
[47] Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates*, 122.
[48] MacGregor and Nalty, *Basic Documents*, Vol. XII, 331-332, 334.
[49] Gropman, *The Air Force Integrates*, 122-123.

American service in Japan and Korea.[50] Commanding officers' disinclination to permit black-Vietnamese marriages, for instance, along with rampant militarized prostitution, led inevitably to another brown baby crisis. By the early 1970s the estimated number of black-Vietnamese children ranged from an official count of less than 500 to several thousand. Black servicemen alleged that, as before, Afro-Asian children constituted the majority of those abandoned since, in the words of one, "it was easier for a white GI to get military permission to marry his girlfriend and . . . to bring his child home." A sergeant who attempted to return with his daughter encountered endless red tape, daunting legal fees, and, according to one black observer, "the money-minded Vietnamese mother of his child to the tune of '$6,000 or $7,000.'"[51] Because "many Vietnamese" were "prejudiced against blacks," *Ebony* editorialized, such offspring were bound to endure harassment and discrimination in education and employment, the "girls who cannot become entertainers . . . likely to become prostitutes," the boys either entertainers or "soldiers in the Vietnamese army."[52] Once again, it appeared, Asian

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[50] Curtis James Morrow, who was dissuaded from marrying his Japanese girlfriend and contemplated killing Korean POWs, participated in air drops to assist the French in Vietnam from 1952 to 1954. Charles Earnest Berry, whose encounter with a young Korean suicide bomber convinced him to shoot first and ask questions later, retired in 1968 as a Master Sergeant after serving in Vietnam. James Thompson, whose experiences in the World-War-Two Pacific and a North Korean prison camp led him to ridicule "[t]hat Third World stuff," served on active duty for twenty-seven years and left the army a Vietnam veteran. And Beverly Scott, who declared the North Koreans a "vicious" and "nasty" people, became a senior advisor to the Thai army in South Vietnam from 1963 to 1965 and then a member of the Army Inspector General staff in Vietnam until 1968. See Morrow, *What's a Commie Ever Done to Black People?*, 104, 106; Charles Berry Collection (AFC/2001/001/5950), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress; Thompson, *True Colors*, xxv; and Tomedi, *No Bugles, No Drums*, 247.

[51] Era Bell Thompson, "The Plight Of Black Babies In South Vietnam," *Ebony*, December 1972, 105-106, 112. "Although less hung up on racial purity than the Japanese and Koreans," Thompson added, "Vietnamese admit privately that their people are prejudiced against dark skin" (108).

[52] ". . . . And Now A Domestic Baby Lift?," *Ebony*, June 1975, 134. *Ebony*'s criticism of the military's last-minute removal of thousands of war babies before the fall of Saigon—so-called "Operation Baby Lift"—likewise echoed the Japanese and Korean brown baby crises: "A good number of black Americans were upset with the baby lift not because it was a bad thing, but because it took place at a time when the federal government is doing almost nothing about an adoption problem that is much larger and of longer standing than the Vietnam war baby problem. . . . If thousands of babies from abroad can be absorbed into American families, why can't homeless black American children find sanctuary?"

racial prejudice was dooming a generation of Afro-Asian children to physical, economic, and emotional exploitation.

And notwithstanding prominent African-American criticism of the war and expressions of solidarity with the Vietnamese people, many if not most black servicemen vigorously defended their role in the conflict.[53] Martin Luther King, Jr.'s April 1967 call for African Americans to avoid serving in Vietnam appeared in *Stars and Stripes* newspaper, prompting CBS's Mike Wallace to query a black officer for his response. "I don't react favorably to that statement," he replied, "because as a career officer, United States Army, I certainly am here because I want to be here. I believe in what the Army stands for, and I'm solidly behind what they're doing here." The officer also firmly rejected King's assertion that Vietnam was hindering progress on civil rights at home. Enlisted men offered Wallace near identical reactions. "I think this war is worthwhile," explained a native of Hattiesburg, Mississippi, "and I think we should stay over here and see this thing out."[54] African-American journalist Wallace Terry, on assignment for *Time* magazine that same year, uncovered remarkably similar attitudes among black servicemen. King, boxer-turned-draft-resister Muhammad Ali, and black-power advocate Stokely Carmichael received harsh rebukes for their opposition to the war. Said one soldier of King and Carmichael, "They live in a free country and somebody has to pay for it." "If King had any pride in his race," asserted another, "he ought to do what he can to support us."[55] Only following the 1968 Tet Offensive, Terry concluded, when African-American conscripts

[53] Civil rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer's celebrated retort—"No Vietnamese ever called me nigger"—springs immediately to mind. See, for example, Engelhardt, *The End of Victory Culture*, 95.
[54] Huebner, *The Warrior Image*, 190-191.
[55] Terry, "Bringing the War Home," 7-8.

increasingly replaced volunteers and the war grew in unpopularity, did a majority of black servicemen begin to speak of Vietnam as a race war in which they should take no part.[56]

To this day Afro-Asian social interactions remain highly militarized affairs. Indeed, given residential and occupational segregation in the United States, ongoing African-American overrepresentation in the armed forces, and the maintenance of American bases across Asia, it is entirely plausible that overseas military environments remain the primary site for Afro-Asian contacts.[57] And as this project suggests, personal proximity under such circumstances has rarely contributed to greater empathy and affinity between armed guest and reluctant host. Rather, mutual indifference, suspicion and, at times, open hostility have been the norm. One of the central ironies of the story told here is that many black Americans enjoyed greater citizenship privileges when serving abroad in an authoritarian institution dedicated to the use of force. African-American veteran Samuel King, interviewed in 2002, offered a cautionary assessment of the military's potential as a facilitator of interpersonal, interracial, or international encounters. "We don't put a lot of emphasis on what it's about now," he admonished, but "like I said the army's about killing."[58] His insight, at once obvious and corrective, provides a valuable starting point for historians of American militarization during the Cold War and beyond. It underscores the difficulties encountered by those who have sought to put notions of international solidarities into everyday practice in an era of American global military hegemony.

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[56] According to a survey of black enlisted men and officers conducted by Terry in 1970, "[m]ore than half of the enlisted men objected to taking part in the war because they believe it is a race war pitting whites against non-whites or because they flatly don't want to fight against dark skin[ned] people. Only 37 per cent agreed that they were fighting a common Communist enemy with their white buddies in arms—the prevailing attitude among blacks three years ago." See Terry, "Bringing the War Home," 7-8.

[57] Black Americans constituted nearly one quarter of army recruits in fiscal 2000, although by early 2005, as the occupation of Iraq entered its third year, that figure had plummeted to just under fourteen percent. See Tom Philpott, "Study shows 41% drop in number of black Army recruits since 2000," *Stars and Stripes*, online European edition, 4 March 2005 (accessed 1 March 2008).

[58] Samuel King interview (2002), "Korea: The Unfinished War," a project of American RadioWorks, documentary unit of American Public Media.