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## **“FIRST A NEGRO . . . INCIDENTALLY A VETERAN”: BLACK WORLD WAR TWO VETERANS AND THE G.I. BILL OF RIGHTS IN THE DEEP SOUTH, 1944–1948**

By David H. Onkst

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In 1994, during the fiftieth anniversary of the G.I. Bill of Rights, politicians, journalists, and scholars helped perpetuate one of America’s great myths—that the G.I. Bill of Rights positively transformed the lives of an entire generation of America’s war veterans. Referring to the G.I. Bill as “the great democratizer” and the nation’s “greatest single piece of social legislation,” this group of professionals profusely praised the bill for allowing World War Two veterans to attend colleges and trade schools, obtain homes, secure business loans, and achieve a “middle-class” lifestyle. In essence, the G.I. Bill’s fiftieth anniversary celebration reinforced the popular perception that *all* World War Two veterans were able to take advantage of the bill and improve their lives during the postwar era. However, as this essay will reveal, that perception is an oversimplification.<sup>1</sup>

At approximately the same time that Americans were celebrating the G.I. Bill’s fifty years of achievement, Neil Wynn, a scholar of African Americans and the Second World War, issued a critical statement about the state of black World War Two historiography. As Wynn noted, most scholars have continued to stress that the war represented “a watershed” or turning point for African Americans—despite a growing body of scholarship which calls for a more balanced and complex interpretation. While Wynn believes that scholars have correctly recounted the strong psychological influence that the war had on blacks, the growth of black militancy throughout the conflict, and some of the important social, political, and economic gains that they achieved during the period, he still contends that the popular belief that World War Two marked the beginning of a new era for African Americans is overstated. In short, Wynn has correctly noted that it is time for us to reevaluate the interpretation that World War Two was the definitive turning point for black Americans in twentieth-century America, and this essay heeds his advice. It does so by revealing the very limited socioeconomic impact that the war had on the majority of black veterans who returned to the Deep South and remained there during the postwar era.<sup>2</sup>

Historians have overwhelmingly agreed that black servicemen were the African Americans most transformed by the Second World War.<sup>3</sup> For example, black World War Two servicemen were particularly inspired by contemporary rhetoric which suggested that their status would improve after the war. Many of them believed that they would be “better off” after the conflict because of the vast social and economic changes that were occurring in American society. Simply stated, they were optimistic and had high expectations for a better life.<sup>4</sup>

However, many of them were also very cognizant that change would not come without action and agitation on their own part. For instance, during the war, African American servicemen had become especially aware of the great disparity between America’s creed and its continued practice of segregation and

discrimination. African American servicemen had to serve in a segregated Army and Navy while they fought for democracy overseas. They also had to endure mistreatment by white officers and soldiers while risking their lives on the lines. Inspired by the battles for freedom abroad, and vowing to right the indignities they had endured, most black veterans returned home ready to fight for their rights—and many of them would do exactly that by playing an important role in the black freedom struggle of the postwar period.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, while historians have noted the vital part that veterans played after the war, few works, if any, have fully explored black veterans' lives during that era.<sup>6</sup> This essay is a step toward correcting that oversight.

As a whole, this study reevaluates the G.I. Bill of Rights and its impact on an important segment of black Americans by analyzing what happened to black veterans in the Deep South when they tried to obtain their G.I. entitlements from 1944 through 1948. To be more specific, it argues that when black World War Two veterans in Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi tried to use the G.I. Bill to improve their socio-economic conditions, they could not do so because of a combination of racial discrimination and the poor administration of the bill's benefits.<sup>7</sup> While some readers may not find it very surprising that black veterans encountered serious prejudices in the biracial South when they tried to secure their benefits, it is still essential to document this previously unexplored part of the black experience so that we can develop a more complete history of African Americans and the Second World War.

It is also necessary for readers to understand that this article is a case study that focuses on only a certain segment of the black World War Two veteran population—albeit an important segment in a key region. Although this study obviously has important implications for interpreting the experience of other southern black veterans who lived outside the heart of the Deep South, scholars should not directly link its findings to the black veteran experience in the postwar North and West. While black veterans in those sections probably encountered many of the same problems as their southern counterparts, there were still different forces at work in those areas that helped determine their socio-economic conditions and status. We will have to await future studies that reveal how northern and western black veterans fared during this period before we can fully assess the entire black World War Two veteran experience.

The G.I. Bill of Rights essentially offered qualified World War Two veterans—those who had served on active duty in the armed forces for at least ninety days without a dishonorable discharge—four ways to improve their socio-economic conditions.<sup>8</sup> The bill's first benefit required the United States Employment Service (USES) to help veterans find jobs that would match their work skills. The second provision allowed unemployed veterans to receive up to a full year of unemployment compensation at the rate of twenty dollars per week. Under the third benefit, the Veterans Administration (VA) provided guaranteed home, farm, and business loans to veterans.<sup>9</sup> And the fourth provision paid for a veteran's education or vocational training for up to four full years. The first section of this essay explores black veterans' attempts to use the first three benefits, while

the second and third sections examine different aspects of the education and training provision.

Before focusing on southern black veterans' attempts to use the G.I. Bill, it is important to note the occupational changes that they had gone through during the war. Because of the Armed Forces' need for technically-trained manpower, the military had to prepare southern black servicemen to fill a number of skilled positions including: linemen, draftsmen, auto mechanics, carpenters, radio operators, and welders, among others.<sup>10</sup> As a scholar of the period noted, the military's specialized technical training program provided southern black veterans with skills that they could use "to lift . . . [themselves] onto another rung of the economic ladder" when they returned home.<sup>11</sup>

And home was a much different place than before the war. Black veterans would return to the "New South"—a region where boll weevils, droughts, depressions, and the mechanization of agriculture had undermined the agrarian economy, while new defense industries had concurrently drawn displaced farmers to the South's growing urban centers. The "New South," in short, was a modern, urban, industrial-based economy that seemed to offer returning black veterans a variety of economic options that had not been available to their parents or grandparents. Its nascent defense industries would need skilled workers to fill technical positions when defense factories converted to a peacetime economy, and black veterans possessed the skills necessary for such jobs.<sup>12</sup>

After faithfully serving their country, black veterans returned home determined to take full advantage of the G.I. Bill and better their lives. They were planning to use the Bill's education and training benefits to adapt their wartime skills for use in civilian life, and, they were looking forward to securing loans and receiving special occupational counseling and job placement. However, as southern black veterans soon learned, their determination would not be enough to overcome the harmful effects of southern racism and the G.I. Bill's poor administration.<sup>13</sup>

### **The Search for a Job and a Better Way of Life: Jobs, Unemployment Compensation, and Loans under the G.I. Bill of Rights**

Returning southern black veterans quickly discovered a major flaw in the administration of the G.I. Bill. Although the law called for two federally funded agencies, the VA and the USES, to administer all of the bill's provisions, southern black veterans found that they would still have to visit *local* VA and USES centers, which were staffed almost exclusively by white employees, to claim their benefits. As black veterans feared, they encountered serious difficulties at such local centers when they tried to secure jobs, unemployment compensation, and loans under the G.I. Bill. Unfortunately for them, but not too surprisingly, southern racial discrimination would block their access to three of the bill's four major benefits.

The main problem that black veterans encountered at local VA centers was a lack of black counselors. By 1947, for example, the VA had only employed a total of approximately a dozen African American counselors in Georgia and Alabama, and not one in Mississippi.<sup>14</sup> With few black counselors able to assist them,

black veterans faced severe discrimination at the hands of white VA counselors. Although VA policies forbade employees from discriminating against veterans based on race, white counselors still discovered a "non-racial" way to keep black veterans from obtaining their benefits. Even though the G.I. Bill only barred "dishonorably discharged" soldiers and sailors from securing entitlements, white counselors often refused to help black veterans who had received a "general" or "blue" discharge (as it was commonly known), which the Army had issued disproportionately to black "troublemakers" who had dared to protest their poor treatment and segregated conditions.<sup>15</sup>

Black veterans also ran into serious problems when they went to the USES, the other federal agency in charge of administering the G.I. Bill. Created in 1933, the USES was essentially a national employment bureau that supplied unemployed Americans with information about jobs throughout the country. It was a federally funded agency administered and controlled by state and community officials. Under the G.I. Bill, the USES was supposed to administer special job counseling and placement services to veterans; a USES center was supposedly the best place for a veteran to find help in securing a job. However, few black veterans in the Deep South obtained skilled positions as a result of the USES's assistance.<sup>16</sup>

Like the VA, the USES refused to hire more than a handful of black counselors. From 1944 through 1946, the agency only employed approximately fifteen black counselors in Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi, and all of those counselors, except one, worked in Georgia. Although records do not reveal how effective these African American counselors were at helping black veterans, several sources do show the abuses black veterans suffered under white USES counselors.<sup>17</sup>

White USES counselors usually refused to refer blacks to skilled and semi-skilled jobs. They sometimes refused to refer black veterans to jobs even after an employer had specifically requested a black worker. In Atlanta, for example, several employers asked the USES to find black veterans who could fill positions as truck drivers. But USES counselors did not forward applications from several qualified black veterans to the employers.<sup>18</sup> Describing the overall predicament that black former servicemen encountered when they went to USES offices, Harry Wright, a Southern Regional Council (SRC) field agent and fellow black veteran, wrote:

In trying to find a job he'd [the veteran] visit the local U.S. Employment Service Office, if he'll accept some laborer's job they'll readily place him—if he knows some of the old-timey trades they can get him placed, but if he's qualified in some of the new skills that Negroes haven't traditionally been doing—or has some kind of professional training, then they just can't find a place for him and he'll be offered a job as a porter in the local hotel or the like. [sic]<sup>19</sup>

