Militias, Manhood, and Citizenship in Southern Reconstruction, 1863-1877

by

Jacob Scott Clawson

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Auburn University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Auburn, Alabama
December 14, 2019

Keywords: Civil War, Reconstruction, American South, racial violence, militia, citizenship

Approved by

Dr. Kenneth W. Noe, Draughon Professor of Southern History
Dr. David C. Carter, Hollifield Associate Professor of Southern History
Dr. Elijah Gaddis, Assistant Professor of History
Dr. Keith S. Hebert, Associate Professor of History
Dr. Daniel J. Svyantek, Professor of Psychology

Abstract

This dissertation analyzes institutional violence and politics in the nineteenth century South, with a focus on the Civil War and Reconstruction Era. It considers how and why institutional violence provided a means for southerners to express varying notions of citizenship during a time of political, social, and economic upheaval. I argue that both white and black southerners defined and defended competing visions of citizenship and manhood in part through these institutionalized forms of violence. Black southerners sought to stake their claims to manhood and political participation while forging a new biracial democracy, while conservative white southerners sought to reinstitute a Herrenvolk democracy based on racial subordination. As southerners grappled with these two visions in the aftermath of a civil war that had normalized violence as a part of the political process, institutionalized violence provided powerful forms of political expression for both races. Indeed, militia service stood at the fulcrum of questions pertaining to who was a man, who was a citizen, and who would possess access to political and social power in the South at a pivotal moment in its history. As political institutions and forms of political engagement, militias are critical to understanding not just Reconstruction, but the history of the South in the middle of the nineteenth century.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

It seems fitting and proper to begin by acknowledging the people who made this project possible. To my committee in particular I owe a debt of gratitude. Since the day I stepped on campus in 2011, Ken Noe has been a model advisor. He read every word of this dissertation and provided insight and feedback that improved it immeasurably. I'm lucky to have had the chance to study under him. I'll be happy if I can achieve a fraction of his success as a scholar. This dissertation began as a term paper in David Carter's writing seminar. David is one of the most genuine people I've met in academia, and I'm grateful for his support as a member on both my qualifying examination committee and as a member of this dissertation committee. Elijah Gaddis and Keith Hebert agreed to join my committee despite my having never taken their classes. I appreciate the time that they took to read this work and provide me with feedback. The questions they posed in the defense will be invaluable in shaping this project going forward. Daniel Syvantek was gracious enough to serve as my outside reader and I appreciate his time and energy.

Others shaped this dissertation indirectly. When I was an undergraduate student at Western Carolina University, Richard Starnes pushed me to become a better historian and was kind enough to read my mediocre 110 page undergraduate thesis on the Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1864. I went to Auburn in no small part because of him. I trust that I haven't embarrassed Cullowhee in the process. Morris Bian's graduate seminar in World History played a role in this project's development as well, especially in terms of how I thought about the relationship between ideologies, institutions, and historical change. I appreciate that he pushed me academically and also that he helped me secure a supplemental graduate teaching appointment in the Department of Architecture that unexpectedly influenced my work here. Finally, Joseph Kicklighter did not influence this dissertation, but he is the model for what I want

to be as a teacher. As his teaching assistant, I enjoyed our walks across campus to Lowder Hall and our discussions of politics and culture. I hope that one day my lectures are as interesting as his.

This dissertation would not have been possible without the financial support I have received from a number of institutions. Deerfield-Windsor School has employed me since 2015 and I could not ask for a better teaching community. I received a McLeod Fellowship from the South Caroliniana Library at the University of South Carolina in the summer of 2016 that allowed me to spend a week conducting research in Columbia. That research shaped the development of Chapters 2 and 6 of this dissertation. The Auburn University History Department provided me invaluable research funding in the spring of 2015. Finally, in 2019 I received the Bert Hitchcock Graduate Award in Southern Studies from the Caroline Marshall Draughon Center for the Arts and Humanities that allowed me to complete this project.

It's cliché to say that I wouldn't be here without my family, but I'll say it anyway. Too few of us born in the foothills of North Carolina attend college, and even fewer earn doctorates. I have been beyond blessed to have parents who believed in personal responsibility, possessed an indefatigable work ethic, and who made me stand on my own two feet. I'm grateful that my parents never paid my rent, never gave me a monthly allowance, or otherwise coddled me after I left the nest. Finishing this was as much an exercise in endurance as it was in independence. To my mom and dad: thank you for preparing me.

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to two people. First, I know that some historians have wives who read their drafts, assist with their research, or offer them feedback. Mine doesn't, but make no mistake, I'm happy for it. I'm blessed to have found someone who is independent enough to have her own passion and who supports me in my pursuits. This

dissertation wouldn't exist without her. And while Jessica Clawson hasn't necessarily carried the burden of this project in an academic sense, she nonetheless carries the burden of living with me (and Barkley and Bear). I love her for that.

My interest in the Civil War began in 1996 when I took a trip with my grandparents through Christian Tours to Pennsylvania. We visited the Amish Country, Hershey, the Harley-Davidson factory in York, and, most importantly, Gettysburg National Military Park. That trip to Gettysburg was one of the most important moments of my life. *Something* about the Civil War – and after over a decade of college and a 300+ page dissertation, I still can't put my finger on it – arrested my attention and has never let go. My grandfather, Robert Clawson, encouraged me in this and always supported my education. As hard as it was at times to push through this project, I promised him that I would finish. I'm deeply sorry that I couldn't finish in time for him to see the end result. If there's one thing I learned from him, it was to appreciate and find joy in work. This took some work, and I'm happy to have finished.

Introduction

Reconstruction violence is a challenging topic. While Americans have found ways to justify the slaughter of the Civil War, the subsequent murders, hangings, lynchings, rapes, and riots that scarred the southern landscape after the guns fell silent at Appomattox do not fit neatly into the American story. Having concluded his investigation of Mississippi's 1875 election, Massachusetts Republican Senator George S. Boutwell demonstrated this affinity for contrasting the violence of the Civil War with that of Reconstruction, declaring that the state witnessed "all the horrors of open war, without its honor, dignity, generosity, or justice." Nor was he alone. One Union veteran living in the South assured Congress that he would rather "ten thousand times go into a battle" than attempt to approach a poll in Mississippi.[1] It is perhaps unsurprising then that there are no Reconstruction reenactors. Yet, despite Americans' attempts to differentiate violence across the 1865 divide, there were important connections between the killing of the war and that of the ostensible peace. Explaining these ideological and institutional continuities and their role in reconstructing southern political life is the purpose of this dissertation.

This dissertation analyzes violence and politics during Reconstruction through a consideration of militia and paramilitary organizations. I argue that southerners of both races defined and defended competing visions of citizenship and manhood through these institutionalized forms of violence. Black southerners sought to stake their claims to manhood and political participation while forging a new biracial republic, while conservative white southerners sought to reinstitute a Herrenvolk democracy based on racial subordination.[2] As

[1] U.S. Senate, *Mississippi in 1875*. 44th Cong., 1st Sess., 1876, Senate Rpt. 527, XVIII; Ibid, 1248.

[2] By *Herrenvolk democracy*, I refer to the idea of equality based on whiteness that constituted a salient trait of southern political life during the nineteenth century. This idea undergirded a form of racial democracy in the South that invoked racism in order to smooth over class differences among whites based on the subjugation of blacks. Thus, access to political and social power sprang from one's membership in a master race, while those outside of this master race were excluded from formal levers of political power. Pierre L. van den Berghe first

southerners undertook these projects in the aftermath of a war that had normalized organized violence as a part of the political process, militias provided a powerful form of political expression for both races. Indeed, militia service stood at the fulcrum of questions pertaining to who was a man, who was a citizen, and who would possess access to political and social power in the South at a pivotal moment in its history.[3] As political institutions and forms of political engagement, militias are critical to understanding not just Reconstruction, but the history of the South in the middle of the nineteenth century.

The project of remaking southern politics began during the war itself, when military service provided African Americans with a means of acting out their claims to manhood. This took on a number of forms, from simply donning the blue of the Union army to serving on occupation duty and having authority over white southern civilians. Most starkly, it involved

---

coined the term "Herrenvolk democracy" in his comparative study of race in South Africa and the United States. George Frederickson has applied the concept to the American South more specifically and traced its development throughout the nineteenth century. See Pierre L. van den Berghe, *Race and Racism: A Comparative Perspective* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1967) and George Frederickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 61-62.

Although Michael Perman has argued that some white southerners did seek to stake out a moderate position, these efforts were largely abortive in the states I seek to examine. Moreover, Perman fails to account for the critical role that violence played in Reconstruction. It is my contention that examining this violence bears out in sharp relief the ideological strength of white southerners' exclusionary impulse. Moreover, if Perman argues that white Democrats did not begin to utilize white supremacy and home-rule as campaign rhetoric until after the elections of 1872, an analysis of postwar violence demonstrates that this tendency was at work before then, even if it was not a facet of organized political campaigns. See Michael Perman, *The Road to Redemption: Southern Politics, 1869-1879* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

[3] Scholars of gender and politics have especially noted the link between social and political power. Stephanie McCurry has examined this dynamic in the South Carolina lowcountry, where she argues that gender and common claims to mastery – over both women and slaves - provided the basis for white men's political participation. Laura Edwards has traced a similar dynamic during Reconstruction in North Carolina. In particular, she argues that gender and especially claims to manhood were inextricably tied to political power. Thus, emancipation was necessarily a gendered process, and when black men staked their claims to manhood and as patriarchs, they were necessarily making political claims as well. See Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Words: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) and Laura Edwards, *Gender Strife and Confusion: The Political Culture of Reconstruction* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997).

battle and killing in the name of the American state.[4] This proved to be a transformative experience for all southerners. For African Americans, the military became an avenue to claim citizenship in a reconstituted nation. Further, given that the black military experience ruptured antebellum notions of white racial patriarchy, African Americans' claims to manhood necessarily implicated conservative white southerners.[5] The process of manhood formation wrought by the black martial experience consequently drew white southerners into a common discourse concerning the possibilities and limits of manhood and citizenship after the war. Ex-Confederates responded by using regulator bands and state militias as postwar recreations of antebellum slave patrols and Civil War units, and further sought to remake white political and social hegemony through access to and the application of collective violence.

When white violence manifested itself in the Ku Klux Klan, and later in the form of the Louisiana White League and South Carolina's Red Shirts, black southerners and their white allies responded by creating their own militia and paramilitary companies at both the grassroots and through formal, legislative channels.[6] These organizations permitted black southerners to use the militia to engage in forms of martial pageantry such as drilling, marching, and parading that allowed them to appropriate political and public spaces in the South. Such displays reified their

[4] Keith Wilson has shown how even soldiering and camp life, and not necessarily combat experience, could facilitate African Americans' transition from slavery to freedom. See Keith Wilson, *Campfires of Freedom: The Camp Life of Black Soldiers During the Civil War* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2002).

[5] For example, Chandra Manning has discussed the implications of soldiering for black men. In particular, soldiering provided an expression of black manhood and political power that undermined notions of black inferiority that lay at the heart of how white men justified their claims to mastery. Chandra Manning, *What This Cruel War Was Over: Soldiers, Slavery, and the Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 129.

[6] Allen Trelease has written about both Klan violence and given a cursory account for the Union League's ability to function as a form of self-defense. James Hogue, Benjamin Severance, and Richard Zuczek have detailed how Republican administrations in the South formed state militias as security forces. See Allen Trelease, *White Terror: The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction* (New York: Harper, 1971); James Hogue, *Uncivil War: Five New Orleans Street Battles and the Rise and Fall of Radical Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005); Benjamin Severance, *Tennessee's Radical Army: The State Guard and Its Role in Reconstruction, 1867-1869* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2005); Richard Zuczek, *State of Rebellion: Reconstruction in South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996).

claims to citizenship and manhood in visible and stark terms. Militia companies also afforded the freedmen with a means of self-defense. Black southerners used institutional violence to defend not just their communities and their individual liberty, but the very idea of biracial republicanism and the postwar American state that it embodied. Ultimately, the white South's counterrevolution appropriated this discourse of violence and manhood. Reconstruction's opponents framed black militia service as a hyper-masculine threat to white political and social power even as whites launched successive waves of counterrevolutionary violence themselves. The result was Redemption, a moment when reactionary southerners again used the politics of militia service to disqualify black men from having access to state-sanctioned violence and viable means to assert their claims to manhood and citizenship within an environment where violence remained a valuable form of political capital. Put simply, because access to organized violence was central to how southerners defined their relationship to one another and to the state, any reading of this era that fails to account for the militia and related forms of institutional violence is incomplete.

******

This dissertation contributes to a number of historiographical debates. First, it builds on the voluminous scholarship dealing with Reconstruction violence, and especially the challenge of writing African Americans into this history as participants rather than strictly as victims. Beginning with the first assaults on the Dunningite interpretation of Reconstruction as a grotesque experiment in biracial governance, narratives of black self-defense were largely non-existent. W.E.B. Du Bois's proto-revisionist *Black Reconstruction in America* did much to imbue African Americans with a needed sense of agency and argue that they were the protagonists of Reconstruction, but in Dubois's attempt to rehabilitate their image, he neglected to seriously consider how black self-defense and black violence were a part of this agency. To the extent

Dubois wrote about violence, it was of the white variety, and this informed the work of later revisionist and post-revisionist historians. This is evident in the work of scholars such as Allen Trelease and George Rable, who both failed to account for the extent and meaning of African Americans' use of force. Trelease's work on the Ku Klux Klan did well to establish that the Klan was a loosely affiliated but extremely violent terrorist organization that served as the armed-wing of the postbellum Democrat/Conservative Party. While his book does venture away from describing the Klan's activities to examine legislation in Washington and the efforts of some Republican governors such as Powell Clayton and Parson Brownlow to combat white terror, anti-black violence is nonetheless the centerpiece of his work. Rable similarly deserves plaudits for offering a concise and tightly woven synthesis of Reconstruction violence. Yet, he is most concerned with describing the evolution of political violence over time, as it mutated from being an outgrowth of postwar social unrest to a political tool wielded by white counterrevolutionaries. Lost in his interpretation are the efforts of black southerners and their white allies to answer that counterrevolution. Even Otis Singletary's *Negro Militia in Reconstruction*, while important in its own time, was more concerned with explaining why Republican militias failed to uphold Reconstruction governments than explaining what militia service meant for the South's freedpeople.[7]

This trend has persisted with more recent works. Kidada Williams provides a powerful rendering of how African Americans resisted violence after the Civil War. Williams illustrates how freedpeople utilized their ability to testify to create a public record that documented white

[7] W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America: Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2013); Trelease, *White Terror*; George C. Rable, *But There Was no Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985); Otis Singletary, *Negro Militia and Reconstruction* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1957).

terror. With this record, they could make claims on the state and their community for protection. While Williams succeeds in demonstrating the power of testimony as a form of resistance, African Americans' own use of violence proved just as important in terms of how ex-slaves envisioned themselves as political actors and how they sought to navigate and shape postbellum politics.[8] Ultimately, Williams writes about an era of southern history where violence and political power marched in lock step with one another. Her failure to account for how African Americans embraced this violence suggests that her view of black politics is incomplete.

African Americans' use of violence is absent in other works as well, perhaps none more so than LeeAnna Keith's examination of the Colfax Massacre. Keith provides a vivid retelling of what was perhaps the grisliest episode of Reconstruction-era violence. Yet for all Keith does to create a visceral narrative, its explanatory power leaves something to be desired. Looking at the one-sided nature of the affair, Keith portrays the black defenders at Colfax as passive and reticent men who discharged their arms only infrequently during the battle and who "lacked the taste for killing and its consequences" that their white adversaries craved.[9] This is suitable if one wishes to frame Reconstruction as a simplistic, and perhaps tragic, morality play, but it does not withstand the scrutiny of the historical record. As I will demonstrate, black southerners used violence to pursue their political goals, a reality that began with soldiering during the war and continued during Reconstruction. Moreover, when Keith uses this language to portray white southerners as inherently violent and the freedpeople as inherently passive she demonstrates how historians of racial violence – and especially those of racial violence in the Civil War era -- have adopted some of the worst tendencies of critical race theory, assuming that oppressors and the

[8] Kidada Williams, *They Left Great Scars on Me: African American Testimonies of Racial Violence from Emancipation to World War I* (New York: NYU Press, 2012), 17-99.

[9] LeeAnna Keith, *The Colfax Massacre: The Untold Story of Black Power, White Terror, and the Death of Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 103.

oppressed have certain essential experiences. Indeed, to claim in broad brush strokes that any group of men had a "taste" for killing is to make the leap that not only were their experiences with oppression an essential part of their being, but so too did they possess essential character traits. To project this essentialism onto Reconstruction violence and its role in creating citizenship in the era under question unmoors this violence from the larger political milieu in which it developed and strips these actors of their humanity and agency.[10] Moreover, it makes it much easier to cast the participants in these incidences of violence as simple protagonists and antagonists. Although white southerners were responsible for a great deal of racial violence after the Civil War, this was not due to some innate experience as oppressors or ingrained bloodlust. This dissertation maintains that it stemmed from the implications of emancipation and the Civil War, and especially ex-slaves' entrance into the body politic and its concomitant threat to white political power, all of which occurred within a hyper-masculine and warlike environment that normalized political violence. A combination of circumstance, ideology, and individual agency shaped this violence, not a "taste" for killing.

[10] The larger point of this dissertation is not to refute critical race theory, nor am I suggesting that these historians themselves explicitly engage with or build on critical race theory. I would argue, however, that some scholars writing about racial violence in the Civil War era – LeeAnna Keith and Aaron Sheehan-Dean in particular – reflect and build off of critical race theory's assumptions and that this limits our understanding of racial violence during Reconstruction. This is especially true as it relates to essentialism. Here, I draw on Richard Delgado's consideration of the role of essentialism in critical race theory. Delgado argues that although some groups might experience oppression differently, they all hold in common the essential trait that they are oppressed. Aside from questioning how meaningful this is as a common denominator for the human experience, ascribing any type of essential trait to large groups of people is a fraught endeavor. I would argue that when applied to the field of history, this emphasis on essentialized notions of oppression is ahistorical and makes it much easier to strip historical actors of their agency by placing them into these foreordained categories, while also making it more plausible that their actions that fed into a cycle of oppression are as innate as their experiences. When Keith writes of a "taste for killing" and Sheehan-Dean speaks of the "single-mindedness" of the enslaved, they certainly appear to be making this leap. In these instances, the assumptions of critical theory are evident in their work and inform their analyses of racial violence, especially when it comes to ascribing character traits to large groups of people based on their position within an unequal socio-political structure. Richard Delgado, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 62-65.

Aaron Sheehan-Dean's *The Calculus of Violence: How Americans Fought the Civil War* expands on this tendency to explain racial violence, at least in part, in essentialist terms. The questions Sheehan-Dean asks, the assumptions he makes, and the conclusions that he draws are far different than mine, and on some level this dissertation might be read as an extended refutation of his rendering of racial violence. Sheehan-Dean proceeds from the premise that the Civil War – a conflict that killed three percent of the American population – was less violent than it otherwise could have been. He notably credits the restraint of the freedmen for limiting the nature and level of violence witnessed in the South, claiming that the "absence of emancipation-related violence is the single most important factor that limited bloodshed in the US Civil War."[11] Civil War era violence was real and yet remained tamer than it could have been, Sheehan-Dean contends, because the enslaved demonstrated "a single-minded focus on freedom rather than revenge" in their battle for emancipation."[12] Sheehan-Dean compares American emancipation to the Haitian Revolution to make his point, which given its own exceptional violence, demographics, and the history of Caribbean slavery, is a problematic comparison to begin with. Moreover, his broad assessment of the freedmen's characters – especially the "single-mindedness" with which they supposedly rejected revenge -- hardly stands up against the reality of the historical record. 180,000 black Americans, many of them former slaves, enlisted in the Union Army. This is not an inconsequential point. At its base, soldiering is killing, and black soldiers killed in the name of the state and of their race, and many did so willingly. This continued into Reconstruction. Each man in the United States Colored Troops or Republican state militia company who killed or otherwise wielded violence in the name of the

[11] Aaron Sheehan-Dean, *The Calculus of Violence: How Americans Fought the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), 153.

[12] Ibid, 142.

state and for their own freedom committed an act that was violent, revolutionary, and escalatory. None of this is to say whether black violence was moral or immoral – such broad pronouncements are difficult to make and are a question more befitting of an ethicist – but this reality alone implicates the emancipation of southern slaves and their subsequent transition into freedom as an inherently violent process. As this dissertation will demonstrate, the formerly enslaved embraced institutional violence, and their behavior when wielding it fell along a broad spectrum of justified and unjustified actions. Sheehan-Dean ultimately warrants plaudits for asking big questions, but his rendering presents black and white Americans as flat, single dimensional characters who fulfill the archetype of what some historians want them to be rather than who they were and what they did.

Black violence remains something of a third rail in the current historiography, but a number of other works have provided a step in the right direction toward understanding how Republicans used violence to counter the efforts of white counterrevolutionaries. James Hogue and Benjamin Severance have provided valuable contributions to historians' understanding of state militias in Louisiana and Tennessee. Hogue examines five "street battles" in New Orleans, and rather than framing these affairs as "riots" or "massacres," he argues that these discrete acts of collective violence constituted true battles in both their intensity and their political implications. Moreover, such was the intensity of organized violence in the state that Hogue posits that Louisiana experienced its own civil war in the decade after Confederate defeat. Overall, however, Hogue is more concerned with using the militia to analyze Louisiana's internal strife than he is with considering what access to state-sanctioned violence meant for African Americans and their quest for a place in the body politic. Looking at the State Guard in Tennessee, Severance offers a thorough account of Reconstruction politics in the state and what

role the state militia played in maintaining the integrity of its elections. Despite the Republicans' occasional use of heavy-handed tactics, Severance argues that the organization performed its duties admirably. Yet, as useful as this revisionist reading of the State Guard is, Severance is also less concerned with interrogating what state-sanctioned violence meant for larger questions about black southerners' political subjectivity than he is with attempting to vindicate the State Guard's actions. Ultimately, despite the important role that African Americans played in each force, these authors are concerned with the militia as an organization rather than its ideological meaning.[13]

Steven Hahn's recent work provides a step forward in this regard. Hahn delineates the importance of militias as a form of political engagement for African Americans in the rural South. He demonstrates how Reconstruction politics germinated in the bloody soil of the Old South, where rituals of violence and racial domination constituted a potent grammar of political power. Rather than altering the nature of southern politics, emancipation and the remaking of the southern electorate--because of the dire threat each presented to white supremacy--strengthened those tendencies. After Appomattox, black and white southerners understood the connection between violence and political power, and they sought to build institutions that would provide them with access to both. Within this violent and warlike political milieu, militia service provided a means through which southerners of both races engaged in politics. Hahn demonstrates how this began at the local level with Union Leagues, and then manifested itself in state sanctioned militias in Louisiana and South Carolina. Hahn does well to give a broad overview of militia-based politics, but it is only one facet of a larger project. Left untouched are

[13] Hogue, *Uncivil War*; Severance, *Tennessee's Radical Army*.

questions of how militias functioned in specific states and what militias and paramilitary organizations meant for gendered ideas about citizenship.[14]

Carole Emberton meanwhile describes how violence and gender ideology infused the racial politics of Reconstruction with a potent and volatile meaning. The Civil War, Emberton contends, produced a discourse that linked violence, freedom, and manhood together in a constellation that provided the rough contours of postwar citizenship. This discourse resonated during Reconstruction, lent itself to the militarization of political campaigns, and played a salient role in how Americans viewed citizenship through the lens of "martial manhood." Maintaining their claims to "martial manhood" compelled southerners to view freedom as "nothing less than a violent struggle between men," a reality that reemerged throughout the 1870s and culminated in Redemption.[15] Emberton argues that military service provides a baseline for understanding both the limits and possibilities of black manhood and citizenship. She posits that a paradox emerged during the 1860s as soldiering represented a means for African Americans to assert their claims to citizenship, but that also piqued white fears of uncontrolled black violence. Consequently, while military service might have charted a path for African Americans to become citizens, it promised a form of citizenship based on ex-slaves' obligations to the state rather than what the state owed them. African Americans' claims to citizenship ultimately rested on an unstable foundation, a reality that contributed to white northerners' disinterest in sustaining Reconstruction.[16]

---

[14] Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2003), 265-313.

[15] Carole Emberton, *Beyond Redemption: Race, Violence, and the American South after the Civil War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 6-9.

[16] Ibid, 102-106; Carole Emberton, "Only Murder Makes Men: Rethinking the Black Military Experience," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 2, no. 3 (2012): 370-372.

This dissertation will challenge Emberton's interpretation on a number of points even as it builds on her foundations. Rather than arguing that the effort to legitimize black citizenship failed because of the unstable foundation upon which it rested or the inherent contradictions it embodied, I emphasize the success of reactionary and conservative white southerners in appropriating the discourse of "martial manhood" for their own ends. The ambivalence that Emberton finds in respect to whites' attitudes toward black self-defense and citizenship is the result of her decision to focus on perceptions of violence rather than violence itself.[17] She emphasizes what whites' expectations were concerning soldiering and its implications for black citizenship rather than accounting for how African Americans viewed violence as a positive exercise in citizenship formation. I instead highlight how the freedpeople viewed political violence and contributed to this larger discourse through their military and then militia participation. Additionally, my work explains how white southerners appropriated this discourse by both committing violent acts and controlling perceptions of what political and racial violence meant.

Rather than viewing soldiering as the point of departure for understanding the relationship between citizenship and black manhood, this dissertation finally will suggest that scholars should instead consider what role postwar forms of institutional violence played in the process of citizenship formation for the freedpeople. In many ways, Reconstruction militias were more important to black citizenship than was soldiering in the Union army. Not only did militia companies afford African Americans autonomy in that they were an expression of local political networks, but given the contested nature of Reconstruction politics and the federal government's reluctant support for Republican governments, militia companies were often a last line of defense

[17] For example, Emberton focuses on print culture extensively, as well as how northerners interpreted southern violence as a sort of spectacle. Emberton, *Beyond Redemption*, 39-54; Ibid, 102-106; Ibid, 192-205.

in guarding the freedpeople's newly won rights at a time when they were most under siege.[18] Put another way, if the Union was willing to enlist slaves and make them citizens due to the exigencies of war, it was the federal government's waning interest in maintaining this project in the 1870s that suggests militias were central to black political advancement during what William Gillette has labeled the white North's "retreat from Reconstruction."[19]

Emberton's interrogation of black manhood and Reconstruction violence points to a second historiographical debate that this dissertation will address, and in particular the question of how the violence of the Civil War era contributed to Americans' understanding of manliness as a wellspring of political power. An essay by Jim Cullen provides a concise but incisive examination of how achieving manliness was a process through which African Americans underwent personal and public transformations through their military service, and in particular in achieving "manly" claims to civilization and citizenship.[20] Chandra Manning also stresses the process of how black men forged masculine visions of self through their military service, but goes much further in stressing what manhood meant and how it fractured along the lines of race. Manning argues that white southerners conflated their own manhood with the domination of dependent women, children, and slaves. Fighting for the Confederacy and defending racialized patriarchy represented an exercise in affirming their masculinity. At the same time, military service provided a vehicle for African Americans to lay claim to their manhood and undermine

[18] Steven Hahn, for example, has demonstrated how militias were sometimes associated with the Loyal League. Hahn, *A Nation Under our Feet*, 276.

[19] According to Gillette, a combination of persistent racism in the North, constitutional conservatism, the Grant administration's fecklessness, and the Panic of 1873 compelled many northern whites, and especially Republicans, to abandon Reconstruction. The South's freedpeople became a casualty of their declining interest. See William Gillette, *Retreat From Reconstruction, 1869-1879* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979).

[20] Jim Cullen, "I's A Man Now: Gender and African American Men," in *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War*, ed. Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 76-91.

the foundations of white racial patriarchy. Manning argues that black soldiers acted out, through their newly found martial identities, "many of the nineteenth century's hallmarks of manhood, including independence, courage, the right to bear arms, moral agency, liberty of conscience, and the ability to protect and care for one's family."[21] Meanwhile, Donald Shaffer describes the postwar experiences of veterans of the United States Colored Troops. He argues that black veterans achieved a relative degree of success after the war in vindicating their claims to manhood and compelling white Union veterans to acknowledge their shared masculinity. This took a number of forms. Many black veterans obtained formalized marriages to long-time female companions, which served to buttress their claims to patriarchy within the home. Moreover, by qualifying for pensions, they vindicated their claims to citizenship and public authority by making claims on the state.[22]

As these works indicate, scholars of gender and the Civil War have done well to map out the complex process by which the war compelled Americans of both races to rethink the meaning of manhood within the context of military service. This dissertation builds on these works by arguing that the militia provided a means through which southerners continued to shape the contested postwar discourse over what it meant to be a man and a citizen, as well as who could lay claim to each. Specifically, it stresses the performative nature of gender, how black and white southerners acted out gendered expectations through militia organizations, and, finally, how their actions contributed to a larger postwar discourse concerning violence, manhood, and citizenship. Thus, this dissertation goes beyond analyzing solely acts of violence

[21] Chandra Manning, *What This Cruel War Was Over*, 29.

[22] Donald R. Shaffer, *After the Glory: The Struggles of Black Civil War Veterans* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004). Douglas R. Egerton makes a similar argument about veterans in *The Wars of Reconstruction: The Brief, Violent History of America's Most Progressive Era* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 85.

or, alternatively, perceptions of violence. It instead considers both actions and perceptions through the idea of performativity to explain how the militia functioned as an institution that gave southerners access to violence and allowed them to participate in this larger discourse through their actions.[23]

Finally, this dissertation engages with recent scholarship focused on the "long Civil War," and in particular the idea that the violence of the postwar years was an extension and modification of that of the war. Richard Zuczek, for example, has examined South Carolina and argued that Reconstruction represented a continuation of that state's antebellum resistance to the federal government. He underscores white South Carolinians' desire to maintain a self-regulating society that would uphold white supremacy and all of its institutional appendages. Secession and war were tactics that South Carolinians employed to maintain that society following the election of Abraham Lincoln. Notably, Zuczek argues that while Confederate nationalism and southern nationhood eventually became incompatible with this project, South Carolinians found much more success after 1865. He argues that the labor coercion, Black Codes, electoral chicanery, and the political violence of the postbellum years represented means through which white Carolinians carried on their struggle, which eventually culminated in the Red Shirt campaign of 1876.[24]

Other scholars have examined this continuity as it affected formal military institutions. Hogue's work on Louisiana examines how and why violence in and around New Orleans constituted a civil war and how it was fought. A combination of existing antebellum ideas about racial violence and the military experience of the Civil War served to politicize the city's

[23] For more on the performative nature of gender and how actions and the reception of these actions shape socially and culturally constructed ideas of sexualized difference and identity, see Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

[24] Richard Zuczek, *State of Rebellion: Reconstruction in South Carolina*, 1-6.

veterans and heavily influenced how they viewed politics and violence after the war. Veterans of the Louisiana Native Guards and other units in the United States Colored Troops held prevalent positions in the state's militia and the Metropolitan Police, while Confederate veterans formed the backbone of the White League. Using these paramilitary organizations, as noted above, Hogue argues that Louisianans engaged in a small civil war for control of the state government, one that played out in five street battles from 1866 to 1877. Although the United States Army did not participate in this violence in a meaningful sense, it was often active in state politics as the final arbiter of violence and who possessed legitimate access to it. This was the case in North Carolina as well. As Mark Bradley has demonstrated, in spite of drastic troop reductions, the Army facilitated the reinstallation of civil government, administered the Freedmen's Bureau, dealt with the Klan, and, eventually, shared in the process of reconciliation. The federal Army, then, might not have played a role in combat or counterinsurgency, but its presence was not negligible. And as Gregory Downs and Andrew Lang both have shown, the Army continued to use its war powers and ability as an occupier to remake the former Confederacy in spite of troop reductions and the reticence of its officers. From bringing order to states marked by anarchy in the months immediately after Confederate defeat, to administering the freedmen's bureau and guiding the process of emancipation, to intervening in civil affairs during military Reconstruction, the Army was not a bit player in postwar life.[25] The Civil War itself might have ended in 1865 when Robert E. Lee and Joseph Johnston surrendered their armies, but military

[25] Hogue, *Uncivil War*, 1-13; Mark Bradley, *Bluecoats and Tar Heels: Soldiers and Civilians in Reconstruction North Carolina* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2009), 1-6; Gregory P. Downs, *After Appomattox: Military Occupation and the Ends of War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015); Andrew F. Lang, *In the Wake of War: Military Occupation, Emancipation, and Civil War America* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press), 2017.

institutions continued to play a role in politics as the region experienced the violent aftershocks of the war.

Other scholars to be sure have called into question the usefulness of the "long Civil War" paradigm. As Gary Gallagher and Kathryn Shively Meier recently argued, presentist concerns of current scholars have led to the "ahistorical expansion of Civil War chronology" that impedes historians from ever "really coming to terms with the war itself." They contend that the war ended in 1865 with the formal end of hostilities, the restoration of the Union, and the death of slavery. "The political and social conflict that ensued," they argue, "should not be considered an extension of the war by other means. Postwar violence, no matter how grotesque at times, did not approach in scale the seismic military violence of the war years; moreover, the goal of former Confederates perpetrating much of it had been vastly scaled back from establishing an overtly slaveholding republic to regaining political power and maintaining white supremacy."[26]

This dissertation accepts the usefulness of the "long Civil War" paradigm even as it is skeptical of framing all violence that occurred after 1865 as a definitive continuation of the Civil War proper. In order to come to terms with the war and its meaning, as these authors insist, it *is* imperative to examine the racial violence of the Civil War and the postwar years together, as each flowed from a common ideological headwater. This continuity is evident in not only examining why Americans fought the war, but also how the implications of Union victory and emancipation bled into Reconstruction. While Gallagher has correctly pointed out that the North fought the Civil War to restore the Union, the more important issue for the South was the exact nature that this Union would take and how it would integrate African Americans into the

[26] Gary Gallagher and Kathryn Shively Meier, "Coming to Terms with Civil War Military History," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 4, no. 4 (2014): 49.

southern body politic.[27] Confronting this reality was especially difficult for conservative white southerners who desired to return the South as close as possible to the antebellum order of things, but also for the African Americans who sought to construct a biracial republic that was antithetical to antebellum notions of white racial patriarchy. Working through this process of reconstructing the South and deciding on whose terms it would be reconstructed represented a critical question for southerners of both races. Due to a number of factors – the experience of the war, as well as the long-standing centrality in the Old South of racial violence as an organizing principle of social and political life – this question was answered quite often with violence. The ideological and institutional continuity of this violence ought to compel historians to look for the connections between antebellum violence, the violence of the war, and the violence of the postbellum years. Taken together, they collectively grew out of political questions that were central to the Civil War, but that were nonetheless unresolved at the war's end. To interrogate this question is hardly ahistorical. Indeed, it is critical to coming to terms with the era of the Civil War writ large.

******

While this dissertation focuses on postwar militia organizations, the question that it seeks to answer is how the militia provides a lens into understanding the wartime and postwar discourses centered on manhood and citizenship. By *discourse*, I refer to the series of words, actions, and ideas that imbued political authority and the South's governing ideologies with meaning.[28] In examining the tension between biracial republicanism and Herrenvolk democracy,

[27] Gary Gallagher, *The Union War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[28] Michel Foucault authored the seminal work on using discourse analysis as a means for deciphering how power relations are constructed and sustained. See Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Vintage Books, 1982).

I argue that a contested discourse grew out of the Civil War when the black military experience challenged the central assumptions that undergirded the Old South's racial democracy. Importantly, if authority in the South rested in the hands of white men who staked their claims to manhood and political power based on their authority as masters over dependents, black soldiering defied the racial and gendered assumptions underlying these claims to power in the way that it empowered black men.[29] Frederick Douglass acknowledged as much when he exclaimed, "Let the black man get upon his person the brass letters 'U.S.'; let him get an eagle on his button, and a musket on his shoulder and bullets in his pocket, and there is no power on earth which can deny that he has earned the right to citizenship in the United States."[30] White Confederates recognized the existential threat black soldiers posed to the South's political and social hierarchies as well. This was evident in the apocalyptic rhetoric they employed when Abraham Lincoln announced his decision to arm blacks, as well as in the savagery that Confederates displayed on the battlefield when they came face-to-face with the United States Colored Troops.[31] Therefore, from 1863 onward, two ideas about manhood and citizenship stood in stark contrast to another: one constituting the racial patriarchy championed by white Confederates, and another that grew out of the soldiering experience of African Americans that defied notions of racial exclusivity and hierarchy.[32] This dissertation will examine how these

[29] For an in depth look at how the South functioned as a racial patriarchy, and how political authority grew out of social authority within the home, see Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Words: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) and *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).

[30] Cullen, "I's A Man Now: Gender and African American Men," 81.

[31] Gregory Urwin, *Black Flag Over Dixie: Racial Atrocities and Reprisals in the Civil War* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Press, 2005).

[32] Chandra Manning, *What This Cruel War Was Over*, 129.

competing visions clashed over the meaning of manhood, citizenship, and access to political and social power.

In spite of the finality of Union victory, the failure of Confederate nationalism, and the reality of emancipation and black citizenship, the meaning of citizenship remained contested into the postwar years.[33] This work demonstrates how during Reconstruction militia companies played an integral role in imbuing this discourse with a potent meaning that was mutually intelligible, if not always mutually inclusive, for both white and black southerners.[34] Central to this work, then, is examining how and why southerners of both races used the militia to engage with and shape this discourse. It will focus on three general uses of the militia during Reconstruction. First, it will examine how southerners employed collective violence as a form of political participation in order to justify their manliness and citizenship. Second, it will discuss how displays of martial pageantry – such as marching and drilling in public spaces – contributed to this discourse by providing southerners with means of acting out political identities in public in a form that was both visible and intelligible. Lastly, it will examine how the creation of militias proved to be an important political issue that shaped the outer boundaries of manhood and citizenship, as well as who could lay claim to each, through debates over whose ends the militia served and who was eligible for membership. In each of these forms, militias provided southerners with a malleable form of political engagement.

This study focuses on three Deep South states: Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina. Each possessed either a black majority or close parity between each race. In all three

[33] Laura Edwards, *Gender Strife and Confusion: The Political Culture of Reconstruction* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995).

[34] It was mutually intelligible, I argue, because the notion that violence created men and citizens was accepted after the war, and most southerners understood the important political capital that violence provided. In this respect, I draw on the works of Hahn and Emberton. It was not mutually inclusive, however, due to the desire of many white southerners to return to an exclusionary form of racialized patriarchy as the basis for social and political relations in the South.

the Republican Party maintained power until the middle of the 1870s, longer than elsewhere. When it finally fell from power, it was the result of violent paramilitary campaigns. Each state, in varied forms, also possessed a militia that played an important role in state politics. Moreover, unlike in North Carolina, Tennessee, or Arkansas, African Americans played a far more important role in these states' militias. While these similarities are important, this dissertation is not intended to be a series of compartmentalized case studies. To be sure, it will take into account how specific political and social contexts influenced the course and nature of postwar violence. Yet, rather than analyzing each in isolation, it will stress the similarities between each state given issues of demography, social structure, and politics, and demonstrate how the postwar discourse concerning citizenship and manhood played out similarly through militia politics.

The numerous congressional investigations of southern violence that followed the Civil War are the backbone of this study. These reports include investigations of discrete incidents of violence, such as the New Orleans riot of 1866, the Memphis riot of the same year, and the Vicksburg riot of 1874. Congress also investigated specific organizations and longer periods of violence, such as the Ku Klux Klan investigations of the early 1870s and the shot-gun campaigns that preceded Redemption in Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina. These investigations contain testimony from southerners of both races who spoke - sometimes candidly, other times obliquely – about violence in the South and about their participation in militias and paramilitary groups. This testimony provides an entrée into understanding how southerners viewed and used violence to shape politics, as well as to act and stake claims to citizenship and manhood.

While other scholars have utilized this testimony, this dissertation will propose a new way to look at African Americans' voices. It has become something of an article of faith to read white testimonies concerning black violence and to assume that they were a result of either lying

or paranoia. There is much truth to this, as white paranoia over the rumored Christmas insurrection of 1865 can attest. Yet as Chad Williams points out, even the myth of the Christmas revolt grew out of real discussions in the black community about hopes for Federal land redistribution at the beginning of the year.[35] Historians can thus be skeptical of white testimony without being dismissive. Once historians account for the hyper-masculine and warlike political milieu of Reconstruction, discrete instances of violence or threats of violence on the part of the South's freedpeople should be taken more seriously. Testimony from the Vicksburg riot illuminates this point. During Congress's investigation of the incident – where African Americans responded to a recent putsch against the city's Republican sheriff by marching on the town under arms -- the committee interviewed J.W. Smith, a veteran of the Union Navy who had moved to Mississippi after the war and who had happened upon a black paramilitary unit that was marching on the city. Smith testified to Congress that before the unit's engagement with a white paramilitary group on the outskirts of Vicksburg, he heard Andrew Owen, the black militia's leader, implore his men that, if need be, they would wade into the city knee-deep in blood.[36] There are a number of ways to read this testimony. Drawing on ideas about white fear of black violence, one could attribute Smith's statement to paranoia derived from preexisting cultural beliefs of black barbarity. It is also possible that Smith lied about this bellicose language in order to legitimize white reprisals against the black militia. I take a different approach. If one situates Owen's statement within the context of Reconstruction's violent political milieu and the aftermath of the Civil War – a time when campaigns were militarized and violence was an

[35] Chad Williams, "Symbols of Freedom and Defeat: African American Soldiers, White Southerners, and the Christmas Insurrection Scare of 1865," *Black Flag Over Dixie: Racial Atrocities and Reprisals in the Civil War* Ed. Gregory Urwin (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004), 210-230; Egerton, *Wars of Reconstruction*, 112-13.

[36] House Reports, 43rd Cong., 2nd Sess., 1875, No. 265, 109.

integral part of the political process in states such as a Mississippi – his bellicose language becomes much more plausible. Moreover, given that these freedmen had already organized as a paramilitary unit, armed themselves, and then marched on Vicksburg, it is reasonable to assume that they would also employ bellicose rhetoric to justify their actions. In this case and others, white testimony about racial violence appears just as likely to be reliable as it is unreliable. To trust its reliability, moreover, allows for a more thorough and nuanced reading of racial violence.

******

This dissertation's organization is both thematic and chronological. Chapter 1 examines the black military experience during the Civil War. I argue that rather than being a discrete episode in the history of the war or African American history more broadly, the black military experience essentially was a prologue to the political struggles of Reconstruction. This was especially true in regards to how African Americans sought out access to violence, experienced racial violence, and utilized militarization and martial pageantry to assert their manhood and citizenship. In other words, this chapter will seek to describe continuity between the war and Reconstruction. I will also describe the process by which the Union came to embrace black soldiers in fits and starts, and how white and black northerners justified black enlistment in terms of allowing black men to prove their manhood and citizenship based on killing in the name of the American state. This was the antecedent to African Americans' use of militia organizations during Reconstruction.

Continuity will also be the theme of Chapter 2, which delineates how violent resistance to federal power and black freedom on the part of conservative white southerners did not subside following the shock and trauma of defeat. Rather than representing a stark discontinuity, the months following surrender saw white southerners immediately attempt to create new

institutions that would serve their longstanding goal of maintaining white supremacy. Before the war, the South possessed a number of institutions – such as slave patrols - that aimed to regulate slavery through violence or the threat of violence. This continued into the war, as the Confederate army regulated slaves' activity on the home front, and when it used violence against African American soldiers on the battlefield and in camp. When the war ended, racial violence did not. The acts of unorganized violence committed by soldiers returning home in 1865, the state-level and grass-root political mobilizations to arm state militias immediately after the war with former Confederate soldiers, and finally, the rise of the Ku Klux Klan were all continuations of anti-black violence that was a mark of not just the Civil War, but of the Old South. This narrative not only emphasizes the persistent nature of white southerners' pursuit of institutional violence as a means of regulating race and politics, but also that the state militias that formed in 1865 and 1866 were an important link between the violence of the war and that of the Klan's terrorist campaign. These state militias and the Klan are important for understanding postwar violence and white southerners' attempt to reinstitute an exclusionary form of democracy in that they were organizationally weak but ideologically potent. Thus, the state militia and the Klan alike provided a means for white southerners to reassert their claims to manhood and citizenship by terrorizing ex-slaves with what amounted to a blank check for committing depredations.

Chapter 3 describes how Republicans at the state level sought to create competent and loyal militia companies following the end of military Reconstruction in order to buttress the authority of their regimes and to provide internal security in the face of white opposition. After describing the grassroots origins of black paramilitarism immediately after the war, this chapter analyzes the legislative process of forming militias. It investigates the language used to justify

these companies, as well as how notions of manhood and citizenship informed the logic of militia formation. In Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina, Henry Clay Warmoth, James L. Alcorn, and Robert K. Scott built militia organizations to secure their respective regime's security and to dole out political patronage. In this way, Republican companies had the dual purpose of serving as state-building and party-building institutions in the service of Republicans' larger goal of creating party-states in the Deep South.

Chapters 4 and 5 explore African Americans' experience in the militia. Chapter 4 builds on recent scholars who have studied space and movement as methods of historical analysis by exploring how what I term black martial mobility allowed African Americans to upset the political and social geography of the South. It explains how martial pageantry afforded African Americans the ability to appropriate symbolic and visible public spaces as a means of asserting their claims to manhood and citizenship in ways that were provocative, visible, and, at times, violent. Chapter 5 weighs the different intensities, contexts, and applications of black violence. It first considers how violence became endemic within the black community and functioned to regulate the political behavior of the freedmen--and especially of the South's small number of black Democrats--before explaining how black men utilized institutional violence as a form of self-defense against white paramilitarists. It ends by examining how black men actively participated in larger, discrete episodes of Reconstruction violence that resembled the pitched battles of the Civil War and how their participation in these incidents contributed to the postwar discourse on black manhood and citizenship. It argues for the presence of ideological, political, and practical continuity between black military service in the Civil War and the growth of black institutional violence after Appomattox.

Chapter 6 examines the late-Reconstruction counterrevolutions that overthrew the Republican regimes in Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina. This chapter explains how and why at this specific moment reactionary white southerners were able to employ paramilitarism to appropriate and then monopolize the discourse of manhood and citizenship that had permeated the South after the Civil War. It will look at how white southerners in each state viewed Republican militias as a hyper-masculine threat to their claims to citizenship and manhood. These perceptions informed and shaped the white counterrevolution in a number of forms. First, they used newspapers to appropriate the discourse of manhood and citizenship by casting black men as an existential threat to white manhood and white racial prerogative in state governments. Second, groups such as the White League and Red Shirts began to exercise force in a violent paramilitary campaign that intimidated and cowed Republican voters, effectively disfranchising and disarming them at once. Finally, white paramilitarists engaged in their own displays of martial pageantry in public spaces, and especially those related to elections and politics. In these myriad forms, white paramilitaries were able to overthrow the last vestiges of the Republican Party in the South and lay the foundation for implementing their exclusionary view of democracy.

Chapter 1: Military Service, Manhood, and Black Citizenship

Although the African American experience in the Civil War was multifaceted, nothing so much as soldiering proved to be the touchstone for black men during and after the sectional crisis. While the North initially went to war to preserve the Union, the states that formed the Confederacy constructed their nation on the ideological, political, and social "cornerstone" of white supremacy.[1] The war necessarily implicated the South's slaves in that their fate was integral to its outcome, and it provided them with myriad opportunities to undermine the racial shibboleths of nineteenth century America. No means of doing so proved more effective than donning the uniform of the Union Army and earning freedom with the bayonet.[2] Black Americans took the chance not only to "strike a manly blow in the name of the liberty," but also to challenge prevailing assumptions regarding black inferiority and the unequal position of African Americans in American society. [3] Military service shattered the notion that African

[1] This view was articulated by many Confederates, but perhaps none more lucidly than Georgian Alexander H. Stephens in his "Cornerstone Speech." Henry Cleveland, *Alexander H. Stephens, in Public and Private: With Letters and Speeches, Before, During, and Since the War* (Philadelphia, 1886), 717-729. For a detailed analysis of how race informed the creation of the Confederacy, and especially how it informed secession commissions, see Charles Dew, *Apostles of Disunion: Southern Secession Commissioners and the Causes of the Civil War* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001). Dew also provides appendices with the texts of the speeches given by southern secession commissioners in ibid, 83-103.

[2] For useful examinations the general extent to which the war eroded the institution of slavery and encouraged African Americans to shape the conditions through which they could bring about their freedom, see Barbara Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland in the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); John Cimprich, *Slavery's End in Tennessee* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1985); Clarence Mohr, *On the Threshold of Freedom: Masters and Slaves in Civil War Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986); Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010); James Roark, *Masters Without Slaves: Southern Planters in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: Norton, 1977); William Link, *Roots of Secession: Slavery and Politics in Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Glenn David Brasher, *The Peninsula Campaign and the Necessity of Emancipation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Judith Giesberg, *Army at Home: Women and the Civil War on the Northern Home Front* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

[3] Ira Berlin(ed.), *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867: Series II, The Black Military Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 786. Cited hereafter as *Freedom* and in reference to Series II unless otherwise noted.

Americans remained outside of the boundaries of citizenship. It afforded them an opportunity to articulate a vision of biracial republicanism grounded in the notion that the American republic belonged to black and white men alike.

The black military experience thus became the catalyst for a profound ideological reconceptualization of the relationship between race, citizenship, and the American state. Warfare and soldiering not only affected the death of slavery, but also seemed to guarantee the freedmen a place in the American republic as citizens. This occurred in fact as Union soldiers worked to destroy the Confederacy, but also in the minds of black Union soldiers, who found a new and powerful basis for staking their claims to citizenship and manhood. This process crystallized a view of biracial republicanism that veterans of the United States Colored Troops espoused during the rest of the war and throughout Reconstruction. Moreover, rather than being a mere outgrowth of soldiering, it was constitutive of it. As Major General Rufus Saxton recognized in 1863, soldiering gave former slaves "a chance to strike a blow for the country and their own liberty."[4] This conflation was hardly incidental, as the exigencies of war rendered the two inextricably linked, part-and-parcel of the experience of exercising institutionalized violence for both personal freedom and in defense of a political union that made that freedom possible. Access to institutional violence and the practice of making war in the name of the republic represented formative moments in many black veterans' political socialization and the creation of an ideology of biracial republicanism.

This chapter explores how institutional violence in the form of soldiering, a biracial vision of republicanism, and notions of black citizenship and manhood developed during the period of the Civil War and the earliest years of postwar military occupation. It also examines

[4] Ibid, 54.

racial violence in the antebellum era, black Americans' actual martial experience during the war, and, finally, the ideological, political, and social implications of that violence. The chapter demonstrates how and why a vision of biracial republicanism germinated during the Civil War and the black military experience. Put simply, because participation in institutional violence was pivotal to many black Americans' early political socialization, it is a useful lens for understanding both the origins of their view of citizenship and how it grew out of their wartime experience.

******

Throughout the antebellum era, access to violence was a salient form of social and political power. Historians have written at length on the various ways in which white men used violence to claim and defend political and social power amongst one another. And just as violence informed how white men defined themselves among their peers, regulating access to violence also informed the creation of the region's rigid racial hierarchy. Historians have demonstrated how wealthy white southerners extended privileges such as property-holding, voting, and anti-miscegenation laws to poorer white men in order to gain their support for a social system marked by class inequality and white solidarity.[5] But so too did access to violence

[5] For treatments of how white southern men employed violence to mediate personal disputes and how they influenced social and political prestige in the region see: Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 283; Kenneth Greenberg, *Honor and Slavery: Lies, Duels, Noses, Masks, Dressing as a Woman, Gifts, Strangers, Humanitarianism, Death, Slave Rebellions, The Proslavery Argument, Baseball, Hunting, and Gambling in the Old South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 51-86.

Edmund S. Morgan's *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* elucidated how anti-black racism provided the basis for white solidarity across class lines in the formative years of the southern colonies. Lacy K. Ford has provided a variant of this argument in his analysis of the South Carolina Upcountry, but adds that the growth of a market economy and its accompanying uncertainty strengthened white southerners' defense of slavery and white supremacy. Recent works have questioned the extent of white solidarity, and especially as it related to what extent poor or landless whites were invested in maintaining the slave regime. Edward Baptist's study of Florida, for example, stresses that in the "frontier" South relations between planters and poor whites were less stable than in older, more settled parts of the region. Keri Leigh Merritt's *Masterless Men: Poor Whites and Slavery in the Antebellum South* portrays poor white men – who were marginalized by the hand-in-hand growth of

– and especially the matter of who wielded it and on what terms – provide an inducement for poorer white men to support what historian George Fredrickson later termed "Herrenvolk democracy."[6] Frederick Douglass famously described how access to racial violence bred equality among white men. "Half a cent to kill a Negro and half a cent to bury him," according to Douglass, was common knowledge amongst young men who were slaves. "The luxury of killing and burying," Douglass noted with acuity, "could be enjoyed by the poorest members of Southern society, and no strong temptation was required to induce white men thus to kill."[7]

Enslaved free man Solomon Northup likewise noted how poor whites in Louisiana took great enjoyment in harassing black men who traveled between plantations. Northrop recalled with some amusement that, "Those having the air and appearance of gentleman, whose dress indicated the possession of wealth, frequently took no notice of me whatsoever." But when Northup encountered white men of a lesser sort, once including "a shabby fellow, an unmistakable loafer," they frequently accosted him and forced him to show his pass.[8] The ability

---

slavery and the cotton economy – as on the fringes of the wage economy and of southern political life. See Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1975), 271-337; Lacy K. Ford, *Roots of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 351-353; Edward Baptist, *Creating an Old South: Middle Florida's Plantation Frontier before the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 155-190; Keri Leigh Merritt, *Masterless Men: Poor Whites and Slavery in the Antebellum South* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

[6] Sociologist Pierre van den Berghe first used the term "Herrenvolk democracy" to describe racial and political systems whose foundation was equality based on whiteness, and in particular those in the United States and South Africa. The historian George Fredrickson elaborated on how van den Berghen's term applied to and developed within the southern United States throughout the 19th century. Fredrickson demonstrated how many white southerners argued that southern slavery and racism facilitated equality among white men through their domination of an inferior race. They shared in the political prerogatives of citizenship precisely because they were superior to black men and women. They often used this defense, Fredrickson argued, as a response to critiques that southern slavery fostered inequality among white men and was antithetical to the tenets of a democratic society. See Pierre van den Berghe, *Race and Racism: A Comparative Perspective* (New York: Wiley, 1967) and George Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 61-62.

[7] Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and my Freedom* (New York: Dover Publishing, 1969), 369.

[8] Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave* (Buffalo: Derby, Orton, and Mulligan, 1853), 158; Ibid.

to punish wayward blacks bound rich and poor white men together with common claims to political and social equality. It created an incentive among the region's poor and middling whites to maintain white supremacy, while at the same time signifying the inferior status of black men as slaves. Poor white men might not have enjoyed the social and economic status of the region's planter class, but that they shared a common racial identity was manifest in how they could wield violence equally to reinforce the South's racial hierarchy.

Antebellum white violence not only buttressed racial inequality, but also undermined the ability of black men to stake their claims to masculinity. This is evident in the sharp distinction between the sexualities of black and white men. Antebellum observers noted how white men abused and exploited black women with impunity. Such men advertised their "profligate sexuality" while making tepid efforts to disguise their sexual liaisons with African American women.[9] The violent form that these relations took underscored not only the inherently brutal nature of slavery itself, but also reproduced the system by giving white men the ability to employ violence to maintain their sexual prerogatives and create new slaves.

In spite of the limitations placed on black manhood and violence, the enslaved did find some outlets for aggression. As Sergio Lussano has shown, slaves engaged in boxing and wrestling contests. Those contests were heavily supervised by whites, however, and sought to debase the black men whose violence they sought to objectify. Nonetheless, Lussano posits that the physical combat "provided enslaved men with a vital and meaningful context in which to assert and display autonomous masculine identities." In this sense, access to violence could be transformative and self-empowering for the men who participated in it. Lussano further argues

---

[9] Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 109; Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 58.

that, "organized fighting activity under slavery served as a sphere in which male contestants were able to exercise mastery over their bodies."[10] Fighting allowed enslaved men to prove their masculine authority to one another within a system predicated on undermining it.

Access to violence on the plantation thus could prove both liberating and self-empowering. At the same time, however, the limits white men placed on it were indicative of the inherently political and subversive implications that uncontrolled black violence entailed. For slaves, violence was only acceptable so long as they used it against one another and in order to fulfill an outcome predetermined by the master class. Blacks could utilize violence to reinforce their social hierarchies, but only those hierarchies within the slave community. Black violence was something to be controlled by (and subsumed under) the prerogatives of white men. Only when black men defied those prescriptions and employed violence against their masters did it become revolutionary. Indeed, if the slave South's socio-racial hierarchy was based on whites' monopoly on legitimate violence, black violence both undermined the premise of this ideological schema and potentially wrought powerful internal transformations in the black men who crossed these boundaries.

This was especially true in the familiar case of Frederick Douglass. His own experience of trading blows with a white man would later inform his war propagandizing when he argued that arming black men and making them soldiers would have a transformative effect on both the country and black men's psyches. Douglass related in his memoir how Edward Covey, a poor farmer slave owner Thomas Auld employed to break Douglass's defiant spirit, frequently attempted to beat him for insubordination. After one such episode Douglass remembered how "a fighting madness had come upon me, and I found my fingers firmly attached to the throat of my

[10] Sergio Lussano, "To See Who Was Best on the Plantation: Enslaved Fighting Contests and Masculinity in the Antebellum South," *Journal of Southern History* 76, no. 3 (2010): 904; Ibid, 911.

cowardly tormentor." "At that moment," Douglass remembered, "we stood as equals before the law. The very color of the man was forgotten." Lashing out at Covey provided a vehicle for Douglass to undermine the notion that unfettered access to force was the exclusive domain of white men. Douglass's resistance exposed the unstable premise of this proposition. Douglass boasted that the next day other slaves on the plantation, inspired by his defiance, were in "open rebellion." For his part, Covey never challenged Douglass again.[11]

The violent encounter with Covey wrought within Douglass an internal transformation in regards to how he conceptualized himself: "After resisting him, I felt as I had never before. It was a resurrection from the dark and pestiferous tomb of slavery, to the heaven of comparative freedom. I was no longer a servile coward, trembling under the frown of a brother worm of the dust, but, my long-cowed spirit was roused to an attitude of manly independence."[12] The incident also instilled in Douglass a deep appreciation for the extent that violence might represent a means of securing liberty for the enslaved. "It was the turning point in my 'life as a slave,'" Douglass recalled. "It rekindled in my breast the smouldering embers of liberty; it brought up my Baltimore dreams, and revised a sense of my own manhood. I was changed after being in the fight. I was nothing before. I was a man now." Exercising violence for the first time against a white man became a seminal moment in Douglass's attempts to conceive of himself as a man, to experience freedom, and to envision himself as a type of proto-citizen. Perhaps more importantly, Douglass's fight with Covey and its ideological and psychological ramifications anticipated the military experience of many black men.

******

[11] Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, 242; Ibid, 245.

[12] Ibid, 247.

Against the backdrop of the Civil War, northern African Americans cultivated an ideological justification for citizenship based on their martial credentials. In speeches, letters, and newspapers they articulated something that many had known since slavery: that violence was a tangible manifestation of the personal freedom and political liberty afforded to men and citizens. Fittingly, Douglass became one of the most ardent advocates of black soldiering, putting into words his personal feelings of transformation and rebirth that his violent experience with Covey had provided him. Douglass used his wartime platform as an orator and publisher to forge an ideology out of what had previously been a visceral but individual experience. If Douglass had learned the usefulness of violence in prompting his own inner transformation from the debased condition of slavery to a sense of independence and freedom, he recognized its similar usefulness within the context of a war that was being fought for the survival of the Union. Indeed, in his oratory and writing, Douglass skillfully conflated the two. Wielding institutional violence within the context of the Civil War would provide African Americans with a means to achieve three related goals: to destroy slavery by preserving the Union, to become free men in the process of doing so, and to leverage the black military experience into an entrée into the American body politic.

As David Blight has shown, Douglass channeled his internal hatred for the slaveholders into support for a retributive war for the Union. Douglass argued for the fullest prosecution of this war against white southerners. Moreover, Douglass held a millennialist view of the conflict, seeing it as a chance to bring God's retribution onto the South.[13] In his mind, black soldiers became God's legions carrying out His vengeance. As early as May 1861, Douglass called for black soldiers to descend upon the South. He called his readers to arms, pleading with them to

[13] David Blight, *Frederick Douglass's Civil War: Keeping Faith in Jubilee* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1989).

face the rebellion in the South and "stop it, and stop it effectually – stop it before its evils are diffused throughout the Northern States – stop it on the soil upon which it originated, and among the traitors and rebels who originated the war." "Let the slaves and free colored people be called into service," Douglass proposed, "and formed into a liberating army, to march into the south and raise the banner of Emancipation among the slaves."[14]

Douglass also provided an intellectual defense of black violence by historicizing black soldiering and its place in American history. He attacked the notion that the war to preserve the Union was the exclusive project of white men. Douglass instead posited that restoring the Union and confronting racial inequality were one and the same. He contended that the Union was historically biracial, and used examples of black soldiering to make his point. Douglass reminded his readers, for example, that the "colored men in Rhode Island and Connecticut performed their full share in the war of the Revolution," and that in 1815, "General Jackson in a slave State fought side by side with Negroes at New Orleans, and like a true man, despising meanness, he testified to their bravery at the close of the war." The argument logically followed that if black men had always fought alongside their white counterparts in the republic's wars, the present struggle for the Union necessarily implicated black Americans and required whites to embrace their service. Douglass concluded that, "this is no time to fight with one hand, when both are needed; that this is no time to fight only with your white hand, and allow your black hand to remain tied."[15]

In Douglass's mind, if black violence had been critical to the birth of the American republic, it would be just as useful to its rebirth in the sectional conflict. Douglass mocked those

[14] Philip Foner, *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass: Volume III, The Civil War 1861-1854* (New York: International Publishers), 94.

[15] Ibid, 153.

who disagreed by juxtaposing Lincoln's conservative officers with those generals in the American pantheon who had used black soldiers. "Mark here our nation's degeneracy," Douglass warned his readers in February 1862. "Colored men were good enough to fight under Washington. They are not good enough to fight under McClellan. They were good enough to fight under Andrew Jackson. They are not good enough to fight under Gen. Halleck."[16] Douglass cast conservative Union generals' antipathy to black soldiers as a more potent threat to the Union than either disloyal southerners or African Americans who were using the wartime crisis as an opportunity to press for more freedom. As Douglass saw it, the steadfast loyalty of black Americans in the face of persistent racism was invaluable and honorable. In the same article, he reminded his readers,

> I am not a citizen by birth or by lineage, but by choice. And with the choice to be loyal to the United States, a country in which there is nothing in the circumstances of the present hour, nothing in the behavior of the colored people, either North or South, which requires apology at my hands. Though everywhere spoken against, the most malignant and unscrupulous of all our slanders have not, in this dark and terrible hour of the nation's trial dared to accuse us of a want of patriotism or loyalty.[17]

Black men would remain steadfast and loyal. They had forged the republic serving under Washington and Jackson. Even as the nation continued to preclude their having equal political rights, African Americans persistently proclaimed their loyalty to it. For Douglass, such devotion was more valuable than birth or lineage, and it stood in stark contrast to the southern rebels who

[16] Ibid, 213.

[17] Ibid.

sought to overthrow the Union. Douglass even went as far as to critique northerners who were opposed to enlisting black men, erroneously averring for a few months that even the rebels used black troops at First Manassas.[18] Other northerners echoed this sentiment. In July of 1862, the Rutland *Weekly Herald* published an editorial that eviscerated Democratic congressmen who opposed enlisting African Americans in spite of American blacks' honorable service in the Revolution and the belief among many in the North that Confederates had "armed their negroes, and placed them in the ranks with white men."[19] Northern advocates for arming blacks held that it was shameful and absurd that even the Confederacy seemed to be more devoted to both biracialism and the legacy of the founding generation than did the loyal North.

Other African American orators and war propagandists in the free states added to this historicization of black violence. In March of 1862, William C. Nell, a black historian, abolitionist, and contributor to *The Liberator*, delivered an address in Boston on the anniversary of the Boston Massacre. Nell reminded his listeners that the free black man Crispus Attucks was one of the first casualties of the American Revolution. Nell lamented, however, that in spite of Attucks's blood being among the first spilled in the Revolution, the nation seemed to have "forgotten that the colored man was one of the 'all men created free and equal.'" When Attucks died at the hands of British soldiers in Boston, he was but the first of many black men who "shared the dangers of that struggle which resulted in the severance of the American colonies from the domination of monarchical England."[20]

---

[18] Ta-Nehisi Coates, "Black Confederates at Harvard," *The Atlantic*, last modified September 2, 2011, https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2011/09/black-confederates-at-harvard/244476/.

[19] Rutland (VT.) *Weekly Herald*, July 3, 1862, pg. 6.

[20] Dorothy Porter Wesley and Constance Porter Uzelac, *William Cooper Nell: Nineteenth-Century African American Abolitionist, Historian, Integrationist – Selected Writings From 1832-1874* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2002), 621.

On New Year's Day in 1863, the African American reverend Jonathan Gibbs addressed a biracial gathering in Philadelphia. He reminded his audience that there was "not a battlefield throughout the country, from the days of '76 until now, but what our bones lie bleaching with yours." Again invoking Attucks, he thundered that "the very first resistance that was made to British aggression in the Revolution of '76 was a black man, Crispus Attucks, who led the attack and was some of the first slain." Gibbs argued that other black men in the northern colonies supported the Patriot cause, and in particular a regiment of free black men from Rhode Island defended Fort Mercer in New Jersey against a superior Hessian force.[21] Gibbs concluded that if northern free black men had fought in the Revolution, so too should they fight to preserve the American experiment in the 1860s.

Black leaders in the northern states further hoped that loyalty to the nation in the Union's time of need not only would allow black men to serve in the Army, but in the process cement the historical connection between black men and the republic that many of these orators took great pains to illustrate. Standing before the Emancipation League in Boston on February 2, 1862, Douglass reminded his audience that black men and white abolitionists stood for the same cause, that of "the whole country." "The circumstances of this eventful hour make the cause of the slaves and the cause of the country identical. They must fall or flourish together. A blow struck for the freedom of the slave, is equally a blow struck for the safety and welfare of the country. As Liberty and Union have become identical, so slavery and treason have become one and inseparable."[22] Other black orators made the same connection, but also drew an explicit connection to the rebellion and a Slave Power conspiracy that sought to subjugate both African

[21] Rev. Jonathan C. Gibbs, "Freedom's Joyful Day," *Blackpast*, last modified January 28, 2007, https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/1863-rev-jonathan-c-gibbs-freedoms-joyful-day/.

[22] Foner, *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, 214.

Americans and the white North. In 1863, Jonathan Gibbs urged black and white men in the North to work together, "strengthening the hands of our government by all the energies and resources they possess." If they did not, he warned his audience, "the question will not be whether black men are to be slaves, but whether white men are to be free! You had better a thousand times let us into the full light of liberty with yourselves, than that yourselves come into a condition equal to that of the slave at the South."[23]

This vision notwithstanding, there were many white Americans who doubted the efficacy of allowing black men to become citizens, much less soldiers. A significant number of white northerners clung to the belief that a biracial republic was impossible, either because of white racism or because of the extent to which slavery had permanently stripped black men of the requisite traits for republican citizenship. When William C. Nell delivered his commemoration of Boston Massacre in 1862, he did so while the Massachusetts legislature was considering granting civil and political rights to recent immigrants that had not been extended to African Americans. Standing before the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society in 1862, black orator John S. Rock held that such were the inroads that racism had made on the white North that many whites considered the black man "a miserable loathsome wretch, fit only to be colonized somewhere near the mountains of the moon, or eternally banished from the presence of all civilized beings." Lampooning white northern attitudes, he exclaimed to his audience that under the logic of colonizationists and racist northerners, "this country and climate are perfectly adapted to Negro

[23]Rev. Jonathan C. Gibbs, "Freedom's Joyful Day," *Blackpast*, last modified January 28, 2007, https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/1863-rev-jonathan-c-gibbs-freedoms-joyful-day/.

slavery; it is the free black that the air is not good for! What an idea! A country good for slavery, and not good for freedom!"[24]

Rock concurred with Douglass and Gibbs that the war offered free and enslaved black men the opportunity to rewrite this narrative. The sight of "Seventy-five thousand freemen capable of bearing arms, and three-quarters of a million of slaves wild with the enthusiasm caused by the dawn of the glorious opportunity of being able to strike a genuine blow for freedom," he counseled the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society in 1862,"will be a power that 'white men will be bound to respect.'"[25] His barb at Chief Justice Roger Taney and the Dred Scott decision was likely not lost on his audience, nor was his belief that racism remained an imposing obstacle to black citizenship. Rock questioned the commitment of white northerners to the cause of black liberty, seeing it as more the product of opportunism than conviction: "It is true the government is but little more antislavery now than it was at the commencement of the war; but while fighting for its own existence, it has been obliged to take slavery by the throat, and sooner or later must choke her to death." Rock hoped, however, than in their desperation, the government would allow African Americans an opportunity to play a role in maintaining the Union and in proving their loyalty to it. "Let the people of the United States do their duty," Rock implored his audience, "and treat us as the people of all other nations treat us—as men; if they will do this, our last drop of blood is ready to be sacrificed in defence of the liberty of this country." Treating African Americans as men and granting them the privilege to defend the liberty of both their race and of their country would be a palliative to the injurious effect that slavery had on African Americans and their fitness for republican citizenship. If only men who

[24] John S. Rock, "A Deep and Cruel Prejudice," *Blackpast*, last modified September 22, 2008, https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/1862-john-s-rock-deep-and-cruel-prejudice/.

[25] Ibid.

possessed independence, freedom, and courage were fit to be citizens – the traits that were antithetical to the condition of slavery – the war gave African American men the chance to prove their worthiness.

Just as northern free blacks sought to legitimize violence as a means of achieving black citizenship, so too did they argue that it was necessary to allow black men to demonstrate their manhood to a white public that at times openly wondered if men who had been subjected to slavery were ever possible of being men. As a system, slavery barred African American men from participating in a range of masculine behaviors, including wielding violence, claiming personal independence, and exercising power over households and families. In effect, chattel slavery as a system sought to place African American men in a position of indolence, helplessness, and powerlessness.[26] It assumed that black men lacked independence and were child-like, and for their part, many northerners wondered aloud if slavery had impressed these traits on African Americans permanently. In early 1862, the *Boston Daily Advertiser* speculated whether slavery had so degraded black men as to disqualify them from military service. "It is a very long step," it counseled its readers to "conclude from the success of this limited experiment that it is possible to raise an army. Those who propose schemes of this sort forge the ignorance and mental darkness, which generations of oppression have fashioned upon the mass of the slave population."[27] Even as staunch an abolitionist as Thomas Wentworth Higginson referred to ex-slaves as "simple, docile, and affectionate."[28]

[26] Cullen, "I's a Man Now," 499-500.

[27] *Boston Daily Advertiser*, February 13, 1863.

[28] Stephen V. Ash, *Firebrand of Liberty: The Story of Two Black Regiments That Changed the Course of the Civil War* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008), 46.

African Americans were especially sensitive to this sentiment. They realized that in the immediate crisis such attitudes undermined their ability to join the army and play their part in subduing the rebellion. Moreover, in the long term, they knew that a persistent belief in black men's insolence and child-like behavior undermined their ability to gain social and political acceptance as men and to exhibit the traits of manliness that were consonant with republican citizenship. Jonathan Gibbs realized that prejudice and racism were significant barriers, and he debated northern white men on their own terms when he offered a solution to the related issues of winning the war and black citizenship: "Enfranchise and arm the black man." Black men, he was sure, had the moral and physical courage to accomplish both. The larger question was whether northern whites had the "moral courage, the pluck, the grit, to lay down their foolish prejudice against the colored man and place him in a position where he can bear his full share of the toils and dangers of this war?" Black men were willing and able, and as he reminded his audience, "We are not children, but men, and are in earnest about the matter."[29] Far from being degraded by slavery, black men possessed the independence and vigor to meet the demands of the hour. Gibbs remained uncertain whether white men would let them prove as much.

If black men sought to utilize the military to prove their manhood, the question remained of what exactly it meant to be a man. As Jim Cullen has demonstrated, black men expressed their manhood through a broad set of behaviors and met complex and sometimes conflicting definitions of what masculinity meant, particularly regarding race and class. This was especially true as it related to violence and what role it played in forging masculine identities. In order to prove their fitness as soldiers and as citizens, black men had to demonstrate their proficiency at killing and soldiering. Yet, such was white racial thought in the nineteenth century that many

[29] Rev. Jonathan C. Gibbs, "Freedom's Joyful Day," *Blackpast*, last modified January 28, 2007, https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/1863-rev-jonathan-c-gibbs-freedoms-joyful-day/.

white Americans could at once assume that slavery had rendered African Americans docile and childlike, while also assuming that underneath this childlike veneer black men harbored a propensity for savagery. Moreover, within the Union army, manhood and manliness entailed a range of behaviors related to social status and class identity. As Lorien Foote has demonstrated, Brahmin officers from New England often defined manhood in terms that were consonant with gentility, respectability, and refined behavior predicated on controlling one's emotions. These conceptions of masculinity clashed with men in the ranks who expressed their manhood through fighting, unruly behavior, profanity, and imbibing in alcohol.[30] This resulted in an environment in which "manhood" represented a complex set of social cues, behaviors, and assumptions regarding one's race and class that were constantly contested, in flux, and a moving target for those black men who felt that masculine acceptance via military service was crucial for black men who sought integration into America's body politic.

Black orators realized as much and they deliberately sought to assuage these fears as they argued for arming black men. In 1864, as Maryland sought to fulfill its quota of enlisted black men, Reverend J. P. Campbell ensured a biracial audience that black men yearned "for the opportunity to show himself a man, capable of discharging all the duties of a common manhood, in whatever sphere that manhood may be called to act."[31] If manhood indeed represented various spheres of behavior – whether that behavior was acting violently in the name of the state or controlling one's emotions and adhering to notions of respectability – black men were capable of navigating each and expressing appropriate forms of manhood in a variety of contexts. Black

[30] Cullen, "I's a Man Now: Gender and African American Men," 500; Lorien Foote, *The Gentlemen and the Roughs: Manhood, Honor, and Violence in the Union Army* (NY: NYU Press, 2010), 41-66.

[31] Rev. J.P. Campbell, "Give Us Equal Pay and We Will Go To War," *Blackpast*, last modified January 28, 2007, https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/1864-rev-j-p-campbell-give-us-equal-pay-and-we-will-go-war/.

men could demonstrate bravery in battle, restraint in dealing with white civilians, kill in the name of the state, and still maintain the virtues of Christianity and republican citizenship in the process. No matter the definition of manhood or its social contexts, black orators such as Campbell argued that military service could both affirm and enhance black masculinity, and it would do so in the name of black freedom and the republic.

By 1863, the Lincoln administration, both out of both necessity and the lobbying of northern abolitionists, had begun to enlist black soldiers in earnest. Republican governors such as John Andrew in Massachusetts and Union officers such as Major Generals David Hunter and Lorenzo Thomas in the occupied South became champions of black enlistment. The rolls of black regiments swelled. At this point black war propagandists turned their attention from legitimizing the potential role and efficacy of black soldiers to the larger northern public to acting as recruiters, urging black men to enlist. Drawing again on the motif that black violence was necessary to secure victory and black citizenship alike, Douglass reminded black men that, "Liberty won by white men would lose half its luster."[32] Here he echoed the common belief among black men, and some whites as well, that to be free, black Americans would have to earn their freedom on the battlefield. Douglass pleaded with African Americans,

> By every consideration which binds you to your enslaved fellow-countrymen, and the peace and welfare of your country; by every aspiration which you cherish for the freedom and equality of yourselves and your children; by all the ties of blood and identity which make us one with the brave black men now fighting our battles in Louisiana and South Carolina, I urge you to fly to arms,

[32] Foner, *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, 318.

and smite with death the power that would bury the government and your liberty in the same hopeless grave.[33]

While Douglass's exhortations were perhaps the most articulate expression of black martial manhood and citizenry, other free black men in the North expressed similar sentiments. George Stephens wrote in August of 1864 that any black man who was not willing to embrace violence and fight the Confederacy should be considered neither free nor a man. He also astutely observed that while the Union offered black men an avenue for citizenship within a biracial democracy, the Confederacy represented the antithesis to this project. The slaveholders "proclaimed a deed of universal outlawry against the African race, and in every individual citizen of which the colored man finds a petty tyrant, ready to degrade and humiliate him on the flimsiest pretext." The presuppositions informing the Confederate government unmanned free and enslaved black men alike, as it assumed their inherent inferiority, submissiveness, and unfitness for citizenship. Warned Stephens, "if you do not possess the physical courage to resist every insult and indignity, and manifest a readiness to sacrifice every interest, and even life itself, for your rights, you do not deserve to be a free man. And if you were made a freeman, you would soon become a slave again."[34] Using violence against the Confederacy would bolster black citizenship by attacking and defying the precepts upon which perceptions of black inferiority rested.

Other black men in the North recognized--as only now recent historians have begun to acknowledge--that access to violence and the opportunity to suppress the rebellion was part of a

[33] Ibid.

[34] Donald Yacavone, *A Voice of Thunder: The Civil War Letters of George E. Stephens* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 325-326.

wider cross-sectional and cross-racial struggle for black rights in America.[35] Some northern blacks questioned to what extent fighting a war for the slaves in the South would advance the cause for freedom of those living in the North. Charles Singer, a black northerner, refuted those claims, arguing that not only was the taint of racism trans-sectional, but that an expansionist Confederacy would attack the rights of northern blacks just as much as it would those who were already in bondage. "Suppose the rebel army was as far as North as the Union Army is South?" Singer queried the readers of a northern newspaper in October of 1864. "What would be the result? I will tell you. Our homes would have been burned to the ground, and our aged and defenseless parents barbarously treated."[36] Such was the case in the summer of 1863, when Confederate soldiers in the Army of Northern Virginia harassed and kidnapped between 150 and 250 African Americans in central Pennsylvania. Many of the abductees had long resided in Franklin and Fulton counties, presumably outside of the grasp of the Confederacy.[37] Even for those northern blacks who believed that the slaves' struggle was not theirs, the Confederate threat transcended section, national boundaries, or the laws of war.

The enslaved also connected the war for the Union with their war for citizenship. Along the Union occupied coast of South Carolina, where the "Gideon Band" had descended on abandoned plantations in order to instruct the freedpeople and teach them the tenets of American nationalism, southern blacks repeatedly demonstrated their affection for the Union. Colonel Robert Gould Shaw of the 54th Massachusetts wrote home and marveled at ex-slaves'

---

[35] Manisha Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 1-3.

[36] Edwin Redkey, *A Grand Army of Black Men: Letters from African American Soldiers in the Union Army, 1861-1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 214-215.

[37] Ted Alexander, "'A Regular Slave Hunt': The Army of Northern Virginia and Black Civilians in the Gettysburg Campaign," *North and South* 4, No. 7 (2001): 85-88; Allen Guelzo, *Gettysburg: The Last Invasion* (New York: Vintage Books, 2013), 73-74.

Independence Day celebration. Shaw witnessed former slaves participating in all of the political activities that one would find in New England, including "ultra-abolition" speeches and patriotic singing. Shaw observed that these freed slaves finally "owned a little themselves, go to school, to church, and work for wages." They were driving their transformation into being a free people. Integral to this process was their reeducation and instruction as citizens. "A little black boy," Shaw wrote to this father, "read the Declaration of Independence, and then, they all sang some of their hymns. The effect was grand."[38] At Port Royal, over two thousand African Americans celebrated the official signing and reading of the Emancipation Proclamation by listening to patriotic and abolitionist speeches, singing patriotic anthems, and celebrated as a group of New York abolitionists presented the First South Carolina Regiment of Volunteers – a unit composed of African Americans – with a new silk flag.[39]

Just as they learned the tenets of American citizenship and nationalism through the instruction of northern philanthropists and missionaries, ex-slaves also underwent a process of political socialization via their military experience. As Keith Wilson has demonstrated, not only did fighting in the Army inculcate in freedmen a strong sense of citizenship, but so too did the campground, where African Americans navigated a transitional geography as they moved from slavery to citizenship.[40] Thomas Wentworth Higginson recorded how black soldiers sang patriotic anthems – such as "My Country 'tis of Thee" – as well as plantation hymns that had anticipated the coming war and their chance to participate in it. Slaves had proclaimed in verse, "We'll fight for liberty till the Lord shall call us home, we'll soon be free when de Lord call us

[38] Russell Duncan, *Blue-Eyed Child of Fortune: The Civil War Letters of Colonel Robert Gould Shaw* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 373.

[39] Ash, *Firebrand of Liberty*, 23.

[40] Keith P. Wilson, *Campfires of Freedom: The Camp Life of Black Soldiers During the Civil War* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2002).

home."[41] Ex-slaves turned soldiers delivered fiery abolitionist speeches that while perhaps lacking in the same eloquence and acidity that marked black abolitionists' polemics nonetheless articulated the same connection between violence, citizenship, and soldiering. Higginson recorded how a man named Prince Lambkin, a former slave who had fled to Union lines and enlisted in the army, recalled the secret anxiety of the slaves who knew "about the election of Pres. Lincoln, & their all refusing to work on March 4th." Following secession and the Union occupation of the South Carolina sea-islands, Lambkin noticed how slaveholders abandoned their devotion to the Union and their plantations as they fled inland with their chattel. He was not surprised that the slaves remained loyal and welcomed the Union forces as an army of liberation. In his speech he juxtaposed slaves' loyalty to the flag with that of their masters' disloyalty. Higginson recalled how the man declared:

> Our mas'rs dey had lib under de flag, det got dere wealth under it, & ebry ting beautiful for dere chil'en & under it dey hab grind us into money & put us in dere pocket; & dat minute dey tink date ole flag mean freedom for us dey pull it down & run up de rag ob dere owen; but we'll nebber desert it boys, nebber, we hab lib under it for 1862 years & we'll die for it now.[42]

Higginson concurred. Lambkin expressed the fundamental truth that when the war compelled white southerners' to abandon their loyalty to the nation, it provided slaves with the opportunity to claim their place within it.

Not surprisingly, the prospect of dying for the Union emerges often in the writings of war propagandists and among black soldiers. Although Andrew F. Lang has recently argued that

---

[41] Christopher Looby, *The Complete Civil War Journal and Selected Letters of Thomas Wentworth Higginson* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 73.

[42] Ibid, 59-60.

occupation duty predominated the military experience of many African Americans - and that Union officers as well as Lincoln intended it to consign them to second-class citizenship - black soldiers nonetheless found their way into combat and sought to leverage these experiences in the service of justifying their fitness for citizenship. Indeed, while he might correctly point out that "the presence of black soldiers in occupied towns revealed the revolutionary nature of the black soldering experience," killing and dying were the engine behind this revolution.[43] At its base, soldiering entails both killing and dying, and dying for the republic was the logical outgrowth of possessing access to state sanctioned violence in an age of nationalism. At the same time, facing death while defending the state proved just as valuable in the ideological legitimization of black violence and biracial republicanism. Combat became a performance for black men as they constructed an ideological basis for biracial citizenship. Experiencing combat legitimized black men in the eyes of other Americans as they both killed Confederates and faced death on the battlefield.

Beginning with the Battle of Port Hudson in Louisiana, the officers of U.S.C.T., black soldiers, and northern observers remained cognizant of the connection between meritorious combat service and the project of legitimizing black citizenship. Indeed, meritorious service often took precedence over victory itself. The fighting at Port Hudson proved at points to be nothing less than suicidal. Black soldiers experienced some of the sharpest – and most futile – fighting of the engagement. Located along the Mississippi River, the defending rebel garrison entrenched itself on bluffs that rose 80 feet above the river. From this commanding position, the Confederates constructed a series of earthworks complimented by artillery, rifle pits, and a water battery armed with two powerful eight-inch Columbiads. Just to reach this position, Union

[43] Andrew F. Lang, *In the Wake of War: Military Occupation, Emancipation, and Civil War America* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2017), 13.

soldiers first had to cross a flood plain that straddled the fortress and the banks of the Mississippi.[44]

Despite the odds, Major General Nathaniel Banks, commanding the Union expedition, ordered a general assault on the position on May 26, 1863. In spite of black soldiers' secondary involvement in the general assault, Brigadier General William Dwight – in command of the *Corps de Afrique* – insisted that the battle offered an opportune time to "test the Negro question," as the black soldiers would "have the fate of his race on his conduct."[45] When the assault commenced, Dwight's black regiments cascaded toward the Confederate earthworks, only to be mowed down by a hail of canister and well-placed Confederate volleys. After witnessing three suicidal assaults against the position, Banks beamed in his after-action report that the black men "answered every expectation," and "in many respects their conduct was heroic." No other men, Banks contended, "could be more determined or more daring." It was this determination, moreover, that cemented their usefulness to the republic. Banks assured his superiors that, "the Government will find in this class of troops effective supporters and defenders. The severe test to which they were subjected, and the determined manner in which they encountered the enemy, leaves upon my mind no doubt of their ultimate success."[46]

What Banks implied, if not fully realized, was that the test put before the black soldiers was not their ability to carry field positions. They had succeeded by performing and fulfilling the requisite expectations for masculine acceptance in the form of their bravery, sacrifice, and willingness to die for the republic. This was their greatest achievement in the battle, and their

---

[44] James G. Hollandsworth, *The Louisiana Native Guards: The Black Military Experience During the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 51-53.

[45] Ibid, 52.

[46] U.S. War Department, *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* Volume 26, Part 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1889), 44-45.

experience with violence forged their allegiance to the American state and it to them. This form of citizenship sprang from black soldiers' willingness to kill and be killed.

Others drew this connection as well. Writing to Brigadier General Daniel Ullman, Captain Elias Strunke of the 82nd U.S. Colored Infantry lauded the black men for their bravery. Before the battle, he had harbored "some fears as to their pluck." Nonetheless, Strunke had led a company in the assault. He described in detail how his men had moved "forward cool as if Marshaled for dress parade, under a most murderous fire from the enemies guns, until we reached the main ditch which surrounds the Fort." In two more frontal assaults, Strunke's men remained steady in the face of "destructive fire" and displayed "coolness and daring."[47] Doing as much confirmed the masculine credentials of the men in his command as they mastered fear and their emotions, maintained military discipline, and executed their duty while sustaining casualties. "In the charge," Strunke pointed out, "we lost our Capt. and Colored sergeant, the latter fell wrapped in the flag he had so gallantly borne."[48] Strunke made sure to highlight that the performance of black soldiers at Port Hudson would provide proponents of abolitionism and emancipation a means to evangelize throughout the North on the efficacy and need for enlisting more black men. He hoped that his message to Ullman would add to his "undertakings and make more popular the movement" for enlisting African Americans.[49]

Such evangelizing grew especially prominent in northern newspapers. A *New York Times* war correspondent embedded with Banks's command conceded that he and others were as interested in the performance of the black men as they were with the outcome of the battle itself.

---

[47] Berlin, *Freedom,* 528-529.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid.

He described how the units assaulted the Confederate works and were mowed down in rows. For the *Times* this performance settled the question of not only if black men would fight but if they were useful to the republic. Echoing the sentiments of Ullman and Banks, the correspondent concluded that "we can henceforth rely upon black arms as well as white in crushing this infernal rebellion." The combat experiences of these black men at Port Hudson thus reified the biracial republic that soldiering in the name of the Union created just as it legitimized black men's place as soldiers and citizens: "These men are soldiers of the United States, bravely fighting for their country, and not wild beasts being sent to the shambles."[50].

Traditional notions of military victory – driving the enemy from the field or taking a position – ultimately mattered less at Port Hudson than the shear fact of black men facing the enemy and dying rather than skulking or retreating. Black and white northerners alike viewed combat as a type of performance that black soldiers had to both endure and master. This was true again at Milliken's Bend, where on June 7, 1863 a Confederate cavalry brigade under the command of Brigadier General Henry McCulloch engaged a detachment of Union troops that consisted primarily of African Americans. Major General John Walker had detached McCulloch's cavalry brigade from his division in a misbegotten attempt to relieve the siege of Vicksburg by attacking Union general Ulysses S. Grant's supply line north of the city. Grant, however, shifted the line south of the city; all that remained at Milliken's Bend were detachments of Union soldiers that had light support from federal gunboats on the river. Coming into contact with the black soldiers, McCulloch's men pushed the federal pickets back to their main line before they flanked and then poured volleys of enfilade fire into the Union's deteriorating lines of battle. The Confederates then engaged in hand-to-hand combat with the

[50] "Important from Louisiana," *New York Times*, June 13, 1863.

Union defenders, and did not retire until federal gunboats approached from the river and gave the beleaguered defenders in blue support.[51]

The fighting resembled murder more than war. McCulloch's men bellowed "no quarter" and applied it indiscriminately to those black men who were surrendering or still fighting. This incident anticipated the brutality that would characterize biracial combat in the Trans-Mississippi West, where engagements between the Confederate army and U.S.C.T. units devolved into what historian Gregory Urwin has described as a race war.[52] Nevertheless, the strategic and tactical value of the engagement, each of which were insignificant within the narrow confines of the Vicksburg campaign, were far less important than the manner in which northerners imagined the engagement and what it meant for the efficacy of black soldiers. George Washington Williams, who wrote one of the earliest histories of black soldiers after the war, stated so succinctly, noting that "the severest test of martial valor is the bayonet." As in the case of Port Hudson, battlefield violence provided a litmus test of how these black men had moved from a state of bondage to one of liberty. Williams quoted white Union officer Matthew Williams: "Two of my colored sergeants were killed, both brave, noble men, always prompt, vigilant, and ready for the fray. I never more wish to hear the expression, 'The Niggers won't fight.' Come with me, a hundred yards from where I sit, and I can show you the wounds that cover the bodies of sixteen as brave, loyal, and patriotic soldiers as ever drew bead on a rebel."[53] Dying brutally at the hands of the

[51] Linda Barnickel, *Milliken's Bend: A Civil War Battle in History and Memory* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013), 83-138.

[52] Ira Berlin, *Freedom's Soldiers: The Black Military Experience in the Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 97-98; Gregory Urwin, *Black Flag Over Dixie: Racial Atrocities and Reprisals in the Civil War* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004), 1-9.

[53] George Washington Williams, *A History of the Negro Troops in the War of the Rebellion, 1861-65* (New York: Bergman Publishers, 1968), 225-226.

enemy and before the altar of the Union underscored that these men valued republican citizenship.

To those northerners who assumed that slavery had so eroded the courage, independence, and bravery of black men as to make them unfit for military service, combat was as vital a proving ground as any for black men to demonstrate their worth to the nation and their ability to legitimately fit within its body politic. The black men who held their ground at Milliken's Bend – even in the face of certain death – and met their fate provided one answer to this question. Their sacrifice, moreover, resonated at the highest reaches of power in Washington. Secretary of War Edwin Stanton wrote to Abraham Lincoln in December 1863 that while "many persons believed, or pretended to believe, and confidently asserted, that freed slaves would not make good soldiers; they would lack courage, and could not be subjected to military discipline. Facts have shown how groundless were these apprehensions. The slave has proved his manhood, and his capacity as an infantry soldier, at Milliken's Bend."[54]

The aftermath of the 54th Massachusetts's assault on Battery Wagner in Charleston Harbor likewise witnessed other northerners expressing this ideological justification for violence. Commanded by Col. Robert Gould Shaw, a New England patrician and scion of an abolitionist family, the 54th Massachusetts included among others on its muster rolls Frederick Douglass's eldest son. It attacked the earthen fortification on Morris Island adjacent to Charleston as part of a combined assault during the summer of 1863. Their attack came to grief after a brief breach of the fort's defenses. And as in the case of Port Hudson and Milliken's Bend tactical failure did not define the significance of the engagement. More important was the regiment's gallantry, manhood, and willingness to die. Shaw himself lobbied for his men to lead the assault in order to

[54] Message of the President of the United States and Accompanying Documents to the Two Houses of Congress, at the Commencement of the First Session of the Thirty-Eighth Congress (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1863), 8.

prove their mettle and combat readiness after enduring months of discrimination and fatigue duty. Their performance did not go unnoticed; George Stephens lauded the black regiment's "brilliant feat" of spearheading the Union's assault on the Confederate stronghold. "It is another evidence that cannot now be denied, that colored soldiers will dare go where any brave men will lead them."[55] The price for this bravery was high, but most men in the ranks realized the necessity of the cost. Echoing the sentiment that their suffering proved their fitness for freedom and that it was necessary for the war effort, survivors of the assault noted with pride how they sacrificed their bodies for both the perpetuity of the Union and their personal freedom. A war correspondent reported that medical orderlies in Union field hospitals after the battle remembered that the men recuperating in the hospital claimed that they would fight "till the last rebel was dead" or "the last brother breaks his chain." Moreover, he boasted, if "all our people get their freedom, we can afford to die." Dying for both the Union and for black freedom increasingly became desirable, for as one wounded man noted, "I think God so much for the privilege; I went in to live or die."[56]

When black corpses returned home for burial northerners used funeral services and eulogies to laud black military service and ruminate on the nature of the war, black citizenship, and black manhood. In September of 1863, Reverend S. Stanley eulogized Sergeant Joseph Wilson of the 54th Massachusetts and reminded his audience that although black men had been, "Doomed through long centuries of barbarism to all the degradations of slavery," African Americans soldiers were "with singular unanimity, forgetting their unnumbered wrongs and the powerful provocations to revenge, coming heartily to the support of the Union cause." Now, men

[55] Yacovone, *Voice of Thunder*, 246.

[56] "The Behavior of the Blacks at Fort Wagner," *Cleveland Morning Leader*, August 3 1863, 1.

like Wilson only asked in exchange for their loyalty, "a chance to prove their manhood." Although slavery had rendered many a black man "ignorant and debased," military service allowed them to remain "patriotic in government and sacred in religion." Military service proved empowering and transformative. It allowed black men "to be recognized as men worthy of a chance in the wide world to earn our bread, worthy of the enjoyment of the commonest right, the right to own ourselves."[57] War making was, then, inextricably tied to black men's masculinity, and not only in proving their aggression and ability to kill. Making war was also a means for black men to map out a course of self-determination and to own themselves rather than to be owned by others. They proved their ability to own themselves by both killing other men and by defending a Union – and the free labor ideology that undergirded it – that would make this possible. Wilson's death and the subsequent opportunity for the black community to gather and mourn him provided a political platform and opportunity to discuss black men's value to the republic.

Given black men's devotion to the Union, white northerners began to argue that the nation should reciprocate. In the aftermath of Battery Wagner, the *Cleveland Morning Leader* published an article arguing that the United States government should begin to demand protection for black soldiers against Confederate recriminations. Confederates in Charleston, a city that was a "hot-bed of aristocracy, oppression, and slavery," had endorsed a form of barbarous and uncivilized warfare in its conduct against black soldiers. The editors argued that this stood in contrast to black soldiers and the Union that they willingly died for, each of which

[57] *Christian Recorder*, September 23, 1863.

became in the North's imagination symbols of republicanism and civilization.[58] Fighting and dying at Fort Wagner demonstrated for many northerners how black soldiers represented both.

*****

If the northern public writ large viewed black suffering and dying as the appropriate price for citizenship, wielding violence against the Confederacy took on a greater salience within the Union army itself. To be sure, learning of Confederate depredations against black men in blue heightened many northerners' contempt for the Confederacy and its un-republican pretensions. The disdain and dehumanization of the enemy that was a byproduct of the war allowed many in the North to tolerate and even demand the prosecution of a hard war against the slaveholding South, and especially a hard war waged by African Americans. Northerners at first became desensitized to violence, and then later craved it, as it became a means to express and assert American nationalism and the supremacy of the American nation-state. Nonetheless, as historian Carole Emberton has demonstrated, when this violence became racialized, white Americans became uneasy. While perhaps useful if in the service of the republic, the extent to which northerners would support state-sponsored black violence otherwise was in question. Within the Union army, the exigencies of war blurred this distinction. Many Union officers viewed black violence as both necessary and desirable for both winning the war and in cultivating the political socialization of black Americans. Just as Charles Royster has argued that civilians and soldiers lived vicariously through violence and reports of violence – and in fact found profound meaning in the war's violence – so too did the war's destruction inform the creation of a black political identity and black citizenship. Indeed, a significant number of officers, publishers, and war

[58] Ibid.

propagandists felt that black men could not become the citizens and men they wanted to be except through war.[59]

Col. James Montgomery, a former Jayhawker and early advocate of employing black soldiers, believed deeply that violence could provide a powerful means for ex-slaves to become American citizens. Montgomery's view of violence also diverged sharply from those who believed that black men fighting and dying valiantly represented the most potent means of achieving manhood and citizenship. This was evident in the razing of Darien, Georgia in 1863. Located on the Georgia coast, the hamlet possessed little strategic value to the Union, nor was it a hotbed of resistance that impeded the Union army's operations on the coasts of Georgia and South Carolina. Robert Gould Shaw, serving under Montgomery's command during the expedition, wrote that "not a shot had been fired at" at the Union force "from this place, and that there was evidently very few men left in it." Montgomery nonetheless ordered his artillery to loft "shells among the plantation buildings, in what seemed to me a very brutal way," in spite of Shaw's concerns that women or children might still inhabit the area. Shaw wrote with disgust how Montgomery insisted that all "furniture and movable property to be taken on board the boats." When this loot was loaded safely aboard the ships, Montgomery ordered the town burned to the ground. Although Shaw protested the action, arguing that it was both unjustified and might result in disciplinary action, Montgomery was "only too happy to take it all on his shoulders."[60]

Montgomery's view of both the war and the uses of black violence differed markedly from that of Shaw's, and informed his decision to have his black soldiers raze Darien.

---

[59] Charles Royster, *The Destructive War: William Tecumseh Sherman, Stonewall Jackson, and the Americans* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1991), 366-404; Carole Emberton, "Only Murder Makes Men: Rethinking the Black Military Experience," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 2, no. 3 (2012): 379; Royster, *The Destructive War*, 232-295.

[60] Duncan, *Blue-Eyed Child of Fortune,* 342.

Montgomery viewed the war in terms that were both biblical and retributive, counseling Shaw that the Confederates "must be made to feel that this was a real war, and that they were to be swept away by the hand of God, like the Jews of old." Black soldiers were the means, and for Montgomery, they could only do so through blood. Remembering Confederate promises to execute white officers and send black Union soldiers into slavery, Montgomery at one point thundered to Shaw, "We are outlawed, and therefore not bound by the rules of regular warfare."[61] The Confederacy had raised the black flag against African American soldiers and responding in kind was, for Montgomery, the only appropriate response. While Shaw conceded the danger posed to black soldiers and the high stakes of the war, he concluded his letter home with a telling delineation of how he viewed the uses of violence in the war. "Beside my own distaste for this barbarous sort of warfare," Shaw wrote, "I am not sure that it will not harm very much the reputation of black troops and of those connected with them. For myself, I have gone through the war so far without dishonor, and I do not like to degenerate into a plunderer and robber. There was not a deed performed, from beginning to end, which required any pluck or courage."[62]

For Shaw, black men would only become citizens and proper men by soldiering honorably, utilizing violence effectively, and demonstrating their "pluck and courage." This was the narrative of Port Hudson and Battery Wagner, and it fit within Shaw's paternalistic view of African Americans and his Brahmin view of masculinity that stressed self-restraint, honor, and gentility. Montgomery's view of soldiering, manhood, and violence was far different. While he shared the assumption that violence was integral to black men's political socialization,

[61] Ibid, 343.

[62] Ibid.

Montgomery believed in killing rather than being killed. The use of unmitigated violence against the Confederacy would catalyze an important internal transformation as former slaves became free, republican men. Montgomery held this view because he himself had experienced it during the events of Bleeding Kansas. Before Kansas, Montgomery confided to Shaw, he had been "a very harmless creature."[63] The border war, however, had opened his eyes to the usefulness of violence as a process of political socialization and as a means of creating men. In Kansas, Montgomery went to war against Border Ruffians, 'depraved' southerners and pro-slavery men who lacked the pluck and manhood to withstand violence. He remembered with disdain "Missourians whom he had taken prisoner," and who had begged for their lives. "Without exception," Montgomery's mused, "their manhood forsook them completely." They had not withstood the crucible of violence and war, and they were not men because of it. Montgomery was determined to make sure that his African American soldiers would not face the same shortcomings. Read in this context, Montgomery's order to raze Darian was an outgrowth of his belief that unmitigated violence was a necessary tool for black men to become citizens and to shed their old identity as timid, unmanly slaves. Rather than inculcating in the former slaves Shaw's genteel masculinity, Montgomery wished to transform his men into soldiers who defined their masculine credentials around their ability to use violence fearlessly and, if need be, wantonly.