One such abuse occurred in Birmingham. There, Willie May, a black veteran who had spent three years in the Army Signal Corps stringing and repairing communication lines, went to his local USES center to try to find a job that would allow him to use his skills. Although the USES informed him that no such positions were available, USES counselors still placed several white veterans,

who had also served in the Signal Corps, in jobs at the Birmingham Power Company. May, on the other hand, had to settle for a position as a Pullman porter.<sup>20</sup>

Black veterans in Mississippi fared just as poorly under USES counselors as May and the Georgia veterans. For example, of the 6,583 non-agricultural jobs that USES counselors filled in Mississippi in October 1946, whites got 86 percent of the professional, skilled, and semiskilled positions. Blacks, conversely, were forced into 92 percent of the unskilled and service-oriented jobs.<sup>21</sup>

Unable to obtain skilled positions, some southern black veterans decided to apply for unemployment compensation, the G.I. Bill's second provision. Simply stated, the unemployment compensation benefit (or the readjustment benefit as it was officially known) called for veterans to receive twenty dollars a week for a full year, as long as they were not employed at a job in which they received more than twenty-three dollars a week. Congress had designed the benefit to tide veterans over while they searched for a job commensurate with their skills and abilities. To qualify, a veteran had to demonstrate that he or she was actively seeking employment by registering for a job at his or her local USES office. Furthermore, no veteran could obtain the benefit if he or she refused a job that the USES deemed "suitable" for him or her. For black veterans in the Deep South, this posed a major problem. Although they argued that the benefit was "there to enable them to wait for an opening at their highest skill," white USES counselors thought differently. To them, any job, no matter how menial or poorly paid, was "suitable" for black veterans.<sup>22</sup>

Because white USES counselors had the power to decide which jobs were "suitable" for former servicemen, many black veterans found themselves browbeaten into accepting positions that they did not want. Some of Alabama's black veterans had to choose between accepting low-paying unskilled jobs and not receiving any unemployment compensation. USES counselors simply informed the veterans that they would be unable to collect any compensation if they refused jobs offered to them by the agency. USES officials considered such refusals a violation of the "suitable" work stipulation. As one white Alabama USES director bluntly stated: "You know you can do that sort of thing to a colored boy, but you can't do it to a white." White USES counselors apparently did "that sort of thing" often because, as one Southern Regional Council (SRC) field agent discovered, only a "few" black veterans were drawing unemployment compensation in Alabama's most heavily populated black counties.<sup>23</sup>

White USES counselors discriminated against black veterans in other Deep South states besides Alabama. In Hoggansville, Georgia, local USES officials refused to allow several black veterans to collect unemployment compensation after they had turned down positions as wood choppers.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, in Rome, Georgia, Reuben H. Thompson, a black disabled Army veteran, went to his local USES office to apply for a position as a truck driver. But the office's counselors refused to place him as a driver and prevented him from collecting unemployment compensation. Searching for an organization that might be able to help him, Thompson wrote to the National Farm Labor Union and vividly described his experience at the USES office:

About 2 years before I went in the Army I was a dishwasher in a cafe but doing my time in the Army I trained for truckdriving and that is all I did. I have been out of the Army five months. About a month ago I went to the U.S. Employment Service office to apply for a job of truck driving but I couldn't get one then they wanted to give me a job washing dishes but I didn't except because cafe jobs here don't pay enough and I have a mother to support. Then they wanted to send me to a foundry I have not done anything like that and I am not able to. I put in for unemployment pay but I failed to get it. I am not asking them to give me anything if I could get the kind of job I am capable of doing. Most of the white boys get the unemployment with ease but very few colored get it. And I would like to know why I can't get it until I get a job. [sic]<sup>25</sup>

Thompson's letter poignantly illustrates the vicious cycle that trapped southern black veterans when they applied for unemployment compensation.<sup>26</sup>

Black veterans in the Deep South also had an extremely difficult time trying to obtain their third G.I. Bill entitlement—veterans' loans. Although many black veterans wanted to open their own businesses, start farms, or build homes, their dreams were often crushed by a combination of the benefit's restrictions, the financial problems of being trapped in the South's poorest socio-economic class, and racial discrimination.

The major problem that veterans of all races encountered when they tried to obtain a loan was that the G.I. Bill only permitted the federal government to guarantee loans, not actually lend veterans money. In other words, the provision only provided a veteran with a cosigner (the VA), and that was contingent upon whether the veteran was first able to secure a loan from a bank or other type of lending agency. Furthermore, since such agencies demanded guaranteed collateral, many veterans who belonged to the South's poorest socio-economic class, particularly black veterans, could not even get past this first stage in the loan process.<sup>27</sup>

Southern black veterans also quickly learned that many banks and lending agencies discriminated against them specifically because of the color of their skin. For instance, when Frank Thomas, one of the SRC's field agents and a fellow black veteran, visited Birmingham in May 1946, he discovered a "lack of cooperation on the part of banks and lending agencies in the matter of making Negro veteran loans." Writing about the situation, he stated: "As far as I have been able to ascertain, not one Negro has been able to get a loan of any type." Birmingham's black veteran leaders claimed that banks were reserving "all of the money available for G.I. loans for whites." Although Thomas could not confirm whether such charges were true, he did feel "sure that if any home or business loans have been made for Negroes they are very, very few."<sup>28</sup>

Statistics about the loan situation for black veterans in Mississippi support Thomas's observations. For example, SRC field agent Harry Wright discovered that although blacks represented approximately half of Mississippi's population, only one of the thirty-six veterans' loans issued by the State between June and December 1946 went to a black veteran.<sup>29</sup> Likewise, when researchers from *Ebony* magazine conducted a survey of thirteen cities in Mississippi during the summer of 1947, they discovered that of the 3,229 loans that the VA had guaranteed for veterans in those cities, black veterans had received only two.<sup>30</sup> Commenting

on black veterans' loan opportunities in the Magnolia State, Wright succinctly summarized: "To Negro veterans in Mississippi getting a G.I. loan is similar to seeking 'The Holy Grail.'"<sup>31</sup>

For many black veterans in the Deep South, a new life had become virtually unattainable. They had found three of the G.I. Bill's four major benefits closed to them due to racial discrimination and the bill's poor administration. While they hoped that their pursuit of the fourth provision of the G.I. Bill—the education and training benefit—would be more fruitful, their optimism would be short-lived.

### The Education and Training Benefit, Part One: On-the-Job Training

Of the four major provisions of the G.I. Bill of Rights, the education and training benefit seemed to offer black veterans in the Deep South the most promising method for acquiring skilled jobs. For example, under the provision veterans could obtain an apprenticeship style of instruction called "on-the-job" training. Such training gave veterans practical "hands-on" experience in a trade or skill for up to four years. Employers would hire former servicemen, pay them wages, and teach them a particular trade. While training, veterans would also receive monthly living subsidies from the federal government in the amount of either sixty-five or ninety dollars depending upon their marital status.<sup>32</sup> In theory, on-the-job training promised to provide southern black veterans with a prime opportunity to improve their lives by offering them a way to adapt their wartime skills and obtain skilled jobs. However, few southern black veterans secured on-the-job training, and, of those who did, most only gained meager benefits from it because of the provision's poor execution and administration, and southern racial discrimination.<sup>33</sup>

The procedure that black veterans had to follow just to enroll in on-the-job training programs became a major hurdle for many of them. Although black former servicemen had the option of going to the VA for assistance, that alternative, given the VA's attitude toward black veterans, did little to help them. Black veterans, instead, had to go through the arduous process of finding training programs on their own. In order even to have an on-the-job training program in which to enroll, a black veteran first had to find an employer who was willing to hire him or her and teach him or her a trade. Then the veteran had to get his or her state's coordinator of education to certify that his or her chosen employer qualified as a training instructor. Black veterans found this procedure, and the other problems that accompanied the approval process, difficult.<sup>34</sup>

Southern black veterans found few employers willing to serve as their on-the-job instructors. White employers refused to train black veterans because they claimed that such efforts would be futile. Black veterans, after all, would still have to secure skilled jobs once they completed the training, and, given the South's penchant for keeping blacks "in their place," on-the-job training seemed like a wasted effort to many prospective instructors.<sup>35</sup> Several black employers were also unwilling to train African American veterans because they feared that once a veteran had finished training, the former serviceman might open a shop or store that would cut into their profits.<sup>36</sup>

Statistics from the SRC and other agencies reveal just how difficult it was for black veterans in the Deep South to find employers willing to teach them. In Atlanta, during March 1946, the American Council on Race Relations found black veterans participating in just six of the 246 on-the-job training programs that the state of Georgia had approved for veterans.<sup>37</sup> Likewise, in April of that year, an SRC field agent calculated that only one out of every ten black Alabama veterans interested in obtaining instruction could find a program in which to enroll.<sup>38</sup> And by July 1946, the SRC estimated that southern black veterans, who collectively represented approximately one-third of the South's World War Two veteran population, could only enter one out of every twelve on-the-job training programs within the region.<sup>39</sup>

Of the southern black veterans who did succeed in entering training programs, most discovered that the instruction they obtained from employers, and the conditions they had to endure, did not even meet reasonable standards. Some employers blatantly exploited black veterans. They could abuse the former servicemen because of the individual states' poor administration of the benefit, and because the program lacked a national set of standards.