Montgomery also viewed camp life as an arena for shaping his soldiers into men and citizens. He introduced black men into a universe of violence that was meant to both discipline and de-synthesize them to the use of force. Montgomery patrolled his camp and would "shoot his men with perfect looseness, for a slight disobedience of orders." Such was Montgomery's willingness to use force that Shaw related to his mother that one night, "on board the steamer, he

[63] Ibid, 363.

shot at and wounded a man for talking after taps, when he had twice ordered him to be quiet. He told me that he had intended to kill him & throw him overboard, & was much astonished at having missed his aim." Nor did Montgomery tolerate other forms of unmanly and insubordinate conduct. Montgomery notoriously caught and executed a deserter without trial. When asked why, Shaw recalled that Montgomery expressed his disdain for the "red-tape way of doing things."[64] As Montgomery saw it, his mission went far beyond following the dictates of the state or military convention. He was creating men and citizens who would be desensitized to violence and would make war in the name of the state by fighting the rebellion.

This was the hard logic that shaped Montgomery's view of black combat and the burning of Darien. Exercising unmitigated violence against the inhabitants of Darien and their property was a means for black men to demonstrate that the American state placed its imprimatur on black violence while also facilitating black men's political socialization through violence. In essence, black violence became a conduit for the American state to express its power. And in doing so, black men experienced the internal transformation that Montgomery had noticed in himself during the struggle in Kansas, one not dissimilar to that experienced by Frederick Douglass in his exchange with Covey. Indeed, Montgomery frequently noted with bemusement to Shaw how well his African American soldiers compared to the insurgents he had battled in Kansas. When facing death and violence, he remarked, African American soldiers passed the test of combat and utilizing violence with high marks. Unlike the border ruffians, black men never flinched. They would fight, die, and use force both for the sake of the American state and for the purpose of expressing their loyalty to it.[65]

[64] Ibid, 369.

[65] Ibid.

Crucially, many black soldiers themselves also subscribed to these views. They craved state-sanctioned violence for the internal transformation it wrought within them. Further, the utility of violence for black soldiers took on a new dimension after the Confederate government ordered its armies to take harsh measures against black soldiers and their officers. On Christmas Eve of 1862, Confederate President Jefferson Davis decreed, "all negro slaves captured in arms be at once delivered over to the executive authorities of the respective States to which they belong to be dealt with according to the laws of said States."[66] The directive ensured that the ensuing clashes between Confederate units and black Union soldiers would be among the most barbarous in a war that killed almost a million Americans. In 1863, Port Hudson and Milliken's Bend were especially brutal. Even more costly, however, were those battles that devolved into one-sided massacres and mass-murders. At Poison Spring, Arkansas; Olustee, Florida; Saltville, Virginia; and the Battle of the Crater, Confederate soldiers massacred black Union troops, treating them as the servile insurrectionaries that Davis proclaimed them to be. Black soldiers responded in a way that voiced an eagerness to use violence in kind. In doing so, they found further empowerment in killing. Just as Confederates performed white supremacy and acted out the precepts of Herrenvolk democracy by killing black soldiers as if they were their slaves, members of the U.S.C.T. used violence to both counteract Confederate depredations and to assert their own citizenship by demonstrating their own efficacy as killers. As Joseph Walker of the 55th Massachusetts wrote after Olustee in May of 1864, "As far as this regiment is concerned we will ask no quarter, and rest satisfied that we will give none … We will never forget the cry of 'Kill the God Damn nigger sons of bitches,' when the 54th Mass. Volunteers went into the fight, neither the well-aimed shot that made a rebel office bit the dust before he had time to draw his

[66] U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compendium of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 vols. (Washington, 1880–1901), series 2, vol. 5, 795–97.

sword. We are compelled to take his in our own hands. The Johnny Reb will find out that niggers won't die so fast."[67]

Black men articulated this view to one another and to their superiors. Black New York abolitionist Theodore Hodgkins attempted to persuade Edwin Stanton to allow African American soldiers to march into battle under the proverbial black flag. Hodgkins blithely encouraged Stanton to round up Confederate prisoners, "let them be surrounded by two or three regiments of colored troops," and then order them to open fire upon them "in squads of 50 or 100, with howitzers loaded with grape." To do so would give black soldiers the "heart and courage to believe in their government." The government never adopted this policy, but this proposal to execute Confederates posited a basis for creating a mutually beneficial relationship between black soldiers and the American state.[68]

This desire to kill Confederates found a more ready outlet on the battlefield. Although Aaron Sheehan-Dean has recently argued that black reprisals remained scant despite the presence of much unnecessary violence in the Civil War, pockets of racial brutality and revenge nonetheless existed.[69] After the Battle of Poison Spring –- where Confederate cavalry attacked and massacred a column of black soldiers escorting a supply train--black soldiers happily spoke of refusing quarter to captured Confederates. A black soldier named Alfred, responding to a query by a white officer commented that, "Dey just kill us like brutes and we's gwine to use dem de same way." And so they did. At Jenkins Ferry, Arkansas, black men of the 2nd Kansas massacred an isolated battery of Confederate artillery, bayonetting the surrendering Confederates

[67] Redkey, *A Grand Army of Black Men*, 54.

[68] Berlin, *Freedom*, 587-588.

[69] Aaron Sheehan-Dean, *The Calculus of Violence: How Americans Fought the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), 271-287; Ibid, 353-355.

before white Union soldiers could intervene.[70] Similar instances occurred at Mobile at the end of the war, where an officer in the 33rd Iowa wrote in his diary that "The negroes in the charge are said to have taken few prisoners on account of one of their men having been shot who was captured." A lieutenant commanding the black soldiers confirmed as much: "The niggers did not take a prisoner, they killed all they took to a man."[71]

******

By 1865, black soldiers inhabited a vortex of racial violence. Many of them appreciated its utility. It had provided them a method for self-defense, an opportunity to serve the American state, and a means to undergo internal transformations into independent men and citizens. As Douglass had counseled young black men during the war, "the musket – the United States musket with its bayonet of steel – is better than all more parchment guarantees of liberty."[72] Then the war ended. Having saved the Union, the attention of black soldiers turned toward solidifying the peace and serving on occupation duty. As occupiers, the type of violence they utilized changed. No longer were black soldiers expected to storm well-fortified ramparts to prove their manhood. Nor did they carry out reciprocal killings against Confederate soldiers. With their mere presence, black soldiers on occupation duty became the embodiment of both the American state in the former Confederacy and the new view of citizenship that undergirded it. Acting now as agents of emancipation, of law enforcement, and as the guarantors of black liberty, they represented the supremacy of the American state and its monopoly on the legitimate use of force. This vision was at odds with white notions of democracy and racial superiority. The

[70] Urwin, "We Cannot Treat Negroes … As Prisoners of War: Racial Atrocities and Reprisals in Civil War Arkansas," in *Black Flag Over Dixie: Racial Atrocities and Reprisals in the Civil War*(Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004),143-144.

[71] Urwin, *Black Flag Over Dixie*, 9.

[72] Foner, *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, 366.

experience of black soldiers on occupation duty thus demonstrates both the manner in which black soldiers continued to assert their manhood and citizenship as soldiers, but also the ambivalence of white Americans as they came to terms with the new conceptions of citizenship wrought by the war.

For white southerners, the sight of black soldiers marching through the ruins of the defeated Confederacy and serving as occupiers was nothing less than revolutionary. South Carolina planter Henry Ravenel wrote that in the months following Confederate defeat, black soldiers paraded through Aiken in their blue uniforms, espousing "threatening language" and displaying an anxiousness to take the lives of whites. Ravenel wrote with disgust how an off duty unit of black soldiers "went to the Baptist church this morning and insisted upon going into the body of the church where the white congregation sat." When they were refused entry, the men traveled to their encampment and returned with their rifles. Although the men did not enter, the church's parson decided to close the church for the afternoon. Ravenel could not help but ask himself if "there ever was such an outrage committed on any people by their own government?" The Union Army "knew full well the peculiar and intense sensitiveness of the whites as to social distinction." Yet, they had sent black soldiers **"**to disorganize and demoralize still more, our excited coloured population. A gang of diabolical savages sent here with arms in their hands to insult and degrade us. Is this the process by which brotherly love is to be infused through the Southern States?"[73] Ravenel imagined an American state still predicated on the notion of white racial supremacy. Under such a state, the presence of black soldiers would have been impossible and the North's disregard for southern racial mores incomprehensible. Instead, the war altered black soldiers' relationship to the American state. As soldiers they were conduits for its power

[73] Henry William Ravenel, *The Private Journal of Henry William Ravenel, 1859-1887* ed. Arney Robinson Childs (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1947), 227; Ibid, 245-6.

and strength, as well as symbols of its reconstituted and biracial nature. Ravenel could not comprehend this revolution.

Black soldiers also aroused fears of a Haitian-style slave uprising. To the white South, that long had seemed the logical outcome of the mass arming of black men and its concurrent ideological justification of black martial manhood. These fears peaked in the latter months of 1865, when wild rumors ran rampant throughout the former Confederacy that the region's black population would rise up at Christmas and slaughter their former masters. The presence of black soldiers exacerbated this anxiety. As Chad L. Williams has argued, although no uprising occurred, "the psychological endangerment they posed for white planters and former slaveholders was nevertheless real. As an accessible target of white hostility, black soldiers represented a perceived social, economic, and physical threat to Southern society in the wake of emancipation and the defeat of the Confederacy."[74]

White southerner Emma Holmes felt that threat. Her diary entries spoke to the great anxiety that swept over southerners after the war when every rumor took on the veneer of truth. She wrote with horror in 1865 how, "An extensive and well planned insurrection was gotten up among the negro troops, who were to destroy the Yankees in the forts, and the other negroes all the white men in the city, intending an African instead of Yankee colony. But it was discovered, and 100 ring leaders hung." Even the discovery and suppression of this supposed plot did little to allay Holmes's fears. After hearing of the murder of a neighbor by his slaves, and how the slaves supposedly dismembered their master in his barn, she wrote that "it is fearful to think of, for an instant, the foulest demoniac passions of the negro, hitherto so peaceful and happy, roused into

[74] Chad L. Williams, "Symbols of Freedom and Defeat: African American Soldiers, White Southerners, and the Christmas Insurrection Scare of 1865" in *Black Flag Over Dixie: Racial Atrocities and Reprisals in the Civil War*, ed. Gregory J.W. Urwin (Southern Illinois University Press, 2004), 211.

being and fierce activity by the devilish Yankees." Due to the interference of interloping white northerners and the freedmen's supposed mis-education in the army, Holmes lamented that "truly freedom down in the low country has passed from the Southerner to the negro, and our beloved city has become pandemonium."[75]

Ravenel also expressed his anxiety over the possibility of a black insurrection. Fretting over rumors of black violence, he wrote with disgust that one night, "some 60 or 70 of these savages armed with loaded muskets proceeded to Mrs. Gregorie's and fired several vollies into the house, wounding a young girl of 12 years a daughter of Mr. G's." Armed black men, posing a gendered threat to Gregorie and the masculine dominion of his home, "entered the house which they rifled and sacked." Only weeks later, Ravenel wrote with fear that discharged black soldiers had begun to roam the countryside, showing impudence toward white men and seeking retribution against them. In Charleston, Ravenel heard rumors that two discharged black soldiers murdered a man named B. S. Rhett for having previously ordered the veterans off of his property. The black Union veterans "waylaid Mr. Rhett with a double barrel shot gun and killed him as he was approaching his farm." In the antebellum era, such an act would have been unthinkable, but in the aftermath of the war, it was the logical result of black soldiering. Ravenel lamented that black men "were taught during the war that it was their duty to kill the whites and they can't learn now that he war is over. Their shooting propensities still continue strong, showing a tendency toward reversion to the savage state." This "savage state," of course, was in the eyes of many blacks the ability to claim their manhood and citizenship. Just as Frederick Douglass had achieved this through his exercise of violence before the war, the conflict had

[75] Emma Holmes, *The Diary of Miss Emma Holmes, 1861-1865 (*Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 442; Ibid, 455.

afforded black men the chance to experience this conversion themselves, a conversion that Ravenel found unnerving.[76]

The experience of the war and serving in the Union army, former Confederates feared, was permanent. Ravenel excoriated "the poor ignorant savages whom he had under him dressed in the uniform of the US army. Like a pack of wolves they are always ready for carnage and those to whom their keeping in command are morally responsible for such outrages. They were taught whilst the War was going on that the whites were their deadly enemies and now it behooves their leaders to unteach them."[77] Other South Carolinians fearfully noted the change as well. The *Yorkville Enquirer* wrote in 1865 that as black soldiers moved into the state on occupation duty, newly freed slaves viewed these men as the vanguards of a coming agrarian revolution that would facilitate their ascendance into the landowning class. The newspaper's editors warned that, **"**The colored garrisons, which were at one time stationed throughout the country, have done infinite mischief, by inducing the negroes to believe that all the lands of their former owners were to be divided out amongst them." The lingering disruptive presence of black soldiers "has made them discontented and unwilling to make contracts for the coming year. In many portions of the State, there are serious apprehensions of disturbances at the beginning of the next year. Strong garrisons ought to be continued in Charleston, Beaufort, and Georgetown, where there is such a preponderance of the negro population."[78]

Rumors of black depredations from afar – and the inability to confirm or deny them – fed into white southerners' persistent fear of an uprising. Ravenel took the United States government

[76] Ravenel, *The Private Journal of William Henry Ravenel*, 279; Ibid, 289.

[77] Ibid, 279.

[78] *Yorkville Enquirer*, November 2, 1865.

to task over the occupation of Charleston by black soldiers and their role in supposedly destabilizing the city as it experienced violence and racial tension in the summer months of 1865. Following an outbreak of violence in the city, he blamed blacks who had "thrust themselves in among the whites," and noted that "one negro fellow who struck and severely injured a white man for no provocation, was shot and killed." The seed of this aggression was the "atrocious policy of quartering the black troops over the country at the close of the war, to insult and degrade the whites, and to instill into the minds of the quiet and orderly disposed rural population, a bitter hostility, now showing itself in acts of violence." Ravenel lamented that such a policy of arming blacks and humiliating whites would only lead to "a war of races and utter extermination of the blacks."[79]

As Ravenel's musings indicate, black soldiers repeatedly invoked a deep sense of resentment among white southerners who refused to accept the legitimacy of black citizenship and Confederate defeat. This was particularly true in Memphis, where black veterans clashed with white Memphians and the city's police force. These confrontations spoke not only to renewed conflicts between national and state authority, but also the racial assumptions that now undergirded each. Put simply, if white southerners in Memphis regarded the city's police force as a manifestation of local authority and the notions of white supremacy that undergirded it, black soldiers on occupation duty embodied the power of the national state and, by their presence, the new biracialism that it entailed.

Black soldiers represented signs of freedom in myriad forms, but perhaps none more so than in their role as protectors of black civilians and families. The Memphis riot of May 1866 was precipitated by black soldiers both testing the new limits of their freedom and in

[79] Ravenel, *The Private Journal of William Henry Ravenel*, 287.

undermining the Memphis constabulary's attempts to police black neighborhoods. The Congressional committee investigating the riot confirmed that once the city's police attempted to detain a black man with the U.S.C.T. in the vicinity, black soldiers immediately surrounded the police and allegedly threatened to club and shoot them.[80] These threats compelled the city's white constabulary to open fire. Thereafter, witnesses testified that black soldiers and those who had recently been discharged retaliated. One discharged black veteran confirmed to Congress that "there was firing by the colored soldiers at the white people on South street; that four of them had muskets and fired them repeatedly; that they kept up a pretty brisk fire for some time; that they fired a volley at a group on horseback who had hoisted a black flag."[81] When others in the fort heard the commotion, they rushed into the city. A white Union officer recalled the eagerness of these black men to rush to the defense of their families and friends. When white assailants were "rushing on the colored people and driving them from their houses, defenceless men, women, and children – when the colored soldiers saw them running and crying murder, then they came up and demanded something to protect themselves with. They wanted the colonel to devise some means by which they could get some protection for their families, who they thought were all being murdered." These men then attempted to rush the fort's arsenal to obtain weapons, but they were subsequently barred by their commanding officer.[82]

Black soldiers also utilized their access to state-sanctioned violence and arms bearing to engage in a distinct politics of space. By patrolling the streets of Memphis with their arms and

---

[80] Steven V. Ash, *A Massacre in Memphis: The Race Riot That Shook the Nation One Year After the Civil War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2013), 68-89; Ibid, 93-99; House Select Committee on the Memphis Riots. *Memphis Riots and Massacres. July 25 1865*. 39th Cong., 1st sess., Rept. 101 (Washington, DC: The House, 1866), 7.

[81] Ibid, 195.

[82] Ibid, 218.

appropriating public spaces through militarized displays of pomp, black men asserted their freedom in terms that were both visible and provocative. Black soldiers on occupation duty expressed braggadocio in the streets and taunted white police officers with tales of their sexual exploits in the city's brothels. One white Memphis resident counseled Congress that in what was an "everyday occurrence" during occupation, black soldiers both on and off duty drank to excess, accosted the police with "abominable language," and frequently touted about visiting "whore-houses." These men enjoyed the vices and virtues that came with freedom.[83] Another white resident, a man who was sympathetic to black soldiers, confided to Congress that while black soldiers were less profane and crude than white southerners had claimed, they did use their authority as soldiers to drink in the streets and their blue uniforms as justification to subvert the South's socio-racial code of conduct. The man recalled that one black soldier left a squad of ten or fifteen of his comrades with whom he had been drinking, and happily wrapped his arms around a passing white man to give him a hug.[84] Black soldiers would walk past policemen on the streets and refuse to cede the sidewalk, often elbowing and jostling white men out of their way. One Memphis resident lamented to Congress that black soldiers used "obscene language" that was "not fit to be used by black or white." The language the man said was so vile, moreover, that he refuse to repeat it to Congress.[85] Another white Memphian related that he had observed black soldiers "going along the streets cursing and swearing and behaving themselves very badly, especially when they were met by several men in uniform. As they passed, I saw one of the negroes place his arms a-kimbo and put his hand on his pistol."[86] Although the war was over,

[83] Ibid, 127.

[84] Ibid, 192.

[85] Ibid, 130.

black men continued to test the boundaries of freedom through their military service, albeit in venues that were more civil than military. Occupation duty and the power that came with donning the blue uniform of the United States Army gave these black men political and social power. This included the opportunity to be disruptive, jejune, and even rude. It enabled them to act in a subversive manner and disrespect white Memphians in a way that had been unthinkable before the war. From engaging in drinking, visiting brothels, swearing, and using both ordinary and extraordinary violence in the streets, the blue uniform of the Union Army expanded the realm of public behavior possible for black men.

Soldiering had granted these men other freedoms that had been unthinkable under the guises of antebellum Herrenvolk democracy, but none more so than the ability to bear arms. Black men with guns represented an existential threat to white southerners. Guns embodied citizenship, self-defense, and an equality of access to violence that had been antithetical to the antebellum southern racial and social order. Black soldiers in Memphis repeatedly flaunted this new-found freedom and its implications for both their ability to claim citizenship and the important transformation wrought by the Civil War that conflated political and social power with access to violence. Prior to July of 1866, black soldiers casually walked through the city with their weapons. Dr. Robert White, a northerner residing in Memphis, testified before Congress that black soldiers who were both on and off-duty frequented the streets of Memphis armed. Their behavior spanned the full spectrum of propriety and impropriety, sometimes being "as good as it could be, and sometimes a little ugly."[87] The latter certainly resonated with white citizens, and this was amplified when black men behaved in a manner that belied the

[86] Ibid, 132.

[87] Ibid, 164.

presuppositions of white supremacy. Not only did White recall that black men shot back during the riot itself, but that they frequently drew their weapons in the ordinary, day-to-day run-ins and exchanges of insults they experienced with white Memphians.

White southerners were well aware of what the presence of armed black soldiers meant. Black men now functioned as agents of the American state and emancipation. As such, they were emboldened to assert their new social and political prerogatives in a way that whites found exceedingly offensive. A white commander of a black regiment stationed in Memphis recalled the animosity that the soldiers aroused, telling Congress that, "the police of this town have felt very much hatred against the colored people, and colored soldiers especially. They did not like to see them wearing the United States uniform and carrying a musket." In response, white Memphians attempted to disarm these very same black men. The same officer remembered how a man who had been on duty, "carrying a gun over his right shoulder, and a policeman has come along and said, 'good evening,' and the next instant hit him over the head." He then attempted to confiscate the soldier's rifle. The police officer did not succeed and the black man fled. Nevertheless, the Union commander mused that had the weapon been loaded, he had no doubt that the black soldier would have fired.[88] Such instances speak to the destructive power that violence, gun ownership, and soldiering had as each eroded the foundation of Herrenvolk democracy.

In spite of the ideological power of arms bearing – and indeed, perhaps because of it – the army in Memphis disarmed black men as they were mustered out of the service. Union commanders believed that doing so would ameliorate racial tensions in the city. In doing so, however, the same army that had conquered the Confederacy and given black men a means to claim their manhood and citizenship unwittingly stripped them of the very tools they needed to

[88] Ibid, 218.

continue to reassert these claims. This assisted the inchoate conservative white insurgency that had begun to form in Memphis. In an ironic twist, the Union policy of confiscating black men's weapons preceded – and perhaps anticipated – the attempts of conservative white southerners to strip African Americans of their other recently secured political and social freedoms.

If this was the first stage in a counterrevolution against emancipation, the political revolution that black soldiering inaugurated remained significant. As one editorial in Memphis stated following that city's riot:

> For months past acts of violence, bloodshed, and murder have been too common; but they have almost always had some direct connection with the negro troops stationed here. Time and time again, stores have been broken open and plundered, and white men shot down in our city by drunken, brutal negro soldiers; and we have yet to hear the first instance when punishment followed the crime. We readily grant that it was often, in fact always, impossible to identify the offenders, as the crimes were generally committed after dark. We only speak of the facts, however; and believing that negro troops were their prime cause, our citizens again and again petitioned that they should be removed. In all these cases of violence the officers of the law had been left to vindicate the law and protect the rights of the people, whose peace and quiet they were sworn to protect. The citizens themselves took no part in all of these altercations, and hence the negro soldiers began to believe that they could manage things their own way. The idea of insolence culminated Tuesday evening, and they became engaged in a fatal altercation with the police. Then, for the first time, our citizens took part in the fight; and the negroes now know, to their sorrow, that it is best not to arouse the

> fury of the white man. Such a thing as a riot never occurred in Memphis till these negro troops came among us to teach us manners; and, from the lessons these brutes have lately received, we think it will be many days before a riot will occur here again. The negro population of Memphis – the draymen, hackmen, porters, servants of all kinds – are as respectful and kindly in their in their deportment as they ever were. With these, save in the rare instances, our people would never have trouble. It is only with the negro soldiers that trouble has ever existed.[89]

When Lincoln elevated emancipation to one of the Union's war aims and began the process of enlisting black men and transforming them into soldiers, southern politician Howell Cobb worried that "If slaves make good soldiers, our theory is wrong."[90] Herrenvolk democracy and the project of maintaining a southern body politic based on white supremacy assumed, among other things, that black men did not possess the same prerogatives to institutionalized violence as white men. By expanding and democratizing access to institutional violence, soldiering in the U.S.C.T. indeed gave African Americans a counterpoint to anti-black racism and a means to prove their worthiness as soldiers, men, and citizens. James Brisbin, a white officer commanding a unit of black cavalry would have concurred. "Go now black soldiers to your homes and become orderly, sober, and industrious citizens," he counseled his men at the end of the war. Having proven their worth to the country as soldiers, he assured them that "When the Government needs your services again it will call for you and you will come." They would do so, he assured his audience, because by serving the state as soldiers, black men had earned their place in a new, biracial republic of their own creation. This much was evident in "the flag

---

[89] Ibid, 334.

[90] Eric Foner, *Forever Free: The Story of Emancipation and Reconstruction*(New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 55.

that now floats over us," which was "as much yours as it is mine." As a result of their new citizenship, Brisbin implored his men that they now "must at all times be ready to defend it." "Be as loyal to it in the future," he pleaded, "as you have been in the past. Teach your children to love it as you have loved it, to fight for it as you have fought for it, and if necessary to die for it."[91] Brisbin spoke these words as a farewell of sorts, but they would also prove prophetic. Black men would have to mobilize yet again. When they did so, however, they would not be defending the American republic that they had fought to both protect and earn a place in, but rather the premises on which they could claim citizenship within this republic. As the Civil War ended, a revolt against the war's uneasy peace began to metastasize.

[91] Noah Andre Trudeau, "Proven Themselves in Every Respect to be Men: Black Cavalry in the Civil War," in *Black Soldiers in Blue*, ed. John David Smith (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 298.

Chapter 2: White Political Violence, Citizenship, and Manhood in the Long Civil War Era

Access to institutional violence was integral to how white men perceived their relationship to the state as men and citizens in the nineteenth-century South. State-sanctioned violence and the institutions through which white southerners practiced it were expressions of the larger ideological assumptions that undergirded the political and social power structures of the white South. Throughout the mid-nineteenth century, a succession of organizations emerged that provided white men with the means to exercise violence against African Americans in a way that reified Herrenvolk democracy and justified their claims to political power.

This chapter charts the changes and continuities evident in white institutional violence throughout the mid-nineteenth century. It reveals how and why institutional violence proved malleable over time, describes the institutions white southerners created to express their views of citizenship and manhood, and explains the roles these institutions played in the larger struggle to define the relationship between race, manhood, and citizenship in the uncertain years that followed the Civil War. In particular, it illuminates that while white southerners proved adept at creating a variety of institutions that granted them access to legal and extralegal means of utilizing violence against blacks, their institutions were marked by an overriding sense of continuity. All were grounded in a common ideological precept: that access to violence at the expense of African Americans defined white political equality and manhood.

******

The state-sanctioned nature of white violence is critical to understanding how and why white men looked to it to define themselves as men and citizens. Institutional violence provided an auxiliary means of buttressing planters' interpersonal authority over the enslaved. State legal codes played an important role in legitimizing planters' authority over their chattel, in that they

defined them as property and protected planters' right to their property. Violence enforced the laws that codified and perpetuated the subservient position of African Americans in southern society. Institutional violence thus represented a crucial enforcement mechanism for the slave regime.[1] Moreover, in addition to creating the universe of violence and fear that made slavery possible, it also ensured the theoretical political equality of southern whites. Collective violence reproduced the South's racial hierarchy by proffering poor and middling men a means of expressing their whiteness and racial solidarity on common ground and with one another. State-sanctioned violence was thus a leveling mechanism among white men, one that symbolized their political equality. In effect, by democratizing the ability to participate in anti-black violence, these institutions provided the sinew of Herrenvolk democracy.

The militia was one such institution. Beginning in the seventeenth century, North American colonists looked to it as a means for collective defense, social cohesion, and identity formation. In their many wars against Native Americans and other European powers, English colonists grew to rely on militia companies to defend their homes and firesides against external threats.[2] Militia companies took on a particular English character in the way that they symbolized the efficacy of English political institutions and the strengths of a free citizenry in a world rhetorically fraught with despotism, whether that be godless Native Americans on the frontiers of the empire or threats from absolutist French and Spanish Catholics. Although the militia became ineffectual following the introduction of British regulars into North America, it continued to hold symbolic value. Militia musters and training days remained important

[1] Ariella Gross, *Double Character: Slavery and Mastery in the Antebellum Southern Courtroom* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006).

[2] For more on the militia in the colonial and early national periods see Lawrence Cress, *Citizens in Arms: The Army and the Militia in American Society to the War of 1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982); William Shea, *The Virginia Militia in the 17th Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983); John Grenier, *The First Way of War: American War Making on the Frontier, 1607-1814* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

communal events throughout the later colonial years. One study of militia training days in New England has argued that musters provided a means for colonists of disparate social classes to come together, create a sense of community, and act out a common martial identity. In a world marked by instability and uncertainty, the sense of order provided by the militia was not insignificant.[3]

In the southern colonies – and later the southern states – the development of the militia mirrored that of the rest of the country, but those institutions also reflected the slave society from which they were drawn. In particular, the militia continued to provide a sense of social cohesion in a society marked by significant social and racial stratification. As Stephanie McCurry has shown in her study of South Carolina yeomen, periodic militia musters provided a space where men of like-minded politics could join together to debate, banter, and discuss current affairs. These meetings also illuminated the mixture of class hierarchy and racial solidarity that characterized the antebellum South. According to McCurry, musters "brought yeomen and planters together as freemen, as citizen soldiers, and then arranged them hierarchically, as planter officers and yeoman troops, as planter politicians and yeoman voters." The militia thus bound southern white men together as a common body politic based on racial exclusion, republican citizenship, and manhood.[4]

To the extent that militia companies were organized in the South, they took on a character that was specific to a slave society and became one means of enforcing the strictures of the slave regime. In the South Carolina county of Edgefield, for example, the state organized the militia in "beats" that were consistent with the number of magistrates in a particular county. In Edgefield

[3] Marie Ahearn, *The Rhetoric of War: Training Day, the Militia, and the Military Sermon* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989) 1-6.

[4] Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 265-271.

alone there were 3,000 men eligible for militia service out of a total white population of around 15,000. Divided into three regiments, men in the militia armed themselves with their own weapons and "turned out once or twice a year" for review. With African Americans claiming a slight majority in the county, men in the militia immediately provided a physical and psychological force that helped ensure the stability of the slave system. In the event of a slave rebellion, the militia provided a means of defense and of policing the South's enemy-from-within, its slave population.[5]

Even more so than antebellum militia companies, slave patrols represented an important expression of white citizenship and manhood, as well as an enforcement mechanism that provided some of the physical compulsion that was necessary for the maintenance of a slave regime. Originating in the eighteenth century and coming to maturation during the early national period, slave patrols were a reaction to both the growth of the southern slave population and, after 1791, whites' fear of a Haitian-style slave revolt.[6] As such, militarized slave patrols provided an institutional means to enforce the legal strictures of the slave regime by acting as its eyes, ears, and dispenser of discipline.

Francis Fredric, an escaped slave who recorded his experiences in bondage, spoke to the military character of the patrols. He wrote that every year "ten white men are chosen, who are called patrols; they are sworn-in at the court-house, and their special duty is to go to the Negro cabins for the purpose of searching them to see whether any slaves are there without a pass or permit from their masters." Fredric noted that the leader took the title of captain and had

[5] U.S. Congress, Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States, *Testimony Taken by the Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States* Vol. III – South Carolina (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1872), 1205. Cited hereafter as *South Carolina KKK Report*.

[6] Sally Hadden, *Slave Patrols: Law and Violence in Virginia and the Carolinas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

expansive authority over the men in his command.[7] Squads punished slaves who committed infractions ranging from the mundane to the spectacular, including gathering for religious worship, attaining educational instruction, or simply being away from their plantation without a pass. The jurisdiction of patrols even extended to free black men who joined in clandestine meetings with slaves. Slave patrols were the pickets manning the front line of planters' constant battle with their chattel and ensured that slaves remained in a state of unfreedom. Former slaves wrote of the horror of roving slave patrols and how poor white men relished the opportunity patrols provided them to punish black men. Solomon Northup remembered that patrols' ability to "seize and whip" black men was nearly absolute. Whenever they came across an escaped slave, they exercised "the right, either by law, or by general consent, to inflict discretionary chastisement upon a black man caught beyond the boundaries of his master's estate without a pass, and even to shoot him."[8]

Far from merely providing an enforcement mechanism for the slave regime, however, they also instilled in white men a sense of community. Slaves who recorded their experiences recalled how these institutions drew widespread support among poorer whites and created incentives for such men to comply with and enforce the dictates of the slave regime. In some cases, southern law shielded patrollers from being sued by masters who incurred property

[7] Francis Fedric, *Slave Life in Virginia and Kentucky; or Fifty Years of Slavery in the Southern States of America* (London: Wertheim, Macintosh, and Hunt, 1863), 29. A digitized version of this narrative is available via the University of North Carolina's Documenting the America South project. URL: http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/fedric/fedric.html.

[8] Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years A Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup, A Citizen of New-York, Kidnapped in Washington City in 1841 and Rescued in 1853, From a Cotton Plantation Near the Red River in Louisiana* (Buffalo: Derby, Orton and Mulligan, 1853), 237. A digitized version of this narrative is available via the University of North Carolina's Documenting the America South project. URL: http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/northup/northup.html.

damage from the whippings and beatings that their slaves endured.[9] Although poor white men might not own slaves and could not claim social authority on par with that of the planter class, membership in slave patrols did provide them with a type of social power and access to violence that, at least temporarily, overrode the property rights of elite planters and democratized anti-black violence.

In Louisiana, where poor Acadians populated slave patrols, the white underclass relished the opportunity to punish wayward black men and women. One former slave remembered them as "the meanest things in creation; they were poor, low down white folks, that descended from a French and Spanish mixture. They had no slaves themselves, and so they just took pleasure in patrolling the public roads so as to get to whip somebody else's slaves that happened to be out without a pass."[10] Freedman Henry Bruce remembered that "Patrol duty was always performed by the poor whites, who took great pride in the whipping of a slave, just as they do now in lynching a Negro….They whipped some slaves so unmercifully that their masters' attention was called to it, so that they met and issued an order to patrols, that in punishing a slave captured no skin should be broken nor blood brought out by the lash." Patrollers circumvented those strictures by instead targeting the slaves of white masters who condoned excessive violence. Such was the satisfaction that many poor white men derived from targeting slaves that Bruce

[9] William Wells Brown, *Narrative of William W. Brown, an American Slave* (London: C. Gilpin, 1849), 155. A digitized version of this narrative is available via the University of North Carolina's Documenting the America South project. URL: http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/brownw/menu.html.

[10] Octavia V. Rogers Albert, *The House of Bondage or Charlotte Brooks and Other Slaves, Original and Life-like, as They Appeared in Their Old Plantation and City Slave Life; Together with Pen-pictures of the Peculiar Institution, with Sights and Insights into Their new Relations as Freedmen, Freemen, and Citizens* (New York: Hunt and Eaton, 1890), 106. A digitized version of this narrative is available via the University of North Carolina's Documenting the America South project. URL: http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/albert/albert.html.

remembered how some white men formed extra-legal slave patrols to stalk black men simply for sport.[11]

Southern slave patrols also allowed white men to express their masculinity through sexual violence. Patrollers used their authority to prey on married black women and undermine the sexual prerogatives of their husbands. Sexual violence was hardly uncommon on plantations, to be sure. Contemporary observers and historians alike have recorded how white masters abused African American women. In order to escape the plantation, slaves often temporarily absconded for the purpose of conducting dances and celebrations away from the scrutiny of their owners.[12] When patrollers uncovered these gatherings, slaves recorded how they not only whipped absentee slaves and returned them to their plantation, but also that they used their authority to employ gendered violence against black women. Henry Bruce recorded one such instance after the war. He wrote that "In the fall of 1859 there was a dance given at Col. Ewing's farm, to which several young men and girls were invited and attended; most of them had passes except four girls, who had failed to secure them. The patrols came about twelve o'clock that night and surrounded the house, allowing those having passes to go free, and were preparing to whip the four girls who had none, right there in the presence of their beaux, who were powerless to protect them."[13] The ex-slave Samuel Hall recalled a similar incident. He wrote that a patrol "came into our place of enjoyment" to "drive and whip the husbands away from their wives and use those same women for their own pleasure." Such was the extent of the sexual violence against enslaved women that Hall estimated that "one-third of said children would probably have white

[11] Henry Bruce, *The New Man: Twenty-Nine Years a Slave; Twenty-Nine Years a Free Man* (York, Pa.: P. Anstadt and Sons, 1895), 96. A digitized version of this narrative is available via the University of North Carolina's Documenting the America South project. URL: http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/bruce/bruce.html.

[12] Stephanie Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

[13] Henry Bruce, *The New Man*, 97.

fathers and the very one that was patroled out to keep the negro in his place would often be the father to some of these children."[14]

Militia companies and slave patrols were institutions that defined the meaning of citizenship and manhood for white southerners. As instruments of law enforcement, they enforced the legal strictures of southern slave society and utilized state violence to buttress planters' authority over their slaves. As instruments of social cohesion, they ameliorated class differences between white men by providing poor whites with an ideological incentive to invest in the slave regime and to secure their own complicity and equality within it. Finally, they served to create racialized notions of masculinity in that they granted poor white men the authority to utilize sexual violence against black women while emasculating black men. Slave patrols thus reflected and perpetuated the ideological underpinnings of antebellum Herrenvolk democracy by creating a body politic predicated on equality based on whiteness and violence.

******

Viewed within the context of service in slave patrols and, to a lesser extent, antebellum state militia companies, it is easy to see why Confederate soldiers unleashed excessive violence during the war when they encountered black soldiers on the battlefield. It was a learned behavior that was both culturally acceptable and an ideological necessity insofar as maintaining racial hierarchy was concerned. Scholars who have examined the motivations of Confederate soldiers have found that as a form of initial, sustaining, and combat motivation, race-hatred proved especially potent in galvanizing white southerners. Racial slavery inculcated white southerners with a sense of liberty, white equality, manhood, and the hope of economic mobility and

[14] Samuel Hall, *The Life of Samuel Hall, 47 Years a Slave; A Brief Story of His Life Before and After Freedom Came to Him* (Washington, IA.: Journal Print, 2012), 29; Ibid, 28. A digitized version of this narrative is available via the University of North Carolina's Documenting the America South project. URL: http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/hall/hall.html.

security.[15] Whether they were slaveholders or not, white southerners' sense of being and identity was implicated in the perpetuation of white supremacy. The Union's arming of African Americans therefore posed an existential threat to the very basis on which white southern men claimed citizenship. When black men not only attempted to exercise state-sanctioned violence but did so against their former masters, Confederates acted with predictable rage and a lack of restraint that the victims of antebellum slave patrols – and postwar militias and the Klan – would have found familiar. As Chapter 1 demonstrated, combat had a deep meaning for African American soldiers and an observant northern public that was undecided on the usefulness of black combat units. Equally important, however, were what these encounters meant to Confederate soldiers. If being killed and massacred – albeit bravely – proved black men's fitness for citizenship, killing and exercising unmitigated violence against a perceived slave insurrection fulfilled the same function for Confederate soldiers. This was consistent with white southerners' view of citizenship that defined their sense of belonging in a Herrenvolk democracy and their status as men with the ability to wield violence against African Americans. Viewed in this light, there was remarkable continuity between the logic of slave patrols and that of the Confederate soldiers who faced the U.S.C.T.[16]

When Confederate soldiers met the U.S.C.T. and other blacks on the battlefield, pitched battles often metastasized into ugly racial massacres that were more akin to murder than war. As one Confederate wrote home shortly after word spread the Union would begin using black

[15] For the role that race and racism played in motivating Confederate soldiers see: Reid Mitchell, *Civil War Soldiers* (New York: Viking, 1988); James McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Kenneth W. Noe, *Reluctant Rebels: The Confederates Who Joined the Army After 1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Joseph Glatthaar, *General Lee's Army: From Victory to Collapse* (New York: Free Press, 2008); Chandra Manning, *What This Cruel War Was Over: Soldiers, Slavery, and the American Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007).

[16] Kevin Levin, *Remembering the Battle of the Crater: War as Murder* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2012), 19-32.

soldiers, "I hope I may never see a Negro Soldier, or I cannot be … a Christian Soldier."[17] The entrance of black soldiers into combat in 1863 induced a sense of rage that was informed by the antebellum logic that linked exercising violence to defining race and freedom. White Confederates responded with extreme measures that were not just rooted in the universe of plantation violence that permeated the Old South, but that were twisted mutations that grew from the exigencies of war. At Poison Spring, Arkansas, for example, Confederate cavalrymen sprang an ambush on a Union supply train guarded by the 1st Kansas Colored Volunteer Infantry Regiment. One southerner remembered that after the engagement the field was strewn with the contorted bodies and mutilated corpses of black soldiers who had been scalped and stripped of their clothing. Such was the carnage that one man remarked that the bodies were "so thick that you could walk on them." As white Confederates combed the battlefield after the fighting, they searched for wounded black soldiers to execute. Other wounded men found themselves crushed by the wagons that were removed from the ambush, with Confederates in competition with one another to see who could trample and crush "nigger heads."[18]

Rather than following prescribed norms of how to deal with prisoners of war, in other words, Confederates who came into contact with black soldiers treated them as they would have treated insurrectionists. Stationed in the Western theatre, the 3rd United States Colored Cavalry often faced "victory or death" in its engagements, as Confederate cavalrymen often stalked black soldiers following pitched battles and murdered them "without mercy." Post-battle roll calls often spoke to the attrition of white racial violence on black soldiers. Colonel Jason H. Coates,

[17] Anne J. Bailey, "A Texas Cavalry Raid: Reaction to Black Soldiers and Contrabands," in *Black Flag Over Dixie: Racial Atrocities and Reprisals in the Civil War*, ed. Gregory J.W. Urwin (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004), 20.

[18] Gregory J.W. Urwin, "We Cannot Treat Negroes as Prisoners of War": Racial Atrocities and Reprisals in Civil War Arkansas," in *Black Flag Over Dixie: Racial Atrocities and Reprisals in the Civil War*, ed. Gregory J.W. Urwin (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004), 135.

.

for example, protested to Confederate Brigadier General L.S. Ross that after a skirmish with his Texas unit, "19 of my command (colored) were missing; since then 6 of the number have been found, presenting every appearance of having been brutally abused, and compelling me to arrive at the conclusion that they had been murdered after having been taken prisoners."[19] To the Confederate mind, these men were not soldiers and prisoners. They were escaped slaves at best and insurrectionists at worst, and they were dealt with summarily.

Confederates rationalized this violence through the matrixes of gender and race. One Confederate officer recalled in his report of the massacre at Poison Spring that after examining the supply train the Confederates found "little children's and women's clothing" that had ostensibly been stolen from civilians. Sorting through "little baby frocks, shoes, stockings, women's bonnets, shawls and cloaks" piqued the ire of Confederate soldiers who not only were fighting to defend hearth and home, but who had rendered their own homes vulnerable to northern raiders by joining the Confederate army.[20] And while the onset of a "hard war" strategy on behalf of the Union army was particularly offensive, a "hard war" carried out by black men conjured up visions of a gendered and racial apocalypse. White southern men's sense of self and citizenship rested upon the domination of households filled with women, children, and often, slaves. Black soldiers making war on white homes represented a stark inversion and threat to this order that provoked many Confederate soldiers to lash out with grotesque rage.

Soldiers and newspaper editors across the South sought to justify these new standards by arguing that the nature of the war had changed, and not because of them. The *Arkansas Gazette*

---

[19] Edward Main, *The Story of the Marches, Battles and Incidents of the Third United States Colored Cavalry: A Fighting Regiment in the War of the Rebellion, 1861-5* (New York: Negro University Press, 1908), 115; Ibid, 131.

[20] John M. Harrell, "Arkansas," in *Confederate Military History* Vol. 10, ed. Clement A. Evans (Seacaucus, N.J.: Blue and Grey, 1975), 250.

contended that a "savage war has been forced upon us. We will have to meet, and deal with it as we find it." The only response to this challenge was war by the black flag. As another journalist argued, "we cannot treat negroes taken in arms as prisoners of war without a destruction of the social system for which we contend. In this we must be firm, uncompromising, and unfaltering. We must claim that full control of all negroes who fall into our hands, to punish with death, or any other penalty, or remand to their owners. If the enemy retaliates, we must do likewise; and if the black flag follows, the blood be upon their heads."[21] This was the logic of plantation violence translated into military policy. A policy of unchecked violence toward the black men who sought to overturn the plantation system was the logical conclusion for a nation where violence defined manhood and citizenship in racialized terms. Not unlike the free rein given to slave patrols and planters over the South's chattel, this policy assumed the right of white men to exercise unmitigated violence against black men.

This same logic came to fruition in the more visible theaters of the war as well. At Fort Pillow in Tennessee, a command led by Nathan Bedford Forrest enveloped a biracial garrison along the Mississippi River, and after storming the fort's ramparts and forcing its defenders to flee to the banks of the river, proceeded to massacre surrendering soldiers. Confederate soldiers taunted the men of the U.S.C.T., many of whom were former slaves, with cries of "Damn you, you are fighting against your master" and "Kill all the niggers." What historian Albert Castel described as an "outburst of racial antagonism" drew upon a deep wellspring of racial ideology that linked white power and black subjugation to the free use of violence against blacks.[22]

---

[21] Urwin, "We Cannot Treat Negroes as Prisoners of War," 140.

[22] Albert Castel, "The Fort Pillow Massacre: An Examination of the Evidence," in *Black Flag Over Dixie: Racial Atrocities and Reprisals in the Civil War,* ed. Gregory J.W. Urwin (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004), 97-98.

This scene was replicated nearly three months later in Virginia at the infamous Battle of the Crater. Under the direction of Major General Ambrose Burnside, the Union army attempted to break the stalemate around Petersburg, Virginia by tunneling under the Confederate field works, planting explosives, and then exploiting the breach in the Confederate line. One of the divisions charged with exploiting the breach belonged to Brigadier General Edward Ferrero, which included black soldiers. Due to poor planning, Ferrero's men struggled to navigate the impression left in the ground by the explosion. Their lines left broken and mangled, they were met by the division of Confederate Major General William Mahone. His men responded to the sight of black soldiers with predictable rage. Historian Kevin Levin has described the Confederate reaction to Ferrero's men as "cathartic" and informed by the perception that black soldiers "fell outside the boundary of ordinary rules of warfare." Mahone's men shot defenseless or surrendering black soldiers and, when engaged in hand-to-hand combat, happily used their bayonets and rifle butts to bludgeon and stab black soldiers into submission. Those who surrendered were taken to the rear and executed thereafter. The Battle of the Crater and its aftermath looked less like war than it did suppressing a slave rebellion by any means necessary.[23]

******

With the fall of the Confederacy, white southerners sought to create new institutions through which they could maintain the South's racial hierarchy in a post-emancipation world while affirming their own claims to citizenship via collective violence. At this point, it is useful to briefly consider how to classify postwar violence, and especially in the years between 1865 and 1870, a period when political violence took on a particularly amorphous nature. The recent trend among historians of Reconstruction is to characterize this violence variously as an

[23] Levin, *Remembering the Battle of the Crater*, 25-27.

insurgency, terroristic, as guerrilla warfare, or otherwise as a continuation of the Civil War itself- a "Long Civil War."[24] These labels are inadequate for historians who seek to understand this violence in its totality, across the broad chronology of Reconstruction, and as it existed in the South writ large rather than in single states or localities. This debate, moreover, extends far beyond semantics. The appropriateness of these labels speaks not only to how historians understand – and misunderstand - the basis for Reconstruction violence in the years that spanned the months immediately following Confederate defeat in 1865 to the abatement of Ku Klux Klan violence, but more importantly, they obscure the institutional basis for this violence and what it meant for how white southerners sought to navigate the terrain of postwar Reconstruction politics.[25]

Those historians who would argue that white southerners conducted an insurgency against Reconstruction do bring powerful testimony to bear to support their claims. As historian Gregory Downs has demonstrated, the conditions of war persisted even after the collapse of the Confederacy. The United States Army and Congress continued to exercise war powers into 1871 for the purpose of buttressing national authority, enforcing emancipation, and reintroducing the southern states back into the Union. Studies at the state level operate under a similar assumption that the conditions of war persisted in one way or another after 1865. James Hogue and Richard Zuczek both have shown that white southerners pursued well-orchestrated campaigns against

[24] Mark Grimsley, "Wars for the American South: The First and Second Reconstructions Considered as Insurgencies," *Civil War History* Vol. 58 (March 2012): 6-36.

[25] The remainder of this chapter focuses on the years between 1865 and 1870. I believe that anti-black violence during these years took on a character that was different than the violence of 1874-1876. In particular, violence in the latter half of the 1860s sought to restore southern race relations as close as possible to those of the antebellum world through existing institutional apparatuses. In this sense, they looked far more to the past in an attempt to recover a lost world than they did to the future in the sense that they wanted to continue the Civil War through an insurgency. On the other hand, the paramilitary violence of the mid-1870s, with its military structure, strategy, tactics, and clear political goals looked far more like an insurgency, and thus it is dealt with separately in Chapter 6.

Reconstruction that targeted the freedpeople and their northern allies.[26] In the end, violence played a decisive role in ending Reconstruction in a number of states. Although the Confederacy failed as a nation, many white southerners continued to pursue the racial and political goals that the Confederacy embodied.

Yet, the language, terminology, and assumptions that historians rely on to describe Reconstruction fail to adequately convey the full spectrum of violence in the postwar era and, more importantly, its root causes. As historian and political commentator Max Boot has written, labels such as "insurgent," "terrorist," and "guerrilla," are inherently politicized; they can be terms of abuse employed by counterterrorism units or, alternatively, terms of endearment for supposed freedom fighters. Nor do these terms necessarily account for the historical specificity of different modes of wartime violence. As Robert Mackey has argued, Civil War violence spanned a spectrum between the regular and irregular and was fought by conventional and unconventional forces, from formal armies to partisan rangers units, guerrillas, and criminal brigands.[27] White institutional violence during and after the war drifted between each of these classifications. Given its amorphous nature, none of these labels used in isolation accurately describes the broad spectrum of white violence and its myriad institutionalized forms. Boot, for example, defines terrorism as "the use of violence by nonstate actors directly primarily against noncombatants in order to intimidate or coerce them and change their government's policies or

[26] Gregory Downs, *After Appomattox: Military Occupation and the Ends of War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 1-6; Douglas Egerton, *The Wars of Reconstruction: The Brief, Violent History of America's Most Progressive Era* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014); James Hogue, *Uncivil War: Five New Orleans Street Battles and the Rise and Fall of Radical Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 9-13; Richard Zuczek, *State of Rebellion: Reconstruction in South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 1-6.

[27] Robert R. Mackey, *The Uncivil War: Irregular Warfare in the Upper South, 1861-1865* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 1-8.

composition."[28] This certainly applies to extra-legal groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, which systematically targeted Republican officials, voters, and the freedpeople. It fails, however, to describe the postbellum southern state militias – which were state actors - that preceded the Klan and that used many of the same tactics, drew upon the same members, and sprang from the same institutional tradition. Moreover, although lynching falls outside of the purview of this study, even in their quasi-institutional and *ad hoc* nature, lynch mobs also sprang from the same ideological devotion to white supremacy that animated the varied forms of white institutional violence that existed across the Civil War era.[29]

Likewise, Boot defines guerrilla warfare as "the use of hit-and-run tactics by an armed group directed primarily against a government and its security forces for political or religious reasons." After the war, white southerners did rely on such tactics, but they were often directed towards the freedpeople, Republican-sympathizers, and state government officials. Yet, for the most part, the 1860s witnessed no planned, orchestrated, or coherent insurgency against the forces and officials of the United States itself, save for the actions of various bandits and criminals who, by their very nature, do not fit the label of insurgent. Boot notes further that guerrillas eschew conventional, set-piece battles. Yet, if one looks to the South Carolina Klansmen that attacked a Republican militia company in Laurens County in 1870, the battles between the Arkansas militia and Klan in the 1870s, and the Crescent City White League and its assault on the Louisiana militia and Metropolitan Police at the Battle of Liberty Place, one finds that white southerners did engage in pitched battles against the security forces of local and state

[28] Max Boot, *Invisible Armies: An Epic History of Guerrilla Warfare from Ancient Times to the Present* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008), xxii.

[29] W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 159.

Republican governments.[30] To the extent that white southerners conducted an insurgency in the postwar years, it might have been one that resisted the goals of the national government, but it rarely in the 1860s engaged in any systematic and centrally directed violence against the national government itself and its principal institution in the South – the Union army. While this insurgency did target and seek to overthrow Republican state governments, the fact that it was limited to state and local politics speaks to its inchoate nature.

None of this is to say that these terms should never be used to describe Reconstruction violence. This dissertation does employ them, but only as specifically and intentionally as possible. In examining white violence, however, its purpose is broader. Rather than defining postwar white violence in terms of whether it was an extension of the Civil War, this chapter instead emphasizes an approach that frames postwar violence through the institutions from which it was practiced. To characterize postwar white violence only as an insurgency ignores the extent to which it was grounded in a strong sense of institutional continuity that looked to the past and a desire to recreate the antebellum racial order based on antebellum institutions far more than it looked to the future to continue fighting the Civil War itself. Amidst the destruction of the Confederacy, the instability of southern states governments, and the socio-political upheaval wrought by emancipation, white southerners' sense of order and political subjectivity faced serious challenges. Black freedom and black arms bearing posed existential threats to Herrenvolk democracy and white men's sense of themselves as political actors and as men. To meet these challenges, they sought out institutional violence for the purpose of reconstructing their fractured sense of citizenship and to impose order on a world that was increasingly marked by disorder. They did not exercise violence as a means of forming an organized insurgency to resist Union

[30] Ibid.

occupation or the North's military victory, but instead to recreate as much as possible a world that had been lost. The antebellum state militias and slave patrols that had granted white southerners access to institutional violence were the direct forerunners to – and in fact the midwives of – postbellum organizations such as state militias, municipal police forces, and the Ku Klux Klan. These were new institutional manifestations of ancient and long-standing racial and political precepts regarding white supremacy and the efficacy of institutional violence in maintaining it. Understood correctly, postwar white violence between 1865 and 1870 was part of a longer process of institutional adaptation and continuity amidst changing political circumstances that both preceded the Civil War and continued after Reconstruction.

******

However one wishes to define the violence of the postwar era, the summer and fall months of 1865 were marked by disorder as recalcitrant Confederate veterans returned home from the war. In Memphis, Major General George Stoneman noted that Confederate veterans maintained a sense of intransigence and without the military in the South, it would be impossible to maintain law and order.[31] In northern Mississippi, another Union officer declared that the state existed in a "state of social and political anarchy." Violence and recriminations between black and white Mississippians manifested across the state, with neither race understanding how to move forward in a world without slavery.[32] With the Union army unable to maintain control over every corner of the South, and with the plantation having disintegrated as an organizing principle

[31] U.S. Cong. House. House Select Committee on the Memphis Riots. *Memphis Riots and Massacres. July 25 1865*. 39th Cong., 1st sess. Rept. 101 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1866), 268. Cited hereafter as *Memphis Riots*.

[32] U.S. Cong. Senate. *Message of the President of the United States, communicating, in compliance with a resolution of the Senate of the 12th instant, information in relation to the States of the Union lately in rebellion, accompanied by a report of Carl Schurz on the states of South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana*. By Andrew Johnson, Carl Schurz, and Ulysses S. Grant. 30th Cong., 1st sess. Doc. 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1865), 74-75. Cited hereafter *Information in Relation to the States of the Union Lately in Rebellion*.

for racial and labor relations, armed bands of "regulators" began to form almost immediately in southern towns and counties.[33] These bands, much like antebellum slave patrols, assumed the task of imposing racial order and hierarchy on a world that appeared to be crumbling under the auspices of emancipation. In northern Mississippi, patrols cordoned blacks on plantations and told them they might have been "free during the war, but the war is now over, and they must go back to work again as before."[34] In Louisiana, one Union officer stated that planters, in spite of emancipation, hoped that immediately after the war they would impose on African Americans a highly circumscribed form of serfdom. Yet, when the Freedmen's Bureau did not provide planters with the autonomy to establish labor relations on their own terms, the South's landed class became "disappointed and dissatisfied."[35] The panacea to this labor upheaval was the informal re-imposition of a regime that was in all but name a reformation of the slave patrols. During the war, marauders had targeted slaves and laborers on the plantations of central and southern Louisiana. After the war, the same men continued to work for sugar-growers, riding to plantations and intimidating black lessees to remain on the land.[36] White violence in Louisiana mediated what freedom meant, even in a world where emancipation was ostensibly law.

Major General Oliver O. Howard, commanding the Freedmen's Bureau, recognized as much. Tasked with assisting the South's freedpeople in their transition to a free labor regime, he observed that southern planters made every attempt to inject into postbellum labor relations "the

[33] U.S. Cong. House. *Annual Report of the Secretary of War*. 39th Cong., 2d sess. Rept. 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1866), 68. Cited hereafter as *Annual Report of the Secretary of War for 1866*.

[34] *Information in Relation to the States of the Union Lately in Rebellion*, 19.

[35] Ibid, 88.

[36]U.S. Cong. House. House Select Committee on the New Orleans Riots. *New Orleans Riots*. 39th Cong., 2d sess. Rept. 16. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1867), 506. Cited hereafter as *New Orleans Riots*.

element of physical compulsion" that was, in the mind of white southerners "indispensable."[37] One of Howard's lieutenants wrote to the general that "organized patrols, with negro hounds, keep armed guard over the thoroughfares," punishing blacks with corporal punishment or death if they were suspected of vagrancy.[38] Another informed Howard that recently demobilized Confederate veterans formed patrols around Port Gibson, Mississippi, where they kept blacks in "abject slavery" while "treating them in every way contrary" to the spirit of emancipation.[39] Throughout the late summer and fall of 1865, Union soldiers reported to their superiors that they found dead black bodies strewn out on southern roads in grisly fashion. Major J.P. Houston of the 5th Minnesota wrote to Howard from his post in Selma, Alabama that in a majority of these cases, "the provocation consisted in the negroes trying to come to town or return to the plantation after having been sent away."[40]

Elsewhere in the South anti-black violence was less specific to labor upheaval and more generally an outgrowth of ingrained racial animus and white southerners' frustration over Confederate defeat. In South Carolina, Major General Daniel E. Sickles, who commanded the Department of the South, reported that towns such as Newberry, Edgefield, and Clinton had encouraged regulators to band together and remove refugees and freedpeople from their environs. They did so to the "indifference of civil authorities, and by the population, who made themselves accomplices in the crimes." Such was Sickles's frustration that he encouraged the towns and cities in South Carolina to organize constabulary forces and militia companies for the sake of maintaining order. Where he thought these men would come from is unclear. Given his

[37] *Information in Relation to the States of the Union Lately in Rebellion*, 19.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid, 18.

admission that support for the anti-black violence was both broad and deep, it is likely that the same men staffing the militia and constabulary would have been the same marauders committing acts of violence against the freedmen.[41]

The violence committed by whites throughout 1865 sought to instill fear in the freed community and to dissuade African Americans from exercising their new social and economic freedoms. These incidents pervade Army correspondence in the weeks and months following Confederate defeat. Dr. J. E. Harvey, for example, an assistant surgeon for the 58th Illinois, reported to his superiors that a white vigilante shot freedman William Mathews for no other reason than that Mathew's vindictive former master ordered it done. J.P. Houston of the 5th Minnesota reported that observers witnessed one former master dragging an ex-slave into the woods with a rope around his neck. The freedman was never seen again. Charles H. Gilchrist, the colonel of the 50th United States Colored Troops, reported that white regulators apprehended a young black boy on a plantation, tied his hands together, shot him, slit his throat, and cut his ears off.[42] Physician J.M. Phipps reported that a party of black travellers who sought refuge in his hospital had suffered severe bodily mutilation. An unidentified assailant scalped Mary Steele, an emancipated slave in the party. She died after losing nearly half of her skull. Three others in the party had their ears cut off, while a fourth had, in the words of Phipps, "his beard and chin cut off."[43] Historian Gregory Downs has estimated that in the states of Alabama, Mississippi, and Texas, former Confederates killed on average one black man per day in the summer months of 1865.[44] Charles Gilchrist described the violence as a series of "barbarities" that had the explicit

[41] *Annual Report of the Secretary of War for 1866*, 68.

[42] *Information in Relation to the States of the Union Lately in Rebellion,* 71; Ibid, 72; Ibid, 69.

[43] Ibid, 71.

purpose of keeping black men and women in a state of fear and subjugation.[45] By engaging in myriad forms of bodily mutilation, white southerners imprinted both their rage and their sense of ownership on former slaves who were seeking to test the boundaries of emancipation and freedom. In these cases, ad hoc institutional violence allowed former Confederates to unmake emancipation.

******

Persistent assaults, robberies, and murders lent credence to the notion that anarchy consumed the South in 1865. This compelled the reorganized southern state and municipal governments that existed under President Andrew Johnson's limited Reconstruction proclamations to create new forms of institutionalized violence with which they could maintain order. As historian Dan T. Carter has argued, the leaders who controlled the southern state governments during Presidential Reconstruction were men with conservative proclivities who realized that the victorious North would not accept an unmodified resurrection of slavery and the antebellum legal codes that supported it. Nonetheless, they also held true to the tenets of white supremacy and had difficulty imagining how the South could function as a free labor economy. Responding to the challenges of governing a society in flux, they sought to create a new regime that would transition the former slave states into a world without bondage but that was nonetheless undergirded by white supremacy.[46]

Across the South, major cities rebuilt their police forces, counties elected sheriffs and constabularies, and southern state governments mustered militia companies to replace roving

---

[44] Downs, *After Appomattox*, 55.

[45] *Information in Relation to the States of the Union Lately in Rebellion*, 70.

[46] Dan T. Carter, *When the War Was Over: The Failure of Self Reconstruction in the South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 176-230.

bands. Yet in pursuit of the goal of maintaining order and stability – something that few white southerners trusted the Union Army to do - these new forms of institutional violence reflected how southern states sought to recreate the old racial order on the ashes of the antebellum world. Furthermore, because emancipation and newly freed slaves posed a threat – either real or imagined - to most white southerners, the goals of ensuring stability and reconstructing white supremacy were mutually constitutive.

Disorder, then, seemed to be a particularly racialized problem. Mississippi's provisional governor and wartime unionist William Sharkey informed Major General Peter Osterhaus, commander of the Northern District of Mississippi and Sharkey's military counterpart, in late 1865 that he was commissioning militia units in every county in the state for the purpose of "suppressing any violent acts which the negroes may attempt to commit during the next winter." Osterhaus replied with some bewilderment, pointing out that the dockets of Mississippi's criminal courts exhibited "only the name of white criminals."[47] For Sharkey, disorder was synonymous with not only emancipation, but the social and economic upheaval wrought by black mobility and freedom. The militia that he constructed to deal with this specific problem was necessarily made up of white men returning from Confederate service. It not only provided a means to rein in postwar anarchy, but the process of militia formation also suggested who qualified for citizenship in postwar Mississippi. Providing white men with access to institutional violence after Appomattox went hand-in-hand with creating order and new state apparatuses from which to reconstruct white southern manhood and a state that could buttress it. Quelling the supposed chaos wrought by the freedpeople was the first step in this process.

In addition to restoring order, southern state governments in 1865 also faced the task of redefining the relationship between the state, citizenship, and racial hierarchy in a world that was

[47] Ibid, 102.

far different than that of 1860. As historian Thavolia Glymph has demonstrated, before the war, the plantation – its manor house, slave quarters, fields, and environs – had been the locus for power in the South.[48] A master's authority over his slaves was inherent in their masterhood and their person. The power of the state existed as an auxiliary to the master class's authority in that it imbued their claims to a slave's life, labor, and reproductive capacity with legal backing. When emancipation severed the relationship between master and slave, it created new challenges for southerners who sought to find a basis for white supremacy.[49] Put simply, if slaves were no longer property, the plantation and the veneer of paternalism that defined master/slave and black/white relations before the war no longer provided a practical means for constructing racial supremacy. As the former secessionist and state legislator William Trescott adroitly noted to James L. Orr immediately after the war, "our little sovereignties and Feudal arrangements are all leveled to the ground."[50] Trescott knew that if the seigniorial nature of planters' social and political power flowed from the political economy of chattel slavery, emancipation eroded much of the basis for their power over black labor and bodies.

This belief had broad implications for the relationship between the law, state violence, and race. No longer could planters exercise personal authority over their slaves. White southerners faced the challenge of creating a new basis for controlling black men and women, and in doing so they turned to the state. As historian Eric Foner has observed, the former master class engaged "in a broad effort to employ the state's power to shape the new social relations

---

[48] Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 3.

[49] For more on the process by which former slaveholders struggled to reconcile their perception of themselves as masters in a post-emancipation order, see James Roark, *Masters Without Slaves: Southern Planters in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977).

[50] William H. Trescott to James L. Orr, December 13, 1865, James L. Orr Governor Papers, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, South Carolina.

arising from slavery. This began the effort … 'to put the state in the place of the former master.'"[51] This change represented a fundamental departure in regards to how white southerners both viewed their labor force and how they instituted discipline over it. The New York-born Alabama Unionist and Brigadier General George E. Spencer described this transformation as he saw it in his new state before the Joint Committee on Reconstruction in clear terms. He lamented to Congress that the "colored people there to-day are worse off than they were when they had masters. The masters had an interest in them to the extent of so many dollars, and would protect them." Emancipation had irrevocably severed this relationship. Now that former slaves were free laborers, white landowners sought "to mistreat them in every possible manner." Moreover, when they did so, they brought the full weight of the state and the law down on freedmen. "The laws of the legislature," he contended, "show that." The means of enforcing these laws were also doubly oppressive. "The arming of the militia," he warned Congress, was only for the purpose of "enforcing upon the negroes a species of slavery."[52] Looking to their immediate past, white southerners found a ready use for an ancient institution. The militia emerged as a means for the state to use violence to undermine African Americans' claims to freedom.

With emancipation, a vacuum had sprang up in southern racial relations, particularly as it related to the question of exactly how these relations would be mediated. The state filled this vacuum, and it did so with plans for institutional violence that acted as an enforcement mechanism for new laws that defined the various hierarchies that would structure the political, economic, and social relations of the South. The new laws, commonly known as Black Codes, reflected the assumptions that informed how white southerners viewed the relationship between

[51] Eric Foner, *Reconstruction*, 198.

[52] *Report of the Joint Committee on Reconstruction*, 39th Cong, 1st sess., H. Rept. 30. Part III, pg. 10.

the state, race, and citizenship after the war, and especially how access to institutional violence tied each together. To properly understand the role of postbellum white militias, one must too understand and contextualize the laws that they sought to enforce.

Fortunately for white southerners, President Johnson provided them with the space to undertake this project. Johnson harbored little sympathy for the plight of the South's former slaves. His opposition to secession had less to do with his objections to slavery and racism than it did with his populist disdain for planters. For Johnson, slavery was wrong not because it degraded African Americans, but instead because it created a permanent white aristocracy and debased poor and middling white men. When Johnson took office, he sought to buttress white supremacy in the South to benefit common whites, not to create a world where former slaves would be equal political actors.[53]

Using the considerable freedom granted to them by President Johnson, the southern state governments that came to power in 1865 began crafting new legal codes that would balance the realities of the postwar world with their long-standing desire to defend white supremacy. A cursory review of the laws passed by southern legislatures reveal how the men who governed the South in 1865 viewed the relationship between race, citizenship, and manhood. To take the case of Louisiana, Black Codes severely limited the freedmen's ability to travel and engage in economic transactions. Just as in the antebellum era, where the pass system and patrols proscribed slaves' movement, the Black Codes tied freedmen to plantations and planters. In Opelousas, the police had instructions from the mayor to arrest black men who came into the limits of the town itself without a pass. Any black man found on the streets after 10 o'clock at night would be sentenced to jail or mandatory labor. Nor could "negroes or freedmen" live

[53] Foner, *Reconstruction*, 180-184.

within the town limits unless they lived in the home of their employer. In order to keep black men not only out of the town, but also from organizing or congregating, they were barred from holding public meetings or gatherings within city limits. They could organize churches, but black pastors had to have the "special permission" of the mayor. Finally, the laws barred black men from selling goods within Opelousas without the written permission of their employer. The mayor charged the town's police force with enforcing these draconian rules.[54]

Black Codes also sought to circumscribe black manhood and sexuality. It limited whom black men could marry and put clear limits on black men's access to white women. As historian Hannah Rosen has demonstrated, as signposts of the social order, control over women's bodies – both real and symbolic- were important markers of power, manhood, and citizenship.[55] In Mississippi, the state legislature allowed for "freedmen, free negroes, and mulattoes" to intermarry with one another and to have all of the legal protections of marriage that were granted to white men and women. If anyone belonging to one of these classes intermarried with a white person, however, they would be guilty of a felony and suffer life imprisonment in the state penitentiary.[56] South Carolina's laws were equally as stringent. The legislature declared it a felony for "a person of color to commit an assault on a white woman with the intent to ravish

[54] *Information in Relation to the States of the Union Lately in Rebellion*, 92-93.

[55] Hannah Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom: Citizenship, Racial Violence, and the Meaning of Race in the Postemancipation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 1-22. Rosen is one of a number of historians who have employed the body as a method of historical analysis. Not only does this speak to the subjectivity of historical actors, but it also demonstrates how bodies – as both physical entities and ideological signposts – were points of contestation in the structuring of not just political and social power in the South, but also of the agency of historical actors. For other historians who use similar methodology, see Stephanie Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004) and Jennifer Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011) .

[56] U.S. Congress, Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States, *Testimony Taken by the Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States* Vol. XI – Mississippi (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1872), 884-885. Cited hereafter as *Mississippi KKK Report*.

her" or "for a person of color to have intercourse with a white woman by impersonating her husband."[57] The Black Codes, then, quickly sought to undermine black men's sexual prerogatives and to provide a legal counterpoint to the impending gender revolution wrought by emancipation.

The Black Codes also sought to denude black men of their ability to claim manhood via their newly won right to bear arms. In the antebellum era, white participation in slave patrols spoke to the important reality that white manhood and citizenship were inextricably linked to using force against black men. Denying African Americans access to institutional violence was integral to the process of creating a Herrenvolk democracy. To unmake emancipation and black freedom, the southern governments of 1865 took particular pains to circumscribe black men's right to legal violence. In Louisiana, local governments barred black men who were not in the military from carrying weapons into town without the permission of their employer.[58] Mississippi's legislature passed similar provisions barring black men from carrying "fire-arms of any kind, or any ammunition, dirk, or bowie-knife." The law went as far as to criminalize white men who provided freed slaves with any of these weapons.[59] In South Carolina, the Black Codes dictated that "persons of color constitute no part of the militia of the state," and they could only carry arms with the permission of the district judge or magistrate.[60] Southern state governments

[57] U.S. Cong. Senate. Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections. *Testimony as to the denial of the elective franchise in South Carolina at the elections of 1875 and 1876, taken under the resolution of the Senate of December 5, 1876. In three volumes. Volume 3.* 44th Cong., 2d sess. Rept. 38(Washington: Government Printing Office, 1877), 405. Cited hereafter as *Denial of the Elective Franchise in South Carolina at the Elections of 1875 and 1876*.

[58] *Information in Relation to the States of the Union Lately in Rebellion*, 93.

[59] *Mississippi KKK Report*, 887-888.

[60] *Denial of the Elective Franchise in South Carolina at the Elections of 1875 and 1876*, Vol. 3, 405.

wasted no time in reviving a view of citizenship and democracy grounded in the postulate that access to legitimate violence belonged exclusively to white men.

Taken as a whole, these laws were an expression of white southerners' dedication to Herrenvolk democracy and how to maintain racial and political order in the postbellum world. Laws, however, do not enforce themselves. O.O. Howard observed with acuity what was unfolding in the South. "There are a hundred ways," he informed his superiors, for southern governments to frame "apprenticeship, vagrancy, or contract laws, which would serve the purpose" of remaking the slave regime in all but name. And insofar as southerners needed a means to enforce this regime, Howard observed that "even the mere reorganization of the militia upon the old footing will go far toward accomplishing the object."[61] The drafting of the Black Codes and the reorganization of state militias went hand-in-hand with remaking white supremacy and manhood. As the *Charleston Daily News* warned legislators in South Carolina, "If the negro code and the militia are not passed before Christmas, we cannot have a complete restoration of civil law. There will be not only no contracts, but there will be danger, not of war, but of bloodshed in every household."[62] The fate of the South – its economy, its political structures, and its social fabric – hinged on passing new legal codes and creating means of enforcing them.

******

Not unlike their antebellum forerunners, the southern states in the chaotic months of 1865 viewed violence not only as a tool with which they could circumscribe the freedoms of blacks, but also as a means through which they could legitimize Herrenvolk democracy at a time when it was threatened by emancipation. By granting only white men access to state sanctioned violence, southern legislators sent a powerful message concerning who would possess political and social

[61] *Information in Relation to the States of the Union Lately in Rebellion*, 35.

[62] *Charleston Daily News*, November 4, 1865.

power following the fall of the slave regime. Moreover, they extended this offer to a group of white southerners with a preexisting antipathy for black men. As South Carolinian and Confederate veteran Matthew C. Butler observed, whites and blacks of the South were locked in state of "social conflict" over the question of "caste." A previously protected caste, poor white men, especially saw themselves as dislocated and marginalized by emancipation and Confederate defeat. This provided a catalyst that led, according to Butler, to a "greater feeling of hostility to the negro." It manifested itself in frequent acts of violence and reprisals on the freedpeople. "These cases of violence and whippings have been by combinations of poor whites to run negroes out, to prevent competition for their labor," he added.[63] In recreating new forms of traditional institutional violence, the southern state governments of 1865 sought to harness this racial resentment for the purposes of propping up white southern state governments.

Southern states gave white militia members wide latitude in exercising their authority. South Carolina's militia law granted militia members "the power, when occasion shall require, to assemble, arm, and raise any number of men belong to their respective corps; and, if need be, to give notice and call to their aid the officers and men of adjacent corps to disperse, suppress, kill, and destroy, take or subdue any pirate, sea rover, or other enemy, who shall in a hostile manner hurt any of the inhabitants of the state, or their persons or possessions, or any company of freedmen or other who shall be lurking in any suspected place where they may do mischief." Daniel Sickles informed the War Department that such a provision was "sure to provoke serious collisions between the two races."[64] In Mississippi, Governor William Sharkey invoked a state of

[63] *South Carolina KKK Report*, 1207.

[64] *Annual Report of the Secretary of War for 1866*, 68.

martial law where the militia would provide strict enforcement of the state's Black Codes against wayward freedpeople.[65]

Militia companies not only reinstituted labor and racial discipline, but also expressed a new form of Herrenvolk democracy that, while similar to that of the antebellum years, took on a new form to meet the demands of maintaining white racial hierarchy in a world where black men were no longer slaves. Appointed by President Johnson to observe the conditions in the South and to make recommendations on the readmission of the former Confederate states, Major General Carl Schurz reported to General Ulysses S. Grant that southern militias granted their members the privilege to use unmitigated violence against freed blacks. These companies provided white men with a blank check to commit violence against blacks in a way that was consistent with maintaining and reproducing white supremacy based on who possessed access to violence. For white men joining the militia, the organization further served as a byway to reintroduce them to state citizenship under the guises of maintaining order and serving the needs of the postbellum state. At the same time – and notably unlike slave patrols -- militia companies did not serve the interests of planters in the sense that they buttressed slavery and enforced planters' property rights in way that antebellum slave patrols did. As Schurz wrote, "the provision of investing in every white man with the power and authority of a police officer as against every black man subjects them to the control even of those individuals who in other communities are though hardly fit to control themselves." Southern militia companies were "a striking embodiment of the idea that although the former slave owner has lost his individual right of property in the former slave, 'the blacks at large belong to the whites at large.'"[66] In this sense, the militia companies of early Reconstruction were far more democratized than

[65] *Information in Relation to the States of the Union Lately in Rebellion*, 24.

[66] Ibid.

antebellum slave patrols in the way that they provided poor white men with access to state-backed violence. Emancipation had created a new type of white solidarity since African Americans were no longer property. Regulating black behavior again became the responsibility of the entire white community and of the state. Militia companies in effect embodied a new form of violent racial collectivism.

Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina all took formal steps to reconstitute their militias in the late summer and early fall of 1865. These companies were patterned after antebellum militias and slave patrols in that they were often localized institutions that saw men in the community come together and elect officers.[67] Indeed, just as the Black Codes mimicked the antebellum slave codes and northern segregation laws in both form and function, so too did the militia. Schurz perceptively observed how the militia recruited men who had considerable experience with state violence. Many had served as antebellum patrollers, Confederate soldiers, and/or regulators immediately after the war. In both Louisiana and Mississippi, southern governors deliberately called for men to join the militia who had fought for the Confederacy. Under the guise of maintaining order, Schurz noted, they now had the imprimatur of the South's new state governments. Following proclamations from new southern state governors, they mustered and elected their leaders. Militia proclamations from southern governors also deliberately excluded African Americans. Schurz observed that even the suggestion of allowing black men in the militia – if they were for the stated purpose of maintaining order – was met with exasperation and incredulity by white southerners who could never imagine black men bearing arms.[68]

[67] U.S. Cong. House. *Report of the Secretary of War 1867*. 40th Cong., 2d sess. Rept. 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1867), 272.

[68] Ibid.

This transition from Confederate service to the state militia was evident in South Carolina as well. In 1865, acting provisional Governor Benjamin F. Perry raised militia units for the purpose of bringing social, economic, and racial order to the state. He sent one of these commissions to Iredell Jones of Chesterfield. The background of both Jones and his company reveals a great deal about militia companies and the evolution of institutional violence after the war. The grandson of former North Carolina governor James Iredell and the son of Cadwallader Jones, a prominent planter and Confederate colonel, Jones belonged to one of South Carolina's prominent families. He enlisted in the Confederate army in 1861 and shortly thereafter suffered a wound at First Manassas. He later organized a company of young men from South Carolina College and went on to serve in Charleston for the remainder of the conflict. After the war, Jones returned to the upstate, where by the end of 1866 he became a leader in the Chester Conservative Clan.[69]

Jones and white southerners like him had fought against black equality and emancipation in the Confederate army. Now they continued their struggle after Appomattox. As with other white southerners, as Jones sought to navigate the world the war made, he did so through institutional violence. When Perry sought to recreate the state militia on the ashes of the old order, men like Jones were prime candidates to lead it. As with other young southern men of the Civil War era, Jones was attuned to national affairs, politically engaged and connected, ambitious, and a fervent supporter of racial hierarchy.[70] Perry appointed Jones to be the leader of a militia company in Chester County, and Jones succeeded in recruiting forty-three men to join

---

[69] Letter of the Chester Conservative Clan, Iredell Jones Papers, Folder 21 January 1866 to 5 August 1868, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, S.C.

[70] Peter Carmichael, *The Last Generation: Young Virginians in Peace, War, and Reunion* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 5-18.

his company. Per their charter, the men promised to "commit themselves in military organization for the protection of the section of the country in which we live against any domestic violence."[71]

The exact date that Jones formed his company is uncertain, but in all likelihood it mustered between July and December of 1865.[72] A staunch prewar Unionist, Perry likely appointed the Confederate Jones to head the militia unit due to his standing in the community and his political clout. Indeed, the unit was a family affair. Iredell led the unit, while his brothers, Cadwallader and Johnstone, served as his lieutenants. As with the antebellum militia and slave patrols, the postwar militia continued to draw its leadership from the planter class. Of the forty-three men in the rank-and-file, at least twenty-four had served in the Confederate army in some capacity. Other than the Joneses, all had been of low-rank and served in the infantry. The youngest was Cadwallader Jones, Jr. at eighteen years of age, while the oldest was forty-two years old. It is unclear whether the company met for drill or actively attacked African Americans as a unit, but given the extent to which Klan violence plagued upstate South Carolina after 1866 - and that Iredell Jones was later a member of the Klan after the federal government disbanded South Carolina's militia - it is conceivable that the unit resorted to some sort of intimidation against the freedmen.[73]

---

[71] Militia Roll, Iredell Jones Papers, Folder Undated/Miscellaneous, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, S.C.

[72] These are the months that Perry, who issued Jones's commission, served as governor.

[73] Ibid. Due to the incomplete nature of this file, my conclusions are necessarily qualified. For one, the roll itself is undated and placed indiscreetly in a folder labeled "miscellaneous." The roll, moreover, is not on any formal stationery; the names of the members are hand-written and in no discernable order, other than the order in which men likely lined up at muster to have their names recorded. Those men with the same surname do tend to fall together. The names themselves are rarely listed in full, and instead have a first or middle initial. Many of the names are illegible, and as a result, cross-referencing them with the records of South Carolina veterans is necessarily patch-work. My estimate that at least 24 served in the Confederate army is thus a function of deciding which names were legible and matching the names on the roll with those of Confederate soldiers from Chester County and the surrounding counties.

Despite of the incomplete nature of the roll, and given the paucity of extant evidence on the militias of Presidential Reconstruction, Jones's record nonetheless is invaluable to understanding not only the nature of the postwar militia, but also the role of militias generally as southerners sought out new forms of institutional violence with which they could meet their political and ideological needs along the ever-shifting political terrain of Reconstruction. In studies of postwar violence, the Ku Klux Klan has garnered much of historians' attention, while the state militias of 1865 have been generally overlooked. Yet, state militia companies were important transitional institutions for white southerners who had demobilized from Confederate service and later joined the Klan. Raising white companies was an attempt by reactionary and conservative southerners to as closely as possible reconstruct the antebellum world in all but name, to undermine black freedom, and to utilize new forms of institutional violence to express white citizenship, manhood, and solidarity. The militia also was but the first in a number of attempts by white southerners to reconstruct white supremacy and institutional violence. It was necessarily a halting and contingent process. Jones's company illustrates how the wartime and postwar years witnessed institutional adaptation and evolution as white southerners continually sought out new means which they could assert their claims to manhood and citizenship in a post-emancipation world.

Once these companies formed, they generally acted in earnest to circumscribe black freedom. They frequently sought to menace, if not directly attack, Union soldiers garrisoning the South. William Sharkey made sure to concentrate state militia companies in those counties of the state that were heavily garrisoned by black soldiers. Reporting from Vicksburg in August of 1865, Carl Schurz wrote to Washington that not only was the militia numerically superior to that of the men garrisoning the state, but the Confederate proclivities of the units was obvious.

Schurz feared the militia would bring about "a collision at once, and increase in a ten-fold degree the difficulties that now beset the people."[74] Nothing like a significant collision between white militia units and black soldiers occurred in Mississippi. Nonetheless, raising white militia companies in the presence of black soldiers was both important in assuaging white fears and in providing a stark counterpoint to the vision of biracial republicanism that those same black soldiers represented.

White southerners frequently critiqued black soldiers for emboldening the freedpeople to renege on their labor contracts, ask for better wages, or to abstain from work. Indeed, when black soldiers took on a prominent role in occupation duty, labor relations between the freedmen and the South's planters took on an increasingly militarized character. Recently discharged black Union veterans in Mississippi wore their military garb to negotiate their wages with their new employers and to trips into the towns such as Yazoo City.[75] Combined with what many white southerners believed to be the inherently indolent nature of African Americans, black soldiers and black military service allegedly had so undermined the South's labor force that many white southerners believed the economy to be on the precipice of collapse. One white Mississippian informed a Freedmen's Bureau agent that due to the interference of black soldiers, planters could "not make the negroes work without physical compulsion."[76]

Drawing on a pool of poor white men who were, in the words of O.O. Howard, "singularly bitter and vindictive" following emancipation, the militia provided that physical

[74] *Information in Relation to the States of the Union Lately in Rebellion*, 62.

[75] Albert T. Morgan, *Yazoo; or, On the Picket Line of Freedom: A Personal Narrative* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1968), 48.

[76] *Information in Relation to the States of the Union Lately in Rebellion*, 16.

compulsion.[77] Across the South, companies attacked African Americans who defied the authority of their employers or who took their grievances to the Freedmen's Bureau. Northern traveller John T. Trowbridge noted how "During an hour I spent at the Bureau one morning, a stream of these cases kept coming in." He recalled the plight of one "colored man, who had been managing a Mississippi plantation under contract for a quarter of the crop, came to Memphis for redress of grievances. The owner had given him fifteen dollars, and refused to give him anything more for his labor." The Freedmen's Bureau head in Memphis referred the case to a sub-office in Vicksburg, who sent it on into the local civil courts. Rather than remedying the problem, the court deferred, and the militia sacked the freedman's home.[78] Such were the perils of exercising economic freedom under the guises of new southern state governments.

Closely related to African Americans' newly won economic freedom was the freedom to move. Restricting black movement had been a central goal of the slave regime, as the ability to move was in effect the ability to claim autonomy over one's body and economic livelihood. In 1865, southern state governments passed a number of proscriptive vagrancy laws, and militia companies enforced these laws violently. White companies patrolled the streets of Avoyelles, Louisiana and the roads of the surrounding countryside and issued threats to black men.[79] In Port Gibson, Lieutenant Colonel P. Jones York reported in August from his post that the rebel sympathizers in the state militia had taken to the habit of patrolling the roads in the countryside – outside of the reach of the occupying Union soldiers – and terrorizing freedpeople and whites

[77] Ibid, 20.

[78] John T. Trowbridge, *A Picture of the Desolated States and the Work of Reconstruction* (Hartford: L. Stebbins, 1868), 342-343.

[79] *Report of the Joint Committee on Reconstruction*, 143; Louisiana General Assembly, Joint Committee on the Conduct of Elections, *Conduct of the Late Elections and the Condition of Peace and Order in the State* (New Orleans, 1868), 18. Cited hereafter as Conduct of the Late and Elections and Conditions of Peace and Order in the State.

with Union sympathies. They ordered passers-by to halt, and if this was not done promptly, the company was "ordered to fire upon them."[80] These units often demanded that travelling freedmen produce a pass. In Amite City, Louisiana Freedmen's Bureau agents reported that an officer in the militia shot a black man twice after the freedman told him that possessing a pass was not necessary following emancipation. Local authorities reviewed the case, but brought no charges against the white man.[81]

All of this was part of a process of recreating what historian Walter Johnson has labeled a "carceral landscape," where a system of monitoring and circumscribing black movement played an integral role in maintaining labor and racial discipline in the South.[82] One Freedmen's Bureau agent reported that in Magnolia, Mississippi, a militia company attacked a 60 year old freedman who had been on a business trip with the son-in-law of his former master. The freedman reported that when he informed the unit that he was conducting business for his employer, they replied that they did not "give a damn." Fifty militiamen, led by their captain, flogged him. When he made his way to the Freedmen's Bureau office to report the crime, he was spitting blood and had a broken breast bone.[83] The incident suggests the strictures with which militia companies enforced vagrancy laws and the pleasure with which poor white men – who likely made up the bulk of the command – could now use the militia to exercise unmitigated violence over even those freedmen who appeared to be in compliance with the law.

---

[80] *Information in Relation to the States of the Union Lately in Rebellion*, 77.

[81] *Miscellaneous Reports and Lists Related to Murders and Outrages, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Louisiana, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869*, RG 105, M1097, Roll 34, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

[82] Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 209-243.

[83] *Report of the Joint Committee on Reconstruction*, 146.

The militia not only limited movement for the purpose of curtailing black economic freedom, but also the ability of African Americans to congregate. In Amite County, Mississippi, where African Americans held a "ball," a white militia company descended upon the gathering and proceeded to flog the men involved in organizing the celebration. This was part of a larger campaign of terror in the county against the freedmen by a local militia company led by a white man named Daniel Fenn, whose outrages included murdering one freedman, beheading him, skinning his body, and nailing the skin to a barn.[84] By employing horrific violence for the most mundane of transgressions, white militia companies created a universe of violence that far exceeded that of the slave regime. Imbued with the power of the state and seeking to limit the gains of emancipation and to protect Herrenvolk democracy, these units went to extreme lengths to proscribe even the most ordinary forms of black freedom. And with slavery a dead letter, planters were unable to invoke the antebellum chattel principle to protect African American laborers on the basis that they were property. Without this protection, postbellum violence was in many ways more gruesome than its antebellum antecedents.

Some freedmen responded to this threat by procuring guns. Here too, however, the militia worked to limit a key pillar of black freedom. The rights to violence, self-defense, and arms-bearing--as demonstrated in the previous chapter--were integral to black men's conception of themselves as autonomous men and citizens. As such they were a direct threat to the exclusionary notion of white manhood inherent to Herrenvolk democracy. Militia companies therefore took great interest in both symbolically and practically undermining black men's freedom and autonomy by invading their homes and stealing their weapons. In northern Mississippi, militia companies descended on the homes of black men who had been reported to own guns. After commandeering their weapons, the adjutant general of the state ordered them

[84] Ibid.

placed in the state arsenal.[85] In Edgefield, South Carolina, where African Americans developed paramilitary organizations in response to white violence and remained well-armed until 1876, the white militia mustered repeatedly to threaten and disarm them. Marauding white companies represented, in the estimation of the Union army's post commander, a threat to peace and a source of "annoyance and injury."[86]

White militia companies also used searches for weapons as a pretense to commit other forms of violence against black men. In Bossier Parish, Louisiana, a squad entered the home of freedman Nelson Logan on Christmas Eve of 1865 in search of his gun. The Freedmen's Bureau reported that he was taken out of his home at night, "dragged to the woods, and hung ... by the neck till he was senseless."[87] The agent made no notation of a gun being discovered. In Mississippi, John Trowbridge wrote that the militia acted with similar impunity. When African Americans sought to arm themselves, the militia "plundered their houses, under the pretense of searching for weapons; committing robberies, murders, and other atrocities."[88] Acting with the sanction of the state, they undermined black claims to patriarchal privilege by rendering their dominion over their homes effectively moot.

When black men were not at home, they often encountered violence at their places of employment. Colonel Charles H. Gilchrist of the 50th United States Colored Infantry wrote to Washington from his post in Jackson, Mississippi that militia companies harassed freedpeople on and around the plantations in the countryside. They encountered one young boy and - for no

[85] *Report of the Joint Committee on Reconstruction*, 32.

[86] Ibid, 46.

[87] *Miscellaneous Reports and Lists Related to Murders and Outrages, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Louisiana, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869*, RG 105, M1097, Roll 34, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

[88] Trowbridge, *Desolated States*, 374.

apparent reason – bound his hands, slit his throat, cut his ears off, and shot him. This led to a general sense of fear among the freedpeople in central Mississippi, who fled plantations or refused to work. Gilchrist noted with good reason that this would lead to a scarcity of food in the winter if no one remained to harvest the crops, with both black and white Mississippians being threatened with starvation or being given assistance by the Army unless the violence abated.[89]

Some militia companies rectified this situation by delaying much of their violence until after the growing season. In South Carolina, the Freedmen's Bureau reported that black farmers were assaulted immediately after the harvest: "In many cases where the crops are 'laid by' (that is cultivated), the Freedmen are told that there is no further need of them; that they had better go to the Yankees &c., in some cases whipping and starvation is resorted to in order to compel them to leave."[90] Given the composition of the militia's rank and file, these were likely the same poor white men who were either threatened by black labor or who felt the threat that emancipation posed to Herrenvolk democracy. Elsewhere in the state, a bureau agent noted that, "the determination among a certain class is to get rid of the freedmen and women now their crops are nearly gathered --- hence the immediate necessity of increasing the force in this Sub-District. There are those who delight in killing Negroes."[91] Rather than reaching out to the freedpeople to pursue a cross racial alliance based on common economic interest, white southerners either drove black men from plantations outright or waited until the end of the growing season to attack the freedpeople when they were no longer useful.

---

[89] *Information in Relation to the States of the Union Lately in Rebellion*, 69-70.

[90] *Reports of Murders and Outrages, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of South Carolina, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869*, RG 105, M869, Roll 34, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

[91] Ibid.

Militia companies perpetrated much of this violence without fear of arrest or imprisonment. Freedmen's Bureau agents noted the frequency with which civil courts refused to indict white militia members for their attacks. On Christmas Day in 1865 – at a time when many white southerners were increasingly afraid of a much-rumored black revolt - the Freedmen's Bureau reported that men in the Bossier militia "came to the plantation of Mrs. Dickson in Bossier Parish, knocked at door of house of Willis Dickson" and "struck him over the head with revolver." When the man tried to escape, the unit shot and killed him. The agent tersely noted in his report of the incident that civil authorities took no action.[92]

Likewise, in Terrebonne Parish, the captain of a local company named H. C. Daspit killed a black man. The only witnesses called in his trial were members of his command. He was acquitted on the basis of "justifiable homicide." Even when indictments were handed down, there was little means of enforcing them. In Marksville, where a court indicted a man in a militia company for beating a black man for a debt he no longer owed, no arrests were made due to the fact that the men in the company refused to arrest their friend.[93] African Americans had little recourse when they were the targets of white violence. In a system constructed for the expressed purpose of utilizing violence against African Americans, white-on-black violence was hardly criminal.

Nor was the violence limited to African Americans. White northerners who moved south to engage in philanthropy, business, or politics offended the precepts of Herrenvolk democracy when they collaborated with African Americans. John Trowbridge recalled how "white men reported as the attendants of, and participants in, negro balls" found themselves on the receiving

[92] Miscellaneous Reports and Lists Related to Murders and Outrages, Records of the Assistant Commissioner for the State of Louisiana, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1869, RG 105, M1097, Roll 34, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

[93] Ibid.

end of violence.[94] Their attendance suggested that they placed "themselves upon a social equality with the people of color." By attending these gatherings, so-called carpetbaggers (northern-born emigrants) and scalawags (native white southerners) in effect elevated black men to the level of white men. In the minds of southern white supremacists, a threat to white supremacy anywhere was a threat to white supremacy everywhere. To protect white supremacy, manhood, and citizenship, white men had to maintain solidarity. Interloping white northerners and traitorous neighbors represented an existential threat to this project in both their deeds and their beliefs.

Ultimately, the success of these institutions in drawing upon white southerners' existing racial animus and in creating a universe of anti-black terror proved to be their undoing. Due to the presence of the federal army in the South and the political will of the northern public to enforce the peace, federal officials gradually began to outlaw these organizations. Although they were called into existence to quell postwar violence and disorder, Major General Henry Slocum remarked that in Mississippi white southerners were rarely on the receiving end of violence. "Most of the outrages," Slocum observed, "have been committed against northern men, government couriers, and colored people." Slocum proclaimed that wherever an outrage against any of the above classes took place, every citizen within ten miles of the incident would be disarmed. In these instances, the Union regiments moved into the countryside and provided refuge and secure spaces for African Americans.[95] In Mississippi, where Slocum issued an anti-militia proclamation, the number of garrisons in the interior and countryside of the state nearly doubled, with black soldiers playing a dominant role in this occupation.[96] Nonetheless, where

[94] Trowbridge, *Desolated States*, 375.

[95] *Information in Relation to the States of the Union Lately in Rebellion*, 63.

[96] Gregory P. Downs and Scott Nesbit's have catalogued the composition, troop strength, and location of the federal occupation of the Confederate states. In Mississippi, the reach of the federal army – if not always troop

freedmen did not have the appropriate channels to report depredations or where the army lacked the resources to extend its reach, the militia remained in control. The South in 1865 consisted of, in the words Gregory Downs, a "patchwork of sovereignties," where the military dominated cities, towns, and the coasts, while the plantation belt and upcountry were contested.[97]

******

For his part, Andrew Johnson remained openly hostile to protecting the freedpeople. Nor did he display an interest in compelling the former Confederate states to undergo any sort of meaningful restructuring of their political, economic, and legal institutions, save for declaring that slavery was dead and secession was void. This hostility manifest itself in his veto of separate bills that provided funding for the Freedmen's Bureau and that protected the civil rights of newly freed slaves. In August of 1866, Johnson began to remove the army from a war-footing in the South, proclaiming that the "insurrection is at an end, and peace, order, tranquility, and civil authority now exist in and throughout the whole of the United States of America."[98] Insofar as Johnson was concerned, the reconstituted southern Herrenvolk democracies had fulfilled their requirements to reenter the Union, their violence against the freedpeople notwithstanding.

With Johnsons' refusal to pursue a vigorous reconstruction of the southern states, Republicans in Congress took up the mantle of providing both equal protection under the law for the freedpeople and in continuing the presence of the United States Army across the South. Johnson's veto of the Civil Rights Act of 1866 in particular piqued the ire of radical and moderate Republicans alike. The veto confirmed Johnson's steadfast refusal to endorse any sort

---

numbers – expanded in the late summer of 1865 as the forces of the United States fanned out across the South in order to enforce order and protect the freedpeople. See Gregory P. Downs and Scott Nesbit, *Mapping Occupation: Force, Freedom, and the Army in Reconstruction*, http://mappingoccupation.org, published March 2015, accessed June 30, 2017.

[97] Downs, *After Appomattox*, 90.

[98] Ibid, 150.

of protection for beleaguered black southerners. To compound Johnson's troubles with the Republicans, riots in Memphis and New Orleans in 1866 reinforced the notion in the North that white southerners remained unreconstructed and that Johnson's policies were an abject failure insofar as they sought to remake the South. In each case, disputes between black citizens – some of whom were discharged veterans – and white police forces ignited widespread violence.[99] By the fall of 1866, in response to Republicans' increasing desire to focus on black civil rights, Johnson engaged in his "swing around the circle," a series of campaign rallies where the president attempted to attack Republicans prior to the midterm elections of that year. The move backfired. Republicans gained nearly three-fourths of the seats in the House of Representatives largely by running against Johnson's truncated reconstruction of the South.

Under the new Republican supermajority's plan for Reconstruction, the military became an important tool for remaking southern state governments. While Republicans differed over the duration and ultimate ends of military occupation, the Reconstruction Acts of 1867 called for the military to play a role in registering voters and guiding the southern states through the process of adopting new state constitutions. It followed that if the military would be the preeminent force in the South and that the southern governments that came to power during Presidential Reconstruction were illegitimate, so too would these governments' primary means of enforcing order – their militias – also lack legitimacy. Recognizing the role of southern militia companies in bringing about racial terror and undermining the gains of the war, Congress outlawed these institutions. In a shrewd political maneuver, the Republicans attached the provision as a rider to the Army's appropriation bill for 1868. Wary of picking a political fight over war spending,

[99] Foner, *Reconstruction*, 262; Hogue, *Uncivil War*; 31-52; Stephen V. Ash, *A Massacre in Memphis: The Race Riot that Shook the Nation One Year After the Civil War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2013), 162-196.

Johnson signed the bill.[100] The *Edgefield Advertiser* reprinted an article from the *New York Times* that summarized the intended outcome of the bill: "To this extent the reconstructed states are powerless, their authority perfectly paralyzed by an order that nothing but an Act of Congress can set aside."[101] By 1867, white southern militias had lost their viability in the face of substantial pressure from Congress and the northern public.

******

That the federal government disarmed southern state governments did not mean that it disarmed Reconstruction's opponents. Exercising violence was inseparable from how white men defined themselves as both men and citizens. Moreover, white southerners demonstrated throughout the middle of the nineteenth century that they were resourceful in creating institutions that granted them access to collective, institutionalized violence. Rather than acceding to the dictates of the federal government and laying down their arms, white men simply sought to carry out their opposition to emancipation through other means. Congress's attempt to disarm the southern militias guaranteed that white southerners would not do so through state-sanctioned violence. Unable to control southern state governments during Military Reconstruction, white southerners instead created other extralegal institutions – the Ku Klux Klan being the most important - for exercising anti-black violence. In its ideology, its tactics, and its membership, the Klan shared much with its antecedents. As the rise of the Klan demonstrates, the history of white institutional violence during the Civil War era witnessed a constant negotiation between the ideological continuity of white supremacy and a pragmatic institutional adaptability for the purpose of achieving this political goal. As one district attorney who was investigating the Klan observed, "every means which the most fertile imagination of these fiendish monsters and

[100] Downs, *After Appomattox*, 161-178; Ibid, 174.

[101] "The Southern Militia," *Edgefield Advertiser*, August 26, 1868.

enemies of the Union could invent have been resorted to inspire the Unionists with fear and terror, and to destroy their freedom of thought, action, and manhood."[102] White southerners were indeed inventive in creating myriad forms of institutional violence. The Klan was but one part of this history and was the logical outgrowth of the South's tradition of anti-black institutional violence. Like its forbearers, the Klan sought to affirm white manhood and citizenship by denying black men these very same claims.

A group of Confederate veterans formed the first Ku Klux Klan cell in Pulaski, Tennessee in May of 1866. Organized at first as a fraternal organization, within a year of its founding it had spread to the surrounding states and acted as a means for white southerners to, in the words of historian Allen Trelease, "keep the Negro in his place socially and economically" and to return the freed population to "the ante-bellum fashion as circumstances allowed."[103] It drew broad support from the larger white community who, in the absence of other forms of institutional violence, gradually adopted the banner of the Klan in all of its amorphous forms between 1866 and the end of the decade. Ulysses S. Grant remarked to Congress that he supposed nearly two out of every three white men in the South Carolina upcountry were Klansmen, while nearly all of the remaining men were sympathetic.[104] Importantly, many of these men had considerable experience with institutional violence. Former Civil War guerrilla and suspected Klansman Junius Thomson testified before Congress that he joined a "democratic club" – an oblique way of suggesting that he was a Klansmen without perjuring himself – due to

---

[102] U.S. Cong. House. Select Committee on Insurrectionary States. *Condition of affairs in the southern states. Message from the President of the United States, in answer to a resolution of 25th January last relative to the lawlessness in insurrectionary states. April 19, 1872.* By Ulysses S. Grant. 42nd Cong., 2d sess. Doc. 268 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872), 29. Cited hereafter as *Condition of Affairs in the Southern States*.