When Congress had shaped the G.I. Bill of Rights in early 1944, congressmen had hotly debated which agency should be in charge of administering the education benefit. Responding to political pressures from southern "states' righters," Congress decided to grant the states the privilege of overseeing and administering the benefit. Because most states had designated their own departments of education to watch over the training provision, Congress did not see any reason to develop a uniform set of standards. The legislators reasoned that each state would be able to create its own set of training guidelines by drawing from its previous apprenticeship education standards. However, some states did not create any new laws to deal with the program, and, under such circumstances, several inconsistencies developed including differences over wages, the length of programs, and the skills that veterans were supposed to acquire while training.<sup>40</sup>

Congress's failure to set aside funds for the states to hire training site inspectors exacerbated the problem. Individual states consequently had to dip into their own educational budgets to employ such officials. But because many southern states refused to cover the new expense in full, several of them lacked a large enough staff to inspect and supervise training programs adequately. Therefore, when veterans' training applications flooded the individual states' departments of education for approval, staffs could not handle all of the paperwork and felt pressed to approve programs without thoroughly reviewing and inspecting them. The proper inspection of "black" on-the-job training sites, and the careful review of "black" training programs, became a low priority in the South.<sup>41</sup>

The many discrepancies in states' on-the-job training programs allowed some employers in the Deep South to take advantage of veterans by creating and maintaining shoddy training programs. In some areas of Georgia and Alabama, SRC field agents discovered that white employers only hired and "trained" black veterans so that they could use them as cheap labor.<sup>42</sup> When Horace Bohannon, a SRC field agent and black veteran, visited Macon, Georgia, in early 1946, he found that local white veterans' counselors and employers were conspiring against African American veterans who were searching for work. Bohannon wrote of the situation:

For the first time since I've been working at this job I met someone who already knew of job training (and had been using it to the disadvantage of nearly every Negro veteran who had applied).

I didn't get much from these people but rough treatment, but I learned from other sources that the procedure these people use is this: a veteran comes in to see about a job usually, for he knows nothing of job training. The agency suggests he try this on-the-job training and fills out his forms for him. They then send him off to one of a number of firms who give the veteran the dirtiest, the most difficult work to do and scheme to keep him at that particular work. [sic]<sup>43</sup>

If a veteran rebelled against such treatment, local officials would notify the VA about the veteran's refusal to accept "suitable" employment and would advise the agency, in Bohannon's words, "to strip the boy of his benefits."<sup>44</sup>

Sadly, some of the more blatant abuses that black veteran trainees suffered occurred when they worked in on-the-job training programs run by black employers. In Greenwood, Mississippi, a black shoe shop owner actually charged veterans ten dollars a month to work and train in his business. As SRC field agent Harry Wright observed, the veterans paid the fee because very few on-the-job training opportunities existed for blacks in the area.<sup>45</sup> Likewise, in Vicksburg, Wright uncovered what he considered "one of the worst evils I have found in an on-the-job training situation yet." Randomly selecting a black on-the-job training program to survey in August 1946, Wright headed to "Stampley's Garage" where five black veterans were supposedly training as auto mechanics. When he got to the garage, he discovered a dingy and ill-equipped building. Unable to find a training instructor on hand, Wright began to question the veterans about their program. The men informed him that there was no instructor and that "Stampley's" was nothing more than a black-owned cab company, not an auto repair shop. They also told him that Stampley, the company's owner, refused to pay them any wages, taught them very little that they did not already know about cars, and just kept them on hand to service his cabs.<sup>46</sup>

In an attempt to counter such abuses, Congress amended the on-the-job training provision with national minimum standards in August 1946—almost two and a half years after the G.I. Bill first became law. The provision essentially required employers to file detailed records with individual states about each veteran trainee before a training program could receive approval. The records outlined the skills each veteran would learn, the length of his or her instruction, the number of hours the former serviceman would work, the types of tasks he or she would have to perform, and the specific wage increases the veteran could expect as he or she progressed under the program.<sup>47</sup>

Despite these improvements, some employers still exploited black veteran trainees. A study by Adrian L. Oliver, a graduate student working at the Atlanta University School of Social Work during the period, emphasizes this point. Oliver studied twenty-five black Atlanta veterans who were enrolled in on-the-job training programs from September 1946 to February 1947, twenty-one of whom worked and trained in black businesses. Oliver, concerned about the quality of instruction that the former servicemen were receiving and how well they were adjusting to training, privately questioned the veterans about their work situations. The men candidly told him that their employers were taking

advantage of them. Several complained about not receiving any lunch breaks or rest periods. Others claimed that they had to work twelve to fourteen hours a day.<sup>48</sup>

Most of the men learned very little from their employers. "Several," Oliver discovered, "felt that they were not getting anything out of their training."<sup>49</sup> For example, two of the veterans, who were supposedly training as bakers, thought that their programs were shams. In ten months of training, they had not received any instruction and had spent all of their time sweeping floors and greasing pans.<sup>50</sup>

Interestingly, Oliver observed that even though the veterans felt abused, they were still hesitant to leave their programs because they "believed that the compensation received from 'on-the-job' training far exceeds any salary that they could receive from jobs that were open to them."<sup>51</sup> Oliver learned that government subsidies "enabled them to draw more money per month than they had ever received on any type job previously."<sup>52</sup> Some men even doubled their pre-war salaries. Still, given most black veterans' prewar jobs, such increases were probably minimal, at best.<sup>53</sup>

While Oliver's study suggests that some black veterans in the South were able to use the training program to improve their economic situation, it also raises the question of how much of a long-term effect the program had on former servicemen. After all, once veterans had used up their allotted training time, they could no longer collect subsidies, and without subsidies, their incomes fell drastically. Furthermore, given their inadequate training, it seems highly unlikely that these men, or other black veterans in similar situations, were able to secure skilled jobs. Obviously, several black veterans only used the training program as a temporary solution to their economic troubles.<sup>54</sup>

Black veterans received the most help in finding good on-the-job training positions in black communities that created their own indigenous veterans' leagues. In Atlanta, the all-black Georgia Veterans' League (GVL), working in close cooperation with the black community, helped place several African American veterans in such skilled training programs as auto mechanics, tailoring, masonry, carpentry, painting, and others. A study of thirty men whom the GVL placed in positions from January through March 1946 reveals that the organization's efforts were a success. In contrast to men in other on-the-job training studies, five out of every six men in the GVL study were more than satisfied with the training they had received.<sup>55</sup>

Unfortunately, however, not all black communities in the Deep South had their own veterans' leagues or reached out to help their returning servicemen. In May 1946, Frank Thomas surveyed Mobile's efforts to assist its black veterans. A black former serviceman himself, Thomas wrote of his visit to the city: "The most disgusting element . . . was the total absence of any concern for Negro veterans on the part of our own people. The business men, the ministers, the teachers and the other leaders have done nothing to assist returning ex-servicemen."<sup>56</sup> This problem was apparently widespread because after Thomas traveled throughout all of Alabama, he angrily observed that black leaders were "far too complacent" about helping black veterans. He found that black leaders were "sitting idly by and allowing the ex-servicemen to return to their . . . former common labor jobs that pay little or nothing."<sup>57</sup>

In all, southern black veterans did quite poorly securing on-the-job training programs during the postwar period. By May 1946, African American veterans in Mobile only held thirty-two of the approximately eight-hundred training positions in the city.<sup>58</sup> Similarly, in Jackson, Mississippi, less than 9 percent of the city's 3700 black veterans were enrolled in on-the-job training programs by late September 1946.<sup>59</sup> And, according to the SRC's statistical review of the entire South, black former servicemen represented just 7 to 8 percent of all of the southern veterans enrolled in on-the-job training. This occurred in a region where African American veterans made up roughly one-third of the entire World War Two veteran population.<sup>60</sup>

### The Education and Training Benefit, Part Two: Vocational Schools, Colleges, and Universities

During the postwar period, the education and training benefit of the G.I. Bill provided black veterans with two other important options besides on-the-job training. Black former servicemen could use the provision to obtain either specialized technical training at a vocational school, or a traditional liberal arts education at a college or university. Each veteran would receive a monthly living subsidy and have his or her tuition paid for up to four full years. Theoretically, this "higher" education benefit should have provided black veterans in the Deep South with significant opportunities to improve their lives. But historic and contemporary problems, which stemmed from years of southern racial discrimination, kept many of them from taking advantage of the provision.<sup>61</sup>

Black veterans tried to enter G.I. Bill vocational programs for a variety of reasons. Some believed that such programs offered distinct advantages over on-the-job training. Vocational teachers, for example, unlike on-the-job instructors, did not have to depend on a veteran trainee's daily productivity to make a living. Black veterans consequently reasoned that vocational instructors would not "use" and abuse them as much as on-the-job employers. They also believed that vocational school teachers would cater more to their individual needs.<sup>62</sup>

Some southern black veterans also decided to enroll in vocational schools because colleges would not accept them. Many former servicemen's poor educational backgrounds kept them from pursuing four-year degrees. Black colleges in the South only admitted veterans who had completed high school, or who could pass a high school equivalency test.<sup>63</sup> For many black veterans, such admission standards became a major obstacle. Most of them, after all, had received woefully inadequate educations before the war because of poor schools and pressures to begin working at an early age. The average education level of southern black veterans consequently rested somewhere around fifth grade and restricted most of them to vocational schooling.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, because of the South's extremely limited training facilities, only a few black veterans were able to enter vocational programs, and of those who did, most received insufficient instruction.

Because the education provision gave each state the right to determine its own number of public vocational schools and the type of instruction that such schools would offer, black veterans suffered greatly. Southern states did not approve enough vocational schools to instruct all of the black veterans who wanted training, and, of those schools that received approval, the majority only prepared

students to enter traditional "black" jobs. Commenting on the situation, George Mitchell, the head of the SRC's Veterans' Service Project, wrote that it was not "possible for large numbers" of black veterans "to attend vocational schools . . . because southern states support very few such schools and they are of indifferent quality, offering only a most limited range of rather old-fashioned subjects."<sup>65</sup> A review of the vocational school at the Georgia State Industrial College provides an outstanding illustration of just how restricted training was for black veterans.