[103] Allen Trelease, *White Terror: The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy in Southern Reconstruction* (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1979), 275.

[104] *Condition of Affairs in the Southern States*, 1.

his fear that African Americans would commit violence against white men during the election of 1868. In the absence of a militia to enforce order and white supremacy, such activity was necessary.[105] One Klansman in Louisiana's St. Landry parish boasted that he had "fought four years in the Confederate army, and that he would be ready to fight again."[106] Anti-black violence might have changed its name and, as Elaine Parsons has argued of the Klan, found more creative and carnilvalesque ways of branding itself, but those exercising it essentially remained the same.[107]

In defending Herrenvolk democracy, the Klan played an important role in stymieing black political participation. Those who joined the Chester Conservative Clan in South Carolina took an oath that compelled them to "counteract the evil influences exerted by a certain secret Radical organization known as the Union League," to "protect and defend any member of this organization should his life or property be endangered by the Union League," and to "render true and faithful obedience to the constituted authorities of this organization."[108] To do so, the group possessed a military organization, with the Grand Cyclops commissioning former militia leader Iredell Jones to raise a local unit of between 20 and 50 men. In the organization's bylaws, it required the men to monitor and harass all "meetings or proposed meetings of negroes and

[105] *South Carolina KKK Report*, 965.

[106] *Conduct of the Late and Elections and Conditions of Peace and Order in the State*, 16.

[107] Elaine Frantz Parsons, *Ku-Klux: The Birth of the Klan During Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 90-98.

[108] "Letter of the Chester Conservative Clan," Iredell Jones Papers, Folder January 21, 1866 to August 5, 1868, South Caroliniana Library, Columbia, South Carolina.

Radicals" in order to disorganize their political organization and to discourage black men from exercising their political prerogatives.[109]

They proved especially effective at doing so by attacking black political institutions and leaders. White assailants attacked African Americans during the election of 1868 in order to suppress voters who sought to cast a ballot for Ulysses S. Grant and the Republicans.[110] In South Carolina, one black man testified that the Klan invaded his York County home for having organizing a local Union League and preaching "political sermons." His attackers pulled the man out of his home and whipped him until he promised to cease giving political speeches and circulating Republican newspapers.[111] In other instances, the South Carolina Klan attacked not just civic leaders, but state government officials. In Spartanburg, the Klan removed two black election officials and their wives from their homes the night before the election of 1870, stripped them, and whipped them "until their blood trickled from their lacerated bodies." The Klan then forced one of the men to "place his nose and mouth about the exposed person of the naked woman in a manner too revolting to repeat." They then taunted the man for giving him "a full dose of the fifteenth amendment and negro equality."[112] Neither man attended the election the next day. This violence spoke to the Klan's general desire to avoid direct confrontations with the national government and its officials, and to instead undermine Reconstruction at its source.

As with its predecessors, Klan violence was especially gendered and sexualized. In Spartanburg, Klansmen took an oath to defend "our families, our wives," and "our children."[113]

---

[109] Ibid.

[110] *Conduct of the Late and Elections and Conditions of Peace and Order in the State*, 12-14.

[111] *South Carolina KKK Report*, 1407-1408.

[112] U.S. Cong. House. *Papers of Contestant in the Case of Isaac G. McKissick vs. Alexander S. Wallace*. 42nd Cong., 2d sess. Doc. 48 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872), 6.

Black hypermasculinity – real or imagined - posed a threat to each in the minds of white southerners who lived in constant fear that slaves would rise up, murder white men, and have their way with their wives and children. Even the slightest suggestion that African Americans sought to cross the color barrier to satiate their sexual desires drew swift reaction from the Klan. When James Hicksman, a black man in Mississippi, boasted of having sexual relations with a white woman, nearly a hundred Klansmen invaded his home and administered, according to one witness, a thousand lashes as punishment.[114] Further, in order to denigrate black masculinity, the Klan sought to humiliate and degrade freedmen in their homes and in front of their families. The Klan removed one Mississippi freedman from his dwelling, stripped him naked, and whipped him in front of his wife. In South Carolina, the Klan disemboweled and castrated one black Republican in the presence of his family.[115] Under the reign of the Klan, black men could exercise dominion over neither white nor black women.

In this way, the Klan also provided white men with an outlet to express their own version of hyper-masculinity. In Meridian, Mississippi, a group of Klansmen invaded the home of freedwoman Ellen Parton under the auspices of searching for arms. When they found none, the men raped her.[116] As in slavery, white power over black women's bodies and their sexuality represented a potent ideological battlefield, and the violent interactions between white and black southerners were often charged with potent gendered and political meanings. The Klan provided white men a means to not only terrorize African Americans, but to practically and symbolically claim mastery over their bodies and sexuality.

---

[113] *South Carolina KKK Report*, 961,

[114] *Mississippi KKK Report*, 417; Ibid, 1038.

[115] Ibid, 270; *South Carolina KKK Report*, 1184.

[116] *Mississippi KKK Report*, 38-39.

So too did the Klan act as the militia had by disarming the freedmen. As one northern men who had moved to Mississippi to teach in a school of former slaves noted, African Americans had "great ambition to get a gun" for the purpose of guarding against white violence, protecting their families, and guarding their newly won rights.[117] Gun-ownership also inculcated in these men a sense of confidence. In South Carolina, Democrat Matthew C. Butler complained that black men expressed a sense of "braggadocio" once they obtained arms.[118] This behavior represented a stark departure from the supposed docility of slaves and the Klan sought to provide a corrective. Countless witnesses testified before Congress that the Klan raided the homes of black men, often for the express purpose of only taking their weapons. Happily for the Klan, this violence brought about a reversion in some men to antebellum docility. One black man testified before Congress that when the Klan invaded his home and took his gun, he felt compelled to address them as a slave might have, and that he began to act "like a negro ought to act."[119] Disarming black men not only stripped them of their political rights, but also their sense of self and independence.

The Klan also targeted black institutional violence. Wielding violence on an individual level might have brought about internal transformations in black men that allowed them to claim citizenship, but wielding it collectively socialized black men to politics and allowed them use violence to forge their relationship with the American state and to claim a place in the American body politic. The Klan consequently sought to sever black men from their connection to institutional violence. When black soldiers returned to the South, many were met with violence

[117] Ibid, 338.

[118] *South Carolina KKK Report*, 1,190

[119] Ibid, 178.

by the same ex-Confederates who they had faced in the field. In both New Orleans and Memphis, white southerners targeted former black soldiers during those cities' riots. In rural Mississippi, the Klan attacked one black veteran who had supposedly broken a labor contract with his employer and signed to work on another plantation. The Klan removed the man from his home and caved his skull in with an ax. They then buried him with a rope around what was left of his neck.[120]

In Meridian, Mississippi, the Klan targeted black men who engaged in Republican politics and joined Republican Governor James L. Alcorn's state militia. One black man named Williams – who was also on the city's board of supervisors – raised a company of men and began to drill in the city. White residents of the city described him as "obnoxious" due to his Republican politics and his propensity to offend white Mississippians' antebellum conception of racial relations. As Meridian descended into violence in the late 1860s and early 1870s, Williams and his militia unit became both a symbol of black political freedom and a prime target for Klan terrorism. To stymy Republican political organization and suppress Williams's activism, the Klan set up a plot to assassinate Williams. It enlisted another black man to draw Williams out of his house at night when he was not in the presence of his militia company. It carried out the plan to perfection, murdering Williams on the doorstep of his home.[121] After his death, the company fell apart, as many African Americans in eastern Mississippi balked at forming new units. If Alcorn had succeeded in turning the militia, one of the white South's central institutions for maintaining racial hierarchy, against its white creators, the Klan supplied white southerners with an extra-legal means for attacking black freedom in general and the state militia in particular.

******

[120] *Mississippi KKK Report*, 278

[121] Ibid, 162.

The history of white institutional violence during the mid-nineteenth century was one of marked continuity. As a constant, white southerners remained focused on maintaining a form of Herrenvolk democracy predicated not only on granting white men a monopoly on legitimate, state-sanctioned violence, but also in using this violence indiscriminately against freedmen. To have access to violence was to be white, a man, and a citizen. From slave patrols to the Confederate Army and postwar state militia companies, white southerners frequently looked to the state and institutionalized violence to construct and defend white supremacy. In their function and ideology, these institutions were markedly similar. And to the extent that the Klan represented a break from this tradition, it was only in its extra-legal nature; its methods and goals were consistent with those of its predecessors. To describe this process as one undergirded by a fundamental sense of continuity is not to suggest that these institutions were necessarily vehicles for continuing the Civil War by other means, however. The violence against Reconstruction during the 1860s was both broad and deep, but it was not an "insurgency" as many Civil War historians have used the term. Rather, it was the result of white southerners utilizing existing institutional frameworks to recreate the antebellum order of things as best they could. White southerners looked to the past to revive the old order far more than they looked to the future and continuing to fight the Civil War. Their creativity and persistence in creating new forms of institutional violence within the ever-changing circumstances of the Civil War and Reconstruction spoke to the power of that violence in maintaining white manhood and citizenship in a world where violence and politics were inextricably linked.

But if the emergence of the Klan spoke to white southerners ability to adapt and create new institutions to meet the changing political dynamics of Reconstruction, so too did southern Republicans – and especially African Americans – find it necessary to seek out institutional

violence for the sake of defending their vision of postwar citizenship and manhood. Both the besieged Republican governments that arose during Congressional Reconstruction and their African American constituencies found themselves in need of a means of enforcing order, providing self-defense for the freedmen, and, most importantly, a method of asserting their manhood and citizenship within an increasingly violent political milieu. Their own state militia companies quickly became a viable means for achieving each. In a twist of irony, African Americans and their white Republican allies would take an old institution that had been central to maintaining white supremacy and would use it against those who sought to recreate Herrenvolk democracy.

Chapter 3: The Origins and Formation of Republican Militias

White South Carolina Democrat Robert Shand testified before Congress in 1871 that of the myriad institutions that sprang up across the South that sought to facilitate black southerners' transition to freedom, the militia in his state was especially opprobrious. Shand complained that armed black men behaved "in a very boisterous manner, firing off their guns, holding meetings, setting sentinels on the road," and "keeping parties from passing." Ohio Congressman Philadelph van Trump queried Shand on whether "this novel experiment, tried, perhaps, for the first time in the history of civil government, of attempting to carry on a government half white and half black; where the whites, prior to the inauguration of such a state of things, were masters, and the blacks, slaves, is a total failure." Shand wasted little time in affirming Van Trump's assumptions. "I think it is a great blunder," Shand replied. "It is simply the elevation of the negro over us, and the manner in which affairs have been carried on by the state government, that have caused this strong feeling against them."[1]

The creation of black militia companies was a revolutionary moment in southern history. Never before had southern legislatures gone to significant lengths to place arms in the hands of black men and then grant them an imprimatur to use force in the name of the state. The power of antebellum state governments had been used to bolster the slave regime and the white man's democracy upon which it rested. When Republicans inverted this order of things, they inaugurated a fundamental break from the past and the myriad ways in which white and black southerners had understood their relationship to the state, their ability to make claims to citizenship, and the political utility of violence.

[1] U.S. Congress, Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States, *Testimony Taken by the Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States* Vol. III – South Carolina (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1872), 968. Cited hereafter as *South Carolina KKK Report*; Ibid, 1001.

If we take Shand's testimony at face value and concede that Reconstruction was ripe with revolutionary possibilities, militias provide a useful window through which we might consider political change in the immediate postwar years. Examining the states of Louisiana, South Carolina, and Mississippi, this chapter traces the political origins of these states' militia companies. It contends that state militias played an unmistakable and novel role as both party-building and state-building devices in the years immediately following Presidential Reconstruction. Indeed, the two increasingly went hand-in-hand given the challenges inherent to constructing a new postwar political order. Not only did southern Republicans bear the burden of proselytizing biracial republicanism, but they also sought to build new governing apparatuses that embodied this ideology. That this project was met with violence from white paramilitarists made it all the more imposing. Republican governors relied on militia companies to not only enforce order and defend their state's sovereignty, but also to build political constituencies. As the fate of the Republican Party and the fate of reconstructed state governments became increasingly intertwined, militias became pivotal institutions. These companies stood at the fulcrum of Republicans' attempts to create a party-state wherein fealty to the party and fealty to the state government were one in the same. Although this endeavor ultimately failed, its failure ought not diminish its significance.

******

The Republican militia companies that emerged at the beginning of the 1870s were the products of preceding institutional arrangements, the political realities of the immediate postbellum world, and African Americans' expectations regarding the utility of political violence. Consequently, any consideration of the militia companies that Republican legislatures created must be preceded by a discussion of black military demobilization after the war and the

creation of Union Leagues in the South thereafter. The former imbued black veterans with the expectation that they could defend themselves. The latter facilitated the further political socialization of the freedmen and a provided them a means of self-defense. Taken together, they reveal the importance of grassroots political mobilization in postwar racial violence, and especially how that mobilization provided an institutional and ideological basis from which Republican legislatures and governors could draw to create their state militias.

In 1865 and 1866, the number of United States soldiers in the former Confederacy declined precipitously. In 1865 alone the number of soldiers in the South dropped from nearly 1 million in April to only 90,000 by the end of the year. Excluding the regiments deployed to the southwestern border to demonstrate against French Emperor Napoleon III's puppet regime in Mexico, the number of men on occupation duty was closer to 61,000. By the end of 1866, this number had fallen still more to approximately 17,591 men, stationed at 97 posts throughout the former Confederacy.[2] These 97 posts represented the fullest extent of the Army's physical authority. Emancipation and the national authority that undergirded it took on a distinct geospatial form. In the general vicinity of these army posts around coastal areas, major railways, and cities, the freedmen and the fledgling Republican Party that they supported could rely on the United States Army to enforce order and provide protection. Given the rapidity with which demobilization occurred, these pockets of national sovereignty were islands in an ocean of hostility. Where the undermanned United States Army could not or choose not to reach, white resistance to Reconstruction was most pronounced.[3] With the numerical strength of the Army

[2] Gregory P. Downs, *After Appomattox: Military Occupation and the Ends of War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 90, 263.

[3] Gregory Downs and Scott Nesbit, "Mapping Occupation," American Council of Learned Societies, http://mappingoccupation.org/map/index.html.

receding, African Americans and their Republican allies were increasingly deprived of an institution that could maintain stability and safeguard the fruits of emancipation.

Whatever challenges demobilization presented African Americans collectively, the bravado they gained from soldiering did not diminish after Appomattox. If the Army had provided one stage to act out their masculinity, militarized black men continued to perform masculine archetypes when they returned home. When they did so, they defied white expectations regarding how black men ought to act. Vicksburg resident James M. Gibson remembered how "young Negroes who had served in the U.S. Army" came back to Mississippi with "wild barbaric assumptions" and supposedly lusted after white women.[4] Gibson exaggerated the threat of miscegenation, but black men did return to the South and claim the same patriarchal privileges as white men. And if black men indeed could be patriarchs, they were now masters over their own small worlds of their homes, their wives, and themselves. Daniel H. Smith, a veteran of the 44th United States Colored Infantry, moved to Noxubee County in Mississippi to pursue teaching in 1866. He informed the congressional committee investigating Ku Klux Klan violence that his status as a veteran did not "sit well on the stomachs" of his white neighbors. When his wife refused to work for a local planter, a group of white men accosted Smith. He retorted that he supported his wife's decision and that given that he had performed his duty to his country, no white man could force his wife to work. Nor, as a black patriarch, could any white man dictate labor terms to one of his dependents.[5] Smith had earned his freedom with the bayonet and in the service of his country. The Army's slow retreat from Reconstruction

[4] J.M. Gibson, *Memoirs of J.M. Gibson: Terrors of the Civil War and Reconstruction Days*, 70.

[5] U.S. Congress, Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States, *Testimony Taken by the Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States* Vol. XI – Mississippi (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1872), 570. Cited hereafter as *Mississippi KKK Report*.

might have meant that federal soldiers were less visible in the South, but the lessons of soldiering remained with men like Smith and did little to diminish his sense of self and his expectation that he possessed the same patriarchal privileges as white men.

The black military experience wrought changes not only in black men's attitudes, but in their behavior as well. A number of scholars have recognized that the planter class feared a Haitian-style wave of violence immediately after the war.[6] While this did not come to pass, the audacity of black veterans did little to assuage whites' anxiety. Military service rendered black men more recalcitrant and defiant, and the historical record abounds with black men in the years after the war asserting their rights, including the right to violence. In Yazoo City, northerner Albert T. Morgan wrote that immediately after the war native whites expressed outrage that the Army discharged its black veterans and allowed them to keep their arms. In colorful language, Morgan wrote that one white southerner approached him and with exasperation bellowed that "the niggers on the Payne plantashons was ahmd with govment guns." To make matters worse, they continued to wear their blue uniforms.[7] Whether these were in fact government guns in questionable. They were likely shotguns. Nonetheless, that black men were brazen enough to demonstrate on plantations while wearing their old uniforms suggests the power of military service in normalizing the notion among black men that they could defend themselves.

---

[6] Allen Trelease, *White Terror: The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy in Southern History* (New York: Praeger, 1979), xx-xxii; George C. Rable, *But There Was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984), 16-32; Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 133-134; Chad L. Williams, "Symbols of Freedom and Defeat: African American Soldiers, White Southerners, and the Christmas Insurrection Scare of 1865," in *Black Flag Over Dixie: Racial Atrocities and Reprisals in the Civil War* Ed. Gregory J.W. Urwin (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004) 214; Mark Wahlgren Summers, *A Dangerous Stir: Fear, Paranoia, and the Making of Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 52.

[7] Albert T. Morgan, *Yazoo: Or, On the Picket Line of Freedom in the South* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1968), 57.

By 1867 black men maintained the prevailing attitude that they could – and in fact must – defend their newly won rights. Union demobilization, however, left them without the means of doing so. In the vacuum left by demobilization, black men began to form extra-state self-defense organizations such as the Union League. Founded in late 1862, the Union League initially encouraged loyal white northerners to support the Union war effort. Metropolitan Union Leagues populated northern cities and were led by elite men such as Henry Bellows and George Templeton Strong. They articulated a vision of American nationalism and citizenship that stressed the importance of citizens' fealty to the American state and the republican system of government upon which it rested.[8] In this way, the Union League demanded from its members a type of loyalty that was familiar to black men who had been urged to join the Union Army. By 1867, the institution had spread to the rural South for the purpose of creating a loyal voting constituency in the former Confederacy while acting as an organizing force for the Republican Party. It promised the freedmen social equality, economic freedom, and an entree into formalized politics.[9]

The Union League thus emerged as an important transitional institution in the postwar years, one that acted as bridge between the black military experience and the creation of postwar Republican militias. Dedicated to black southerners' political socialization, it played a prominent role in their ideological education. This was especially evident in how it instructed its members with the precepts of biracial republicanism. Union League clubs wrote bylaws that articulated a clear view of their beliefs and purpose, and presumably, the ethos of those they recruited. On its

[8] Melinda Lawson, *Patriot Fires: Forging a New American Nationalism in the Civil War North* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002).

[9] Michael W. Fitzgerald, *The Union League Movement in the Deep South: Politics and Agricultural Change During Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989).

formation in 1868, the Union League of South Carolina declared its object to "be to preserve liberty and the union of the United States of American; to maintain the Constitution thereof and the supremacy of the laws; to sustain the Government and assist in putting down its enemies; to protect, strengthen, and defend all loyal men, without regard to sect, condition, or race; and to elect honest and reliable Union men to all offices of profit or trust in National, State, and local government; and to do secure equal civil and political rights to all men under the Government."[10] White minister Reverend A.W. Cummings testified in 1871 that all Union League members in his county were required to take an oath requiring "loyalty to the General Government" and a "duty to the State government."[11] The oath required loyalty not to the Union League itself, but rather to the principles and ideologies it was meant to defend. If the Union Army had represented African Americans' best means of defending the wartime state, the Union League was a new device for protecting and defending the postbellum project of creating a new biracial state on the ashes of the old order.

The Union League educated its members in the tenets of biracial republican ideology, but it also spurred them to action by embracing paramilitarism. This was not the intention of its founders, yet, at the grassroots level, local Republican leaders took advantage of the League's effectiveness in building political constituencies and manipulated it to fit the realities of postwar politics. After all, if the war had normalized the notion that violence was part and parcel of the political process by granting black men citizenship in exchange for their willingness to kill, it was logical that the southern iteration of the Union League could be used as a paramilitary organization in the South's most violent counties. For example, in Newberry, white Republican

[10] *South Carolina KKK Report*, 955.

[11] Ibid, 928.

Joseph Crews used the Union League to create a formidable paramilitary presence. Crews organized black men into companies that marched through the town in military formations. White Democrats complained that during the canvass of 1868 Crews frequently made "incendiary' speeches that advocated for the political equality of black Republicans. His companies shot the dogs of white men, refused to work on plantations, and were rude and abrasive when they marched through the streets, often refusing to cede the road to white men and women. Once Governor Robert Scott ordered the state constabulary force to form, Crews's companies easily transitioned into its service.[12]

In nearby Union County, a biracial Republican named June Mobley organized and armed a local Union League, and employed it as his personal security force. In August 1868, the *Charleston Daily News* derided the League for protecting Mobley and for intimidating white citizens. Mobley and his guard were "inseparable companies," the paper reported, escorting him into town, to the Freedmen's Bureau, and even to Columbia when he attended legislative sessions. In one of its more egregious acts of defiance, it had met on a plantation where "incendiary harangues were made, military evolutions performed, and a series of general orders published, said to be from Gov. Scott." The company apparently planned to march on the county jail and secure the release of Sam Glenn, a Republican who some prominent white men had accused of assault and battery. Such was the bravado of the group that Governor Scott – ever sensitive to the lingering specter of racial violence and whites' fears of armed black men – called on the organization to disband.[13] Importantly, these examples of black paramilitarism preceded the formation of Scott's Republican militia by over a year. In the interim, black men acted with a

[12] Ibid, 1304-1305.

[13] *Charleston Daily News*, August 10, 1868.

stark sense of urgency and took it upon themselves to create their own paramilitary organizations.

As in the South Carolina upcountry, the Alabama and Mississippi border had devolved into a warzone by the latter part of the 1860s and early 1870s. Klan affiliated groups in Alabama waged a campaign of terror against the state's freedmen, especially around Demopolis, Livingston, and Tuscaloosa. Once Alabama's Democratic Party gained control of the state in 1870, many African Americans, fearing that the new Democratic administration would work to undermine their freedom, fled to eastern Mississippi.[14] The Klan responded by crossing the border into Alabama, conducting raids against the freedmen, and even forcing some back into Alabama to labor on plantations. In Kemper County, where the state would eventually enroll nearly 200 freedmen in its militia companies, Union Leaguers formed ad hoc paramilitary organizations in 1869 before the state decided to formally create militia companies. Republican judge W.W. Chisholm organized a biracial command that not only policed the state line, but that also responded to raids from Alabama by pursuing Klansmen into the Yellowhammer State.[15] Other times, Republican paramilitarists co-opted the Klan's tactics. A black paramilitary group associated with the Loyal League invaded the home of a known Klansman named Joseph Ball in 1870, drove him from his bedroom, and assassinated him in a thicket adjacent to his house.[16]

---

[14] Michael Fitzgerald, *Reconstruction in Alabama: From Civil War to Redemption in the Cotton South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2017), 203-204.

[15] James M. Wells, *The Chisholm Massacre: A Picture of Home Rule in Mississippi* (Chicago: Agency Chisolm Monument Fund, 1877), 81-84.

[16] James Lynch, *Kemper County Vindicated: And A Peep of Radical Rule in Mississippi*(New York: Negro University Press), 107. Both Lynch, a Democrat, and James M. Wells, a Republican, discuss the murder of Joseph Ball. Wells argues that Ball was murdered by Klansman out of fear that he planned to collaborate with federal authorities. Lynch, on the other hand, argues that the murder occurred shortly after Ball tried to assassinate Chisholm and that his dying declaration to his wife was that his assailants were local Republicans. While both accounts are undoubtedly self-serving, Lynch's rendering of the affair is more detailed and supported by evidence in the form of the dying declaration and Chisholm refusing to prosecute the men after Ball's death.

While the Klan was by far the more violent of the two organizations – and it nearly always played the role of provocateur – black and white Union Leaguers were neither hapless targets nor innocent of engaging in their own type of violence. Extra-state violence granted Republicans the ability to meet Klansmen on their own grotesque terms.

The retributive violence between the Union League and the Klan in Mississippi eventually metastasized into open conflict. This was nowhere more evident than in Meridian, where the initial success and aggressiveness of black self-defense ultimately led to one of the grisliest race riots of Reconstruction. In 1870, a white school teacher and Union League leader named Daniel Price settled in the city after fleeing from Livingston, Alabama. When Democrat Robert Lindsay ascended to the governorship of Alabama, other freedmen followed Price to Republican-controlled Mississippi in hopes of finding work and for fear of what the return of Democratic rule might mean in the state for black liberty. Their flight led to a labor shortage in and around Livingston. In one of the stranger incidents of Reconstruction, white men in Livingston deputized Adam Kennard – a former slave who had forged an alliance with white planters in Livingston – and encouraged him to cross into Mississippi with a posse of Klansmen for the purpose of retrieving these vagabond laborers.[17] Meridian's Republicans quickly devised a response. Price led a group of black men to a hotel where Kennard was staying. Under the cover of darkness they dragged him from his bed and beat him. Price and his conspirators were then arrested for violating Mississippi's anti-Ku Klux Klan law of 1870 that had made assaulting someone while wearing a disguise a state crime.[18]

[17] *Mississippi KKK Report*, 7.

[18] Ibid, 31.

The ensuing trial of Price and his accomplices led to an escalation of violence in the region. In neighboring Noxubee County, white men reported that the Union League would "march through the streets with arms, marching down the main streets, which they were requested not to do."[19] In Meridian itself, a black man named Williams formed a paramilitary company that drilled in the streets. M.H. Whitaker, a white lawyer, informed Congress that Williams was "a very obnoxious man" who used the arrest of Price and his allies as an excuse to antagonize white Meridians.[20] When Price finally stood trial in early 1871, Williams' Union League company marched in the streets in what was an ostensible attempt to disrupt the proceedings. Members of the company even sat in the gallery of the court house during the proceedings.[21] Price eventually went free due to a mistrial. When the Union League's leaders were later retried for inciting violence, a riot consumed the city. Meridian's Republican mayor, William Sturgis, in an admission of the state of affairs in eastern Mississippi, called for the imposition of martial law. In Meridian, the Union League had succeeded in providing black men with access to institutional violence but was unable to maintain order without further sanction.[22]

The Union League, in short, played a pivotal role in the history of black institutional violence after the war. It provided a way for black men to defend themselves amidst Union demobilization. Moreover, in the way that it embraced and institutionalized black paramilitarism, these organizations provided a basis for Republican governors to harness black self-defense networks and repurpose these units for militia service. As the experience of Joseph Crews in South Carolina suggests, white Republicans became uneasy when local, unsanctioned

[19] Ibid, 566.

[20] Ibid, 165-166.

[21] Ibid, 52.

[22] *New York Daily Tribune*, March 16, 1871

paramilitary units operated without the endorsement of the party. They saw the units as a political liability due to their unpredictable nature. These companies also conjured apocalyptic visions of a race war in the minds of the moderate whites whom the Republicans sought to bring into their party coalition. Mustering these units into a state militia presented an alternative wherein Republican governors could control this violence and benefit from it. Thus, in no small part, the creation of Republican militia companies was as much a reaction to the threat of Klan violence as it was an attempt to channel the energy and verve of black paramilitarism for the purpose of state- and party-building.

******

Republican militia companies found their genesis in a complex matrix of republican ideology, racial politics, and political necessity. In Louisiana, Governor Henry Clay Warmoth found it necessary to form a state militia in 1871 in the interest of maintaining order in what was the South's most violent state. With nearly 3,500 politically motivated killings taking place in the years between 1865 and 1875, Louisiana essentially experienced its own civil war in the decade following Confederate surrender. Organized white paramilitary companies in Louisiana reached a level of sophistication exceeding that of any other southern state. In 1868 alone, the state witnessed the rise of white supremacist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan and the Knights of the White Camellia that contributed to nearly 1,800 political deaths.[23]

In response, Louisiana's militia became the largest, most active, and most successful of the three militias organizations examined here. Much of this success was due to its close relationship with the governor that brought it into existence. A native of Illinois and a Union

[23] James Hogue, *Uncivil War: Five New Orleans Street Battles and the Fall of Radical Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 2; Henry Clay Warmoth, *War, Politics, and Reconstruction: Stormy Days in Louisiana* (New York: McMillan, 1930), 70.

veteran, Warmoth in many ways proved to be a caricature for unscrupulous carpetbag rule in the South. After settling in New Orleans in 1865 and opening a law practice, he entered the Republican Party. In 1866, he publicly called for political equality for the freedmen and an end to the state's Black Codes. None of this endeared him to Louisiana's native whites, nor did his proclivity for profiting from his office.[24] After ascending to the governorship in 1868, he faced increasingly violent opposition. Warmoth realized the need to solidify his personal position, the viability of the Republican Party in Louisiana, and the freedoms of his black constituency. The Republican-controlled state legislature gradually centralized power in the hands of the executive office at Warmoth's urging. The legislature notably passed a law in 1868 that stripped the mayor of New Orleans of his ability to command the Metropolitan Police. It instead decreed that a five-member board would control the "Metropolitans." The governor appointed the board and it answered to him alone. The legislation allowed Warmoth to provide for the security of the state capital with little input from the citizens of the Crescent City.[25] In order to project power to the parishes that lay outside of New Orleans, the legislature created a volunteer state militia. During the election of 1868, violence especially had plagued the parishes along the Red River. A militia would, in the words of former Confederate general and Republican convert James Longstreet, provide for the "preservation of quiet and order."[26] By Longstreet's estimation, men enrolled in the militia after its authorization in 1870 with such brio that the threat of white violence temporarily abated.[27]

---

[24] Hogue, *Uncivil War*, 62-65.

[25] Ibid, 66.

[26] Louisiana Adjutant General's Office, *Annual Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Louisiana for the Year Ending December 31, 1870* (New Orleans: State Printer, 1871), 3. Cited hereafter as *Louisiana Adjutant General Report*.

[27] Ibid, 4.

The Louisiana militia's order of battle and structure fluctuated throughout its five year existence, but it possessed a clear chain of command that reflected both Warmoth's need to provide patronage to his supporters across the state and the reality that its units would be mobilized in Louisiana's most violent parishes. In 1870 and 1871, the state militia consisted of two divisions. Three brigades constituted the 1st Division in New Orleans. The 1st Brigade consisted of a black regiment of ten companies and a white regiment of six companies. Three regiments and two independent companies composed the 2nd Brigade, which consisted entirely of white men. Two of the regiments were infantry, the third was an artillery regiment, and of the two independent companies, one was listed as a "city guard" unit while the other was cavalry. The 3rd Brigade of the 1st Division included one unit, a lone African American regiment. Unlike the 1st Division, the 2nd Division made its headquarters in the northern city of Monroe. It had one brigade with a single infantry regiment, two independent infantry companies, and two independent cavalry companies.[28]

The composition of the militia's leadership reflected Warmoth's desire to create a broad-based party with the support of native white southerners, northern emigrants, and the freedmen. Warmoth selected the former Confederate General Longstreet to act as its commander. The veteran of the Army of Northern Virginia had found a postwar home in the Republican Party after he leveraged his prewar relationship with Ulysses S. Grant after the war and endorsed his friend's bid for the presidency. After Grant's victory in 1868, the new president appointed Longstreet to the United States Customs House in New Orleans. By extending patronage to Longstreet, Warmoth hoped to curry favor with the Grant administration and its allies in the Customs House, as well as to the native white southerners whose support he needed to legitimize

---

[28] Ibid.

his government.[29] Such was Warmoth's willingness to extend an olive branch to native whites that four of the seven regiments that made up the state militia in 1870 had white leaders as well. A number were prominent ex-Confederates, such as the 1st Regiment's colonel, William Owen, and the commander of the First Field Artillery, Charles Squires. Both had served in New Orleans's Washington Artillery, the same elite unit that historian James Hogue has shown was well-represented in the Crescent City White League in 1874. At the beginning of the 1870s, however, their allegiance was undecided. Warmoth and Longstreet hoped to draw white veterans into the Republican Party by using the militia as a form of patronage and party-building. Whether out of expediency, necessity, or ideology, their tenuous involvement in the militia spoke to the form of biracial republicanism that Republicans envisaged taking root in the South, however deep its contradictions.

The two more likely Republican constituencies of northern carpetbaggers and African Americans also held leadership positions in Warmoth's militia. To lead the Metropolitan Police in the anti-Reconstruction hotbed of New Orleans, Warmoth appointed both Algernon Badger – a Union veteran and fellow carpetbagger – and C.C. Antoine, a prominent *gens de couleur libre* and Union veteran, to serve on its board of directors.[30] As his appointment of Antoine suggests, Warmoth was well aware of who provided him the votes to win the governorship, and his militia granted leadership opportunities to the state's freedmen. The units in the militia were segregated, but three of its regiments in 1870 consisted of black men. James Lewis, a biracial politician and native of Mississippi, led the 2nd Regiment. James H. Ingraham, a veteran of the Louisiana

[29] Ibid.

[30] Board of Metropolitan Police, *Annual Report of the Board of Metropolitan Police to the Governor of Louisiana, From October 31 1873 to December 31 1874* (New Orleans: Printed at the Republican Office, 1875), 13. Cited hereafter *Annual Report of the Metropolitan Police*.

Native Guards, became colonel of the 3rd Regiment. Both regiments made New Orleans their base of operations. Meanwhile, in Colfax Parish along the Red River, freedman William Ward organized the 6th Regiment.[31] In total, at least 54 of the 199 officers listed (27 percent) in the 1870 adjutant general's report were African Americans.[32] Officers in the militia were often leaders in the statewide and local Republican Party. Creating militia companies solidified political support for the fledgling Republican Party. The militia thus represented an important avenue for political advancement and participation for the state's emerging black political class.[33]

The rank-and-file of Warmoth's militia also reflected Republicans' desire to build a party via institutional violence and the allocation of it to Louisiana's loyal citizens. For some, there was a monetary incentive to join. In the years before the passage of the Pendleton Act, patronage remained the favored device of both parties – and after the passage of the 15th Amendment, both races - for building political power and partisan loyalty. Reconstruction politics were Gilded Age politics, and Warmoth received frequent criticism – some warranted, and some not - from his Democratic opponents for taking monetary contributions from his black constituents and for relying on graft while in office. In order to boost participation in the militia and to encourage recruiters to approach their responsibilities with vigor, the legislature dictated that officers were to be paid five cents for every man they enrolled. By the end of 1870, these monetary incentives had resulted in 104,352 men enlisting for service. Many came from New Orleans and its

[31] *Louisiana Adjutant General Report* 1870, 6-10.

[32] This number is based on my reading of officers listed in the 1870 adjutant general report. Given that the units were segregated based on race, I assume that every officer listed in either the 2nd or 3rd regiments was considered either black or mulatto. William Ward's regiment was not listed in the 1870 report (it was instead first listed in 1871) and consequently is not included in these calculations.

[33] Hogue, *Uncivil War*, 68.

immediate environs. Yet while on paper this provided Warmoth with an impressive field army, few of these men were ready for combat. When Warmoth deployed the militia and Metropolitan Police against an attempted coup in 1872, for example, it brought only 2,500 men to bear.[34] As lean as it was in actuality, however, the force was politically reliable and biracial. One observer noted that about half of the men deployed in 1872 were former Confederates, while the rest were freedmen. For its part, the Metropolitan Police consisted of 130 black men and 243 whites.[35]

Money and patronage, however, were not the only reasons men served in Warmoth's units. The state also attempted to inculcate within the militia's ranks the ideological presuppositions of biracial republicanism. Enlistees took an oath affirming their loyalty to the state and the principle of political equality. Each man pledged to "bear true allegiance to the United States of America and the State of Louisiana, and to … serve them honestly and faithfully against all their enemies or opposers whatsoever." They further swore to "observe and obey the orders of the President of the United States, and the orders of the Governor of the State of Louisiana, and the orders of the officers appointed over you." This created a clear line of fealty and obedience that began with the state and the elected officials and officers that represented its interests. Men in the militia also pledged allegiance to the political ideals of the Republican Party. Paraphrasing the 14th Amendment, militia members promised to "solemnly swear (to) accept the civil and political equality of all men," and agreed "not to attempt to deprive any person or persons on account of race, color, or previous condition, of any political or civil right, privilege, or immunity enjoyed by any other class of men."[36] In the reconstructed postwar world,

[34] *New Orleans Republican*, April 13, 1870; U.S. Congress, *Testimony taken by the Select Committee to Investigate the Condition of Affairs in the State of Louisiana* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872), 295.

[35] Hogue, *Uncivil War*, 66.

[36] *Louisiana Adjutant General Report* 1870, 29, 40.

militia service facilitated the political reorientation of the men who enlisted and sought to ensure their loyalty to the party and to the state rather than to the racial ideology of Herrenvolk democracy.

This reorientation occurred in no small part through the politicization of violence. To serve in the militia and potentially wield violence in the name of the state became constitutive of expressing one's membership in the Republican Party and loyalty to the postwar state. Republicans argued that any institutional violence that existed outside of the guises of their militia companies, or that sought to challenge the authority of the state of Louisiana, was both treasonous and outside of the acceptable boundaries of political discourse. The Republican press attacked the opponents of Reconstruction as brigands and banditti who wanted little more than to disturb the peace. It cast members of white paramilitary or terrorist organizations as possessing "turbulent, uncontrollable dispositions" that were effectively un-republican. The paper continued, averring that "deeds of violence committed every day" sought to not only undermine the fruits of emancipation, but also a general sense of public order that was needed to restore the state to normalcy following nearly four years of armed conflict. Thus, white paramilitarism was representative of anarchy, lawlessness, and a lack of respect for the law that was antithetical to republican governance.

But if insurgent paramilitarism was both the cause and product of anarchy, the militia represented its antidote. The *New Orleans Republican* cast aspersions on the manhood and courage of white paramilitarists, informing its readers that these same men who acted as agents of turbulence quickly changed their behavior in the face of the constabulary, as they became "peaceable enough in the presence of armed authority."[37] By providing for "the protection and

[37] *New Orleans Republican*, July 24, 1868.

safety of quiet people, and for the repression and punishment of the unruly," the Republican militia served an important public function. It proffered the public a form of violence that was rooted in the stability and the authority of the state, a type of violence whose threat was meant to provide order rather than disorder. Men who joined the militia did so as a form of civic service that was required in their role as citizens. As the *Republican* implored its readership in 1870, "The people convinced of the necessity of doing their whole duty; as well in the jury box as with the cartridge box and the ballot box; and the time would have soon come when all men would have a wholesome respect for law, and the red hand of violence would no longer be at its bloody work."[38]

The men who joined the Louisiana militia thus became agents of the state who wielded violence in the name of public order. They possessed, moreover, wide latitude in doing so. The militia bill passed by the legislature and signed by Warmoth shielded militia members from being "liable for civil or criminal prosecution for any act done in the discharge of his duty."[39] In theory, this granted the men of the Louisiana militia a blank check for violence, one that was not dissimilar to the wide discretion granted to the white men that populated slave patrols in the antebellum era. Exercising violence in the name of the state represented a privilege and status symbol in the post-war era. Access to state-sanctioned and institutional violence offered an inducement for men to enlist in the organization. It provided the cohesion necessary for Louisiana Republicans and their government to build both a party and new governing institutions. Ironically, for an ideology that was meant to be inclusive, exclusive access to violence allowed Republicans to establishing a foothold in Louisiana politics.

[38] Ibid, May 19, 1870.

[39] Ibid, August 2, 1868.

******

As in Louisiana, Republicans in South Carolina used the state militia to provide internal security and to fortify their party. In early 1868, the state held a convention that sought to draft a new constitution that was both compliant with the 14th Amendment and that would protect the spirit of emancipation and biracial republicanism. Seventy-three of the convention's 124 delegates were black, and the document that they drafted recognized black political equality. Yet as radical as that might have been – and the state's reactionaries certainly thought it was – when it came to nominating candidates for political office in April's elections, South Carolina Republicans took a more moderate path. White men made up the majority of the Republicans' nominees for office. Robert K. Scott, a native of Ohio, former Union brigadier general, and assistant commissioner for the Freedmen's Bureau, headlined the party's slate of candidates as the Republicans' nominee for governor. The ensuing election witnessed the Republicans seize power on the shoulders of newly enfranchised freedmen. Scott won the governorship, Republicans controlled the next South Carolina General Assembly, and a mixture of black and white Republicans filled local offices for sheriffs and magistrates.[40]

Scott and many in his party were wary of arming black men, for fear of both the backlash it would provoke from native white Carolinians and due to their own racial prejudices. Nonetheless, the General Assembly passed and Scott signed a militia bill in March of 1869. All men between the ages of eighteen and forty-five were eligible to enlist. The freedmen formed companies in the state's northern counties, where Klan violence was most intense and the need for security the most urgent. Scott fully armed the state's companies, an action that far exceeded those of his contemporaries in Louisiana and Mississippi. If black men generally operated at a

[40] Richard Zuczek, *State of Rebellion: Reconstruction in South Carolina* (Columbia, University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 49-51.

disadvantage throughout Reconstruction when it came to possessing equal firepower to that of their adversaries, Scott and his adjutant general Franklin Moses took remarkable steps to secure sufficient weaponry. The adjutant general's record book for the year of 1869 is filled with requests and receipts for arms that the governor's office discharged throughout the state. As early as April, Moses instructed financial agents to begin purchasing Winchester rifles for the units.[41] In all, Moses succeeded in purchasing 88,000 arms from the United States Department of War. This amounted to the state's full ten-year quota allowed by the national government from the Military Reconstruction Acts. Scott himself ordered that the militia also take control of all government owned armaments in upcountry Laurens and Darlington Counties, presumably to keep them out of the hands of white insurgents. In order to keep the units combat ready, Scott allowed the men in the militia to take their weapons home, rather than leaving them in state armories between musters.[42]

Scott and the legislature armed the militia in order to ensure that it would provide an efficacious security force for the state, but he also used these units to hand out political patronage. With the fortunes of the Republican Party closely connected to that of the state government, it was imperative for Scott to use the militia to, in effect, create a party-state where state citizenship and party loyalty became indistinguishable. In May of 1869, just as the process of enlistment began, Scott and Moses received notification that men of dubious loyalty were attempting to raise their own companies and to offer their services to the state as a means of

[41] Franklin Moses to South Carolina State Treasurer, April 30, 1869, South Carolina Adjutant General Report for 1869, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, South Carolina.

[42] John Scoffin to Benjamin S. Williams, August 7, 1878, Benjamin S. Williams Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, S.C; O.F. Winchester to Robert Scott, June 22, 1869, Box 7, Folder 43, Robert K. Scott Papers, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, South Carolina; Robert Scott to John Dennis, January 31, 1870, South Carolina Adjutant General Report for 1870 SCDAH, Columbia, South Carolina; Special Orders 38 , South Carolina Adjutant General Report for 1870, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, South Carolina; Franklin Moses to Captain J. Keith, South Carolina Adjutant General Report for 1870, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, South Carolina.

gaining access to both the financial incentives the government offered for enlisting and the weapons held in the state armory. On May 8, Scott banned those units from mustering.[43] After this initial attempt by anti-Reconstruction insurgents to undermine the institution's integrity, Scott wielded great discretion over who received commissions in the militia. Correspondence between Scott and local party leaders suggests that militia officers at the town and county level were beholden to Scott's approval and were required to seek out his favor for appointments. Scott's political opposition within South Carolina did not allow this to go unnoticed. In a scathing critique of the Scott regime and his militia, the *Yorkville Enquirer* eviscerated the militia's leadership for being composed of the most "rabid of Scott's partisans," a reality that rendered it in the view of the *Enquirer's* editors both unaccountable and inherently political when it operated in the field.[44]

Scott and Moses also relied on financial incentives to strengthen the loyalty of both officers and the rank and file. By early 1870, officers were receiving payment for organizing units. A commander of a regiment received $100 from the state for organizing and drilling a unit, while his subordinates could receive between $50 and $75.[45] These payments extended to the rank and file as well, but no extant records exist of the amount or frequency with which enlisted men received payment. Nonetheless, when Daniel H. Chamberlain assumed the governorship in 1875, he ended payments to enlistees in the militia, an act that led to disaffection within the rank-and-file. Thus, while records of the payments do not exist, they were likely not unimportant to

[43] South Carolina Adjutant General Report for 1869, May 8, 1869, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, South Carolina.

[44] Robert Scott to G.W. Rich, June 11, 1869, South Carolina Adjutant General Reports for 1869, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, South Carolina; "Hold Him to Account," *Yorkville Enquirer*, October 6, 1870.

[45] R.B. Elliot to Robert Scott, January 12, 1870, South Carolina Adjutant General Report for 1870, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, South Carolina.

those that enlisted. Further, given the demographics of the militia, it is likely that payment played an important role in providing a source of income for some black families.[46]

The militia of Chesterfield County provides a useful window to decipher the militia's demographics, to consider how it served as a party-building tool, and to discern who joined its ranks. Located in the upstate, Chesterfield bordered Marlboro, Darlington, Kershaw and Lancaster counties to its east, south, and west respectively. To its north were the North Carolina counties of Anson, Richmond, and Union. Chesterfield's population in 1870 stood at 10,584. In total, 510 black men joined the militia companies of Chesterfield County, representing the townships of Alligator, Cheraw, Chesterfield, Cole Hill, Jefferson, Mt. Croghan, Old Store, and Steer Pen. The average age of a Chesterfield militia member was 28 years old. Of these 510 men, 461 were listed in the census as either farmers or laborers, something that was typical of black companies elsewhere in the South. The other 49 men comprised a diverse array of professions, including 21 mechanics, five blacksmiths, four merchants, and two town council members. There was, respectively, a single teacher, barber, auditor, cooper, miner, clerk, and miller.[47]

That unskilled laborers and farmers made up a majority of the Chesterfield militia speaks to the degree to which party politics often had a class dimension, something that was symptomatic of other postbellum labor arrangements typified by tenant farming. As a number of scholars examining labor relations in Reconstruction have shown, labor in the South was quite literally militarized, as the freedman frequently looked to militia companies to secure and defend their economic liberty. As James Rodrigue has demonstrated in Louisiana, freedmen engaged in

[46] Zuczek, *State of Rebellion*, 151. In one of the few demographic studies completed of a black militia company, Samuel McGuire found that a strong plurality of the men in George B. Willis's black company of the North Carolina militia were farmers or farm laborers. Samuel McGuire, "The Making of a Black Militia Company: New Bern Troops in the Kirk-Holden War, 1870," *North Carolina Historical Review* 61, no. 3 (2014), 307.

[47] 1869 Militia Roll for Chesterfield County, South Caroliniana Library, Columbia, S.C. The county's militia rolls remain intact at the South Caroliniana Library at the University of South Carolina, where they have been cross referenced with the census of 1870.

the production of sugar joined that state's militia.[48] South Carolina's freedmen followed a similar trend. They embraced military organizations as early as 1867 in order to defend their new economic freedoms along the coast and the upstate.[49]

Scott and his allies in the legislature sought to build their militia and their party around these men and to harness their enthusiasm and verve. The excitement with which agricultural laborers joined the militia caught the attention of the Democratic press in the state, which complained that militia service provided a distraction from work. The *Charleston Daily News*, for example, lamented in July of 1869 as militia enrollment began that "nearly all of the farm hands left their employers … for the purpose of joining their colored military comrades. Many farmers are thus left high and dry so far as planting is concerned, and many of them are without a single hand on their plantations."[50]

These men seem to be typical of who Scott and his Republican allies wanted in the state's companies. On June 2, 1869, the state's adjutant general wrote to local militia leaders and instructed them to travel to plantations in order to recruit. Landless farmers provided a willing constituency for Scott. Moreover, given that these men were often the targets of Klan violence and were potential targets for recrimination from their employers, membership in the state militia would provide them with a sense of collective strength and solidarity.[51] To make this solidarity possible, Scott and Moses encouraged local party leaders to exclusively recruit men with Republican political sensibilities. In separate letters dated April 21 and April 30, 1869, assistant

---

[48] James Rodrigue, *Reconstruction in the Cane Fields: From Slavery to Free Labor in Louisiana's Sugar Fields, 1862-1880* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 74.

[49] Julie Saville, *The Work of Reconstruction: From Slave to Wage Labor in South Carolina, 1860-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 169.

[50] *Charleston Daily News*, July 28, 1869.

[51] R.B. Elliot to H.L. Lomax, June 2, 1869, South Carolina Adjutant General Reports for 1869, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, South Carolina.

adjutant general R.B. Elliot instructed party leaders in Abbeville and Unionville to enlist men who were "reliable Republicans" in order to keep Democrats and Klansmen from infiltrating the institution's ranks.[52] Later that summer, Elliot ordered the enrollment officer in Edgefield to "ascertain how many of the men enrolled" would be active for service and loyal, given the "excitement" of political affairs in the state.[53] Elliot repeated this order a few weeks later, when he ordered R.R. Rivers to "exercise great care in the selection" of the men enrolled.[54] Scott and his subordinates aimed to create a militia that was as reliable as it was partisan.

The state's Republican leadership also went to great pains to make sure that all eligible men enrolled. In some instances, agents of the census bureau performed the dual task of taking records for the census and enlisting men in the militia. With their mobility, long reach, and knowledge of each county's social geography, census agents provided a valuable resource for militia building. Indeed, Scott and his subordinates made maximum enrollment a priority, even when invalids attempted to opt out of service. On June 18, 1869, for example, the adjutant general's office denied the petition of a native of Sumter who had requested an exemption due to a physical infirmity.[55] The leadership followed the same course just over a week later when Moses similarly rejected the petition of a man from York who also sought to claim an exemption due to physical limitations. Moses responded to the man, regretting that "no application of

---

[52] R.B. Elliot to S.S. Mobley, South Carolina Adjutant General Repots for 1869, SCDAH; R.B. Elliot to Abbeville Republican Party, South Carolina Adjutant General Reports for 1869, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, South Carolina.

[53] R.B. Elliot to Edgefield Enrollment Officer, South Carolina Adjutant General Report for 1869, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, South Carolina.

[54] R.B. Elliot to R.R. Rivers, 22 July 1869, South Carolina Adjutant General Report for 1869, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, South Carolina.

[55] Adjutant General to Mason Hayneworth Fraser, 18 June, 1869, South Carolina Adjutant General Report for 1869, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, South Carolina.

exemption from service" could be issued on "account of physical disability" until after the militia had already passed its initial muster.[56] The militia rolls of Chesterfield support the existence of this policy. Wilson Miller of Jefferson, a 39 year old clerk, enrolled in the Chesterfield regiment despite having only one arm.[57]

The state's Republicans thus sought to enroll every loyal man in their security forces. This spoke to Scott's larger goal of creating a military force that might counter or even preempt Klan violence while protecting the state's freedpeople. As a complement to this, the South Carolina militia also existed as a distinctly political institution. It was a manifestation Scott's attempts to forge a new Republican Party in the South under unfavorable circumstances, part of a nascent political machine that sought to provide patronage to its members and solidify their loyalty to Scott's Republican Party. In doing so, it equated not only citizenship with militia service, but conflated the security of the state with the security of the Republican Party. By extension, loyalty to state and party were effectively one in the same.

While Scott was not as vigorous in his use of the militia as Parson Brownlow in Tennessee or even William W. Holden in North Carolina, South Carolina's companies did mobilize to protect the prerogatives of the freedpeople. At times, this happened with Scott's explicit endorsement. For example, in response to Klan violence in York, Scott mobilized the militia prior to the elections of 1870 and ordered it to guard polling places, churches, and schools.[58] In March of 1871, Scott activated the militia of Chesterfield in response to threats

---

[56] Franklin Moses to L. Gray, 26 June, 1869, South Carolina Adjutant General Report for 1869, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, South Carolina.

[57] Chesterfield Militia Roll, South Caroliniana Library, Columbia, S.C.

[58] *Charleston Daily News*, February 19, 1870.

from white guerrillas. The militia barricaded streets, patrolled the town, and made violent threats to Klansmen and white townspeople alike.[59]

Elsewhere, local political leaders took matters into their own hands. In Clinton, militia units under Joseph Crews organized under Scott's auspices, paraded through the town under arms, and interrupted white political rallies, actions that eventually led to a riot in the city and the imposition of martial law on behalf of the United States Army.[60] In Hamburg and Edgefield, black militia companies antagonized the whites who had sought to marginalize them economically and politically. Democratic newspapers lamented that in Edgefield black men "invaded" the town and marched in the streets.[61] The *Charleston Daily News* reported in Hamburg that "about forty Winchester rifles – sixteen shooters – have been distributed, and that night drills are now the sensation among Scott's brave woolly-heads, whom he thinks can be educated to 'fight nobly' against the good order and peace of the State."[62] The zeal of this militia unit was one reason that Scott and Moses had singled out the Edgefield militia immediately after it mustered and ordered its leaders to keep the unit in good order and to make sure that it in "no case acts as an aggressor."[63]

While in general terms Scott did not want his companies to be seen as an aggressor--and thus a political liability--he was not entirely opposed to their resorting to force. He frequently justified not only the right of his units to do so, but also of the right of the state to employ

---

[59] Ibid, March 13, 1871.

[60] *South Carolina KKK Report*, 1304-1305.

[61] *Charleston Daily News*, July 28, 1869.

[62] "Arms for the Negro Militia," *Charleston Daily News*, September 6, 1869.

[63] Franklin Moses to R.R. Rivers, July 22, 1869, South Carolina Adjutant General Reports for 1869, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, South Carolina.

violence for the sake of maintaining public order. Answering his critics in 1870 after having mobilized his companies, Scott argued that doing so was nothing more than an attempt to ensure "peace and order." The state's Democrats and their allies in the Klan, in Scott's estimation, remained in opposition to both. He reminded his political enemies that he would not "be driven from the state, as some propose. If the Democrats choose to practice their old tricks of murder and intimidation, the result will be terrible to them and to the state."[64] In effect, justifying the militia increasingly became an act of also justifying the authority of the postbellum state itself and the ideological presuppositions on which it rested. Scott attacked anti-Reconstruction insurgents as both cowards and a threat to public order. He sought to rhetorically undercut their claims to institutional violence and to cast white terrorists, rather than the Reconstruction state, as the true threat to republican government in South Carolina.

Necessarily, then, wielding violence in the militia became an important political tool not just of Scott, but also a political privilege for the men who enrolled in his companies. By wielding state-sanctioned violence, freedmen became agents of the state and loyal republican citizens. In a proclamation published in December of 1871, Scott reminded his party that calling out the militia was "an issue between the loyal friends of the government and its disloyal enemies." Scott contended that insurgents that sought to overthrow his administration threatened the "life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness" of loyal citizens. And when many of these loyal citizens were freedpeople, the militia took on a heightened importance. Scott contended that "The negro was a slave by virtue of the Constitution of the United States, he was emancipated and made a free, American citizen. The Government of the United States is, therefore, morally bound to protect him in the full exercise of his vested rights." It followed, then, that "if the

[64] *Charleston Daily News*, February, 19, 1870.

Government of the United States fails … to discharge this duty, then emancipation was a political crime, and the negro is left to become the obedient tool or wretched victim of the disloyal enemies of the government."[65] Raising the militia accomplished the twin goals of protecting the state and protecting the freedpeople.

As a security force, South Carolina's militia ultimately proved ineffective. It was just strong enough as to antagonize the white South Carolinians who were excluded from its ranks, but it was simultaneously too weak to impose order on a state that was increasingly in chaos. As white South Carolinian John Leland wrote in 1879, Scott's militia had imbued black men with a sense of citizenship, but by granting black men a monopoly on legitimate violence at the expense of the state's whites, Scott only exacerbated white opposition to his administration.[66] This is not to suggest that white conservatives in the state would have acted in good faith had the militia never been called into existence or if they had been welcomed into its ranks. On the contrary, whenever white men gained access to institutional violence throughout Reconstruction --- whether that violence was state-sanctioned or extra-state – they turned it against the freedmen. Ensuing conflagrations of Klan violence and the inability of the Republicans to maintain order on their own led the Grant administration to impose martial law in a number of counties in the South Carolina upcountry. In terms of providing for their own security, this was merely a short-term victory for the state's Republicans. The influx of United States attorneys and the Army into the state did restore order, but it also meant that Republicans began to neglect the militia.[67] When political violence resumed in 1876, the state lacked the institutional apparatuses to combat it.

---

[65] *Edgefield Advertiser*, December 14, 1871.

[66] John Leland, *A Voice from South Carolina: With a Journal of a Reputed Ku-Klux* (Charleston: Walker, Evans, & Cogswell, 1879), 48-50.

[67] Trelease, *White Terror*, 399-418.

Moreover, at this point in Reconstruction, the state lacked a Republican governor who possessed the sufficient political will and the audacity to combat the violence of the emerging Red Shirt movement. Daniel Chamberlain instead sought to cut state funding, and especially funding to the militia. These cuts, along with his refusal to activate what militia units were left, rendered the South Carolina militia useless in the final years of Reconstruction.

******

The state militia of Mississippi was the most poorly utilized of the three in question. In Louisiana and South Carolina, Republicans created militia companies to serve as party-building apparatuses and security forces. Their success varied, but in both the logic behind creating militia companies was largely consistent. Successive Republican administrations sought to maintain some semblance of organization in the units. In Mississippi, the organization of the militia was haphazard, its underlying political logic was inconsistent, and the support it received from the state's executives was fleeting. That it was ineffective, however, does not suggest that it was unimportant. As later chapters will demonstrate, on the county level, Mississippi's freedmen went to great lengths to form paramilitary units that promoted communal and individual self-defense. For these men, militia companies were indispensable means of asserting their claims to citizenship and participating in politics. Yet, as the militia existed as a *statewide* institution, it was underfunded, poorly organized, and lacked a clear mission. It reflected infighting within the state's Republican Party and the general incompetence of its governors.

The creation of the Mississippi militia was a reaction to the growth of Klan violence in 1869 and 1870. When both the United States Army and local constabularies proved unable to maintain order, the legislature enabled Governor James L. Alcorn to pacify the state. Unlike Henry Clay Warmoth and Robert K. Scott, Alcorn was far less likely to embrace the militia.

Born in Illinois but a longtime resident of Mississippi, the scalawag Alcorn stood in stark juxtaposition to his carpetbagger counterparts. He was neither a northerner, Union veteran, nor a staunch Republican. Alcorn was instead a political chameleon, a prewar Whig who had cast his lot with the Confederacy only after secession, served ineffectively as a member of Mississippi's home guard, and who had then joined the Republican Party only as a matter of convenience after the war. Although Alcorn supported black enfranchisement and the passage of the 14th Amendment as a matter of course, the Delta planter was far more concerned with using the Republican Party to enact a Whiggish program of economic modernization than he was with advocating for the rights of the freedmen.[68]

Alcorn's political proclivities, then, erred on the side of conservatism. The threat of Klan violence was, however, so acute and the potential for instability in the state so real that the legislature took extensive action in creating the framework for a politically reliable and combat-ready security force. The legislature passed a militia bill in 1870 that in theory granted the office of the governor and the militia considerable power to enforce order. The law dictated that all able bodied men between eighteen and forty-five years old were liable for service. Per the legislation, the militia was to be divided into divisions based on Congressional districts. The leaders of these divisions were to be appointed by the governor. They would be chosen based on "their military experience, their experience in arms," and "their fidelity and loyalty." In the postwar world, when some former Confederates had been disfranchised and excluded from militia service, the latter point was especially important. Just as in the antebellum world where access to violence had been inseparable from citizenship, Mississippi's postbellum militia law delegated to the governor the power to not only grant patronage through his militia, but to dictate who remained

[68] Ibid, 277; George C. Rable, *But There Was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984), 144-145.

outside of the boundaries of citizenship due to his power to include and exclude men from serving in these units.

The legislature granted these men wide latitude to perform their duties. Militia members received immunity for any alleged crimes they committed while in service. Moreover, if officers in the militia deemed it necessary to enlist men in the militia who were under the age of eighteen, the law granted them the authority to do so. They could also distribute weapons across the state at their discretion to men who were not enrolled in a company. This in effect rendered militia officers as arms distributors to freedmen who sought to defend themselves in between musters. This had the potential to remake racial and labor relations throughout the state, for if black men were well-armed, they remained less likely to be cowed by Klan violence or by intimidation from their employers.[69]

Finally, the legislature granted Alcorn the authority to use the militia as a party-building institution. It sought to ensure that only loyal men could participate in militia musters and enroll in companies. The militia law dictated that only men who were eligible to vote would be able to serve. This established an additional hurdle for former Confederates who sought to subvert the institution.[70] When men were enrolled at the local level and went into muster, the act ensured that they would do so as units that reflected existing local socio-political networks. Indeed, since the colonial period, militia musters had created a venue for the reproduction of local power structures as planters and other civic leaders served as officers, while lower-class men constituted the rank-and-file. Mississippi's law continued this arrangement, as it required that all officers had to reside within the legislative districts of their respective commands. This ensured

[69] Ibid, 141.

[70] Ibid, XLVII.

that militia companies would remain localized institutions with men who were familiar with one another.

If the act sought to reinforce the political and social bonds that held militia companies together, so too did it provide a framework to strengthen these bonds via financial incentives. It declared that the pay of officers and enlisted men would be commensurate with the pay received by officers and soldiers in the United States Army, while any man that brought his horse to muster or to duty for the militia would receive an extra 50 cents per day.[71] Further, any man who was injured while on active duty would "be taken care of and provided for at the expense of the state."[72] As Gregory Downs has demonstrated, the postwar years saw a rise in individuals looking to the growing American state as a benefactor and protector. The expansion of postwar state militias and their role as providers of social welfare and political patronage were consistent with this development.[73]

Black men responded to the call to enlist with marked enthusiasm in the counties where Klan violence was most acute. Later chapters will examine their actual activity, but at this juncture the geographic dispersion of the units and their muster rolls provide a glimpse of how the units reflected the geopolitical circumstances of the state and black men's willingness to enter these units. Militia rolls swelled in the counties where they were needed the most, and in particular in the eastern counties that bordered Alabama. In Lowndes and Noxubee, 1,413, and 2,962 freedmen mustered in each county's respective companies. In 1870, Lowndes County had nearly 30,000 residents, while just under 21,000 Mississippians resided in Noxubee County.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid, 143.

[73] Gregory Downs, *Declarations of Dependence: The Long Reconstruction of Popular Politics in the South, 1861-1908* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 1-13.

Thus, a relatively high percentage of the eligible black men in these two counties opted to enroll in Alcorn's companies. The state also organized companies in the Mississippi Delta. In Bolivar County, 206 black men mustered in 1870.[74] The men who flocked to these companies did so with verve and enthusiasm. The *Macon Beacon* reported that when a member of Alcorn's staff reported to Noxubee County to organize a company, black men "swarmed on foot, on horseback, on mules and in wagons" to provide their names.[75] These freedmen willfully joined Alcorn's militia and demonstrated their keen understanding of what militia service meant for their ability to defend their tenuous claims to citizenship in the face of escalating violence.

In spite of this obvious enthusiasm, Alcorn never capitalized on the significant number of African Americans that mustered in the units in 1870. From the outset, Alcorn's militia proved to be rural, geographically isolated, and racially homogenous.[76] In eastern Mississippi, militia companies mustered in the counties of Chickasaw, Choctaw, Lowndes, Noxubee, and Oktibbeha. In the Mississippi Delta region, Bolivar, Copiah, Warren, and Yazoo counties saw the formation of militia companies. Around the state capital in Jackson, the *Jackson Clarion* reported that companies mustered in Hinds, Madison, and Rankin counties. Isolated companies sprang up in Amite County, Marshall County, and De Soto County. While this superficially suggests that the organization was present in all corners of the state, later chapters will demonstrate that these companies were primarily active in the eastern counties, and even there black men made up the vast majority of those enrolled, with white men being either excluded from participation or

[74] Trelease, *White Terror*, 290; Ibid, 277; Militia Rolls, 1870-1874, Mississippi Adjutant General's Office, Series 212, Box 6098, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, M.S..

[75] *Macon Beacon*, December 17, 1870.

[76] *Jackson Clarion*, September 29, 1870.

refusing to join.[77] Moreover, this organization lacked the type of centralized command structure that benefitted the Louisiana militia that primarily drew its base of support in New Orleans. Thus, it could never be deployed quickly enough to combat the Klan.

The Mississippi militia lacked sufficient organization and combat effectiveness. The militias of Louisiana and South Carolina faced similar challenges, but they at least benefitted from governors that believed in their legitimacy. Alcorn spoke of the militia with caution and appeared to be far more afraid of the consequences of using the militia than he was with the continuation of Klan violence. He remained aware that white Mississippians would reject the establishment of a state constabulary, and especially one that armed black men. Alcorn, recognizing his critics' concerns, went as far as to concede to his opponents in a speech to the legislature in 1870 that "a free people educated in freedom might claim some indulgence for restiveness under government of the sword." It was reasonable, he added, for law-abiding citizens to view the creation of a militia and the monopolization by the state on political violence with some trepidation. Alcorn strangely noted that he "regretted to confess some indications of turbulence" persisted throughout the state following the passage of the bill and white Mississippians' fears that it might be mobilized. Although the arming of a militia would undoubtedly pique these fears even further and be "met in some quarters with menace," he promised to only use the companies "in the pursuit of evildoers."[78] Alcorn thus undermined his companies with faint praise and his tepid defense of their necessity even before they took the field.

******

[77] *Macon Beacon*, December 17, 1870; *Jackson Clarion*, April 6, 1871.

[78] Ibid, April 6, 1871.

Insofar as they were top-down military and political organizations, the state militias of Louisiana, South Carolina, and Mississippi were failures. As state-wide institutions, the militias of South Carolina and Mississippi withered away after 1871 as the Klan became less of a threat due to increased federal prosecution of the organization. Without an internal threat to justify their existence, militia companies became far less valuable in the eyes of each state's governor. Moreover, that Klan violence abated due to federal intervention and not because of any act of the militia ultimately undermined its existence insofar as it was needed for military necessity. In Louisiana, the state militia continued to function as an effective institution until late 1874 when it was routed in battle by the Crescent City White League.

Nor, moreover, did these institutions succeed in the long term at party- and state-building. As they existed as political institutions and sources of patronage, the Republican militias of the Deep South spoke to the challenges that the Republican Party faced in governing a hostile people and in its own inability to construct a stable and reliable political base. Although on its face biracial republicanism was meant to be an inclusive ideology built on cross racial alliances and political equality, the exclusive nature of these state militias belied these precepts and further antagonized white southerners who had little inclination to support the Republican Party to begin with. Nonetheless, that the South's militias failed as top-down political movements does not suggest that it was unimportant or that it did not succeed in other respects. For freedmen across the Deep South, the militia provided their primary means to assert their citizenship and manhood after the war. Regardless of the fecklessness of Republican leadership and the constant existential threat posed by white violence, the freedmen utilized militia companies to defend the fruits of emancipation and their ability to engage in politics in the violent world the war made.

Chapter 4: Black Martial Mobility and the Politics of Space

On the morning of November 15, 1871, Dr. Oscar Brothers heard a disturbance outside of his office. A man of prominence in the eastern Mississippi hamlet of Artesia, Brothers was, like many of his white neighbors, an active Democrat. While Artesia was a redoubt of conservatism, Lowndes County itself possessed a sizeable population of freedmen who were politically attuned and who had recently organized a militia company of a few hundred men. The previous week, Mississippi held off-year elections for seats in the state legislature, and in the aftermath, the militia held a series of political rallies in support of the county's Republican candidates. Despite increased black political mobilization, Artesia's political proclivities led Brothers to believe that the company would confine its rallies to the more radical parts of the county. Brothers was shocked when his attention was arrested "by the sound of a drum and fife and considerable yelling voices coming across the railroad."[1]

Brothers ventured outside to investigate the commotion. What he found in the distance was startling. A military procession of "six or seven or eight hundred men" strode down the town's main road, swept "across into the grove, then down what is known as Robinson road, passing Artesia." The company marched in a distinct military formation, with "freedman Levi Jones mounted at the head of the column." At least one of the columns consisted of men armed with guns and swords. The sight of armed black men caused a predictable uproar in the town, one that was made all the worse when the rear of the column crossed paths with a carriage and its white passengers. In a test of wills, the company refused to cede the road to the carriage, just as the white man steering the carriage refused to reroute his path around the column. As this dispute

[1] U.S. Congress, Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States, *Testimony Taken by the Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States* Vol. XI – Mississippi (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1872), 1001. Cited hereafter as *Mississippi KKK Report*.

escalated, Brothers observed that the head of the column "turned around and came back, nearly in front of the station-house, on the commons, where the buggy and carriage halted, and immediately the crowd surrounded them, and speaking began." Brothers testified to Congress that out of curiosity, "one of my friends suggested that we get on our horses and ride up and hear what they had to say. We did so."[2]

Brothers arrived just as the confrontation reached its climax. "After having been there about three minutes," he remembered, "I saw smoke emanating from a gun." Shortly thereafter another man in the crowd discharged his weapon, felling one of the black men. With the lifeless body of a freedman in the road, the procession began to devolve into an intemperate mob. Seeing Brothers, a number of black men drew their weapons as the company bellowed out in collective rage, "White man, kill him, kill him, kill him." Brothers remembered amidst the chaos that one freedman "took out a carpet sack of what I supposed to be pistols." In an attempt to defuse the situation, Brothers pleaded with the man, "For God's sake, don't take those pistols out of there. The white men of Artesia have got nothing to do with this difficulty." The would-be assailant replied with defiance that he would "be damned if I am not going to take them in the crowd." Brothers fled the scene as quickly as he had approached it, not willing to engage either the black company or the white men who had antagonized it.[3]

Taken at face value, this confrontation along an obscure street in Artesia – a locale that barely registers on a contemporary map of the Magnolia State – represented a conflict over the ostensibly trivial issue of who possessed access to a road. Read in isolation, it was an unremarkable incident that did little to alter the trajectory of Reconstruction. Yet, disputes like

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

this pervaded the southern landscape in the years immediately after the Civil War, and it was no accident that white and black southerners continually fought over access to not just roads, but courthouses, town squares, polling places, plantations, and the ability to move in between them. Understood properly, this confrontation in Artesia reveals a great deal about the role of institutional violence in a choreographed, symbolically rich, and ideologically potent politics of space and movement that dominated Reconstruction. By *space*, I refer to locations and places across the southern landscape that held specific social and political meanings. By *movement*, I refer to the acts of physical mobility undertaken by southerners to traverse the southern landscape and to occupy these spaces. The control of each played an unmistakable role in defining the boundaries of freedom and citizenship after the Civil War.

Scholars of spatial history have utilized new methodologies to reveal how conflicts over specific spaces were imbued with rich, layered, and contested socio-political meanings.[4] Using the politics of space as a unifying theme, this chapter traces the history of racialized mobility

[4] As analytical categories, space and movement are not exclusive to one specific discipline. The use of each is inherently multidisciplinary, but they originated in the field of architecture. In the early twentieth century, the Swiss-French architect and urban-planner Charles-Edouard Jeanneret, writing under the *nom de plume* Le Corbusier, argued that the built world should reflect the ideological presuppositions that brought it into being. Le Corbusier's work was normative as it sought to shape his own field and encourage architects to construct buildings that would reflect the industrial world. Subsequent architectural critics and scholars have followed Corbusier's line of thought. Meanwhile, scholars in other fields have interrogated how space and movement both reflect and shape human experiences as a matter of fact. They have, moreover, taken a more broad view of space and movement to include more than just the built world, but also nature and places with specific socio-political, cultural, or sentimental meanings. Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan has studied how spaces have certain social meaning that speak to humans' lived experiences. His methodologies have been applied to the study of the antebellum and Civil War South, most prominently by Stephanie Camp and Yael Sternhell. Camp's work has examined how enslaved women utilized space and movement to create "rival geographies" that existed outside of the plantation and that allowed the enslaved to create small pockets of freedom away from the watchful gaze of planters and overseers. More recently, Sternhell has studied how the Civil War created a world of movement that that was both a cause and effect of the seismic political, social, and economic changes the South witnessed during the war. Taken together, these scholars demonstrated that the physical world and the ability to traverse each have rich ideological and social implications. Le Corbusier, *Toward an Architecture*, trans. John Goodman (Los Angeles, CA: Getty Research Institute, 2007), 96; Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2007),269-313; William J.R. Curtis, *Modern Architecture since 1900* (New York: Phaidon Press, 1996), 9-17; Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977); Stephanie Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Yael Sternhell, *Routes of War: The World of Movement in the Confederate South* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

from the antebellum era to Reconstruction. It considers how the ability to move and to redefine the socio-political meaning of certain spaces became consonant with black citizenship and political liberty. Most importantly, it underscores how freedom of movement coalesced with the growth of black institutional violence after the war to create what I term black martial mobility, a phenomenon wherein black men employed their militia companies to engage in a politics of space that was meant to express black citizenship and manhood under the veneer of violence. Utilizing institutional violence and black martial mobility, this politics of space manifested itself in southern cities, towns, and plantations in the forms of drilling, marching, and parading. Black men employed martial mobility to terraform the political geography of the South by transforming geographies that had, in the antebellum era, been sites of black subjugation into stages wherein they could act out their claims to citizenship publicly and, depending on the venue, in a variety of social, economic, and political contexts. These actions were a critical but underappreciated chapter in the history of black violence after the war, as martial mobility stood second only to the use of violence itself in terms of providing an effective means of expressing black citizenship within the violent politics of Reconstruction.

******

To understand the importance of movement and space to the construction of black freedom after the war, one must grasp the extent to which the slave regime employed racialized immobility and prescribed directionality against its chattel in the antebellum era. Only by understanding the plantation regime's commitment to black immobility can one appreciate that black martial mobility held the potential to not only express black citizenship, but to also reconfigure southern politics.

The planters' project of dehumanizing and controlling their chattel was limitless, and no facet of African Americans' lives was regulated with violence and brutality quite like their ability to move. Southern planters endeavored to create a static world where black movement occurred only with white discretion. Frederick Douglass understood as much when he wrote that slaves'

> path was beset with the greatest obstacles … At every gate through which they were to pass, they saw a watchman--at every ferry, a guard--at every bridge, a sentinel--and in every wood, a patrol. They were hemmed in on every side. On the one hand, there stood slavery, a stern reality, glaring frightfully upon them,--its robes already crimsoned with the blood of millions, and even then feasting itself greedily upon their own vitals. On the other hand, away back in the dim distance, and under the flickering light of the north star, behind some craggy hill or snow-covered mountain, stood a doubtful freedom--half-frozen--beckoning them to come and share its hospitality. This, in itself, was sometimes enough to stagger them; but when they permitted themselves to survey the road, they were frequently appalled.[5]

For Douglass, freedom manifested itself in part as a spatial and directional construct. North was consonant with freedom and south with unfreedom. In the space between, the slave regime created a landscape that walled in and immobilized its chattel. Again, as historian Walter Johnson has shown, the planter class transformed the South into a "carceral landscape" that eliminated slaves' ability to move unobserved. By distancing slave communities from each other on loosely connected plantations and roads, by leveling landscapes and clearing forests to make clandestine movement impractical, and by employing slave patrols to stalk this landscape, the

[5] Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* (Boston: The Anti-Slavery Office, 1849), 84.

architects of the plantation regime engaged in a process of "remaking space as discipline."[6] By altering the southern landscape, slaveholders compelled it to fit the needs of the plantation system.

The project of creating a world that was as hierarchical as it was static was most evident in the pass system. Its enforcement elucidated not only how movement and ideas of racial hierarchy were mutually supporting, but also how violence bound each together. This reality resonated with Solomon Northup, the black New Yorker who found himself kidnapped and enslaved in 1841. Planters issued a pass to any slave desiring to leave the plantation that included their name, master, destination, and the time for which they would be absent. Those slaves who defied this code found themselves subject to discipline. "A slave caught off his master's plantation without a pass," Northup wrote, "could be seized and whipped" with impunity by either their masters or white men serving on the local slave patrol.[7] In effect, the project of regulating black movement fell to the entire white community. By obligating all white men to uphold this system, white society drew a clear link between race and the privilege to move. Both the right of movement and the means to maintain slaves' world of immobility rested with white men and their monopoly on state-sanctioned violence.

Those who violated this code met grave repercussions. Sam Aleckson, a freedman who lived through slavery in the lowlands of South Carolina and recorded his experiences in the early twentieth century, remembered one such incident vividly. As was the custom in parts of the South, slaves from neighboring plantations often visited, courted, and married one another with the permission of owners. While some historians have viewed these relationships as a means

[6] Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2013), 219-223.

[7] Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave* (Auburn, N.Y.: Derby and Miller, 1853), 158.

through which slaves constructed a modicum of freedom under the heavy-handed rule of the slave regime, one cannot escape the irony that where slaves did not pursue these relationships clandestinely, only the most regulated forms of movement allowed slaves to engage in these relationships openly to begin with.[8]

Aleckson's narrative illustrates the tension between the autonomy slaves found in shaping their own social relations, the restrictive means of movement through which they accomplished it, and the pervasive threat of violence that coexisted with slaves' ability to traverse the roads, fields, and woodlands of the antebellum South. He wrote that a slave from a neighboring plantation named Mingo sought to marry Dolly, an enslaved woman living on the plantation of a Mr. Ward outside of Charleston.[9] Having journeyed to the Ward plantation, Mingo met with Ward to inquire about Dolly's availability. After agreeing to the arrangement, Ward asked Mingo for his pass. Examining it, Ward chastised Mingo because his pass did not include his destination. Ward informed Mingo that he "never allowed anyone on my place with such a ticket. The next time you visit Dolly you must have a different ticket. Ask your master to give you one stating plainly that you are to visit my plantation." Ward permitted Mingo to leave, but not without first reminding him of the terms that governed slaves' ability to move as well as the unequal power relationship that produced these restrictions. When Mingo returned to the plantation with the same pass a few days later, Ward reacted accordingly. Aleckson recalled that Ward first calmly chastised Mingo, and then ordered the plantation's driver to give Mingo twenty lashes. Mingo's offense was inadvertent and careless; Aleckson recalled that Mingo had

[8] Sam Aleckson, *Before the War and After the Union: An Autobiography* (Boston: Gold Mine, 1929), 51; Brenda K. Stevenson, *Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 226-257.

[9] Aleckson, *Before the War and After the Union*, 55.

no intent of running away. Nonetheless, such was the value of movement and the freedom that it entailed that even the most innocent violations of the pass system demanded swift retribution. Mingo left Ward's plantation after the whipping. The incident made an impression on Aleckson, as even years after the fact he remembered that when Mingo returned, he carried the type of pass that Ward required.[10]

Mingo's violation of the South's code of movement probably was inadvertent, but other slaves were more deliberate in their attempts to undermine the plantation regime's dictate of immobility. At times, that manifested itself in temporarily absconding from the plantation. As Stephanie Camp has demonstrated, slaves often retreated to forests to hold celebrations, religious gatherings, weddings, or to temporarily escape the guises of an overseer or master. In other instances, slaves left the plantation to directly defy their masters, and in particular to avoid their sexual advances. Frederick Douglass wrote in his autobiography how his Aunt Hester was the constant target of her owner, a man named Aaron Anthony. Despite Anthony's advances, Hester was involved with a slave on a neighboring plantation named Ned Roberts. Fearful of Anthony, Hester would abscond from the plantation at night and sought shelter with Roberts. Douglass recalled that one night when Anthony visited Hester's slave quarters to find her absent, he deduced that she was with Roberts. When Hester returned to the plantation, Anthony took Hester to the manor house's kitchen, bound her hands, and proceeded to whip her. Douglass wrote that Anthony,

> said to her, 'Now, you damned bitch, I'll learn you how to disobey my orders!'
> and after rolling up his sleeves, be commenced to lay on the heavy cowskin, and

[10] Ibid, 56.

> soon the warm, red blood (amid heart-rending shrieks from her, and horrid oaths from him) came dripping to the floor.[11]

Hester's freedom of movement entailed the destruction of Anthony's ability to control her sexuality. Movement provided Hester with the ability to reclaim a sense of autonomy over her own body by not only allowing her to leave a geography that was a site her subjugation and objectification, but by also allowing her to control who had sexual access to her body and when. Violence refereed these conflicting aims and rendered Hester's world static.

Hester's flight was temporary, but other slaves attempted to flee permanently. They too met a form of violence that was proportional to the threat that their movement presented to the slave regime. In 1859, Wesley Norris fled Arlington House plantation in Alexandria, Virginia. Norris had belonged to George Washington Parke Custis, the adopted grandson of George Washington and the father-in-law of future Confederate General Robert E. Lee. Upon his death in 1857, Custis mandated that his executor emancipate his slaves within five years. By 1859, the still enslaved yet rightfully restless Norris fled north. Authorities apprehended him in Maryland and returned Norris to Virginia. Norris claimed that then-Lieutenant Colonel Lee ordered the local constable to administer twenty lashes, which he was to "lay on well." Following his flogging, Norris remembered that "not (being) satisfied with simply lacerating our naked flesh," Lee instructed an overseer to "wash our backs with brine."[12] An army veteran, Lee was not as versed in plantation discipline as were men who had made planting a career. Nonetheless, even for this novice, stark displays of violence represented the only efficacious means of regulating slaves' movement. The maintenance of the peculiar institution demanded as much.

---

[11] Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 7.

[12] John Blassingame, *Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 467-468.

Norris remained enslaved at the beginning of the Civil War, but as a consequence of Confederate slave impressment in 1863, the Lee family's agent dispatched Norris to Richmond to labor on the defenses surrounding the city. Given the opportunity, Norris once again fled. Unlike his previous attempt, Norris emancipated himself by reaching Union lines. Like thousands of slaves across the Confederacy, Norris benefitted from the reality that the world the war made had violently upended the world the planters made.[13] Whereas limited mobility defined the antebellum South, the war incentivized movement and provided slaves with the opportunity to find freedom through it. As Yael Sternhell has argued, the Confederacy was a nation that eventually met its death metaphorically and practically "on the road," when both armies and fleeing refugees, both black and white and yet running in opposite directions, contributed to the nation's dissolution.[14] As Confederate defeat became evident, movement came to be a signpost of a changing socio-political order. This reality was so stark, visible, and unsettling to white southerners because it was a complete inversion of the antebellum world. Violence provided the foundation for that world and its strictures of racialized immobility. After 1861, violence was ironically the catalyst for its undoing. In the post-emancipation South, the freedpeople would experience social and political freedom on a level that they had not yet witnessed. The most obvious would come in their ability to traverse the southern landscape freely.

******

Given their experience in slavery, freedmen were well acquainted with the efficacy of movement as a method of resistance to white racism. Slaves employed clandestine mobility on an individual and communal level prior to the war, and as freedpeople they continued this

[13] Ibid.

[14] Sternhell, *Routes of War*, 7.

practice after emancipation. They did so, however, in a much different form and with a much more radical logic. With the end of the war, and with black men entering the arena of formal politics, they were no longer concerned with creating rival geographies or subaltern spaces wherein they could exist outside of the slave regime's view. They instead sought to appropriate and reshape the political and social geography of the South in a way that would deracinate it from its white supremacist roots. Put another way, if black movement before the war had existed primarily in the shadow of plantation system, in the world the war made it took place in the open, and on old geographies and spaces that had been sites of racial exclusion.

Black soldiers confirmed this reality when they descended on southern cities and towns as occupiers, symbols of national authority, and free men. J.H. Collins of the 54th Massachusetts wrote when his unit entered Charleston, "the streets were thronged with women and children of all sizes, colors, and grades – the young, the old, the halt, the maimed, and the blind. I saw an old colored woman with a crutch – for she could not walk without one, having served all her life in bondage – who, on seeing us, got so happy that she threw down her crutch and shouted that the year of jubilee had come." Armed black men marching unfettered through the streets of the South were to the recently emancipated proof that a significant change had been wrought in southern politics.[15] Black soldiers themselves also took note of the revolutionary change that militarized movement entailed. James F. Jones, a member of the U.S.C.T. on duty in Louisiana wrote home that after entering New Orleans for the first time, "we could see signs of smothered hate and prejudice to both our color and present character as Union soldiers. But, for once in his life, your humble correspondent walked fearlessly and boldly through the streets of a southern

[15] Edwin Redkey, *A Grand Army of Black Men: Letters from African American Soldiers in the Union Army, 1861-1865*(Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992), 78-79.

city! And he did this without being required to take off his cap at every step, or give all the sidewalks to those lordly princes of the sunny south, the planter's sons!"[16]

Soldiering and martial mobility had the potential to not just level the Old South's social hierarchy, but as with Jones, it also wrought an inner transformation in black men as they began to envision themselves as citizens. Actions such as parading, drilling, and marching were integral parts of military service. Regiments in the United States Colored Troops had engaged in these activities during the war, as would the militia companies that proved to be their ideological successors. Thus, despite demobilization, black movement after the war became institutionalized, especially as it related to black militia and paramilitary service. In Reconstruction, with black citizenship, manhood, and political freedom under siege, the freedmen utilized their militia companies to engage in a form of martial mobility that provided a public display of black men's inner transformation from slaves to citizens, just as it sought to effect a similar transformation of the southern landscape.

Black martial mobility first demonstrated its ability to shape regional and national politics in New Orleans in 1866. Louisiana had gone through the process of Reconstruction in 1864, when a convention drafted a new state constitution that recognized emancipation. Yet, not long after the guns fell silent at Appomattox and the smoke of war lifted from the southern landscape, the state's former Confederates returned to power. In 1866, the white voters of New Orleans returned the city's Confederate mayor, John C. Monroe, to his old office. Under Monroe, the city began to reconstitute its police force under the leadership of former Confederate Brigadier General Harry T. Hayes and veterans of his Louisiana Tigers brigade, a unit known during the war for both its fighting prowess and its penchant for brawling. Alarmed by this development, the state's radicals sought to reconvene the constitutional convention and to add provisions to the

[16] Ibid, 141-142.

document that would enfranchise ex-slaves and prohibit ex-Confederates from exercising the right to vote. The new convention planned to meet on July 30, 1866 at the New Orleans Mechanics Institute. A group of black veterans planned a march in support of the convention.[17]

The day prior to the convention, those veterans held a rally to garner support for the march. Many were veterans of the Louisiana Native Guards and its successor units in the Union Army. They also hailed from New Orleans' class of *gens de couleur libre* and were acquainted with the city's social and political networks. They had few qualms with engaging in politics, and now they did so with the moral authority and political capital attached to their status as veterans. They rallied on July 29 under the colors of their old units and articulated their reasons for marching.[18] Led by Michael Hahn, the state's first governor after the ratification of its 1864 constitution, the men at the rally made, according to white Democrats, "intemperate remarks" that were "denunciary of the rebels and their cause." Hahn, moreover, reminded the black men who were present that "being now citizens of the United States, they had the right to defend themselves as free men, and if attacked that day, they had the right to defend themselves." Following Hahn's speech, the men marched from the state house to city hall, where they continued to make harangues against the Crescent City's former rebels.[19] The ability to meet, hold rallies, and march provided these men with the opportunity to not only articulate their understanding of what citizenship meant, but also the ability to make these claims public.

When they marched to the Mechanics Institute the following day, they drew a clear connection between citizenship, manhood, and their new ability to both militarize and mobilize.

---

[17] Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 262.

[18] U.S. Congress, House Select Committee on New Orleans Riots and on New Orleans Custom House Frauds, *New Orleans Riots*, 39th Cong., 2nd sess., 1867, pg. 125. Cited hereafter as *New Orleans Riots*.

[19] Ibid, 1.

Around 10:00 A.M., around 200 veterans gathered in the French Quarter and marched through the middle of New Orleans towards the Mechanics Institute and the convention. Wearing their uniforms and marching in military columns, the procession included all of the trappings that one would expect of a military parade, including a drummer, fife player, and flag bearer. As the column proceeded through New Orleans, it accumulated as many followers as it raised indignation among the city's whites. They marched proudly while some hurled insults at white men who jeered them.[20]

Not only did the column march in favor of black civil rights and political liberty, but it did so in a way that conjured up memories of the city's long Union occupation and the immediate aftermath of emancipation. In a state that had recently passed its version of the Black Codes--which among other things undermined the ability of black men to move freely--the military procession rejected the logic that undergirded the immediate postwar reaction against emancipation. The New Orleans police met the marchers at the Mechanics Institute just as they crossed Canal Street and attempted to wrest the flag from the procession. Shots immediately rang out, the police began attacking the marchers, and the ensuing riot resulted in 44 deaths.[21]

The violent reaction to the march was suggestive of its ideological power and disruptive potential. The police chief of New Orleans was reported to have told his men to arm themselves on hearing word of the march. After having witnessed the crowd of black men traversing Canal Street, he described the column as a "black cloud." Such was the power and radical sight of black martial mobility that he viewed it as a looming threat akin to a storm or natural disaster.[22] Once

[20] Ibid, 18.

[21] Ibid, 477, 103.

[22] Ibid, 113.

the marchers and the police engaged one another, one observer testified that he witnessed freedmen "shot as soon as they would attempt to leave the rear end of the institute or the side exists, shot as soon as they would show themselves." Another man testified that freedmen were "beaten after they had fallen with clubs by policemen, and I saw the policemen put revolvers to their heads and to their hearts, within a couple of inches, and fire into them. Men respectably dressed rushed up with canes, or sticks, or anything they could get a hold of, to jab them, pound them, and stick them in the face and eyes." The same man remembered that after the riot abated, he came across a black man "lying on the sidewalk, partially in the gutter, dying from the effects of his wounds. Blood was spouting from his eyes and he seemed to be shot in several places in the head. A man drew a sword cane and stuck it into his heart. He bent over, and as he rose up the blood spouted into his face. He put his weapon up, all covered with blood, saying, 'Another one gone to hell.'"[23] Such was the rage induced by black martial mobility that it reignited scenes of violence that harkened back to the racial massacres of Fort Pillow and Poison Spring.

The procession and its aftermath had far reaching consequences for state, regional, and national politics. The violence that followed the march played a pivotal role in revealing to northern voters that the South had not accepted the terms of the war. In partial response, northerners sent Republican supermajorities to Congress in 1867 that passed a much more aggressive and comprehensive program of postwar oversight. Additionally, the procession and ensuing massacre revealed a new political opportunity for black men insofar as they could engage with the political process. It demonstrated the power of militarized movement to reshape the terms of debate in Reconstruction politics, just as black men could also alter the political and social meaning of space. Black men marching through the streets in militarized fashion provided a rendering of what black martial manhood both looked like and meant. Drawing on their

[23] Ibid, 18.

authority as veterans and expressing their new political subjectivity, black men demonstrated their opposition to anti-Reconstruction policies and their own sense of citizenship through the militarized and public ritual of marching. In doing so, they appropriated public space in New Orleans in a way that before the war might have been inconceivable, and it was this reality that compelled the police of New Orleans to lash out against the marchers. At its heart, the march was a counterpoint to the antebellum politics of space. It bore out in sharp relief the radical and violent potential of black martial mobility in the postbellum world.

******

Once Republican state governments began to mobilize militia companies in the latter years of the 1860s, freedmen across the South employed militarized movement to project their vision of manhood and biracial republicanism on to a variety of terrains. They chose these sites carefully and intentionally as they utilized their companies to attack social and political geographies that were rich with both symbolism and practical value. The remainder of this chapter focuses on these specific geographies and how the appropriation of each allowed black men to not just remake the South's political geography, but also how each specific location allowed black men to express their sense of citizenship and how white men responded to these public rituals. In doing so, this chapter is organized primarily in terms of space rather than time or chronology. It focuses on the places that black companies marched, drilled, and paraded. Utilizing a series of vignettes and the stories that southerners told to both themselves and congressional committees, it begins in the rural South on southern plantations before examining political processions in southern streets and the politics of movement in more densely populated towns and cities. It ends by examining the two locations where these processions and rallies often found their terminus – southern courthouses and polling places. The former were often

located in town centers and were thus a visible venue where black men might express their manhood and citizenship, while the latter was a practical geography where black men in the postbellum era had the most contact with formalized political processes and the ability to effect political change. Each of the spaces had long histories as sites of racial subjugation and exclusion. By attacking, appropriating, militarizing, and redefining the meaning of these geographies, Republican companies sought to create fertile soil for the growth of biracial republicanism and black citizenship.

Southern plantations were a logical target for black companies. In the antebellum era the plantation was a site that defined racial and economic relations throughout the southern countryside. Plantations cast an imposing shadow over slave quarters and acreage devoted to the production of staple crops. Although slaves found ways to abscond and temporarily escape the watchful eyes of their masters, overseers, and drivers, their places of living and work defined much of their geographically limited existence. As chattel, they were essentially bound to the plantation, and their only means of leaving it were either through the pass system, temporarily absconding, or fleeing north. The plantation, then, stood as an edifice to the slave regime and its racial presuppositions. As such, it would necessarily become a prominent point of conflict in the post-emancipation world, as former masters and former slaves sought to control its symbolic meaning, political power, and economic productivity during the transition to a free labor economy.[24]

This was especially evident on the plantation of Charles Baskerville in eastern Mississippi. A native of Lowndes County – where he had been a man of standing and a planter

[24] For works that deal with the centrality of the plantation to not only the slave regime, but the lived experiences of slaves and the enslaved alike, see Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 9-12, Stephanie Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, and Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

before the war - Baskerville relocated to Noxubee County after returning home from Confederate service and purchased another plantation near Macon. Baskerville attempted to make his new enterprise profitable, but he struggled to do so while meeting the demands of a market economy and of his freed laborers.[25] Baskerville also dealt with men who refused to work, abandoned their labor contracts, or left work to attend Republican rallies.[26] Baffled at how to navigate postbellum labor relations, he sought at first to appease his laborers, but that proved ineffective. He established a school on the plantation and installed an ex-Confederate soldier as a teacher. To his dismay, he found after returning from a business trip that the freedmen had recruited a former northern soldier to take the man's place. If the plantation had been a space that reproduced white supremacy before the war, in Reconstruction it was an increasingly contested terrain.[27] Unaccustomed to dealing with the demands of a wage economy and free labor, Baskerville soon became active in the local Ku Klux Klan in hopes of enforcing labor discipline not only on his own plantation, but of stamping out the interference of white Republicans.[28]

Baskerville's membership in the Klan was a poorly kept secret, but it did more to embolden his tenants than to intimidate them. In attempting to secure their political freedom and establish their economic autonomy on the plantation, they organized militia companies. Noxubee was the same county where over 2,000 freedmen volunteered their services in James L. Alcorn's state militia. While Alcorn himself was hesitant to use his companies, the men that filled their ranks were far more enthusiastic. As the previous chapter demonstrated, Republicans sought to recruit black farmers into their companies, and southern labor relations became increasingly

[25] *Mississippi KKK Report*, 374.

[26] Ibid, 383.

[27] Ibid, 384.

[28] Ibid, 441.

militarized due to the presence of the militia and black farmers' grievances against postwar peonage. For Baskerville, the presence of the militia proved to be especially disruptive. He recalled that after the passage of Alcorn's militia bill, the black tenant farmers to whom he rented land began mustering and drilling on his plantation in an effort to either intimidate or antagonize local whites. "Some of my negroes got to drilling on the place at night," Baskerville complained to the committee investigating Klan violence in the state. He testified that he confronted his employees during one such drill, and ordered them "to stop it, on the principle that they had no right to be mustering upon the plantation; that when they got ready and organized companies they must do like other people did; but I did not want them to be organizing into a militia company on my plantation."[29] Baskerville's testimony is telling. From his use of the first-person possessive to refer to the freedmen working on his plantation, it is clear that Baskerville was unable to accept the reality of emancipation, much less black citizenship. Nor could he accede to the freedmen's intransigence on what had only six years before been a geography that embodied the fullest expression of planter domination. The martial pageantry performed by his ex-slaves, in the form of mustering, drilling, and marching forced Baskerville to confront the reality of black citizenship as it occurred on his property. Taking advantage of Alcorn's militia, the freedmen in Baskerville's employ attempted to fundamentally alter and subvert the meaning of the plantation in southern society, and the disdain with which Baskerville met this recalcitrance suggests as much.

While these acts were laden with symbolic meaning, they also had practical consequences. The presence of militia companies was enough to upset the plantation economy and create a pull factor for black laborers to abandon their work. In Edgefield, South Carolina, where a black company mustered and began to occupy the town in 1869, black laborers in the

[29] Ibid, 388.

town's environs immediately abandoned their work and traveled to Edgefield once they learned of the militia's presence. Local newspapers reported that with the "invasion of the county by the negro militia" plantations witnessed a mass "desertion of the fields by the negro laborers." For many, this was a protest against the South's nascent sharecropping system and its failure to meet black men's expectations of what it meant to be free laborers. The presence of companies gave black men the opportunity and the audacity to vote with their feet and undermine the South's fledgling economy. Such was the extent of this mass abandonment of the county's plantations that the *Charleston Daily News* predicted disaster for that year's crops: "Many farmers are thus left high and dry so far as planting is concerned, and many of them are without a single hand on their plantations. Nice prospects for crops ahead in Edgefield County, certainly!"[30] In a radical act, black martial mobility had not only altered the plantation's power as a geography that supported a coercive labor regime, but by allowing black men the ability to move freely, it undermined its potential profitability.

This militant appropriation of plantation space was evident elsewhere in the South. In Chesterfield, South Carolina, where cotton plantations employed black men as ganged laborers, freedmen flocked to join Robert Scott's companies in 1869 and 1870. The *Yorkville Enquirer* reported that these men took pleasure in "insulting and bullying in the extreme" when their employers attempted to coerce their labor and to bar them from bringing their government arms to the plantation.[31] As the Klan escalated its campaign of terror in the face of militia mobilization, these black men began to employ both violence and the manipulation of space and movement for the purpose of self-defense. Black companies circulated between plantations, set

[30] *Charleston Daily News*, July 28, 1869.

[31] *Yorkville Enquirer*, March 16, 1871.

pickets on the county's main roads, and demanded that white men travelling along rural byways provide their destinations. One man in Hamburg, South Carolina, the site of the notorious white-on-black massacre in 1876, recalled that a black militia company marched by his home that year, shouted insults at his family, and damaged his fence with their bayonets. The *Enquirer* reported further that companies were "in the habit of traversing various sections of this county, singly and in squads, with loaded guns, which were fired a random, to the terror of peaceable citizens, and making threats that they would kill the whites of all ages and conditions, and burn while there was stick of timber to make a fire!"[32] These companies transformed the rural economy and geography of the county. Whereas before the war the state embodied a carceral landscape where white control over space and movement circumscribed black freedom, the presence of roving black companies and militarized plantations had inverted this racialized geography.

Militia companies employed martial mobility to reshape the ways in which southerners understood not only the relationship between towns and the countryside, but also how movement between each was increasingly fluid and militarized. Democratic newspapers reported that in 1871 Chester County's company "turned out under arms, and continued through the whole day to march and countermarch on the public highway, behaving in a most boisterous and indecent manner, and indulging in the most violent threats."[33] The same company rallied nearly 80 men and began to "march on the town, and at the same time rumors were sent through the country to notify the negroes on the plantations." The company marched to Yorkville, drilled in the streets, stacked their arms, and refused to allow whites to pass along the roads and sidewalk. When the town's sheriff, a white man, convinced them to leave, the militia instead paraded around the

[32] U.S. Congress, Senate, Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections, *South Carolina in 1876*, 44th Cong., 2nd sess., 1877, pg. 641. Cited hereafter as *South Carolina in 1876*; *Yorkville Enquirer*, March 16, 1871.

[33] Ibid.

outskirts of the town's central district before convening again at a black Methodist church.[34] The town's whites were noticeably frustrated at their inability to contain black men's ability to now move freely from the country to townships and back again.

******

Appropriating the streets and central districts of southern towns proved just as disruptive as black companies' ability to corrode the hegemonic power of the plantation. In the way that black martial mobility rendered the relations between towns and their environs more fluid, it set the stage for black political processions and parades that appropriated city streets. Moving from the countryside to more densely populated cities and townships, black companies had a much broader audience for their political activism. In the Edgefield district of South Carolina, the companies of freedmen Ned Tennant, Prince Rivers, and Doc Adams took delight in antagonizing white men by marching, parading, and drilling on the town's busiest avenues. Prior to the Hamburg Massacre, a black company used the Independence Day holiday in 1876 to drill in the streets. Although the street running through the center of the town was nearly 150 feet wide, the company extended its ranks the entire width of the street and refused to allow white men in their carriages to pass. One white observer wrote with derision of how "white men and their families going by Hamburg on their necessary affairs were subjected to constant annoyances, exactions and insolence, petty and serious."[35] In a more rural area this type of parading could be avoided, but in a town center white men had to confront the reality of armed black men. In many of these instances, confrontations in the streets between black companies and white men became contests over manliness and racial hierarchy. In the antebellum era, black

[34] Ibid.