By early 1946, the vocational school at Georgia State Industrial College had established a reputation as the institute that provided the best vocational training for black veterans in the Peach State.<sup>66</sup> However, when Horace Bohannon visited the school in February 1946, he found the classrooms too small to accommodate many veterans, with the students only receiving training in some of the less desirable trades. Meanwhile, white veterans at a nearby school were acquiring instruction in such advanced skills as radio repair, diesel engineering, and electrical appliance restoration. Bohannon reported that when he asked Benjamin Franklin Hubert, the president of the college, whether he was planning to get permission from the state to develop advanced training courses, Hubert recoiled at the suggestion and displayed his "Uncle Tommishness" by insisting that he already knew very well what type of training the veterans wanted. According to Hubert, the school was already offering such instruction.<sup>67</sup>

Bohannon and other SRC field agents found conditions and training opportunities for black veterans even worse at some of the smaller vocational schools in the Deep South. For example, after Bohannon inspected one such school in Georgia, he wrote: "I don't know [what] I expected but I found: an old dilapidated building with virtually no doors or windows a very poor heating system and most despairing of all **poor teachers and worse subject matter**. . . . Conditions are really deplorable at the Ward Street School."<sup>68</sup> In Fairfield, Alabama, William Twitty, another SRC field agent, discovered similar inadequacies. The Fairfield vocational school differentiated between the types of courses that black and white veterans could take. White veterans received training in such advanced courses as tool-and-die making and electrical appliance repair, while black veterans were still ushered into dry cleaning and tailoring classes.<sup>69</sup>

Black veterans also encountered serious problems when "fly-by-night" vocational training schools cropped up throughout the South. As the name suggests, some of these schools were literally founded overnight. Several unscrupulous individuals created such facilities to take advantage of black veterans' desperation and the federal government's largesse. Most of these schools' founders were not interested in training veterans properly. They only wanted to turn a quick profit and consequently set tuition rates at the highest level the federal government would pay. Despite the exploitative nature of these schools, and their many educational inadequacies, most of them still obtained state certification to operate as qualified veteran vocational schools, particularly if they catered to black veterans.<sup>70</sup>

A survey by the National Urban League (NUL) suggests just how inadequate instruction was at these new "fly-by-night" schools compared to the instruction that African Americans had received at the black vocational schools that had existed before the war. For example, when Lester Granger, the head of the NUL, traveled through twenty-three states in 1947, and inspected 314 urban black

vocational schools, he found black vocational education in the South to be even worse than it had been in 1945!<sup>71</sup>

In an attempt to correct black veterans' limited vocational school opportunities, several black citizens in the South decided to build their own schools. Sometimes, however, even the most prominent blacks within communities had problems finding enough money to construct quality facilities. In Macon, Georgia, for example, Dr. J. T. Saxon, a local black minister and newspaper editor, had trouble completing the Memorial Trade School for Negroes. Although Saxon was able to open the school in October 1946 and offer sixty-five veterans one-year courses in such skills as masonry and auto mechanics, the school still had serious drawbacks. Because of limited funds, Saxon's school lacked vital training equipment and did not have a ceiling, or any windows, doors, or rest rooms.<sup>72</sup> Other black citizens who tried to build facilities in the Deep South had similar problems raising the money to build first-rate schools.<sup>73</sup>

In at least one southern state, white politicians made an honest effort to build a vocational school for black veterans but had to abandon their construction plans when white citizens protested the facility. In the Magnolia State, in 1946, state officials wanted to convert a large war munitions plant located near Flora into a black vocational school. However, when local whites heard about the plans for the factory, they staged a major demonstration. Approximately three hundred of them vigorously protested the conversion of the facility because they feared that their neighborhood would be overrun by blacks. The governor and department of education, taking careful notice of the demonstration, abandoned the project.<sup>74</sup>

Southern black veterans who tried to enter universities under the G.I. Bill encountered many of the same problems as the men who were seeking vocational training—a lack of space and resources. Black universities had mistakenly estimated that very few returning black servicemen would pursue a college education as a result of various Army surveys and the Armed Services' promise of a gradual military demobilization program. The Army's "Post-War Educational Plans of Soldiers" study, for instance, claimed that only 8 percent of veterans planned to return to school full-time after the war. But the study proved unreliable; Army pollsters had conducted the study at the height of the war when most men had not even heard of the G.I. Bill or thought seriously about their postwar plans.<sup>75</sup>

Official projections of a gradual demobilization program also proved misleading. A gradual program might have given schools more time to absorb veterans and expand facilities. However, when President Truman abandoned the gradual demobilization plan in early 1946 due to public pressure, colleges ran into trouble. Given these problems, and the few job opportunities and training programs that existed for black veterans in the crowded postwar job market, it is not surprising that a large number of veterans applied to black colleges and that those schools had trouble accommodating them.<sup>76</sup>

Veteran enrollment at colleges and universities rose in direct proportion to the rapid demobilization rate and veterans' limited job opportunities. In the fall of 1945, veterans represented just 5 percent of the nation's college enrollment. However, within a year, that figure jumped to about 48 percent.<sup>77</sup> But, for black veterans, the situation was quite different. Nationally, they represented just 30

percent of the total enrollment at black colleges during the 1946–47 academic year and only comprised about 4 percent of all of the former servicemen attending school under the G.I. Bill.<sup>78</sup> By 1947, black colleges had turned away between 15,000 to 20,000 black veterans because of limited resources and facilities.<sup>79</sup>

In August 1946, Congress created the Veterans' Educational Facility Program (VEFP) in an effort to relieve overcrowded colleges and improve inadequate instructional facilities. The program allowed the Federal Works Agency to move surplus military buildings to schools that the Office of Education deemed as having a major shortage of floor space. Federal funds paid for the relocation and remodeling of such facilities. Schools only had to make room for the new units and install the necessary utilities. The program also allowed colleges to purchase surplus war materials at discount prices, which enabled several black schools to improve their shop areas.<sup>80</sup>

The federal government was extremely generous to black colleges that took advantage of the program. Black schools obtained a large portion of the program's aid; they essentially received about twice as much floor space per veteran as white schools. The government also spent \$156 on each black veteran covered by the program, while white schools only obtained \$93 per veteran. In all, the VEFP allowed black colleges to increase their physical plants by 25 percent. Nevertheless, as Keith Olson, a leading historian of the G.I. Bill, has suggested, the VEFP program did not have a substantial impact on black colleges in the Deep South. For cash-starved southern black schools, which were already plagued with appallingly meager facilities, a 25 percent increase did not make a significant enough difference to accommodate the majority of veterans who applied for admission.<sup>81</sup>

Although southern state legislatures increased black schools' budgets during the postwar period, the additional funds did not relieve the financial burdens of increased enrollments. The problems caused by the legislatures' previous decades of neglect could not be overcome immediately.<sup>82</sup> The budget problems that Mississippi's Alcorn A and M encountered shows how inadequate the new funds were.

At the beginning of 1946, Alcorn was in poor shape. Although many considered the institution Mississippi's best black public college, the school lacked the proper facilities and equipment to train veterans adequately. Conditions were so poor at Alcorn that when Harry Wright first visited the school in January 1946 he wrote: "The neglect of State Officials in not providing facilities for the education of Negroes at Alcorn College is a most serious mistake."<sup>83</sup> Even though the Mississippi Legislature gave the school a quarter of a million dollars to expand its facilities in the summer of 1946, the increase was not enough to help school officials significantly improve the institution's conditions.<sup>84</sup> As a result, Wright angrily wrote of the school's situation in the spring of 1947:

The State-supported Agriculture and Mechanical College at Alcorn is surely the least effective of its kind in the whole country; all the evils of a poor institution exist here: it is understaffed, poorly managed, inadequately equipped and traditionally its program is limited by the "starvation budget" doled out to it by the State. A representative of one of the accrediting associations appraised the education setup at the college as being . . . most backward. . . . The mechanical courses are makeshift, and the agriculture course "would hardly qualify a stu-

dent to do his own farming or to teach agriculture" as one of the State agricultural experts put it. This is the only college provided by the State of Mississippi to teach Negroes agriculture, even though the State is based on an agricultural economy.<sup>85</sup>

While Alcorn did get additional chunks of funding from the Mississippi Legislature, the school received the money too late to make a difference for most veterans.<sup>86</sup> In the fall of 1947, Alcorn could only accommodate approximately four-hundred veterans—not a very significant number considering that the school represented Mississippi's primary black college.<sup>87</sup>

Inadequate funds also caused serious housing shortages at other black colleges.<sup>88</sup> Even some of the more prestigious black schools had problems housing former servicemen—particularly married veterans. In the fall of 1945, Tuskegee Institute had no family housing units. Although married veterans comprised more than a fourth of the school's veteran population, only about one in four of the married G.I.s found adequate lodging.<sup>89</sup> While some states provided schools with additional funding for dormitories, the new funds were limited. Colleges still could not build enough facilities to accommodate all of the veterans who applied for admission.<sup>90</sup>

Congress, taking note of the housing crisis at both black and white schools, tried to alleviate the problem by amending the Lanham Housing Act in the summer of 1945. Basically, the amendment allowed the National Housing Administration (NHA) to move former defense workers' dwellings onto college campuses that lacked adequate veterans' housing. It also gave the NHA the power to construct temporary veterans' homes at schools when such units were not available for relocation. To apply for the aid, schools had to calculate how many additional units they would need and submit the figures to the NHA for approval.<sup>91</sup>

Black schools, nevertheless, did not apply for the new units right away. By the middle of January 1946, the black newspaper *Chicago Defender* was chastising black colleges for not processing students' applications quickly enough to determine the number of additional units needed. At that time, just six of the nation's black colleges had applied for surplus dwellings—and none of those schools was located in Georgia, Alabama, or Mississippi.<sup>92</sup> Colleges in those states did not apply until March, and, because of their delay, they did not get all of the units they needed. Tuskegee Institute, for example, requested five hundred units, but only received one hundred. Although the federal government tried to assist black schools as much as possible, it could only do so much to help them.<sup>93</sup>

In all, by the middle of October 1946, the NHA had installed 493 housing units at public and private black colleges in Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi.<sup>94</sup> While the new units helped some veterans, there were not enough of them to meet the crisis. Schools still had too few units to accommodate the mass of veterans who applied to their programs.<sup>95</sup>

In final perspective, the overcrowded and poorly equipped southern educational system caused serious and irreversible damage to black veterans' educations both before and after World War Two. Although conditions arose that allowed black colleges to improve their facilities, the changes were too small and occurred too late to assist most black veterans. The problems and inadequacies

caused by years of southern racial discrimination kept many black veterans in the Deep South from taking full advantage of the G.I. Bill's "higher" education benefit. The provision, in short, did little to assist southern black veterans in their attempt to improve their lives during the postwar period.