[35] Alfred Brockenbrough Williams, *Eyewitness to 1876*, South Caroliniana Library, Columbia, S. C.; Martin L. Gary Papers, Scrapbook 1876, South Caroliniana Library, Columbia, S. C..

men had been expected to cede roads and sidewalks to passing white men. When black companies disrupted this custom and deliberately impeded white men – as had happened in Artesia – black and white men engaged in a test of wills. On its face, this brand of street politics appeared petty and shallow, but on a deeper level it revealed fundamental questions of power in southern society and what degree of deference – if any – black men owed white gentlemen in a biracial republic.

In Hamburg this particular form of street politics became a persistent point of conflict. The town witnessed frequent scuffles and arguments between the local black company and traveling white men. This situation reached a tipping point in 1876 when Thomas Butler - a young white man from a prestigious family - approached the company in his carriage as it drilled. As the South Carolina Governor and Senator "Pitchfork Ben" Tillman related in his autobiography, "instead of throwing his men into columns of four or columns of platoons or wheeling them out of the way," the company's commander "gave the order to charge bayonets with the view no doubt of showing off" for the black citizens that had gathered to watch the drill. For Hamburg's black citizens, the presence of the militia in the street was a sign of black political power. By humiliating Butler, the company provided black onlookers with the ability to live vicariously through their own attacks on white racism. Tillman asserted that the action was meant to emasculate, embarrass, and dishonor Butler in front of both the white and black citizens of the town. Butler responded in kind, drawing his pistol on the company before leaving.[36]

As the incident in Hamburg suggests, the threat of violence frequently undergirded southern street politics. In the town of Colfax, another site of a notorious pogrom, Captain

[36] Ben Tillman, *Autobiography*, 13, SCL; Martin W. Gary Papers, Prince Rivers Interview, Folder: Scrapbook 1876, South Caroliniana Library, Columbia, S. C; Martin W. Gary Papers, Joseph Thomas Interview, Folder: Scrapbook 1876, South Caroliniana Library, Columbia, S. C.

William Ward of the Louisiana militia allowed his company to regulate the movement of white men whenever they entered town. Some whites also accused the company of menacing Democrats with their weapons and temporarily taking them prisoner.[37] In the Mississippi town of Crawfordsville a company under the command of a freedman named Bob Thompson made a habit of marching and drilling in the town's streets. When J. B. Brooks, a white Democrat described by the *Macon Beacon* as "one of the most respected peaceable men in the community," attempted to navigate through the militia's drill when he entered the town on business, Thompson informed Brooks that he would "have his heart's blood" if he ever attempted to pass by again. The *Beacon* mused of Thompson that "evidently, he will bear looking after."[38] The sincerity of these threats is an open question, but that white southerners feared black violence spoke to its potency as it allowed these black companies to redefine who possessed access to southern streets and town centers.

Martial mobility also allowed black men to appropriate public space for the sake of supporting the Republican Party. Companies often marched through town centers as a part of partisan campaign rallies. Throughout 1870, the militia company of Joe Crews made frequent trips through the town of Laurens, South Carolina and organized rallies for the Republican Party in that year's congressional elections. White Democrat B.W. Ball testified that the company marched "east, west, south, and north," exercising free reign over the town. It escorted candidates for local and state office throughout Laurens with their arms in hand, mustering and

[37] U.S. Congress, House, Select Committee on the Insurrectionary States in the South, *Conditions of the South – February 23, 1875*, 43rd Cong., 2nd sess., pg. 12-15. Cited hereafter as *Conditions of the South – February 23, 1875*.

[38] *Macon Beacon*, May 23, 1874.

parading throughout the district.[39] R.P. Todd, a white Democrat, similarly informed Congress that Crews and his company canvassed the county during the months preceding the election "from one end to the other, with arms in their hands, shooting dogs and terrifying women and children." About a month prior to the election Todd recalled how the company held a campaign rally in the town's center where Franklin Moses and Daniel Chamberlain – two future governors - spoke "surrounded by bayonets furnished by the governor" and mocked the county's white Democrats in a series of stump speeches.[40] When Democrats attempted to confront the Republican speakers, the company kept them at bay with their bayonets. By marching, mustering, parading, and escorting Republican politicians, Crews's company reshaped the possibilities of where the Republican Party could hold political rallies and when they could do so. Moreover, they appropriated the most visible public spaces possible. In doing so, they made a claim for Republicans to have equal access to public spaces in a manner that was consistent with their claims to equal citizenship.

The collective violence threatened by the militia allowed for black men to not only participate in and shape political discourse, but to do so in a manner that was as brazen as it was intrinsically violent. This was important development, for as formal politics became increasingly predicated on the use of force, the communication of threats allowed the freedmen to meet white Democrats on similar terms. In this sense, political violence represented a wide umbrella that included many behaviors. Acts of inflicting bodily harm were certainly one, but just as important was black men's ability to communicate violence through their words, actions, and gestures.

---

[39] U.S. Congress, Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States, *Testimony Taken by the Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States* Vol. II – South Carolina (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1872), 1329. Cited hereafter as *South Carolina KKK Report*.

[40] U.S. Congress, House, *Papers of Contestant in the case of Isaac G. McKissick vs. Alexander S. Wallace*, 42nd Cong., 2nd sess., H. Misc. Doc. 48, pg. 79.

Black companies were especially effective in this regard when they utilized their weapons to disrupt political rallies and debates. In Chester, a militia company rallied in 1870 to oversee a debate between the county's Republican and Democratic candidates. The Republican militia marched into town and lined up in formation. Once the Democrats congregated and began to speak, a number of the freedmen fired their guns over the Democrats' heads. The Democrats claimed that not only could their speakers not project over the sound of black men's volleys, but also that they were too afraid to challenge them. Having made its point, the company marched away.[41]

Aside from curbing the political speech of their opponents, when black companies appropriated town squares, they also made them accessible to Republican politicians who used these openings to engage in vitriolic, hyper-masculine, and partisan addresses. Prior to the Meridian riot of 1871, freedmen in eastern Mississippi marched and rallied in the city and delivered incendiary speeches. A white Republican named William Clopton organized a black company and during the trial of fellow Republican Daniel Price, allegedly welcomed the prospect of a race war. Similarly, one of his black lieutenants urged freedmen to adopt retributive warfare where they matched the Ku Klux Klan casualty-for-casualty and depredation-for-depredation.[42] Berry labeled the speech "inflammatory and incendiary," while another white Meridianite, J.W. McMullen, expressed an acute sense of angst after hearing Clopton's speech. McMullen feared for his life, as the speech seemed to embolden the black men who were organized in Meridian. "The language was of such a nature," McMullen recounted, "as to create in my mind considerable alarm." The crowd that heard this speech – which was predominately

[41] *South Carolina KKK Report*, 1427.

[42] *Mississippi KKK Report*, 137.

black – was according to McMullen was "completely under (Clopton's) control, and that I was afraid … that if he so ordered, the crowd would come in and murder me."[43] The language militia members employed during their rallies emboldened black men and allowed them to invoke language that preyed on white Mississippians' deepest fears.

This rhetoric sometimes became reality. In eastern Mississippi, black men frequently carried their arms to political rallies in order to deter white paramilitarists.[44] In other instances, white men eschewed outward displays of violence and instead sought to heckle, shout-down, or otherwise intimidate Republican politicians. White Democrat James Rives testified in 1871 that when a white man disrupted a rally of black Republicans in Lowndes County, Mississippi by taunting its speakers, a member of the company that accompanied the Republican politicians struck the man on the head with a saber and shot him.[45] With their legitimacy under threat, Lowndes freedmen resorted to violence to ensure that Republicans would have fair access to the political process and the political spaces needed to engage in this process.

*****

If martial mobility sought to serve the freedmen's interest in Republican Party politics, in a broader sense it also informed their understanding of American history and how they integrated themselves into this history. As William Blair has demonstrated in his study of the politics of commemoration, immediately after the war black southerners were able to participate in public rituals and appropriations of public space in a way that would have been unimaginable in the

[43] Ibid, 152, 157.

[44] Ibid, 161.

[45] Ibid, 557.

antebellum era.[46] This was part and parcel to the freedmen's ability to develop a robust commemorative culture that included celebrations of the Fourth of July, emancipation, and the Civil War itself. The ability to hold these gatherings was firmly rooted in the black military experience, for it was their military experience that undergirded many freedmen's ability to claim a place in the nation in the first place. On a more practical level, the military provided safety for freedmen to create this commemorative culture. Consequently, commemoration became an increasingly militarized affair that was deeply intertwined with parading and drilling. In September of 1865, the commander of the Union garrison in Mobile, Alabama reported that he permitted a "procession of freedmen, the only class of people in Mobile who craved of me the privilege of celebrating the anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. Six thousand well-dressed and orderly colored people, escorted by two regiments of colored troops, paraded the streets, assembled in the public squares, and were addressed in patriot speeches by orators of their own race and color."[47] Similar scenes occurred in Charleston, where a veteran of the 54th Massachusetts wrote home that, "Independence Day was celebrated with great enthusiasm by the loyal citizens and soldiery … The troops paraded, the Declaration of Independence and the Emancipation Proclamation were read, and orators gave expression to patriotic sentiments doubly pointed by the great war which perfected the work of the fathers."[48] Martial mobility made this type of demonstration possible and allowed the city's freedpeople to express their

[46] William Blair, *Cities of the Dead: Contesting the Memory of the Civil War in the South, 1865-1914* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 23-76.

[47] U.S. Cong. Senate. *Message of the President of the United States, communicating, in compliance with a resolution of the Senate of the 12th instant, information in relation to the States of the Union lately in rebellion, accompanied by a report of Carl Schurz on the states of South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana*. By Andrew Johnson, Carl Schurz, and Ulysses S. Grant. 30th Cong., 1st sess. Doc. 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1865), 58.

[48] Luis F. Emilio, *A Brave Black Regiment: The History of the Fifty-Fourth Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, 1863-1865* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1995), 314.

fealty to the American nation and their history within this nation despite the objections of the city's whites.

Once the Union army demobilized, paramilitary and militia companies filled the void left by the federal army. Their martial mobility provided a visible means for African Americans to reproduce their commemorative culture. These commemorative events allowed the freedmen to connect their sacrifice in the war with the challenges of emancipation. In this sense, martial mobility and commemorative culture built continuity and stability within the black community. For whites, however, this combination proved threatening. In New Orleans, white men complained that having left their Decoration Day ceremonies, black companies "entered saloons in large numbers, with boisterous and threatening deportments" and antagonized white patrons.[49] In Newberry, South Carolina, a black company celebrated Independence Day by parading through the streets late into the evening before one of its members discharged his weapon at a white town marshal.[50] To white southerners, this appropriation of space was nothing less than a form of rebellion and Independence Day celebrations became anathema to former rebels. Henry Ravenel of South Carolina frequently derided these celebrations in his personal journal. His disdain, moreover, remained consistent throughout Reconstruction. On July 4th, 1866 he lamented, "We hear the discharge of canon in Aiken where the troops are celebrating the day. Our own people are scarcely in a condition yet to join in rejoicing with those who seem to think the day belongs exclusively to them."[51] After a decade, Ravenel's contempt for both black martial mobility and Independence Day had not changed. On the nation's centennial, Ravenel

[49] *Conditions of the South – January 15, 1875*, 189.

[50] *South Carolina KKK Report*, 163.

[51] William Henry Ravenel, *The Private Journal of William Henry Ravenel, 1859-1887* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1947), 288-289.

penned in disgust: "Fourth of July! An anniversary once honored through the whole length of our land. Now our Southern people (the white citizens) feel that they are still ostracized, and under the political ban. Until they are fully restored to political rights, they cannot take a heartily in a national celebration, which is intended to perpetrate the liberty and independence of the United States of America."[52]

Southern politics became in effect street politics, where paramilitary strength complemented partisan rhetoric. At an Independence Day celebration in 1870 in Yorkville, South Carolina, W.B. Nash, a black state senator, and white politician Philip Epstein engaged in a physical altercation over the veracity of claims each made during a debate. The *Yorkville Enquirer* reported that as the situation escalated, "Wash Bynum, colored, drew a knife and, slashing right and left, wounded several persons. Bynum was finally run through with a bayonet and instantly killed." Rather than this ending the altercation, other men rushed to the scene and drew their weapons, while those who did not have arms made do with "fence rails, knives, etc."[53] Martial mobility granted African Americans the ability to appropriate political space and to hold rallies, but in the way that this radical act challenged white supremacy and increased the likelihood of white retaliation, it also made it necessary for black men to resort to violence to defend their prerogatives. Wherever militia companies went, they posed a threat to white men who not only feared that the militia would erode the spatial boundaries of Herrenvolk democracy, but also replace it with a new political geography where black men could express their citizenship wherever they pleased and however they wanted.

******

[52] Ibid, 348.

[53] *Yorkville Enquirer*, July 14, 1870.

Militarized political processions and rallies often found their terminus at two places: courthouses and polling places. This was intentional, as each had played a prominent role in creating the legal and political conditions under which white supremacy and the slave regime thrived. In contrast to the rural spaces that black men sought to appropriate, these spaces held civic value and meaning in that they represented the grounds on which visible, formal politics were contested in the antebellum era, a politics from which black men were excluded. Southern legal codes dictated that slaves were property and that a master's claim over his slaves was absolute. Slaves, moreover, were barred from testifying before southern courts in legal proceedings, a reality that reinforced their subordinate position in southern society. This arrangement was also evident at southern polling places, where as non-citizens and non-voters, southern chattel and free black men lacked any sort of meaningful claim to political participation. Southern polls reflected the essence of Herrenvolk democracy, where wealthy, middling, and poor white men met as citizens to reproduce white republicanism through the franchise and at the expense of southern free blacks and slaves. More than any other geographies in the South, courtrooms and polling places revealed how the slave regime sought to marginalize black men in southern society, both ideologically and spatially. That black companies would target them when they engaged in processions was unsurprising. Access to civic space was constitutive of republican citizenship and black men's ability to become citizens in a meaningful sense.[54]

Black companies employed a number of tactics to deracinate southern courthouses from their white supremacist histories. First and foremost, just as they had done on southern streets and plantations, black companies acted out their martial identities by drilling on courthouse

[54] Ariella Gross, *Double Character: Slavery and Mastery in the Antebellum Courtroom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

lawns. In 1874, Republican P. C. Hall marched a black company to Vicksburg and with their rifles in hand, began drilling at the courthouse and marching in the streets. Vicksburg had been a fertile ground for the recruitment of black regiments during the Civil War, and units belonging to the United States Colored Troops had served on occupation duty in the city.[55] For whites, the reappearance of armed African Americans conjured up the ghosts of Confederate defeat and the humiliation of emancipation. In other cases, violent rhetoric accompanied this drilling. One white South Carolinian recalled that a captain of a black company reminded his men during one such rally that courthouses were a place where they were "once tortured and lashed in slavery," and as such, they ought to rally there in order to reclaim their meaning. The company did so, and after extensive drilling, the same captain took the opportunity to deliver another polemic where he defended the right of self-defense and the Republican Party. Standing at the court house, he reminded his audience that they should "keep (your arms) and defend yourselves with them, and if the whites attempt to molest you in any way you will have these arms to defend yourselves. If they ever attempt such a thing here, property will be laid to ashes in this town, and the streets of this town my run with blood."[56] If prior to the war black men had been deprived of the ability to testify at courthouses, the political realities of Reconstruction granted them the liberty to commandeer these spaces and then use them to make public speeches calling on black men to, in the most extreme cases, lay waste to southern towns.

There was also a gendered dimension to these courthouse rallies. Demonstrating at courthouses afforded black men with the ability to engage in masculine performances that simultaneously bolstered their claims to manhood while denigrating those of white men.

---

[55] Anthony Kaye, *Joining Places: Slave Neighborhoods in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 196.

[56] *South Carolina KKK Report*, 1515.

Throughout 1874, Vicksburg's black company not only occupied the town's courthouse, but it also drove white women and children from its lawn whenever it sought to drill. When the company's drills spilled into the streets adjacent to the courthouse, the militia came into direct conflict with white men, halting their carriages and attempting to interrogate them.[57] Similar incidences occurred in New Orleans, where in 1874 Governor William Pitt Kellogg threatened to decommission a company that harassed white women in public places.[58] Black companies circumscribed white mobility and access to public space in a way that disrupted white men's conception of themselves as patriarchs. If white masculinity rested on the ability to dominate, direct, and protect the dependents of white households, black companies openly undermined this masculine prerogative when they regulated the movement of white women and children. If white men were unable to protect white women and children against black martial mobility, the practical bases of white patriarchy were a dead letter. That this occurred in public spaces that had been shuttered off from black men only a few years prior made this development all the more disruptive.

If undermining white men's patriarchal privileges represented one side of the proverbial coin of constructing black masculinity after the war, fulfilling the expectations of black women represented the other. Freedwomen sometimes encouraged their husbands, brothers, and sons to act violently as a means of asserting their manhood. During the trial of the captain of a black company in the ever-violent Edgefield, a black militia unit hovered around the courthouse during the proceedings. When black witnesses were barred from giving testimony due to their frequent

[57] U.S. Congress, House Reports, *Vicksburgh Troubles*, 43rd Cong., 2nd sess., 1875, pg. 46. Cited hereafter as *Vicksburgh Troubles*; Ibid, 377.

[58] U.S. Congress, House Select Committee on the Insurrectionary States in the South, *Conditions of the South – January 15, 1875*, 43rd Cong., 2nd sess., pg. 218. Cited hereafter as *Conditions of the South – January 15, 1875*.

use of profanity and directing ad hominem attacks at white men, black women encouraged their arms bearing husbands to heed this slight. One white Carolinian testified before Congress that these women encouraged the men to shoot and cut the throats of the white judge and jurists if either treated black defendants unfairly.[59] Not only was a black company appropriating the courthouse, but so too were black women, and not as passive bystanders. They actively encouraged black men to not just appropriate the space, but to act violently within it.

In these instances black men sought to utilize southern courthouses as a type of stage where they could express the inner transformation that militia service had wrought within them. These statements were powerful, but perhaps even more controversial were black men's attempts to quite literally alter the physical landscape of actual courthouses and town squares themselves as a means of expressing their view of militarized citizenship. This was evident in Louisiana's Grant Parish prior to the Colfax Massacre of 1873. Responding to threats made from a white paramilitary company regarding disputed election results, William Ward's company encamped at the town's courthouse and began terraforming it into a militarized political space. The unit constructed earthworks around the town's courthouse that were "some 300 yards in length and from 2 to 4 feet high" and deployed a piece of artillery on its lawn. His men – some of whom were also Union veterans – drilled around the building and set up pickets around the town. Many white residents fled the town, with one lamenting that those who stayed were not allowed to move through the streets without the permission of Ward's company.[60] The courthouse itself became the physical embodiment of black martial manhood. Rather than representing a mere means for black men to act out their inner transformation from slave to citizen, the courthouse

[59] *South Carolina in 1876*, 328.

[60] *Conditions of the South – February 23, 1875*, 15.

itself – with its militarized trenches, armaments, and drilling – became an edifice to a militarized form of black citizenship.

Black companies affected a similar transformation of polling places. Without the franchise, polling places represented a completely foreign geography to black men insofar as they approached these spaces as republican citizens. Polling places in the antebellum era reproduced the bonds of race that held the white community together when poorer and middling white men went to polls to elect wealthy white men to office. For black men to not only gain the franchise and enter these geographies on equal footing, but to do so in military formations spoke to the existential conflict between biracial republicanism and Herrenvolk democracy that the rise of black militias represented.

The project of redefining the meaning of polling places began with the issue of accessibility. For Republicans to win office, they needed a high level of black turnout. To achieve as much, Republicans needed black men to be able to reach southern polling places safely. Republican governments thus sought to increase black turnout by manipulating where polling places were located. In South Carolina, where Robert K. Scott filled both his state militia and other patronage positions with party loyalists, militia captain Joseph Crews also served on the state's election board. Crews took advantage of his position and located the county's polling places relatively close to one another and in neighborhoods or areas of the county that were primarily inhabited by freedpeople. Crews hoped to deter the Klan from openly intimidating prospective black voters. Companies across the state's northern counties then mustered on election day during 1870 to guard the polls, assuring that the Klan would not interfere with voting in the immediate vicinity of the ballot boxes.[61]

[61] *South Carolina KKK Report*, 1305.

As the presence of black companies at these polls suggests, polls themselves became militarized landscapes. This reality arose largely in response to the growth of white terrorism and paramilitarism. From the rise of the Ku Klux Klan to the beginning of the campaigns of the Louisiana White League and South Carolina's Red Shirts, white southerners employed violence to deter black men from voting. As one Republican in Louisiana averred, white and black Republicans alike were "scared to death" to approach a poll due to the specter of white violence. Access to institutional violence and to the ballot therefore went hand-in-hand. Realizing this, Republican militia and paramilitary companies did not stand by idly when white terrorists sought to intimidate black voters. In Mississippi, freedmen responded to Klan violence by marching to polls armed and in military formation. Republican candidate Jim Reeves testified before Congress that in the election of 1868 he witnessed a black paramilitary unit marching to the polls to vote for him with their pistols buckled around their waists for all to see, presumably to act as a deterrent to white aggressors. Reeves testified that when he saw the men, he counseled them to hide their arms out of fear that they would do more to provoke violence than to the prevent it. The act of voting while armed, however, seemed to only embolden them. Reeve recalled that rather than disarming they instead asked him to repeat a speech that he had recently delivered and pledged their loyalty to him. Reeves uneasily obliged, and the company continued on their way to the poll.[62]

Once black companies reached polling places they displayed a wide range of behaviors. In 1870, a company marched to a poll in Chesterfield, South Carolina, voted as a unit, and encouraged black men that were under the age of 21 to illegally cast ballots.[63] In the neighboring

[62] *Conditions of the South – February 23, 1875*, 277; *Mississippi KKK Report*, 555.

[63] U.S. Congress, House, *Papers of Contestant in the case of Isaac G. McKissick vs. Alexander S. Wallace*, 42nd Cong., 2nd sess., H. Misc. Doc. 48, pg. 23.

town of Abbeville, a black militia company marched to the poll in 1876, voted, and left without incident, although the presence of the company offended local whites. Another company in the town marched to the poll to vote together, singing John Brown's Body as they approached and then exited the polling place. In Louisiana, black companies marched to the poll as units with arms in hand and voted. Lieutenant William Gerlach of the Third United States Infantry noted that the black unit intended to only use violence as a last resort. Voting collectively was more a means of defending themselves against the Klan than it was an attempt to antagonize whites.[64] Militarized voting was thus a flexible tool that could either be intentionally used to disrupt the electoral process, to offend or taunt white southerners, or to ensure protection from legitimate threats. Yet, what these actions held in common was that nearly everywhere black men voted as a company, they contributed both to the militarization of politics and to the militarization of political space. That contribution filled an important ideological need in the sense that it legitimized black manhood and citizenship in the face of white terror, while also assuming a practical function in assuring black men's safety.

These actions also proved escalatory. In its most provocative form, black martial mobility excluded white southerners from voting and restricted their movement to and from the polls. In Walterborough, a town on the outskirts of Charleston, white Democrat William R. Hoyt recalled how in 1870 a black company formed a picket line "within eight or ten feet, on either side of the ballot-box, and voters were obliged to pass through this column or line to deposit their ballots." The militia stacked its weapons around the actual boxes and forced white men to navigate around state arms in order to cast their votes. Hoyt testified that armed black men shoved and hustled white men. Although he was able to vote, Hoyt claimed that as he attempted

---

[64] *South Carolina in 1876*, 368; *Conditions of the South – February 23, 1875*, 149.

to leave the poll, one of the men in the company stabbed him with a dirk.[65] A similar incident occurred at nearby Calhoun's Mill. White farmer H.R. Gilbert informed Congress that when a group of thirty white men approached the poll to vote, "darkies came up with clubs, two and two, and crowded the white people back." Although the white men were not prevented from voting, the black company at least hoped to dissuade them via intimidation.[66]

White men interpreted black dominance of polling places as a sign of their impending disfranchisement and exclusion from the privileges of citizenship. In Monroe, Mississippi, Democrat Reuben Davis testified that during elections in 1875, a black company gathered between 50 and 150 men, "with drums, fifes, banners, and swords, and a very large number of them with revolvers, and upon getting to the town they universally massed themselves around the ballot-box, so as to exclude the democrats." Davis testified to Congress that when the black company attempted to exclude him from the poll, he chastised them, lecturing the unit that his father - a veteran of the American Revolution - had "fought for my right to vote many years ago. Some of his blood is upon the battle-field at Yorktown, where he saw Cornwallis stack his arms."[67] Black appropriation of political space said as much about black men's new claims to citizenship as it did about how the very existence of black martial manhood eroded Davis's own claims to citizenship. For Davis, citizenship – and by extension voting – was an ancient right that was conferred on him by birth and that was derived from his family's place in the American republic. When polling places became stages for the expression of black citizenship, they alienated Davis and other men like him from a version of American republicanism that was

[65] U.S. Congress, House, *Additional Papers in the Case of C.C. Bowen vs. R.C. DeLarge*, 42nd Cong., 2nd sess., H. Misc. Doc. 37, pg. 111.

[66] *South Carolina in 1876*, 197.

[67] U.S. Congress, Senate Select Committee to Inquire into the Mississippi Election of 1875, *Mississippi in 1875*, 44th Cong, 1st sess., pg. 1057. Cited hereafter as *Mississippi in 1875*.

predicated on white supremacy and racial exclusion. What Davis viewed as the triumph of black citizenship and manhood made him feel as if he was a man deprived of the franchise and unmoored from his country.

******

Reuben Davis's obsession over his exclusion from Monroe's polling place reveals another important facet of black martial mobility that spoke to the irony inherent to the postbellum politics of space. With the mobilization of black militia companies and the expansion of black martial mobility across the South, one of the most efficacious means of black men expressing their newly found citizenship, manhood, and political power rested in acting as the arbiters of mobility and immobility for southerners of both races. Just as the antebellum South's carceral landscape had served to circumscribe black freedom, Reconstruction witnessed an inversion of this arrangement when black companies sought to regulate where, how, and when some white southerners could travel. To be sure, they were never as oppressive as the slave regime. Yet in the instances where black companies halted, questioned, redirected, or apprehended white citizens, they performed radical acts that rejected the antebellum white supremacist logic of coerced movement and directionality.

Regulating movement began with granting safe passage to black men who were deemed offensive by Democrats. In Claiborne County, Mississippi, following the interracial marriage of Haskins Smith and Ellen Smith, the community's freedmen responded to threats to Smith's life and began accompanying him on his trips into town, often armed and in *ad hoc* paramilitary groups.[68] In the way that they traversed the town freely and kept Smith at arm's length from white paramilitarists, Smith and his defenders incensed the county's whites. White Democrat

[68] Ibid, 159; Ibid, 192.

J.D. Vertner detailed his outrage to Congress in 1876: "I told the sheriff – a colored man – by the eternal god, if ever again such a thing were repeated, blood was thicker than water, and we would kill the last son-of-a-bitch."[69] Such was the strength of black movement. It demonstrated not only the reality of black martial manhood, but it stood as a symbol for black men's new patriarchal prerogatives, including the ability to wed white women.

In other cases, black companies defended interracial marriage by creating choke points on southern roads and limiting white access to black communities. Alexander P. Wylie, a white physician in Chester, testified before Congress in 1872 that the Klan targeted the homes of some white men who were "living in open adultery with negro women." In an attempt to preserve racial purity by regulating the behavior of deviant white men, the Klan raided these men's homes at night, whipping both them and their black partners. Thereafter, a local militia company began not only parading with regularity, but also setting up pickets on country roads and turning back white men that they deemed too dangerous to travel.[70] This provided protection for their white allies and black women, whose honor and bodies they sought to protect from white depredations. To allow white men to continue to make claims over black women through violence would be to allow the logic of plantation slavery and black emasculation to persist. Regulating white movement in the name of protecting black women thereby became a means of expressing black manhood.

If protecting black women was part and parcel of constructing black manhood, so too was utilizing martial mobility to antagonize white women. In South Carolina's Aiken County, black companies stood on the side of busy roads throughout 1876 and demonstrated with their weapons

[69] Ibid.

[70] *South Carolina KKK Report*, 1428.

when white women passed. In New Orleans, black men armed with Winchesters drilled throughout the city and acted in an antagonizing manner that drove white women off of sidewalks and rendered them too afraid to leave their homes. Other times, the Warmoth militia marched on soda fountains frequented by white women. When they did so, they did little more than loiter, but long-standing fears of armed black men made the mere appearance of black companies near white women a point of conflict.[71] Benjamin R. Forman, a member of the Crescent City White League, averred that white men "had every reason to apprehend danger to our women and children from the conduct of the Black League and the black militia. The negroes are a very excitable people, easily stirred up, and easily led by designing men." When armed black men entered soda-stands in the city, the stands closed for the remainder of the day and their white female patrons and their children were forced to leave. Even at places of pleasure, the threat of the militia was present. With the threat of armed freedmen lurking around every corner, white men felt that their sense of mastery over their dependents was persistently under siege.[72]

White men also found themselves targeted by black martial mobility. In the midst of the Ku Klux Klan's war against the South Carolina Republican Party and the freedmen, black men responded to Klan violence by attempting to preempt night-riding. One white South Carolinian testified before Congress in 1872 that "under the pretext that they were about to be attacked by the Ku-Klux, and with open threats of their readiness and desire to exterminate the mysterious organization, the members of (a) company began to picket the highways and byways, and, in many instances, stopped and turned back unarmed white men who were moving about the county

[71] *South Carolina in 1876*, 1058; *Conditions of the South – January 15, 1875*, 217; Ibid, 42.

[72] Ibid, 218.

on legitimate business."[73] In Aiken County, black companies were especially active during the Red Shirts' infamous shotgun campaign of 1876. Attempting to counteract white violence and provide black families with safe passage between their homes and the county's towns, black companies set up picket lines and monitored the movement of white men. One of these companies halted Frank Dunbar, a white Democrat who was traveling home after a fishing expedition. Dunbar recalled that five armed black men overtook him, and without saying a word, escorted him to his destination. "They rode along with me," Dunbar remembered, "and when I was in a walk they kept a little ahead of me." Eventually, four of the men departed, but the fifth followed Dunbar to the terminus of his route. This supervised mobility was undoubtedly as unsettling for Dunbar as it was ironic. In the antebellum era, white southerners had employed slave patrols to limit black movement. This company used the same tactic against Dunbar, limiting his sense of freedom by closely monitoring his ability to move unfettered across Aiken's landscape. And although the threat of violence inherent to black companies was certainly not the equivalent to that of slave patrols, white men in Aiken certainly felt threatened. When Dunbar reached his location with his lone escort, the pair was met by a group of ten white men who berated the black man for his membership in the company.[74]

In its most extreme form, black martial mobility saw black companies actively pursue white men. This politics of pursuit and policing played a prominent role in the creation of black men's political subjectivity, in their ability to claim manhood, and in waging an ideological war against white supremacy. Indeed, when Reconstruction violence became most acute, black men took extreme measures to fight back against white paramilitarists. In 1876 outside of Ellenton,

---

[73] *South Carolina KKK Report*, 1451.

[74] *South Carolina in 1876*, 622-623.

South Carolina, a company of freedmen ambushed a party of white men following a political rally. Caught by surprise, a member of the party testified that it "immediately dispersed in the swamps and went in different directions." R. J. Dunbar, a white Democrat and Red Shirt, related how he spent the night in the swamp evading this pursuing company before making his way home in the morning. Rather than finding safety, however, the black company followed him to his dwelling, where he again retreated out his backdoor and into an adjacent grove of trees. From there he laid in wait for "about fifteen minutes, when I saw several of them crossing the field in different directions." These patrolling militiamen forced him to flee once again toward the swamps around the banks of the Savannah River. Dunbar related that the company "followed me all afternoon," but he "knew the swamp perfectly, however, and dodged them."[75]

In more ways than one, Dunbar's testimony speaks to the manner in which Republican companies facilitated a form of black martial mobility that redefined the meaning of citizenship and freedom after the war. If prior to the war white men had controlled not just the political and social geography of the South, but how, when, and who could navigate these geographies freely, the exigencies of the Civil War and the growth of black institutional violence after it radically altered this order. Read blindly, Dunbar's testimony bears striking similarities to that of Solomon Northup's slave narrative. Dunbar was the hunted rather than the hunter, a fugitive in a carceral and hostile landscape where the power of the state stood in opposition to him. Denuded of his ability to move freely – even in his own home – Dunbar became, from his point of view, something less than equal. That Dunbar felt this way even as the redemption of South Carolina was imminent speaks to the power of black institutional violence and martial mobility.

The freedom to move was constitutive of political freedom and a signpost of manhood and citizenship. Unfettered movement signaled the end of slavery and the creation of black

[75] Ibid, 631-632.

citizenship just as it also played a practical role in the construction of each. Each time a black company marched down a street, drilled on a plantation, occupied a courthouse lawn, or limited the mobility of southern whites, it revealed the revolutionary potential of Reconstruction. And while these companies never had the same violent potential as southern slave patrols, or exercised the type of hegemonic power that the plantation system did, the manner in which they relied on violence and the threat of it upset the antebellum order of things

Chapter 5: Black Violence and Reconstruction Politics

In March of 1871, nearly seventy Klansmen rode to the home of freedman Alexander Willis in Aberdeen, Mississippi. A month earlier, Willis had brought suit against a local planter for withholding compensation for labor that Willis claimed to have completed on the man's plantation. Rather than disputing the case in court, the planter resorted to extra-legal means to mediate the conflict. He enlisted the Ku Klux Klan to visit Willis's home and remind him that while the war might have swept away slavery, the South's racial regime remained intact. According to one of Willis's kinsmen who witnessed the affair, disguised banditti rode to Willis's home under the cover of darkness, forcibly entered through the front door, and "brung him in about fifty yards off the road and commenced whipping him."

The Klan's assault of Alexander Willis was one of the countless violent acts committed against the freedpeople during Reconstruction. Taken at face value, it supports a familiar narrative of white terror and black victimization. Less familiar, however, is what followed. As the white men held Willis down and began lashing him, a party of freedmen hiding in the woods opened fire on the unsuspecting Klansmen. The white assailants halted in a state of shock before their commander ordered the unit to disperse. Encumbered by disguises that made a hasty retreat difficult, the Klansmen threw away their masks and other articles of clothing, left Willis lying in the road, and retreated to safety. Observing their ephemeral shapes fleeing in the moonlight, the same witness informed Congress that "when they commenced pulling off their clothes I was right by. They had come right along by me, and when they came along I knew them just as good as I knew myself." The man was able to identify Willis's assailants. He added that some of the Klansmen were "dead by the next Saturday night," felled by the Union League.[1]

[1] U.S. Congress, Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States, *Testimony Taken by the Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late*

As Republicans rose to power in the South, men like Willis found greater social prestige, concrete legal protections, and political representation. Willis took full advantage of these rights and privileges to challenge white supremacy. That the Klan would attempt to intimidate him is unsurprising. Yet, despite the prevailing assumptions of many historians of Reconstruction, it was not uncommon for black men to respond and meet white paramilitarists with force. Black violence played an unmistakable role in the politics of Reconstruction as both a fact of life and as one of the ideological building blocks of black citizenship during a time when it was increasingly under siege. Indeed, black violence is no less important to the history of Reconstruction than is white violence. The Klansmen who attacked Willis and the members of the Union League that rushed to defend him realized as much. These black and white men held views on citizenship, race, and manhood that were so divergent as to be existential threats to one another. Nonetheless, although their ends might have differed, the means through which they sought to achieve them were quite similar. Each group of men – the Klan on one hand and the Union League on the other - would have found truth in the Maoist axiom that "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun."[2] In the violent world the war made, violence was inseparable from politics, and the efficacious use of violence was necessary for political survival and legitimacy.

Too few historians of Reconstruction appreciate that black violence both existed as a salient fact of life and played a prominent role in shaping the political and ideological conflicts of the immediate postbellum years.[3] This is curious. Scholars have recognized that violence

---

Insurrectionary States Vol. 11 – Mississippi (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1872), 1184. Cited hereafter as *Mississippi KKK Report*.

[2] Mao Tse-tung, *Quotations From Chairman Mao Tsetung* (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1972), 61.

[3] An extended historiographical discussion of this shortcoming is located in this dissertation's introduction, but to name but a few of the works in question that give insufficient attention to black violence, I note the narratives posited in older works by Otis Singletary, Allen Trelease, George Rable, and Eric Foner, as well as those in newer works by LeeAnna Keith and Kidada Williams. To these scholars the history of Reconstruction, violence is

defined the historical process that witnessed the destruction of slavery, the fact of emancipation, and the creation of black citizenship. So too have they accepted that *white* violence played an unmistakable role in the overthrow of Reconstruction in states such as Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina. Ignored, however, is the role of black political violence in the intermediate years that witnessed the Republican Party ascendant in the Deep South. Especially missing from the historiography is the extent to which black Republicans openly embraced institutional violence in order to ensure their political and personal survival. In overlooking this development, historians have neglected two important realities: black men engaged in Reconstruction Era violence not primarily as passive victims, but instead as active and willing participants, and that wielding political violence was no less important for the freedmen than it was for white paramilitarists. The Civil War spawned a political milieu in which violence was frequently accepted as part of the political process. Freedmen had little choice other than to resort to force to defend their individual political prerogatives and to maintain their collective grasp on political power.

---

exclusively white. Other recent works by Benjamin Severance, James Hogue, and Richard Zuczek at least pay lip-service to how black southerners defended themselves against white paramilitarists, but they largely ignore the ideological implications of those violence. Carole Emberton's *Beyond Redemption: Race, Violence, and the American South After the Civil War* does examine how black and white violences informed a postwar discourse on what it meant to be a citizen and man, but she shares much with her revisionist predecessors from the 1970s and 1980s in that she presents a victimization narrative. The same could be said of Aaron Sheehan-Dean's *The Calculus of Violence: How Americans Fought the Civil War*, which claims that the South's black population largely rejected retributive violence. See Allen Trelease, *White Terror: The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction* (New York: Harper, 1971); James Hogue, *Uncivil War: Five New Orleans Street Battles and the Rise and Fall of Radical Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005); Benjamin Severance, *Tennessee's Radical Army: The State Guard and Its Role in Reconstruction, 1867-1869* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2005); Richard Zuczek, *State of Rebellion: Reconstruction in South Carolina* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996); Kidada Williams, *They Left Great Scars on Me: African American Testimonies of Racial Violence From Emancipation to World War I* (New York: NYU Press, 2012); LeeAnna Keith, *The Colfax Massacre: The Untold Story of Black Power, White Terror, and the Death of Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Carole Emberton, *Beyond Redemption: Race, Violence, and the American South after the Civil War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013; Aaron Sheehan-Dean, *The Calculus of Violence: How Americans Fought the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), 166-179.

This chapter interrogates how and why they did so by analyzing different intensities, contexts, and applications of black violence. It first considers how violence became endemic within the black community and functioned to regulate the political behavior of the freedmen, and especially of the South's small number of black Democrats. It then turns to how black men utilized institutional violence as a form of self-defense against white paramilitarists. It ends by examining how black men actively participated in larger, discrete episodes of Reconstruction violence that resembled the pitched battles of the Civil War and how their participation in these incidents contributed to the postwar discourse on black manhood and citizenship. Weaving these threads together, this chapter argues for the presence of ideological, political, and practical continuity between black military service in the Civil War and the growth of black institutional violence after Appomattox. The ideological basis for black citizenship, after all, was forged in violence when the Union promised black men freedom if they killed in the name of the American state. This expectation remained after the war when the Republican administrations of the South were under siege from recalcitrant whites and again called on black men to take up arms. Black citizenship was consequently inseparable from the violence processes that begat it, and specifically the black combat experience. When black men in the South used their militia and paramilitary companies to engage in the violent politics of Reconstruction, they confirmed as much.

******

As the freedpeople mobilized politically across the South, one significant threat to the emerging black political community stemmed from the small but by no means insignificant number of black men who cast their lot with the southern Democracy. Out of a combination of necessity and anger, black companies often turned their violence inward in order to enforce

political uniformity within the freed community. They were not unique in doing so. In the same vein that reactionary white southerners sought to create white electoral solidarity under the umbrella of the Democrat Party, so too did Republicans mirror this strategy and hope to maximize their share of the black vote. In the racialized politics of Reconstruction, mobilizing one's political base and demobilizing the base of one's opponents could represent the difference between victory and defeat in states with racial parity. One Louisiana resident estimated that nearly 8,000 black men voted for the Democratic ticket in the closely contested gubernatorial election of 1872. Black Democrats also played a prominent, if mostly symbolic, role in Wade Hampton's Red Shirt movement in 1876.[4] For the Republican Party to remain in power, it could not allow Democrats to siphon off its black support.

The importance of silencing and disfranchising black Democrats was not limited to counting votes. In both words and deeds, black Democrats posed a serious threat to the political morale of black Republicans. They leveled critiques against the Republican Party that many freedmen found both unnerving and potentially dangerous. Some freedmen echoed the charges of white Democrats that the southern Republican Party was corrupt and a vehicle for graft. A black farmer in Richland County, South Carolina, and a man of modest means, Merriman Washington testified before Congress that he threw his support to the Democrats after a Republican judge swindled him out of $75. Republican officeholders were in his mind more concerned with personal enrichment than with securing justice for the freedmen. This assertion rendered him a pariah within the black community.[5]

---

[4] U.S. Congress, House Select Committee on the Insurrectionary States in the South, *Conditions of the South – January 15, 1875*, 43rd Cong., 2nd sess., 215. Cited hereafter as *Conditions of the South – January 15, 1875*.

[5] U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections, *South Carolina in 1876*, 44th Cong., 2nd sess., 1877, 563. Cited hereafter as *South Carolina in 1876*.

Nor was Washington alone in voicing his concern that white Republicans cared little for the welfare of the formerly enslaved. John Lee, an emancipated blacksmith living in Columbia, became notorious within his community when he openly repudiated the Republican Party on the basis that he felt its devotion to the freedmen was disingenuous. He lectured black Republicans that white northerners did not fight for emancipation but instead for monetary gain and the Union. Lee feared that they would have little use for southern blacks after having achieved both and that black men ought to consider casting their lot with the Democrats. Lee also attacked black Republicans' deification of Abraham Lincoln, proclaiming that emancipation was less the work of the former president than of God. For freedmen who viewed Lincoln and the Republican Party with reverence, this was not just blasphemous, but also an attack on the legitimacy of the party.[6] To be sure, Washington and Lee voiced minority opinions. The great majority of freedmen supported the Republican Party. Nonetheless, black opposition to the Republicans was not insignificant, and their critiques struck a nerve for Republican loyalists.

Black companies accordingly used force to punish freedmen who cast Democratic ballots. In this regard, polling places not only continued to be sites of violent political contestation, but of intra-racial violence. During the congressional elections of 1870, for example, South Carolina freedman Howard Brown voted for the Reform Party. He was subsequently beaten and stripped of his clothing by a black company. An observer recalled that as Brown was being attacked, a white "gentlemen who witnessed it drew his pistol, and made them turn Brown loose, and said that Brown was a free man, and had a right to vote as he saw proper." Enraged black men then "ran in the direction of their armory, where they kept their guns." After these freedmen retrieved their arms, the town stood on the precipice of a riot until

[6] Ibid, 590.

the army intervened to quell the disturbance.[7] The intervention of Federal troops ensured that the situation did not lead to any deaths, but the black company succeeded in communicating a clear message to wayward freedmen: those who openly rejected the Republican Party were enemies of the freed community.

Brown was beaten, but otherwise was left unharmed. Other black Democrats were less fortunate. In the same election, white conservative Matthew Butler complained to Congress that a Republican company in Edgefield killed a black man for voting the anti-Reconstruction Reform Party. Having cast his ballot, the man exited the polling place and was summarily shot by a sentinel belonging to a company that had been posted in order to ensure that the Klan could not interfere in the election.[8] Within the context of Reconstruction politics, it is easy to understand the sentinel's logic even if his actions were suspect. Both the Klan and black Democrats alike posed existential threats to the Republican Party and, by extension, the black political community. Violence seemed to be a legitimate means to counter both threats.

White men happily used these incidents to not only castigate the freedmen for their violence and propensity to interfere with southern elections, but also to encourage further divisions in the black community. When moderate white Democrats offered sympathetic freedmen protection it enraged black Republicans. Benjamin R. Foreman, a lawyer and member of the Crescent City White League in New Orleans, remembered during the election of 1874 that his comrades received reports "from a good many colored men belonging to these democratic clubs they had been assaulted, especially by colored policemen, on account of their affiliation

[7] U.S. Congress, Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States, *Testimony Taken by the Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States* Vol. II – South Carolina (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1872), 148. Cited hereafter as *South Carolina KKK Report*.

[8] Ibid, 1190.

with the conservatives." As a lawyer and member of the White League, Foreman "was appointed by the Crescent City Club to take measures to protect them."[9] In spite of these protections, black members of the Metropolitan Police and the state militia continued to direct their ire at black Democrats. White doctor G.T. Trezenant informed Congress that the White League sought to protect the political speeches and ballot access of black Democrats from Republican companies that hovered around polls and sought to influence their votes during the elections of 1872 and 1874.[10] For their part, black Republicans sought to circumscribe black political behavior through institutional violence. It provided a method to not only coerce black Democrats but also to keep white Democrats from exposing internal fissures within the black electorate.

This targeted intimidation persisted into the latter years of Reconstruction, and especially in the closely contested and divisive elections of 1876. In South Carolina in particular, the election amounted to a referendum on Reconstruction. Black companies were as eager to maintain the color line as were white paramilitarists. One freedman testified before Congress that a Republican company pummeled black Democrats when they attempted to cast their ballots for Wade Hampton.[11] Nor was this violence limited to those who voted, as even expressing support for Conservative or Democratic candidates invited threats. John Lee testified that black Republicans in Columbia directed epithets at him, labeling him a "democratic nigger" and threatened that "if I made a speech (in support of Wade Hampton) they would kill me before night." The leader of a local Republican company was especially vocal in his disdain for Lee, who he eviscerated as a "damned democratic son of a bitch" and promised that "any nigger that

[9] *Conditions of the South – January 15, 1875*, 217.

[10] *Conditions of the South – January 15, 1875*, 133-4.

[11] *South Carolina in 1876*, 563.

would belong to the democratic party ought to have his God damn skull busted open."[12] Freedman Preston Taylor shared Lee's experience. After casting his ballot, he left the poll and taunted a Republican company, shouting "hurray for Hampton." The unit accosted Taylor, threw him to the ground, and tore away his red shirt. Black institutional violence thus sought to inform how black men voted and what political opinions were acceptable within the freed community.[13]

With the rise of the Red Shirts in 1876, street politics came to play as much of a role in the campaign as did electoral politics. The Red Shirts staged rallies and held marches in support of the Hampton candidacy and other down-ticket Democrats. The genteel Hampton meanwhile actively cultivated a paternalistic campaign to pry black votes away from the Republicans. One consequence was the presence of black Democrats in Red Shirt rallies. Just as black men voting the Democratic ticket compelled Republicans to lash out with force, so too did the sight of black men marching in lock step the Red Shirts. When a group of Charlestonian freedmen held a procession along with the city's white Democrats in early September of 1876, they were met by the men of a Republican paramilitary unit that "had gathered their forces and were massed, waiting, in King street, armed with pistols, clubs, and single shots, the last made with a pound of lead attached to a 12 inch leather strap." The Republican company attacked the procession, making little distinction between white and black Democrats. The Republicans eventually compelled the black marchers to seek refuge at the campus lawn of The Citadel. Perhaps realizing the symbolic power of martial mobility, black Republicans disdained how Democrats utilized it to expose and flaunt internal fissures within the freed political community and they responded predictably.[14]

---

[12] Ibid, 590.

[13] Ibid, 555.

Whenever black men mobilized for the Democratic Party, black Republicans sought to intimidate, threaten, and attack them. When they did so, they revealed that violence had become an accepted means of resolving political disputes and maintaining solidarity within the black electorate. Moreover, when it came to ensuring the safety and integrity of the black political community, black companies cared as little for the principles of individual liberty or freedom of speech as did their white opponents.

******

The rage that black Republicans directed at black Democrats was but a reflection of their deeper disdain for the anti-Reconstruction politicians with whom these supposedly wayward freedmen made common cause. Black Republicans understood the existential threat that white violence posed to biracial republicanism and black citizenship. They concluded that they would need to match it not just with out-voting and out-maneuvering whites in the political arena, but also meeting white paramilitarists and terrorists with force. Freedmen consequently used paramilitary units and militia companies to shoot back – and at times, to shoot first – against the Ku Klux Klan, the White League, and the Red Shirts. As political violence became more widespread and normalized, force quickly displaced rhetoric and debate as a means of countering one's political opponents. Self-defense represented one of the primary purposes of black militia companies and the freedmen understood the importance of arms bearing and the power inherent to political violence, and they embraced each. As one white Democrat in Edgefield noted, the freedmen "regarded the gun as a badge of freedom," and black men exercised their freedom to defend themselves with gusto.[15]

---

[14] "King Street Riot," Alfred Brockenbrough Williams Papers, South Caroliniana Library, Columbia, South Carolina.

[15] Ibid, 540.

Protecting black citizenship began at locations that were distinctly political. For practical and ideological reasons, black men were especially willing to employ violence at southern polling places. As the previous chapter demonstrated, companies frequently marched to polls in symbolic displays of black citizenship and martial manhood. These processions often communicated veiled threats when companies stacked their arms and drilled. In other instances, the threat of violence was more overt, as when Republican politicians and party leaders made partisan screeds against their Democratic opponents. These threats were sometimes followed by actual acts of force. James Rives, a white lawyer from Noxubee County, Mississippi, testified that during a state election in 1871, a black company marched to vote "with music and banners flying." Arriving at the poll, they received insults from an indignant white man who deemed their procession obnoxious. A brawl broke out and the unit exchanged fisticuffs with the white men who had assembled to vote. The company sought out the man that instigated the incident, "struck him in the head with a very serious blow," knocked him to the ground, and then shot him dead.[16]

Suffering verbal abuse from white men at the ballot box was a serious insult to African Americans who sought to exercise their right to vote. Black men demanded the right to enter polling places as equal citizens and equal men, and for white Democrats to recognize as much. The insults, threats, and indignities freedmen faced after the war as they sought to become citizens weighed on them. Militia companies provided an outlet for this frustration. A white Democrat in New Orleans testified that when a black company named the "Colfax Defenders" sought to march along Canal Street prior to the election of 1868, it met resistance and jeering from the city's Democrats. The man testified that the club marched through the city and cheered for Ulysses S. Grant and his running mate Schulyer Colfax, only for a white Democrat to shout

[16] *Mississippi KKK Report*, 557.