### Conclusion

At the end of World War Two, Julius A. Thomas, the director of the National Urban League's Department of Industrial Relations, predicted that the G.I. Bill of Rights would present black veterans with a number of "opportunities to improve their earning power." Thomas declared that because of the Bill, "the outlook for many young [black] men is much brighter than it has been in the past half century." Thomas's optimism proved unfounded. Racial discrimination and the G.I. Bill's poor administration combined to thwart southern black World War Two veterans' attempts to take advantage of their rightful entitlements.<sup>96</sup>

The first priority for most black veterans who had returned to the South had been to find a skilled job. Many could not take up a new occupation, however, because the USES and the VA—the federal agencies in charge of helping veterans with the G.I. Bill—discriminated against them. As a result, many black veterans had to return to unskilled, low-paying jobs. For similar reasons, southern black veterans could not obtain unemployment compensation and loans. The USES virtually refused to grant them unemployment compensation, and banks, lending agencies, and the VA denied them loans.

Of the G.I. Bill's four provisions, only the education and training entitlement benefitted more than a handful of southern black veterans. But training under the provision was very limited. Poor instruction, abusive teachers, and improper and overcrowded facilities frequently nullified the benefit. Few training facilities existed for blacks in the Deep South, and many veterans could not obtain college instruction because of their poor academic backgrounds. A VA survey summarizes how limited the education provision was for black veterans. In April 1947, the VA found only 5 percent of all black veterans enrolled in courses and programs under the education benefit.<sup>97</sup> This occurred at the same time that the total veteran enrollment at colleges throughout the country reached its peak during the postwar era.<sup>98</sup>

Southern black veterans obtained the most assistance in areas where they formed their own leagues and organizations with their own special focus and agendas. These associations did an excellent job helping black veterans find jobs and training programs within the black community, as the work of the Georgia Veterans' League demonstrates. Three major factors emerged during the immediate postwar years, however, that stunted the growth and effectiveness of such leagues.

First, many black veterans in the Deep South placed more emphasis on trying to desegregate traditional white veterans' organizations like the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars than in forming their own specific leagues. Unfortunately, their efforts were unsuccessful.<sup>99</sup> Second, NAACP officials discouraged black veterans from creating their own organizations because they thought that such associations would only reinforce racial segregation, rather than allowing African American veterans to pool their resources and

work together.<sup>100</sup> And third, as many historians have suggested, the anticommunist atmosphere of the era, particularly southern anticommunism, created a paranoia that undermined the efforts and effectiveness of many organizations involved in the black freedom struggle immediately after the war—especially veterans' leagues.<sup>101</sup> The fear of being labeled a “communist” organization, for example, kept some black veterans' groups, like the GVL, from working with other African American veterans' organizations, like the supposedly “communist” United Negro Veterans.<sup>102</sup> In sum, these three factors combined to seriously hamper black veterans' ability to create their own associations, which in turn made it extremely difficult for them to band together and obtain their G.I. Bill benefits.

A few years after the end of the Second World War, two researchers for the Public Affairs Committee, Inc., wrote about the black war veteran: “He wants very simple things in life: a good job, educational and vocational guidance, better housing, and a little self-respect. He knows that returning veterans were supposed to find these things. He knows they exist in this land of ours. But he does not find them.”<sup>103</sup> The reason that southern black veterans did not find these “simple things” was perhaps best captured by William A. Caudill, a scholar who worked for the Julius Rosenwald Fund. Writing for the American Council on Race Relations during the final days of the war, Caudill accurately predicted that black war veterans would be unable to obtain their G.I. Bill benefits when they returned home because “the white GI will be considered first a veteran, second and incidentally a white man; the Negro GI will often be considered first a Negro, second and incidentally a veteran.”<sup>104</sup>

Caudill's prediction came true for black World War Two veterans in Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. The Second World War did not represent a watershed for most of them, at least not as far as their socio-economic conditions were concerned. While southern black veterans were particularly inspired by World War Two's fight for democracy and returned home with high expectations of creating a new life for themselves, they quickly found their desires quashed by racial discrimination and the G.I. Bill's poor administration. In short, black former servicemen in the Deep South were unable to use the G.I. Bill of Rights—the war's great social legacy—to redefine their status. They had to return to the lowest rung of the socio-economic ladder and could not use the G.I. Bill to lift themselves above it. The “New South” proved to be a stagnant environment instead of a progressive habitat for them. World War Two and the immediate postwar years did not mark the beginning of a new era of socioeconomic opportunity and change for black veterans in the Deep South, but rather a continuation of the “Old South's” system of racial segregation and discrimination.

One might ask why black veterans in the Deep South did not directly demand their rights under the G.I. Bill as they did the franchise. The answer probably lies in the observation that most of them believed that securing the ballot was the key to improving their overall condition. As historian Steven Lawson has noted, “Veterans like these reasoned that as long as blacks did not determine who governed them, they would continue to be victimized by racial discrimination.”<sup>105</sup> Southern black veterans probably believed that their demonstration for the franchise and important leadership in the voter registration drives during the

immediate postwar years constituted the best way for them to obtain their G.I. Bill benefits. Stated differently, one can view black veterans' attempts to secure the franchise as an indirect protest against their inability to obtain their benefits. For instance, African American veterans probably thought that if they could achieve the vote, they might then be able to elect progressive politicians who could help them overcome some of the obstacles they faced when they tried to secure their G.I. entitlements.

Perhaps another reason that southern black veterans did not band together to directly demand their benefits was the out-migration of a significant number of them from the postwar South. For example, as historians John Modell, Marc Goulden, and Sigurdur Magnusson argue, World War Two military service substantially increased black servicemen's expectations that they would return to a better life; many African American veterans were simply unwilling to accept their prewar status and consequently emigrated from the South in search of better conditions and treatment.<sup>106</sup> Therefore, perhaps we should view southern black veterans' inability to obtain their G.I. entitlements and improve their individual socioeconomic status as major "push factors" in the massive migration of scores of black veterans from the postwar South.<sup>107</sup> After all, as Modell, Goulden, and Magnusson stress, by 1950 "more than half of the black men who were in their twenties at the time of their World War II service" lived in a different region from the one of their birth.<sup>108</sup>

Finally, it is important to consider what happened to the black veterans who remained in the South over the years. Maybe their inability to secure their benefits was an important reason why so many of them would become leaders in the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 60s. Whatever the case, the tragic part of this story remains that southern black veterans, despite their expectations and the federal government's promise, were unable to secure their rightful entitlements, even though other veterans throughout the country were able to use the G.I. Bill to significantly improve their lives. Nevertheless, given southern black veterans' participation in the black freedom struggle of the 1950s and 60s, it seems likely that some of them found a way to use this tragedy to fuel their fight for the rights and improvement of future generations of African Americans.

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## ENDNOTES

Portions of this article have previously appeared in David Onkst, "'First a Negro . . . incidentally a Veteran': Black World War Two Veterans and the G.I. Bill of Rights in the Deep South, 1944-1948," Conference Paper given at the Hagley Museum and Library, October 27, 1995, and David H. Onkst, "Black World War Two Veterans and the G.I. Bill of Rights in Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi, 1944-47" (M.A. thesis, University of Georgia, Athens, 1990). This essay has benefitted greatly from the comments and criticisms of Numan Bartley, David Garrow, Roger Horowitz, Michael Kazin, Peter Kuznick, Marcel LaFollette, William Leary, Heidi Onkst, Robert Pratt, Elizabeth Stewart, the members of the Tuesday Colloquium of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History, and Bernard Unti. I would like to thank all of them for helping me mold it into a much better essay than it would have been without their keen

eyes and sharp critiques. Finally, this article is dedicated to the late Colonel Paul L. Bates, former commander of the 761st Tank Battalion—the man and friend who first piqued my interest in the history of the African American experience in the Second World War.

1. William J. Clinton, "Proclamation 6703—50th Anniversary of the GI Bill of Rights, June 21, 1994," *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* 30 no. 25 (27 June 1994): 1323–24; Ken Scharnberg, "The G.I. Bill," *The American Legion* 137 no. 3 (September 1994): 62; James A. Michener, "After the War: The Victories at Home," *Newsweek* 121 (11 January 1993): 26–27; Thomas Toch, "The G.I. Bill at 50," *U.S. News and World Report* 116 no. 26 (27 June 1994): 17; Special Issue "The G.I. Bill's Lasting Legacy," *Educational Record* 75 no. 4 (Fall 1994); Edwin Kiester, Jr., "The G.I. Bill May Be the Best Deal Ever Made by Uncle Sam," *Smithsonian* 25 no. 8 (November 1994): 129–39. For two more recent celebratory accounts of the G.I. Bill, see Michael J. Bennett, *When Dreams Came True: The G.I. Bill and the Making of Modern America* (Washington, D.C., 1996) and Theda Skocpol, "Toward A Partnership With American Parents: A Family Oriented Strategy for Progressive Democrats," Conference Paper given at the Airlie House, Virginia, January 10–12, 1997, p. 8. Interestingly, Skocpol refers to the G.I. Bill "as a kind of formula for social policy success [Skocpol's emphasis] in American democracy."
2. Neil A. Wynn, *The Afro-American and the Second World War* (rev. ed., New York, 1993), pp. 129–36. For the classical statement that suggests that World War Two was a watershed, see Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (20th Anniversary Edition, New York, 1962), p. 997.
- Some scholars have already started to question how much of a "positive" impact World War Two had on black Americans by stressing the significant increase in racial violence, the repressive effect that the postwar anticommunist crusade had on the black freedom struggle, and the limitations of federal wartime policies. See, Wynn, *The Afro-American*, pp. 129–31, and 135–36; William Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II* (3rd ed., New York, 1986, 1995), pp. 86–91; Robert Norrell, "One Thing We Did Right: Reflections on the Movement," in Armstead L. Robinson and Patricia Sullivan, eds., *New Directions in Civil Rights Studies* (Charlottesville, 1991), p. 69; James A. Buran, "Racial Violence South During World War II" (Ph.D. diss., University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 1977); Pete Daniel, "Going Among Strangers: Southern Reactions to World War II," *Journal of American History* 77 (December 1990): 905–08.
3. For historical and stylistic reasons, I will use the term "servicemen" to signify both men and women who served in the armed forces during the war.
4. For two contemporary statements which suggested that blacks' status would significantly improve as a result of the war, see Jesse Parkhurst Guzman, Vera Chandler Foster, and W. Hardin Hughes, eds., *Negro Year Book: A Review of Events Affecting Negro Life 1941–1946* (Tuskegee, 1946), s.v. "The Negro Veteran in the Economy," by Julius A. Thomas, p. 151; and Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*, p. 997.
5. Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey*, p. 86; Steven F. Lawson, *Black Ballots: Voting Rights in the South, 1944–1969* (New York, 1976), pp. 96, 102–03, 107, 114, and 340; Charles M. Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley, 1995), pp. 24, 30–31, 47–48, 56–57, 66, and 136; John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Urbana, 1994), pp. 1–9.
6. At least two other scholars, Jennifer E. Brooks of the University of Tennessee at Knoxville and Jane F. Levey of Yale University, are currently working on studies of black World War Two veterans. Both Brooks and Levey have forthcoming dissertations on the subject. For previous samples of their work, see their papers from the Hagley Museum and Library's "Aftermath" Conference, October 27, 1995; Jennifer E. Brooks, "Coming Home and Taking Charge: Southern Veterans, Wartime Service, and the Politics of Change," and Jane F. Levey, "Citizenship, Civil Rights, and African-American Veterans after World War II."

7. To support my argument, I have relied on the NAACP's records, the Tuskegee Institute Newspaper Clippings Files, several Atlanta University sociology students' master theses from the 1940s, black educational journals from the period, and the papers of the Southern Regional Council, or SRC (an interracial organization which administered a program that sent approximately a dozen black former servicemen out into the field to observe and record southern black veterans' attempts to use the G.I. Bill during the postwar period). The SRC's "Veterans' Service Project" began in January 1945 and operated until the end of 1947. The project's basic goals were to inform southern black veterans about their rights under the G.I. Bill and make the public aware of black veterans' poor conditions. For more information on the program, see Henry Paul Houser, "The Southern Regional Council" (M.A. thesis, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1950), pp. 66-76; William Clifton Allred, Jr., "The Southern Regional Council 1943-1961" (M.A. thesis, Emory University, Atlanta, 1966), p. 98; Horace A. Bohannon, interview by David Onkst, 16 June 1989, Atlanta, GA, tape recording, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia Library, Athens, GA. Hereafter cited as "Bohannon Interview."

8. The Bill also provided insurance, hospitalization, and disability benefits, or what some called "maintenance" provisions. However, because this essay only concentrates on the entitlements that the veterans could have used to advance themselves economically and educationally, it will not focus on the maintenance provisions. See, "Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944" (PL 78-3469, 22 June 1944).

9. This provision permitted the federal government (through the VA) to guarantee up to 50 percent of each veteran's loan, provided it did not exceed two thousand dollars.

10. Helen E. Cheslik, "Effect of World War II Military Educational Training on Black Colleges" (Ph.D. diss., Wayne State University, Detroit, 1980), pp. 60-61; Robert C. Weaver, "The Negro Veteran," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 238 (March 1945): 128-29; James C. Evans, "Adult Education for Negroes in the Armed Forces," *Journal of Negro Education* xiv no. 3 (Summer 1945): 441.

11. Ambrose Caliver, *Postwar Education of Negroes: Educational Implications of Army Data and Experiences of Negro Veterans and War Workers* (Washington, D.C., 1945), p. 39.

12. For the changes in the South, see Numan V. Bartley, *The New South, 1945-1980* (Baton Rouge, 1995), pp. 8-11, and 135-46; George Brown Tindall, *The Emergence of the New South, 1913-1945* (Baton Rouge, 1967), pp. 430-32, and 694-700; David R. Goldfield, *Cotton Fields and Skyscrapers: Southern City and Region, 1607-1980* (Baton Rouge, 1982), pp. 140-42, and 182-84.

13. For information about black veterans' desire to use their skills and secure their G.I. entitlements when they returned home, see John Lovell, Jr. to Walter White, 22 February 1946, VA Discrimination, 1945-47, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Papers, Library of Congress, Veterans Affairs, Group II, Box G-17. Hereinafter cited as NAACP-LC, followed by the series title, group number (G), and box (Bx) where the material is located. Please note that I used both the manuscript and microfilm versions of the NAACP collection at different points during my research. The microfilm edition is cited as NAACP-MF. Also see, "Color Means Nothing at the Front," 26 January 1945, U.S. Army General, 1945, NAACP-LC, Veterans Affairs, G-II, Bx-A-645; Jesse O. Dedmon to Robert L. Williams, 26 April 1945, General Correspondence: January-April 1945, NAACP-LC, Armed Forces Legal Files, G-II, Bx-G-9; Notes from the NAACP Veterans Conference, 10 November 1945, Miscellany: General, 1941-January 31, 1946, NAACP-LC, Armed Forces Legal Files, G-II, Bx-G-12.

14. For information about the number of black VA counselors, compare George S. Mitchell to Julius A. Thomas, 25 February 1947, *Southern Regional Council Papers* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1983), Reel 189, Frames 1147; hereafter

cited as SRC. Each citation is followed by the reel (R) and frame (F) number where the material is located; "A Survey of Veteran Services for Negro Veterans in Mississippi, by Harry S. Wright," March 1947, SRC, R-218, F-955-56; Charles G. Bolte and Louis Harris, *Our Negro Veterans* (New York, 1947), p. 21.

15. *Birmingham World*, 5 February 1946, *Tuskegee Institute Newspaper Clippings Files*, (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1976), Reel 91, Frame 1050. Hereafter cited as TINCF. Each citation is followed by the reel (R) and frame (F) number where the material is located. *Atlanta Daily World*, 9 September 1945, SRC, R-191, F-1679; Lillian Virginia Evans, "A Study of Twenty-Five Negro Veterans who are 'On-the-Job' training in Ten Establishments in Atlanta, Georgia" (M.A. thesis, Atlanta University, 1946), pp. 8-9.
16. For the history of the USES and its importance to the G.I. Bill, see "Memo to all members of all Management Labor Committees, by Paul McNatt," 15 August 1945, *Records of the War Manpower Commission, Region VII*, Federal Record Group 211, Archives Branch of the Federal Records Center, East Point, Georgia, Series 14, Box 1, Folder 3. Hereafter cited as WMC. Each citation is respectively followed by the series (S), box (B), and folder (F) number where the material is located. Also, see, William Harber and Daniel H. Kruger, *The Role of the United States Employment Service in a Changing Economy* (Kalamazoo, MI, 1964), pp. 31-37, 41-46; Davis R. B. Ross, *Preparing for Ulysses: Politics and Veterans During World War II* (New York, 1969), pp. 224-37.
17. For the number of black USES counselors and where they worked, compare *Atlanta Daily World*, 4 November, 1945, TINCF, R-91, F-1013; "Service to Negroes in the South," no date, SRC, R-218, F-791; Louise Delphine Johnson, "A Study of 100 Veterans Rendered Service by the United States Employment Service in Atlanta, Georgia from November 1, 1945 to June 1, 1946" (M.A. thesis, Atlanta University School of Social Work, Atlanta, 1946), pp. 7, 25; William B. Twitty to George S. Mitchell, 25 February 1946, SRC, R-188, F-1069; Bolte, *Our Negro Veterans*, p. 23; Julius A. Thomas, *Adjustment of Negro Veterans: A Report of the Adjustment Problems of Negro Veterans in 50 Cities* (New York, 1967), p. 6; Guzman, et al., *Negro Year Book*, s.v. "The Negro Veteran," by George S. Mitchell, pp. 381-82.
18. "Survey of Community Veterans' Information Centers by the American Council on Race Relations," 29 March 1946, SRC, R-188, F-1195-1204.
19. "Draft copy of article by Harry S. Wright, 'Wanted, A Square Deal for Negroes,'" no date, SRC, R-189, F-796-97.
20. *New York Times*, 8 April 1946, TINCF, R-95, F-759.
21. These figures include both veteran and non-veteran placements. See, "A Survey of Veteran Services for Negro Veterans in Mississippi, by Harry S. Wright," March 1947, SRC, R-218, F-955.
22. "Memo, Thomas H. Quigley to Local Office Managers, Area Directors and Field Representatives," 5 June 1945, WMC, S-1, B-4, F-1; Ross, *Preparing for Ulysses*, p. 102; "Service to Negro Veterans in the South," no date, SRC, R-218, F-789-90.
23. *New South* 1 no. 4 (April 1946): 2.
24. "Memo of comments made by southern teachers and school officials about black veterans," Summer 1946, SRC, R-189 F-1291.
25. Rueben H. Thompson to the National Farm Labor Union, 7 May 1946, SRC, R-191, F-173-74.

26. Another type of unemployment compensation that southern black veterans tried to collect under the G.I. Bill was the special readjustment benefit for self-employed veterans. For an overview of the self-employment adjustment, see The President's Commission on Veterans' Pensions, *Readjustment Benefits: Education and Training, and Employment and Unemployment: A Report on Veterans' Benefits in the United States* (Washington, D.C., 1956), p. 134. For specific information on black veterans' attempts to secure self-employment benefits, see Onkst, "First a Negro," (Conference Paper), pp. 12-13.
27. "Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944" (PL 78-346, 22 June 1944); Ross, *Preparing for Ulysses*, pp. 115, 118, and 124; Charles Hurd, *The Veterans' Program: A Complete Guide to its Benefits, Rights, and Options* (New York, 1946), p. 2.
28. Frank P. Thomas to George S. Mitchell, 19 May 1946, SRC, R-188, F-987. Interestingly, Horace A. Bohannon, another SRC field agent, and a black former serviceman, also observed that several banks and lending agencies were discriminating against black veterans in Georgia, see "Bohannon Interview."
29. "A Survey of Veteran Services for Negro Veterans in Mississippi, by Harry S. Wright," March 1947, SRC, R-218, F-956.
30. "GI Loans: Colored Vets Who Borrow Cash Prove Sound Business Investments," *Ebony* II no. 10 (August 1947): 23; *Los Angeles Tribune*, 19 September 1947, TINCF, R-101, F-454.
31. "A Survey of Veteran Services for Negro Veterans in Mississippi, by Harry S. Wright," March 1947, SRC, R-218, F-956.
32. Congress did not raise veterans' subsidies to the sixty-five and ninety dollar limit until December 28, 1945. Prior to that time veterans only received either fifty or seventy-five dollars depending upon their marital status. The December amendment also removed the education benefit's age limit. See, President's Commission on Veterans' Pensions, *Readjustment Benefits*, pp. 12-15.
33. "Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944" (PL 78-346, 22 June 1944); President's Commission on Veterans' Pensions, *Readjustment Benefits*, p. 43; Hurd, *The Veterans' Program*, pp. 97-98. The education and training provision also allowed veterans to train in "on-the-farm" programs. While "on-the-farm" training was not nearly as popular among black veterans as "on-the-job" instruction, some of the former servicemen did pursue such programs, but with essentially the same disappointing results as "on-the-job" instruction. For more details, see Onkst, "First a Negro," (Conference Paper), pp. 24-27, and 29-30.
34. "On the Job Instruction Offered G.I.s," by George S. Mitchell., no date, SRC, R-218, F-905; *New South* 1 no. 4 (April 1946): 10.
35. "Problems Affecting the Negro Veteran," by Vincent Malveaux for the American Council on Race Relations, *Veterans: General*, 1946, NAACP-LC, General Office Files on Armed Forces Affairs, G-II, Bx-A-657. Black veterans countered white employers' arguments by suggesting that it did not matter whether they would be able to find jobs in the South after they finished their training. For them, the important point remained that they have the option of choosing the training they wanted and rightfully deserved. After all, if a veteran acquired skilled training and still could not find a job in the South, he or she could always migrate to the North or West in search of a position.
36. The National Council of Negro Veterans, Inc., newsletter, October 1946, *Veterans: General*, 1946, NAACP-LC, General Office Files on Armed Forces Affairs, G-II, Bx-A-657.

37. "Survey of Community Veterans' Information Centers," by the American Council on Race Relations, 29 March 1946, SRC, R-188, F-1201.
38. *New South* 1 no. 4 (April 1946): 9.
39. "Services to Negro Veterans in the South," July 1946, SRC, R-218, F-793.
40. President's Commission on Veterans' Pensions, *Readjustment Benefits*, p. 44; Ross, *Preparing for Ulysses*, pp. 95–98, 112–13, and 124.
41. President's Commission on Veterans' Pensions, *Readjustment Benefits*, p. 44, and 55–59. For examples of how this affected black veterans in Georgia, see Horace A. Bohannon to George S. Mitchell, 21 January 1946, SRC, R-188, F-271–273; Adrian L. Oliver, "A Study of the Work Content and the Adjustment of Twenty-Five Veterans Placed in On-the-Job Training by the Veterans' Center of Atlanta-Fulton County Georgia, September 1, 1946–February 1, 1947" (M.A. thesis, Atlanta University, Atlanta, 1947), pp. 26–27.
42. William B. Twitty's Field Report on Tuscaloosa County, Alabama, 14–18 January 1946, SRC, R-188, F-1058–1060; Horace A. Bohannon to George S. Mitchell, 22 February 1946, SRC, R-188, F-278; Oliver, "Work Content and the Adjustment," p. 25.
43. Horace A. Bohannon to George S. Mitchell, 17 January 1946, SRC, R-188, F-263–64.
44. *Ibid.*
45. Harry S. Wright to George S. Mitchell, 9 February 1946, SRC, R-188, F-1174.
46. Harry S. Wright to George S. Mitchell, 12 August 1946, SRC, R-188, F-1364–66. For other incidents of African American employers taking advantage of black veterans, or trying to take advantage of them, see Horace A. Bohannon's Field Report, 22 February 1946, SRC, R-188, F-278; William B. Twitty's Field Report on Tuscaloosa County, Alabama, 14–18 January 1946, SRC, R-188, F-1058–60; Evans, "A Study of Twenty-Five Negro Veterans," pp. 21–22.
47. "Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, Amendment" (PL 79-679, 8 August 1946); President's Commission on Veterans' Pensions, *Readjustment Benefits*, p. 45–46.
48. Oliver, "Work Content and the Adjustment," pp. 22–25, and 30.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
50. *Ibid.*
51. *Ibid.*, pp. 20 and 30–31.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
54. For another study that reveals the dissatisfaction that black veterans felt with on-the-job training, see George William Franklin, "An Evaluation of Counseling and Employment Activities of Disabled Negro Veterans" (Ph.D. diss., Purdue University, 1955), pp. 5, 30–37, 58, and 89.
55. Lena D. Sayles, "A Study of the Services Rendered by the Georgia Veterans' League to Thirty Veterans Seeking On-the-Job Training During January, February, and March,

1946" (M.A. Thesis, Atlanta University, 1946), pp. 16–24, 37, and 45. Branches of the GVL existed at one time or other in the following cities: Savannah, Macon, Albany, Brunswick, Valdosta, Waycross, Gainesville, Rome, Lithonia, Cordele, and Moultrie. In August 1946, Sayles reported a statewide membership of five-hundred. Also see, *Atlanta Daily World*, 9 September 1945, SRC, R-191, F-1679; George S. Mitchell to H. L. Mitchell, 5 June 1946, SRC, R-191, F-170.

56. Frank Thomas to George S. Mitchell, 25 May 1946, SRC, R-188, F-989.
57. Frank Thomas to George S. Mitchell, 19 May 1946, SRC, R-188, F-986. For a discussion of veterans' salaries, compare "Services to Negro Veterans in the South," no date, SRC, R-218, F-789; *Monthly Labor Review* 63 no. 11 (November 1946): 720; *Monthly Labor Review* 65 no. 7 (July 1947): 66–67. For more on various black communities' neglect, see "Problems Affecting the Negro Veteran," by Vincent Malveaux for the American Council on Race Relations, *Veterans: General*, 1946, NAACP-LC, General Office Files on Armed Forces Affairs, G-II, Bx-A-657; R. L. Williams to Walter White, 16 March 1946, Jesse O. Dedmon: *General*, 1946, NAACP-LC, Armed Forces Legal Files, G-II, Bx-B-57.
58. *New South* 1 no. 4 (April 1946): 9; Frank P. Thomas to George S. Mitchell, 25 May 1946, SRC, R-188, F-989–90.
59. Harry S. Wright to George S. Mitchell, 22 September 1946, SRC, R-188, F-1376.
60. "Services to Negro Veterans in the South," July 1946, SRC, R-218, F-793.
61. "Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, Amendment" (PL 79-268, 28 December 1945).
62. Sandy Gregg Reid, "A Study of the Social Problems of Fifty Veterans of World War II, Enrolled in Booker T. Washington High School, Atlanta, Georgia 1946–1947" (M.A. thesis, Atlanta University, Atlanta, 1946), p. 5.
63. L. H. Edmondson, *Georgia's Educational Opportunities for Negro Veterans* (Athens, GA, 1945), pp. 10–17; I. A. Derbigny "Tuskegee Looks at its Veterans," *Quarterly Review of Higher Education Among Negroes* 14, no. 1, (January 1946): 14; Keith Olson, *The G.I. Bill, the Veterans and the Colleges* (Lexington, KY, 1974), p. 35.
64. Condensation of Notes Taken at NAACP Veterans Conference, November 1945, General Correspondence: November–December 1945, NAACP-LC, Armed Forces Legal Files, G-II, Bx-G-10; Samuel A. Stouffer, Edward A. Suchman, Leland C. DeVinney, Shirley A. Star, and Robin M. Williams, Jr., *The American Soldier: Adjustment During Army Life*, Volume 1 (Princeton, 1949), p. 490.
65. George S. Mitchell to Col. Campbell C. Johnson, 11 January 1946, SRC, R-189, F-1739.
66. Edmondson, *Georgia's Educational Opportunities*, p. 12.
67. "Field Report by Horace A. Bohannon," 22 February 1946, SRC, R-188, F-278–79. For more on the school's poor program, see "Field Report by Horace A. Bohannon," 11 March 1946, SRC, R-188, F-281–82.
68. The emphasis is Bohannon's. Horace A. Bohannon to George S. Mitchell, 17 January, SRC, R-188, F-262.
69. *New South* 1 no. 4, (April 1946): p. 10.

70. Compare George S. Mitchell to Robert H. Owens, 6 June 1946, SRC, R-189, F-1850-51; Bolte, *Our Negro Veterans*, p. 15; *New South* 1, no. 12 (December 1946): p. 13; *Pittsburgh Courier*, 26 November 1946, TINCF, R-95, F-366; "A Survey of Veteran Services for Negro Veterans in Mississippi, by Harry S. Wright," March 1947, SRC, R-218, F-955; President's Commission on Veterans' Pensions, *Readjustment Benefits*, pp. 34-36.
71. *Afro-American* (Baltimore Edition), 5 April 1947, TINCF, R-100, F-550.
72. *Macon News*, 15 October 1946, TINCF, R-95, F-736.
73. W. A. Bender to the U.S. Congress, 13 January 1948, U.S. Armed Forces: G.I. Bill of Rights, NAACP-LC, General Office Files on Armed Forces Affairs, G-II, Bx-A-642.
74. *Washington Post*, 7 May 1946, SRC, R-188, F-130; Harry S. Wright to George S. Mitchell, 19 January 1946, SRC, R-188, F-1151-54.
75. The survey was a composite of three samples of white and black Army officers and enlisted men taken between the summers of 1943 and 1945; see Olson, *The G.I. Bill*, p. 29-31; Caliver, *Postwar Education of Negroes*, pp. 8-9.
76. Ross, *Preparing for Ulysses*, pp. 186-89; Cheslik, "Effect of World War II Military Educational," p. 92.
77. President's Commission on Veterans' Pensions, *Readjustment Benefits*, p. 26.
78. Martin D. Jenkins, "Enrollment in Institutions of Higher Education for Negroes, 1946-1947," *Journal of Negro Education* xvi no. 2 (Spring 1947): 225; Unidentified Newspaper, September 1947, TINCF, R-100, F-13; *Los Angeles Tribune*, 13 September 1947, TINCF, R-100, F-134.
79. Compare Wynn, *The Afro-American and the Second World War*, p. 116; Olson, *The G.I. Bill*, p. 74; Quarles "Background of 1947 College Student," p. 88; Bolte *Our Negro Veterans*, p. 19.
80. Olson, *The G.I. Bill*, pp. 67-68; James A. Atkins, "Negro Educational Institutions and the Veterans' Educational Facilities Program," *Journal of Negro Education* xvii no. 2 (Spring 1948): 141-43.
81. Olson, *The G.I. Bill*, pp. 74-75.
82. For information about the budget increases in Georgia, see *Atlanta Constitution*, 20 August 1945, TINCF, R-91, F-380. Alabama's increases can be found in *Quarterly Review of Higher Education Among Negroes* 14 no. 4 (October 1946): 223; *Birmingham News*, 31 October 1946, TINCF, R-95, F-374. And, Mississippi's budget increases are in *Negro College Quarterly* 4 no. 2 (June 1946): 97; *Pittsburgh Courier*, 2 May 1946, TINCF, R-95, F-556. Also see, Olson, *The G.I. Bill*, p. 72.
83. Harry S. Wright to George S. Mitchell, 19 January 1946, SRC, R-188, F-1151-54.
84. Compare *Negro College Quarterly* 4 no. 2 (June 1946): 97; *Pittsburgh Courier*, 2 May 1946, TINCF, R-95, F-556.
85. "A Survey of Veteran Services for Negro Veterans in Mississippi, by Harry S. Wright," March 1947, SRC, R-218, F-954.
86. *Chicago Defender*, 24 August 1947, TINCF, R-100, F-20.

87. Martin D. Jenkins, "Enrollment in Institutions of Higher Education for Negroes, 1947-1948," *Journal of Negro Education* xvii no. 2 (Spring 1948): 209. Because of an error in Alcorn's veteran enrollment report, this figure may even be too optimistic.
88. Bolte, *Our Negro Veterans*, p. 19; "State of Alabama Department of Veterans' Affairs: Narrative Report from September 3, 1946 to January 1, 1947," by Lucious W. Smiley, SRC, R-190, F-91-92.
89. Derbigny "Tuskegee Looks at its Veterans," pp. 12 and 17.
90. *Atlanta Constitution*, 20 August 1945, TINCF, R-91, F-380; *Chicago Defender*, 24 August 1947, TINCF, R-100, F-20.
91. John B. Blandford, Jr., to Walter White, 16 July 1945, NAACP-MF, Part 5, R-13, F-634-35; Olson, *The G.I. Bill*, pp. 66-68.
92. *Chicago Defender*, 19 January 1956, TINCF, R-95, F-368.
93. *Journal and Guide* (city unknown), 23 March 1946, TINCF, R-95, F-368.
94. National Housing Agency, Press Release, 13 November 1946, NAACP-MF, Part 5, R-12, F-787-788.
95. Olson, *The G.I. Bill*, p. 75.
96. Thomas's quote is in Guzman, et al., *Negro Year Book*, s.v. "The Negro Veteran in the Economy," by Julius A. Thomas, p. 151.
97. The VA's survey is cited in *Afro-American*, 10 May 1947, TINCF, R-100, F-133.
98. Olson, *The G.I. Bill*, p. 44.
99. Black veterans did not succeed in integrating these organizations, but they were allowed to establish their own separate "colored" American Legion (AL) and Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) posts. For information on their efforts to integrate the AL, see and compare *Informer* (Houston), March 1945, *Chicago Defender*, March 1945, *Afro-American*, March 1945, all located in TINCF, R-94, F-307. On their attempts to desegregate the VFW, see Harry S. Wright to George S. Mitchell, 19 January 1946, SRC, R-188, F-1152. For black veterans' success at establishing their own black AL posts, see *Los Angeles Tribune*, 7 September 1946, TINCF, R-98, F-644; *Atlanta Constitution*, 11 April 1946, SRC, R-191, F-1729; various unidentified newspapers, no dates, TINCF, R-98, F-642-46. And, on their success at establishing black VFW posts, see *Pittsburgh Courier*, 11 May 1946, TINCF, R-98, F-657; *Chicago Defender*, 25 October 1947, TINCF, R-101, F-384; various unidentified newspapers, no dates, TINCF, R-98, F-642-46.
100. The NAACP continually asked southern black veterans to join the American Veterans' Committee (AVC) instead of supporting the veterans' efforts to create their own organizations. NAACP officials considered the AVC the most liberal and progressive veterans' organization of the period because it was an integrated association that sought to secure the civil rights and liberties of all veterans regardless of race. However, what the NAACP did not realize about the AVC was that there were a number of factors that probably made it difficult for black veterans in the Deep South to join. For example, the AVC was not only based in New York City, but was also headed by a group of north-eastern, intellectual, college-educated veterans, hardly men with whom southern black veterans comfortably identified. Similarly, although there were a number of AVC posts throughout the country, most were located in college towns, and since most southern black veterans did not live in such areas, this factor probably severely curtailed their access to the organization. Finally, and even more problematic for southern black veterans,

was the fact that the AVC contained veterans who were members of the Communist Party; given the South's postwar anticommunism, it is likely that the communist issue played an important role in keeping black veterans from joining the organization. For information on the NAACP's efforts to discourage black veterans from forming their own organizations, and the association's efforts to persuade the former servicemen to join the AVC, see Leslie Perry to Hastie, Wright, Carter, Delaney, Gannett, White, Wilkins, and Dedmon, 1 May 1945, General Correspondence: May–August 1945, NAACP-LC, Armed Forces Legal Files, G-II, Bx-G-9; "Condensation of Notes Taken at NAACP Veterans Conference, November [1945?]," General Correspondence: November–December 1945, NAACP-LC, Armed Forces Legal Files, G-II, Bx-G-10; "Walter White's introductory comments to the NAACP Veterans Conference, 9 November 1945," Notes from the NAACP Veterans Conference, 9 November 1945 Miscellany: General, 1941–January 31, 1946, NAACP-LC, Armed Forces Legal Files, G-II, Bx-G-12. Information on the AVC is in Richard Severo and Lewis Milford, *The Wages of War: When America's Soldiers Came Home—From Valley Forge to Vietnam* (New York, 1989), pp. 309–14; Rodney Minott, *Peerless Patriots: Organized Veterans and the Spirit of Americanism* (Washington, 1962), pp. 104–07; Robert L. Tyler, "The American Veterans Committee: Out of a Hot War and Into the Cold," *American Quarterly* 18 no. 3 (Fall 1966): 420.

101. On southern postwar anticommunism, see "Chapter Seven: Anticommunism, Southern-Style," in John Egerton, *Speak Now Against the Day: The Generation Before the Civil Rights Movement in the South* (New York, 1994), pp. 448–60.
102. "Bohannon Interview."
103. Bolte, *Our Negro Veterans*, p. 3.
104. "Negro G.I.s Come Back," by William A. Caudill, 4 August 1945, SRC, R-193, F-977.
105. Steven F. Lawson, *Running for Freedom: Civil Rights and Black Politics in America Since 1941* (Philadelphia, 1991), p. 22. Also see Dittmer, *Local People*, pp. 1–9.
106. John Modell, Marc Goulden, and Sigurdur Magnusson, "World War II in the Lives of Black Americans: Some Findings and an Interpretation," *Journal of American History* 76, no. 3 (December 1989): 838–48. Significantly, in their essay, Modell and his co-authors consider Samuel Stouffer and his colleagues' famous studies of American World War Two combat veterans' opinion surveys.
107. For some of the other "push" and "pull" factors of southern black out-migration during the war and postwar period, including lynching, racial violence, industrialization, urbanization, the mechanization of southern agriculture, and other factors, see Joe W. Trotter, Jr., ed, *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective: New Dimension of Race, Class and Gender* (Bloomington, IN, 1991).
108. The emphasis is Modell, Goulden, and Magnusson's. See Modell, et al., "World War II in the Lives of Black Americans," p. 839.