"get out you damned nigger … Hurrah for Seymour and Blair!" The company did not take the insult lightly. When the white men retreated into a local confectionary and fired shots at the black men, "this was followed by the firing of eight or ten more shoots from the gallery of said confectionery into the procession, and also several shots from the gallery on the opposite side of Bourbon street."[17]

Given the persistent threat of white violence, black self-defense took on a number of forms and encompassed a wide range of behaviors. In New Orleans, where the Metropolitan Police served as a branch of the state militia and provided patronage positions for black men, the police frequently protected black citizens just as they antagonized white men. Historians have understood how police forces and southern legal codes were employed against African Americans after the Civil War.[18] Less studied, however, are the interactions between white and black southerners when black men filled the ranks of southern police forces. One white New Orleans resident testified in 1875 that, "it was the practice among the policemen when they arrested a man, the first thing to do was to strip him of all the valuables about his person." One officer in particular, a "colored policeman who was there, a large, heavy man," became notorious in the city for an incident where he apprehended a white man suspected of antagonizing the freedmen, and sat "upon him and beat him in a very frightful manner."[19] The white man did not die, but perhaps worse than death, he suffered the indignity of not only being humiliated by a black man, and one with official state-sanction. It was an act of violence that fell well short of killing but that nonetheless made a powerful statement about whom the state served.

---

[17] Louisiana General Assembly, *Report of the Joint Committee of the General Assembly of Louisiana on the Conduct of the Late Elections and the Conditions of Peace and Order in the State* (New Orleans: 1868), 7.

[18] Edward Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice: Crime and Punishment in the 19th Century South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

[19] *Conditions of the South – January 15, 1875*, 222.

Black companies also attacked white property. In a later era, boycotts would prove to be a useful tool of civil rights protestors. In the world of Reconstruction politics, violence provided a far more useful and mutually intelligible method of economic pressure. The last chapter demonstrated how militia mobilization undermined the profitability of plantations when it emboldened black farm hands to abandon their labor contracts. This disruption, however, was not merely limited to the plantation system. Companies targeted other southern economic institutions and sought to damage the profitability of white businesses. In Yorkville, South Carolina, the controversial Lieutenant Lewis Merrill of the 7th United States Cavalry testified before Congress that a black company set fire to the homes and cotton gins of several white men who were known Klansmen in retaliation for stealing weapons from the state armory.[20] In a similar incident, a white Democrat in the upstate testified that "six or eight colored men went in disguise with meal-bags and flour-bags, armed with double-barreled guns and pistols" to the store of a purported Klansman. They "rapped at the side of the house and ordered the clerk out." After threatening to kill the man, the unit ordered him out of the store, entered, and "went in and rifled the store; took tobacco, shoes, etc."[21] Not unlike the Klan's tactic of targeting institutions such as churches and schools that generated social and political capital within the black community, armed black men responded in kind by attacking the wealth and economic capital that allowed white Democrats to maintain their position atop the South's socioeconomic hierarchy.

Wealth accumulation provided one pillar of white political power, but so too did white men's institutional knowledge and control of the southern legal system. Whether black men were suing or being sued, white magistrates, judges, and juries often showed little sympathy toward

[20] *South Carolina KKK Report*, 1471.

[21] Ibid, 1514.

the freedmen. Given their inexperience with formal politics and legal processes, former slaves often found it difficult to navigate the sometimes byzantine southern legal system. When the courts were inefficient at best and hostile at worst to the freedmen's interests, militia companies could administer a method of extralegal justice that was swift, efficient, and easily understandable. Freedman Washington Willis, for example, testified before Congress that when a white man named Arnold brought a frivolous lawsuit against a freedman that related to nonpayment on ginned cotton, a black company visited Arnold's home and sought to persuade him to drop the suit. Willis testified that following the visit, "Arnold went and dismissed the attachment, and turned over to this black man his corn and oxen and cotton" that had been seized by the county government. "The black man," Willis noted, "seemed to very grateful to these people. He spoke in high terms of the manner in which they had protected him." Willis keenly observed that "the men would not wait for the law, because the negro was not able to stand a lawsuit, and that they themselves would visit Arnold personally and inflict punishment upon him if he did not go and withdraw the attachment and deliver up the property." The militia supplied not only self-defense against Democratic insurgents, but also an alternative to a legal and political system that failed to provide blind justice.[22]

******

Political intimidation was a potent weapon, but more radical acts of white violence called for more extreme methods of self-defense and retaliation. In addition to utilizing violence to carry out politics as usual, freedmen employed their militias and paramilitary companies to conduct a form of counterinsurgency against white paramilitarists. As Robert Mackey has argued, counterinsurgency operations entailed a broad range of actions predicated on restoring state authority to a given region. This was true of Republican militias. So, too however, did they

[22] *Mississippi KKK Report*, 1186.

engage in anti-guerrilla activities wherein they sought to root out and destroy their white opponents. The two actions were mutually supportive in their goals and purpose, as the restoration of state authority and the safety of the freedmen was predicated on the destruction of violent white opposition to Reconstruction.[23]

These operations occurred throughout the Deep South. Marshall Twitchell, a native of Vermont who immigrated to Louisiana after the war, recounted that during the rise of white paramilitary violence that followed the state's contested 1872 gubernatorial election, white men in Louisiana's rural parishes established pickets in order to limit the movement of freedmen who they feared would organize paramilitary companies. In one instance, two white men, whom he identified only as Pickens and Dickinson, witnessed a black man traveling alone. Twitchell testified that "they shouted at him to halt," but the man refused, and when "he did not stop, they shot at him." The black man was able to escape the attack and alerted a unit in the Louisiana state militia. When Pickens and Dickinson returned to their picket line after having reported the incident to their headquarters, the freedman had returned with his companions. The company fired on Dickinson and Pickens. Dickinson suffered a wound in the altercation, and he and Pickens were compelled to abandon their patrol. Although they killed neither man, black companies did not hesitate to shoot white paramilitarists. [24]

As black companies became more active, they began to rely on their own type of irregular tactics. Black bushwhackers engaged in ambushes that provided the element of surprise and allowed them to appropriate a favorite tactic of white paramilitarists. One Mississippian

---

[23] Robert R. Mackey, *The Uncivil War: Irregular Warfare in the Upper South, 1861-1865* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 1-8.

[24] U.S. Congress, House, Select Committee on the Insurrectionary States in the South, *Conditions of the South – February 23, 1875*, 43rd Cong., 2nd sess., 386. Cited hereafter as *Conditions of the South – February 23, 1875*.

recalled how in 1871, nearly three dozen Klansmen approached the town of Pontotoc in 1871 under the cover of darkness. They were subsequently confronted by the local sheriff, whom they attacked. Unbeknownst to the Klan, the constable had "had eight men concealed behind a brick house" that "stepped out and fired on the disguised men."[25] The Klansmen were forced to retreat and rethink how they would proceed. In other instances, black companies shadowed the Klan and waited for the opportune moment to strike. A.P. Huggins, an agent with the Freedmen's Bureau, testified that when one black man in Mississippi found himself targeted by the Klan, a number of men in a company stalked the white terrorists as they approached the man's house. After they attempted to whip him, "the colored men fired into them, and one of them was probably killed." Moreover, these freedmen used complex tactics in their ambush, as they enveloped these Klansmen on two sides and sprang a nearly perfect trap. Huggins noted that, "the firing was pretty sharp by the freedmen; the Ku-Klux returned it for a time, and then gave the command to 'squander,' which seems to be their word for dispersing. The moon was very bright; the freedmen had placed themselves so to be at different politics in the road, in order to see as many as possible." Fighting fire with fire, black companies like this one engaged in a form of guerrilla combat that was premeditated, intentional, and well-executed.[26]

When the Sweetwater Sabre Club in Edgefield, South Carolina attempted to apprehend black militia captain Ned Tennant in 1876, it discovered how sophisticated the tactics of black companies had become. The white company noticed sentries posted outside of Tennant's house and concluded that he had apparently left. When the company sought to reconnoiter the woods surrounding the home, it walked into a trap. Future South Carolina Governor and Senator Ben Tillman wrote that as the unit stalked the area surrounding Tennant's home, it realized that the

[25] *Mississippi KKK Report*, 460.

[26] Ibid, 277-278.

sentries had been a diversion. Walking through the woods, the unit was "fired on by some of the negro militiamen who were concealed in a gully."[27] Tillman and his comrades quickly took cover. The two groups exchanged fire for a period of time, with the black company sustaining a casualty and one man in Tillman's unit suffering a wound.

A favorite tactic of white paramilitary units involved attacking black households. As it had been during both Sherman's march and the episodes of guerrilla violence that scarred the southern homefront, the household became a practical and ideological battlefield where combatants sought to gain a distinct psychological advantage over their opponents. This trope continued throughout Reconstruction, where the Klan mastered this type of warfare. Historians such as Allen Trelease, Hannah Rosen, and Kidada Williams have demonstrated fully how white insurgents and terrorists committed acts of arson, vandalism, murder, and rape in black homes. These acts not only intimidated the freedmen, but also sought to unmoor black men from their sense of mastery over their households. After all, if black men could not protect their households and their dependents from white depredations, their ability to claim manhood was an open question.[28]

Less appreciated by scholars is the extent to which black companies – whether state-sanctioned or operating under the guises of the Union League – adopted the same tactics. To be sure, there was no epidemic of black night-riding that matched the violence or intensity of the Klan's campaign of terror. Nevertheless, black men were not passive victims. They recognized the practical advantages and ideological capital that they could gain by targeting white homes. If

[27] *Benjamin Tillman Autobiographical Essay – My Childhood Days*, Benjamin R. Tillman Papers, South Caroliniana Library, Columbia, S.C.

[28] Allen Trelease, *White Terror: The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1979); Hannah Rosen, *Terror in the Heart of Freedom: Citizenship, Sexual Violence, and the Meaning of Race in the Postemancipation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Kidada Williams, *They Left Great Marks on Me: African American Testimonials of Racial Violence From Emancipation to World War I* (New York: New York University Press, 2012).

violence was constitutive to creating and defending black manhood, it was exponentially as potent when it was turned against white households.

Testimony related to the congressional investigation of the Klan and contemporary newspapers accounts are filled with evidence of black companies attacking Klansmen and other enemies of Reconstruction in their homes. In 1871, a black paramilitary group associated with the Union League invaded the home of Klansman Joseph Ball as he slept. The League entered through the front door, drove Ball from his bedroom where he lay in bed with his wife, and then pursued him into a nearby forest. They surrounded Ball in a thicket adjacent to his house and shot the Klansman. Ball crawled back to his home and informed his wife of his assailants' identities before succumbing to his wounds. His wife was otherwise left unharmed.[29] In Noxubee County, white Democrat Charles Baskerville testified that a black company raided the home of a white constable who was responsible for the imprisonment of a freedman. The unit approached the man's house and "fired some fifty or sixty shots at him." The constable retreated from the back door of his house and fled to the Alabama border. Baskerville recounted that in the man's absence, "some four negro men entered his chamber and with cocked pistol remained over his wife all night and demanded that he should be produced before they would give her up. They did not, however, do her any injury."[30] In each case, white men testified that, to their knowledge, the men in black companies entered a white man's home but did not otherwise assault their wives. In many ways, however, this was revealing, as each left unspoken the reality that had the black men wanted to, they could have had their way with white women.

---

[29] James Lynch, *Kemper County Vindicated: And a Peep at Radical Rule in Mississippi* (New York: E.J. Hale & Son, 1879), 107 and James M. Wells, *The Chisholm Massacre: A Picture of "Home Rule" in Mississippi* (Chicago: Chisholm Monumental Agency, 1877), 54-55.

[30] *Mississippi KKK Report*, 375.

Gender-based violence pervaded Reconstruction, and white women and children sometimes became its inadvertent recipients. James B. Steadman, a white lawyer in Unionville, South Carolina, informed Congress that in response to raiding by the Ku Klux Klan, the county witnessed "a number of attacks upon private individuals, and upon houses, which were traced directly to the militia." One of the more infamous dealt with an assault on county coroner John Gallman. Steadman recounted how a company approached Gallman's dwelling under the cover of darkness and fired into his bedroom. Stray bullets apparently entered rooms where members of Gallman's family were sleeping. Steadman recalled that, "one of the balls struck the bed in which some members of his family were lying. If I am not mistaken, copper cartridges, which accompanied the fixed ammunition of the militia, were found on the outside of the house."[31] The *Charleston Daily News* reprinted the story, noting that one of the bullets became lodged in the bed of Gallman's niece.[32] This violence was gender-based, although it was not the sexual violence that the Klan directed towards the freedmen and their families. Attacks on white homes nonetheless amounted to attacks on white manhood whether they were sexual or not. Stripping white men of their sense of dominion over their dwellings and their dependents struck at the essence of what it meant to be a man.

There was one significant difference, however. As these incidents attest, unlike the Klan, black companies largely refrained from committing acts of sexual violence. In both the war and Reconstruction, cases of black-on-white rape by armed black men did occur, but they were rare. In Tennessee, white residents feared the prospect of sexual violence at the hands of the state's black militia when it deployed in 1867 and 1868 due to incidents of sexual violence by black soldiers during the state's wartime occupation. In Arkansas, these fears were realized when black

[31] *South Carolina KKK Report*, 1012-1013.

[32] *Charleston Daily News*, November 21, 1870.

members of the state guard raped a white woman during the "Brooks-Baxter War." After a court-martial, the offenders were executed. In Aiken, South Carolina, two black men attacked Lucy Harley – a 38 year old white woman – in her home in September of 1876. She managed to fend both of the men off, but only after they murdered one of her sons by striking him repeatedly in the head. And in 1873 in the months preceding the Colfax Massacre, Dosia Williams Moore wrote in her memoir that two of her white female neighbors were abducted by a squad of intoxicated freedmen. The women escaped, but the incident heightened racial tensions in the parish.[33]

These examples notwithstanding, instances of white women enduring sexual violence and rape are largely absent from Congress's investigations. Yet, despite the difficulty in explaining why something did *not* happen, this discrepancy in white and black incidents of sexual violence warrants an explanation. For one, given that white southerners had a long history of committing rape against black women under the slave regime, it is hardly surprising that these culturally ingrained behaviors persisted after the war. If slavery had granted white men total dominion over the sexuality of the women they owned, the myriad postbellum presidential proclamations, legislative actions, and the Reconstruction amendments that sought to protect the freedpeople and codify their dignity were unlikely to undo these attitudes. Moreover, the reality that white men continued to control southern courts after the war made it more likely that they could commit these acts without legal consequence. The swift justice directed at the Arkansas militia suggests the stark racial disparities in prosecuting sexual violence. For legal and cultural reasons, rape proved far more useful for white men because they were more likely to avoid punishment.

[33] Benjamin H. Severance, *Tennessee's Radical Army: The State Guard and Its Role in Reconstruction* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2005), 50; Allen Trelease, *White Terror*, 163; *South Carolina in 1876*, 927-928; Carol Wells, *War, Reconstruction, and Redemption on Red River: The Memoirs of Dosia Williams Moore* (Ruston, Louisiana: McGinty Publications, 1990), 66-67.

There is also another explanation that is less obvious but equally as powerful: members of black militia companies did not engage in sexual violence simply because they did not need to. If rape and other forms of sexual violence are viewed primarily as political tools, they were above all else means of dominating one's political opponents by exerting control over their dependents. Indeed, there was no better of way of dominating another man than by demonstrating his impotence at protecting his dependents. Yet, if this was the ultimate objective of sexual violence, black men did not need to rape white women to exert this type of power. Given the hypersensitive nature of white patriarchy and their desire to exert control over white women, the mere *threat* of black sexual violence was enough to upset, threaten, and destabilize white manhood. The above testimony of Charles Baskerville and James Steadman suggests as much. In each incident, black men had every opportunity to assault helpless white women and children. In each case they refrained from doing so. Morality aside, their restraint suggests that they also implicitly knew that they did not need to actually assault white women in order to feign masculine dominance over their political rivals. Their mere ability to do so – and indeed, their restraint in not committing these acts – was enough to attack white manhood. Indeed, that black men could even threaten this type of violence not only on white men, but on their dependents, more than fulfilled the strictly political purpose of using sexual assault to attack their white opponents' manhood. This speaks to the radical potential of black violence and how it emboldened the freedmen by allowing them to act out a form of hypermasculinity through the militia and through the exercise of political violence. Ultimately, black companies achieved more in terms of attacking white manhood by abstaining from sexual assault than they did by committing it.

White dependents were not always directly implicated in these attacks on white men's homes, but the absence of women and children did not render these attacks any less significant. The same company that fired into the home of James Gallman made a point to target other white men as well. Steadman testified that this active company targeted, "another … attack on the house of H.T. Hughes in the neighborhood of the courthouse here. He was driven from his house and compelled to take refuge in flight."[34] Some white men attempted to stand their ground against black companies, but that did not always act as a deterrent. R.J. Dunbar, a white Democrat from Ellenton, testified before Congress that when he sought refuge in a friend's home following a skirmish with a black company, the company followed them to the home and demanded entry. Dunbar recalled that "the negroes came up and surrounded the house, crying that they wanted me to come out – wanted to get me out of the house – wanted the white man's blood; nothing would satisfy them but white men's blood." The proprietor of the house initially refused to let the black men enter, but after further threats he agreed to allow a committee of three men to enter and search the dwelling.[35] Dunbar escaped unscathed, but the incident reveals the degree to which black political violence both imbued black men not only with new and profound social and political power, but also with the ability to sever white men from their antebellum sense of racial and patriarchal mastery. Institutional violence afforded these black men the ability to defend themselves and to fundamentally reshape the racial and gendered hierarchies that had long demarcated the channels from which political and social power emanated in the South. Their use of institutional violence ensured that they did so in terms that

[34] *South Carolina KKK Report*, 1012-1013.

[35] *South Carolina in 1876*, 636.

white men would find mutually intelligible. Violence was the common language of Reconstruction politics, and the freedmen spoke it fluently.

******

In March of 1871, a company of nearly 90 freedmen marched through the center of Chester, South Carolina, occupied the town's train depot, and formed a line of battle behind a high and thick fence, as if preparing for combat. The company had mustered in response to the threat of Klan violence. Rather than diffusing racial tension in Chester, the presence of the company predictably heightened the festering animosity between the town's white and black residents. Looking back on the incident, white Democrat Alexander Wylie testified that he and other white city leaders formed an ad hoc paramilitary organization to counter the black company. After an unsuccessful peace conference during which the Democrats sought to compel the Republicans to lay down their arms, Wylie's comrades tried to drive the black men from the town. Having approached the black company's lines, Wylie recalled how the freedmen rose up and fired "a whole volley of musketry" at the advancing white men. The well-timed volley "killed a horse and wounded another, and shot a man named Waters in the knee and crushed his thigh." Having seen enough, the white company fell back. Wylie recalled with disdain how the initial phase of the fighting heightened the black unit's élan, as the freedmen "all jumped up and showed their heads from behind the rocks and cried out, 'There is one God-damned white face we have brought down. We have brought down one white-faced scoundrel.'" These black men had seen the elephant and stood tall. Wylie's company regrouped and devised a new plan that succeeded in flanking its opponent. After subjecting the black line to enfilade fire, Wylie remembered with satisfaction that "the negroes broke, stampeded, and ran."[36] This incident at

[36] *South Carolina KKK Report*, 1432-1433.

Chester ended in tactical victory for Wylie's company, but not before this black company had drawn first blood.

The episode Wylie described is difficult to classify. With nearly 200 combatants, the fighting at Chester differed from the ordinary political violence and quasi-guerrilla warfare in which many companies participated. With its lines of battle, rudimentary fortifications, and the use of flanking maneuvers, the conflagration resembled a battlefield skirmish more than it did a "riot" – the contemporary term that was often employed to describe these incidents – or an isolated incident of irregular fighting. Nor, however, would any observer have confused the skirmish at Chester with the carnage witnessed at Gettysburg or Shiloh. It was neither an act of targeted political intimidation nor a spectacular pitched battle. The incident thus fits awkwardly into historians' understanding of Reconstruction violence. Yet, as historian James Hogue has argued, "numbers of participants and death tolls have always been imperfect measures of the political implications of any battle in military history."[37] Hogue's own work focuses on a succession of engagements in New Orleans that included, at times, thousands of men in arms. Not all militarized confrontations in Reconstruction were this large, but the designation of *battle* is nonetheless useful insofar as it provides a vantage point from which to begin analyzing these discrete incidents of organized and militarized black violence.

To view these larger conflagrations as battles reveals how black violence functioned both as an important lived experience for its participants as well as a series of discursive texts that spoke to the relationship between violence, citizenship, and manhood.[38] Here one again finds

[37] Hogue, *Uncivil War*, 113.

[38] I draw in part on John A. Lynn's distinction between the reality of battle and the discourse of battle. Unlike Lynn, I am less concerned with demonstrating the discrepancies between the two than I am with demonstrating how both reality and discourses played a role in constructing black citizenship and manhood. See John A. Lynn, *Battle: A History of Combat and Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), xix-xxii.

continuity. Just as black men imagined their wartime combat experiences at Fort Pillow, Battery Wagner, and Milliken's Bend as exercises in proving their citizenship and manhood, so too did they view their participation in Reconstruction's battles in a similar light. The experience and reality of combat continued to effect a transformation within black men regarding what it meant to be a man and a citizen. Wielding institutional violence with the imprimatur of the state against white paramilitarists provided the freedmen with an experiential modality that justified their claims to citizenship and the efficacy of biracial republicanism through killing and being killed. Reconstruction combat was thus an integral part of black men's political subjectivity and a mechanism that they used to view themselves as political actors.

So too, however, did the meaning of Reconstruction combat reach far beyond how black men viewed themselves. Reconstruction battles were distinct political events and spectacles. They constituted political texts that were often open to interpretation and political contestation. Debates over what these battles and the salience of black violence in them meant informed a larger national discourse. As Carole Emberton has demonstrated, there were widely divergent views on what black citizenship meant and what the uses of black violence were in a country that had depended on black violence to save the republic, but that remained less certain of how to harness it after the war. For all of the attempts by southern Democrats and racial reactionaries in the North to frame black violence as a creature of anarchy and barbarism, so too did radical Republicans and their black allies posit a counter narrative that sought to make black violence politically palpable.[39] Republicans sought to seize on incidences of black violence to create political capital, to denigrate their ex-Confederate opponents for their continued commitment to sedition, and to frame black violence in such a way that it was consonant with loyalty to the American state. In terms of what combat meant for black men's own sense of political

[39] Emberton, *Beyond Redemption*, 198-205.

subjectivity and in the way it shaped the larger discourse concerning what it meant to be a man and a citizen, black institutional violence was part and parcel of Reconstruction politics.

The Colfax Massacre is perhaps the most infamous incident of Reconstruction violence. The conflagration stemmed from a set of circumstances and controversies related to Louisiana's contested gubernatorial race in 1872. Political rivals William Pitt Kellogg and John McEnery each claimed to have won a closely-contested and fraud-ridden election. With neither offering a concession, both men named appointees to various patronage positions throughout the state's parishes. Colfax was located in Grant Parish, a gerrymandered county named for U. S. Grant that was itself a creature of Reconstruction politics. Having only been created in 1869 by Governor Henry Clay Warmoth and the Republican state legislature, its narrow black majority rendered it competitive. Colfax, known before the war as Calhoun's Landing – after planter and editor Meredith Calhoun, the supposed inspiration for Harriet Beecher Stowe's Simon Legree - but renamed for Grant's Vice President, became the county seat. In late 1872, McEnery appointed Alphonze Cabat as the parish's judge and Confederate veteran Christopher Columbus Nash as its sheriff. Kellogg responded in March of 1873 by appointing his own Republican partisans to the same posts. Shortly thereafter, Kellogg's appointees broke into the Colfax courthouse and took possession of their offices. The parish's Democrats responded by organizing a *posse comitatus*. A Republican company under the command of Union veteran William Ward mustered and occupied the courthouse and town center. With both sides militarized, a standoff continued for nearly two weeks. Ward and his subordinates traveled to New Orleans on April 10, 1873 to request assistance from Kellogg. In Ward's absence, Nash led a white paramilitary unit to the

courthouse and attacked the black company on April 13. The ensuing attack ended in the massacre of the Republican militia. [40]

The course of the fighting and the actions of the men engaged speak to how Ward's men sought to connect their participation in institutional violence with their claims to manhood and citizenship. Colfax also demonstrated the wartime experience and tactical awareness of both sides. When Ward departed for New Orleans, he left black Union veteran Levin Allen to oversee the defenses around the courthouse. Allen's 150 men dug a shallow entrenchment that surrounded three sides of the building. The men defending the courthouse were armed with muzzle-loading Enfield rifles taken from the state armory in New Orleans, as well as their own shotguns. Supporting the riflemen were several rudimentary pieces of artillery. Nash's unit fielded Winchester repeating rifles and an artillery piece procured from the steamboat *John T. Moore* and outfitted it for battle. Nash's men also had the added benefit of mobility, as many brought their own horses to the battle.

United States District Attorney J.R. Beckwith, who investigated the aftermath of the affair and prosecuted some of Nash's men, testified that after a failed peace conference, "Nash demanded of him that they deliver up their arms and disperse." The black men refused for fear that "if they gave up their arms, they would be slaughtered in detail." Nash gave Allen half an hour to evacuate whatever women and children were on the premise. At the expiration of the truce, a "force of white men moved down through Smithfield Quarters and put their guns in position about probably three hundred yards' distance and opened fire on the courthouse, or on the negroes about the court house, with some improvised missiles."[41] Dodging the Republicans' own artillery, an observer remembered that the "The (white) skirmish line opened fire briskly at

[40] Hogue, *Uncivil War*, 108-109.

[41] *Conditions of the South – February 23, 1875*, 411-412.

the same time, the negroes only retuning a scattering fire in exchange ... Several shots were fired at different times, evidently from Enfield rifles, coming very close to the skirmishers and striking ground several hundred yards behind them." Although Allen's company succeeded in repulsing the initial assault, Nash detached a group of men to flank the courthouse while his main body demonstrated against Allen's men in their front.[42]

The Republicans' position quickly deteriorated. Not only did Nash's men flank the black company, but the white paramilitarists succeeded in using a long pole covered in turpentine to engulf the courthouse in flames. From this point, there are differing accounts of both the battle's sequence of events and the behavior of the combatants. Some historians cast Nash's men as cold-blooded murderers and dismiss the notion that Allen's company remained belligerent and defiant even as it was surrounded.[43] Of course, it is possible that many surrendered, pled for mercy, and were nonetheless executed. It is also possible that white testimony arguing that the black men remained belligerent was but a self-serving attempt to justify the massacre. Just as likely, however, is that even with their dying breaths, the same men who had gone to great lengths to arm themselves at Colfax taunted their assailants and remained defiant. As Winthrop D. Jordan noted, at the beginning of the war slaves who were captured prior to the assumed conspiracy at Second Creek, Mississippi, and faced certain death, made provocative threats to white men related to wanting to murder them and rape their wives. Jordan contended that they did so either because they sincerely had sought to commit murder and rape, or because facing certain death, they attempted to be as provocative as possible given their fate was already decided.[44] One

[42] Ibid, 848.

[43] Hogue, *Uncivil War*, 110-111.

[44] Winthrop D. Jordan, *Tumult and Silence at Second Creek: An Inquiry into a Civil War Slave Conspiracy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 166.

cannot say for sure, but we might assume the same of the freedmen at Colfax. If black men were militant enough to enlist in militia companies, to use these companies to march across southern towns and cities in a way that antagonized whites, and to engage in various forms of political violence, it is not outside the realm of possibility that black men also engaged in violent rhetoric and violent acts, even in the face of sure death.

A number of accounts at least suggest that many of Allen's men did not meet their death quietly. One white man testified that, "A large negro, dressed in a gray shirt, jumped on the breastworks, bowing his head and throwing up his hands several times, adding some expression, the precise words not being understood. Some of the skirmish-line thought he was pleading for mercy, and the order was given to cease firing." Yet, when the white men held their fire, the man began to taunt and fire back at Nash's men. One of the white men called back to his comrades that the black man "was defying us" and ordered them to recommence their assault.[45]

Another testified that, "It appeared that there were two parties in the court-house: one, mostly young negroes who had wished to surrender earlier, and now rushed out in a large squad crying, 'Don't shoot; we are whipped!" the other, of older ones, some of the worst negroes in Louisiana, such as Jim Ravenwell and others, who have been active in the making of a hell in Grant Parish for years, filled with undying hatred to the white race." These men did not surrender, and "when first surrounded, their intention of fighting to the last, and drew guns on those who talked of surrendering previous to this. They still kept their guns in their hands, determined on revenge."[46] The experience of battle and their imminent deaths appear to have fortified these men. Moreover, that they were so emboldened was a decidedly political development and one that was closely connected to their sense of citizenship. As the

[45] *Conditions of the South – February 23, 1875*, 848.

[46] Ibid, 849.

congressional committee investigating the incident tellingly noted, "The negroes, not even the field hands, are no longer the weak and simple creatures they were before the war. The years of freedom which they have enjoyed have had their effect on them, as well as their military education which many of them received in the United States Army. The time is past, if it ever existed, when a handful of whites could frighten a regiment of colored men."[47] By embracing this rhetoric, freedmen spoke violence and their own claims to citizenship into being even as they faced their impending demise. As at Battery Wagner and Milliken's Bend, exercising violence and dying became the ultimate measure of bravado and manliness.

This fact was not lost on Louisiana's political class either. The bodies of the men felled at Colfax were still warm when Republican politicians and their organs in the press began to contest what the violence meant and to frame it in such a way that would be politically advantageous. They condemned Nash and his men for their wanton brutality while drawing a sharp distinction between the seditious nature of white paramilitary violence and the righteous violence of the freedmen. Speaking to a crowd of Republicans in New Orleans, white Republican politician T. Morris Chester emphasized the "bloodthirsty ferocity" of Nash's "cruel men" and how their assault lay outside the boundaries of normal political and military conflict. In violating these boundaries, moreover, Chester questioned whether Nash's men were fit for citizenship. Nash's command "threatened not only the overthrow of the Republican government in the parish, but the destruction of the lives of the men engaged in supporting and defending it."[48] Others struck a similar note, arguing that if white violence was the embodiment of sedition, the behavior of Allen's company was the epitome of loyalty and republicanism. Republican P. B. S.

[47] Ibid, 17.

[48] Louisiana Republican Party, *Horrible Massacre in Grant Parish: Address and Speeches* (New Orleans: Republican Office, 1873), 6-7.

Pinchback took to the stump in New Orleans and reminded his listeners that the freedmen "were loyal to the government and fought for liberty, for which the rebels have never forgiven us, and never will as long as one of the present generation is left to poison the current public sentiment." White Democrats that stood opposed to Reconstruction were "vindictive and covert enemies, and would, if not restrained and deterred, in their stupid attachment and devotion for the relic of barbarism, heap up hecatombs of colored bodies."[49] Nor was this particular brand of vindictive white violence new. Republican politician C.C. Antoine reminded his listeners that "these brave men, after having been attacked by a force double them in numbers and infinitely better equipped, were then butchered; and they were butchered because of the hatred that their assailants bear to the colored race, a hatred that was evinced at Fort Pillow, that was reiterated at the Mechanics' Institute in this city in 1866."[50] White violence and the rationale behind it revealed a great deal about one's loyalty and fitness for citizenship. Not only was it dastardly, cowardly, and freakish, but it was a direct outgrowth of and continuity to the very same seditious violence perpetrated by the Confederates at Fort Pillow.

These speakers also recognized the threat that white paramilitarism posed to the freedmen and sought to identify a corrective. They appealed to the federal government, drawing upon the same logic that black politicians and polemicists had used to rationalize black citizenship and emancipation during the war. Given that black men had wielded violence in the name of the state – and continued to do so in Reconstruction – they were entitled to the privileges of citizenship and the protection of the government. If citizenship consisted of reciprocal rights and responsibilities between the individual and the state, black men had fulfilled their duty in protecting the American government during the war and then protecting the state of Louisiana in

[49] Ibid, 12.

[50] Ibid, 20.

what could hardly be called the ensuing peace. Pinchback pled with his audience that, "Our only hope and safety is in the federal government's realizing the situation and acting with that promptitude and vigor which would in the future protect the innocent and deter the guilty. Should we in our fidelity to principles and patriotism – in the exercise of manhood and citizenship – continue to incur the wrath of our oppressors without invoking from the National Government a corresponding degree of protection, our annihilation is a foregone conclusion, unless we accept such terms as may be dictated."[51]

Antoine echoed this sentiment, musing that "the events that have recently transpired must convince all of the wonderful foresight that our illustrious President evinced in supporting the only government that will protect all classes of its people. It was hatred of the United States Government that caused the attack upon those men at Colfax, who had been summoned in obedience to law to guard the records of Grant parish … it was in obedience to the lawful mandate of these white officials, and to prevent them from forcibly dispossessed that the gallant citizens of Grant rallied in their defense."[52] To Antoine's eye, if white violence was barbaric, seditious, and anti-republican, the violence wielded by the defenders at Colfax was its antithesis. Standing athwart this barbarism, moreover, fulfilled black men's obligation to the United States and the state of Louisiana. The question remained as to whether the government would reciprocate.

If these battles represented political texts that transmitted the meaning and rationale for black citizenship, Republicans read them in terms that cast black citizenship in a favorable light. The black defenders of Colfax acted on behalf of good government, virtue, and in defense of biracial republicanism. White Democrats, however, read the action of Allen's company far

[51] Ibid, 12.

[52] Ibid, 20.

differently. They sought to cast both the black company's behavior in terms that undermined biracial republicanism and black violence in a way that legitimized Herrenvolk democracy and racial supremacy. They did so in myriad ways, but one of the most powerful rested in their propensity to cast black men as so hyper-masculine and violent that they were unfit for citizenship. This was the double-edged sword of black violence. While it stood to legitimize black men's bravery and republican credentials in the eyes of those inclined to support the Republican Party, it just as easily fueled white racial apprehension and fears of a Haitian-style uprising. One white paramilitarist testified before Congress that "the people of our country and the adjoining parish, I believe, solemnly and religiously, in my opinion, and I believe so myself, that it was the solemn duty of the men who went there to go there to make the fight, for the protection of their wives and children … the negroes were in arms, in large numbers in Colfax; that the women and children were fleeing from the country; that the open threats of the negroes were to kill the white men and violate the white women."[53]

Hypermasculine black men posed a particular gendered threat to white men, but visions of armed black men threatening vulnerable white women and children rendered black companies an existential threat to white supremacy. This was especially evident to northerners and federal officials in Louisiana. U.S. attorney J. R. Beckwith observed that whites in Colfax and the surrounding area believed genuinely that "this crowd of negroes had gathered together at Colfax for felonious purposes; that they intended to burn houses, to ravish women, and go through with the whole scale of crimes with which they are always charged." Beckwith dryly noted that this fear was ill-founded, especially since the black men built breastworks which "would indicate that it was defensive."[54] His point was, however, moot. The perception of armed black men that

[53] *Conditions of the South – February 23, 1875*, 531.

mattered more than the reality, and the actions of the white men at Colfax spoke to the sense of fear that black citizenship, manhood, and black violence ignited in many white southerners.

******

Colfax was not an isolated incident. Across the South, black Republicans continued to meet force with force in pitched engagements that were the fullest expression of black institutional violence. In Warren County, Mississippi, Vicksburg witnessed a similar conflagration. There too black men demonstrated that they would fight and die to defend their political legitimacy and the basis on which they claimed manhood and citizenship. Although historians have perhaps rightly viewed the Vicksburg incident as a turning point in Mississippi's experience with Reconstruction, given that it undermined the authority of Republican governor Adelbert Ames – a native of Maine, veteran of the Union Army, son-in-law of the hated Benjamin Butler - the clash also possessed a powerful, discursive meaning in the way that its participants and observers used the rationale of martial manhood and biracial republicanism to justify black violence.[55]

Following the Panic of 1873, Vicksburg experienced an acute economic crisis. While this would have been problematic in any year, the fact that it occurred during the period of Republican governance exacerbated white Vicksburgers' angst. To compound Warren County Republicans' trouble, in late 1874 it became apparent that a number of prominent black politicians were guilty of corruption. When the implicating documents disappeared, the Vicksburg Tax Payers League blamed Peter Crosby, the county's African-American sheriff. A mob of nearly six-hundred armed whites subsequently accosted Crosby and forced him to resign

---

[54] Ibid, 415.

[55] Rable, *But There Was No Peace*, 145-149; William C. Harris, *Days of the Carpetbagger* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 645-649; Emberton, *Beyond Redemption*, 139-153.

his office. The sheriff at first chose prudence over valor and acquiesced to their demands. Two days later, Crosby telegraphed Ames, informing the governor and former Union general that he "would not be able to obtain peaceable possession" of his office. In the intervening years between the disappearance of the Klan and the ascendancy of the white-line movement, Mississippi, unlike Louisiana, possessed no organized state militia upon which the Republican governor could call to maintain order. Ames pled to Grant for assistance, warning the President that, "the chief executive of this state has no sufficient force at his command." Ames instead requested this use of "military power … to suppress domestic violence (and) to restore and order to this state."[56] Wary of intervening in what he saw as a local political dispute, Grant demurred. With no other alternative, and because in the absence of a formal militia African-Americans had nonetheless maintained their arms and continued to muster independent of state sanction, Ames instructed Crosby to organize a *posse comitatus* and retake his office. Crosby issued a call for assistance in the environs surrounding Vicksburg. On December 7, 1874, freedman and militia captain Andrew Owen massed between 120 and 500 freedmen on the outskirts of the city.[57]

The details of the fighting are murky, but the better-armed whites defeated three separate columns of Owen's militia. Whites opened fire during a truce at the beginning of the battle, quickly driving the African Americans in the initial column from the field. From there, white companies advanced out of the city, occupied the faded trenches of the old 1863 battlefield, and directed enfilade fire on black men who had briefly gone into bivouac. Another column attacked a portion of Owen's force near the city's monument to Confederate Major General John C. Pemberton. Seeing black men in retreat, the white units mounted a bayonet charge and drove the

[56] Ames to Grant, December 19, 1974, Folder December 13-19 1874, Adelbert Ames Governor Papers, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, M.S.

[57] Rable, *But There Was No Peace*, 145-150.

freedmen from the outskirts of the city and into the countryside. Approximately twelve African Americans died in the fighting compared to one white man. Nearly twice that many suffered wounds. White paramilitary units then fanned out into the countryside and commenced murdering black men suspected of being involved in the battle. The number of casualties in the aftermath of the engagement is unknown, but estimates place them in the hundreds.[58]

As was typical of Reconstruction, white men who possessed better arms, better organization, experience in the Confederate army, an affinity for underhanded tactics, and who possessed an apocalyptic worldview regarding southern race relations defeated a makeshift black paramilitary unit. To view the battle solely in terms of it being a tactical defeat for Owen's men, however, obscures a far more important reality. Black men participated in the fighting and did so for distinct ideological reasons. This second battle of Vicksburg is important both in that black men made themselves soldiers and that they elected to go to battle and risk their lives for their political rights.

The subsequent congressional investigations and accompanied testimony provide a rare glimpse into how African Americans rationalized their participation in this violence. Analyzing the motivations of the men who marched on Vicksburg and sought to reinstate Crosby illuminates how these African Americans understood the relationship between their militia service, manhood, and citizenship.[59] Asked why he fired on the white paramilitary unit attacking

[58] Crosby to Ames, December 4, 1874, Adelbert Ames Governor Papers, Record Group 27, Box 994, Folder December 1-4, 1874, MDAH; Rable, *But There Was No Peace*, 148-149; U.S. Congress, House Select Committee on the Affairs in Mississippi, *Vicksburgh Troubles – February 27, 1875,* 43rd Cong., 2nd Sess., 1875, No. 265, VII – Cited hereafter as *Vicksburgh Troubles*; James M. Gibson, *Memoirs of J.M. Gibson*, 75-77.

[59] The voices of African Americans in the South have been notoriously difficult to excavate given issues of illiteracy and, in the case of the Congressional investigations used in this essay, the reality that fear could often mute African Americans' protests given the public nature of the hearings. Moreover, when looking at whites' testimony concerning black violence during Reconstruction, historians have noted the propensity of many whites to exaggerate fears of black violence given their festering sense of racial paranoia. For this portion of the essay, however, I use white testimony given to Congress concerning what the African Americans who marched on Vicksburg said, and I

his position, Washington Henderson stated his rationale plainly to Congress: "I would be a pretty fool to stand there and see them shoot at me and do nothing. All I had to do was to fight as well as I could."[60] Henderson went on to allude to the fact that he had ventured to Vicksburg in order to restore peace to a city that had witnessed a putsch against the county's black sheriff. Moreover, he had done so because Crosby had been democratically elected and the white-line *coup* ran counter to the premise of republican government and the political liberty that had been promised to the freedmen at the end of the war. Henderson had therefore marched on the city to defend African American political legitimacy and by extension the claims to citizenship and manhood that undergirded it. Violence was necessary for the defense of both.

Others' language was even more bellicose. J. W. Smith, a white veteran of the Union Navy, happened upon the militia before the engagement. He heard Owen proclaim to his men that anyone who did not have the courage to march to Vicksburg should fall back to the rear, for he planned to take the town even if it meant wading through the streets knee-deep in blood.[61] M. E. Kline, a white Vicksburg resident who also observed the militia outside of town, testified that black women were imploring their husbands to "Go on and fight for your rights," a not-so-subtle nod to the gendered motivation underlying these men's claims to citizenship and manhood.[62] Kline recalled that when he chastised the men for marching on the town against a better-armed foe, one freedman retorted, "he had but one time to die, and he would just as well die at one time

---

take their testimony seriously. It is my contention that if those in Owen's posse were motivated enough to join the armed group and bring their own weapons to Vicksburg, then they were also quite likely to use the bellicose rhetoric detailed here to justify their actions.

[60] *Vicksburgh Troubles*, 278.

[61] Ibid, 437.

[62] Ibid, 432.

as another, die fighting."[63] The reason, the man averred, was that he refused to live under the authority of a government installed by force and that he did not elect. To die fighting seemed necessary, even honorable, as he refused to legitimize the whites' coup through his own unmanly submission. Each of these comments points back to the unmistakable role of violence in providing these men with the means to guard their claims to masculinity and citizenship. Of course, this attempt at armed resistance ultimately failed. The black posse was repulsed and African Americans living in Vicksburg and its environs suffered from reprisals for their participation. Nonetheless, to read this incident as a failure misses the larger point of what participation in battle meant for these African Americans. The men who marched on Vicksburg to reinstate Crosby understood – and even celebrated - their participation in institutional violence.[64]

As much as black violence in general--and the second battle of Vicksburg in particular--shaped the political reality of Reconstruction, so too did it play a profound role in setting the terms of and informing the postwar discourse on what it meant to be a man and a citizen. Mississippi's Republicans engaged in this discourse and sought to shape it in as favorable a way as possible to legitimize black violence and the freedman's claims to citizenship. They were keenly aware that as the nation as a whole set its eyes on the South, southern Republicans had to demonstrate that both they and their constituency were worthy of holding political power and could maintain order. A month after Vicksburg, Governor Ames stood before the Mississippi legislature and called for the reconstitution of the state militia, the creation of a constabulary force, the purchase of up to four Gatling guns, and sixty-thousand dollars in defense funding.[65]

[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid, 432-437.

While the bill had the obvious goal of providing the government with a mechanism to enforce order, the language that Ames employed spoke to the political value of martial manhood and violence. Ames implored his listeners, "It cannot be possible that the people of the State will permit a few lawless, violent men to influence the mind of a community appealing to class or race prejudice and then by force overthrow regularly constituted authorities. To prevent such acts, and punish those who have participated in them, the whole power of the state should be invoked. The freedom of a race is at stake. No act should be left undone to assert the authority and majesty of the law." Ames reminded the state's Republican legislators that, "A free people should resort to every legitimate means to maintain, for their government, peace and order; and for themselves, personal security and liberty. It is now for you to decide how that can best be done. The nation cannot regard with favor the appeal for help sent forth by those who supinely refuse to help themselves."[66] Ames well understood that within Mississippi and the nation at large there was an expectation that citizens and men defended their freedom.

The Republican press elaborated on Ames's point and sought to solidify the ideological basis on which black violence rested. Central to their argument was that black violence was a necessary antidote to the plague of white paramilitarism and sedition. In Mississippi, where its legislature engaged in a vigorous and partisan debate over the issue of arming and mobilizing a state militia, Republicans frequently made the connection between black violence and peace. The *Jackson Clarion* reported in 1875 that during a meeting of its legislative chamber a black representative read "a long speech. He hung out the bloody shirt and aired it extensively." The man spoke in favor of mobilizing the state's black militia, arguing that "it was in the interest of

---

[65] Rable, *But There Was No Peace*, 151; James Lynch, *Kemper County Vindicated*, 188.

[66] Governor Adelbert Ames to the Legislature of Mississippi Session 1875 (Jackson, Mississippi: Pilot Publishing Company, 1875), MDAH.

peace." Other Republicans in the legislature believed that disorder plagued the state precisely because the state government had not sufficiently channeled black political violence and turned it against an increasingly disruptive white insurgency. One Republican counseled his fellow legislators that violent "disturbances would not have occurred" if "the Governor would have forces at this command to put down turbulent and riotous bodies." In mobilizing the militia, he assured his colleagues that each would grant the state a reprieve from anarchy if the government would successfully harness the political potential of black violence.[67]

Not only did Republicans in Mississippi argue that black violence was consonant with good order, but also that when black men exercised violence, so too did they exercise a monopoly on manliness and courage. The *Mississippi Pilot* lampooned Democrats who hid "in ambush" and cowardly attacked the freedmen with "infamous chicanery and fraud."[68] "Give us the buccaneer," its editors pleaded two months later, or, "the blood dyed ruffian, the intrepid highwayman" rather than "the cowardly being who dogs our footsteps after nightfall and shoots our head off from behind a protecting tree."[69] In mocking the Democratic paramilitary groups that set about terrorizing the state's black voters, the *Pilot* attacked them in language that would have been mutually intelligible to white and black men alike. The newspaper sought to cast white militias as cowardly and unmanly, while the men who joined these dastardly groups were unworthy of the prerogatives of manhood and citizenship.

Conversely, the paper framed the state's Republicans as paragons of manliness who were willing to engage in violence, albeit the right kind of violence. "The Republican party of Mississippi is not afraid," the *Pilot* boasted. "It has its ranks unthinned, its confidence

[67] *Jackson Clarion*, February 4, 1875.

[68] *Daily Mississippi Pilot*, July 29, 1875.

[69] Ibid, September 29, 1875.

undimmed. If the Democracy feels that the best way to defeat is in an open contest, let it come on. If, on the contrary, it thinks than an ambush will serve, let it too try that. The Republicans will be prepared for both kinds of attacks."[70] Encouraging Republicans to embrace the political moment and stand up in self-defense, it quoted Shakespeare's Henry V before the battle of Agincourt and excoriated "weak-kneed" Republicans. Rather than appearing meek and unarmed, the paper encouraged Republicans to arm themselves with Winchester rifles. This provided a counterpoint to Democrats' claims that the Republicans were weak and ineffectual, all the while encouraging the party's rank-and-file to maintain a manly stance against white aggression: "The black men are not cowards. There are individual instances of recent occurrences that say they are brave and true. And the time has come when all Republicans are expected to show that they are not pusillanimous recreants and craven-hearted wretches that it were a slander to call men. They can do this by keeping up their organization; by holding their club meetings as usual; by calmly attending to their duties as citizens."[71] It promised that "this is no holiday militia, with glittering regimentals … of empty show and pageantry. They are the *posse comitatus* of peace officers, and their enlistment and their arms mean business."[72] The next day, the paper counseled the "terror stricken White Leagues to let the colored militia alone if you do not like them. If you do not trouble the militia, nor in any other way violate the laws, the militia will not trouble you."[73] Adopting hyper-masculine and warlike language, the paper ultimately argued that the militia was prepared and willing to do battle with the state's white-liners, both physically and rhetorically. Casting the militia as the final arbiter of violence and authority in Mississippi, the paper

[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid, September 28, 1875.

[72] Ibid, October 13, 1875

[73] Ibid, October 14, 1875.

appropriated a potent discourse of manhood and violence and argued that the state's freedmen possessed legitimate access to both, and that only in the hands of the freedmen could Mississippi achieve a lasting and just peace.

******

That violence existed as an integral component of postwar black political life was a fact of Reconstruction. The history of Reconstruction violence, however, cannot be defined solely in terms of black victimization and white terror. Though this is certainly part of the story of Reconstruction, it ought not overshadow the reality that black men employed violence for their own benefit and safety, as well as to further their own political goals, and they did so enthusiastically. They might not have done so with the same intensity and brutality as the Ku Klux Klan or the White League, but black violence was pervasive. Its forms were varied and black companies served a wide range of purposes. Black companies intimidated their partisan enemies, they ambushed white paramilitarists, they provided for black self-defense, and, in their fullest expression of political violence, black companies engaged in pitched warfare against the forces that sought to overthrow Reconstruction. Any honest and accurate appraisal of Reconstruction and the black political experience after the war must come to terms with these realities. The fact that Reconstruction ultimately ended due to white paramilitarism does not erase the reality that black violence is as much a part of the story of Reconstruction as is white violence.

If black violence existed as a fact, so too did it inform a larger national and regional discourse over what it meant to be a man and a citizen. When black southern Republicans embraced institutional violence to defend their political prerogatives, they forced the nation to reckon with what black violence meant and what its uses would continue to be in a region of the

country that sat in an uncomfortable limbo between war and peace. To a degree, this project to make sense of black violence was hardly new. Both before and during the Civil War, abolitionists and Republican politicians legitimized, defended, and imagined what violence meant for black men's entrance into American politics through the written and spoken word just as northern copperheads and Confederate partisans viewed the arming of black men as nothing less than barbaric. It is not surprising, then, that when racialized violence continued to plague the South after the war, white and black southerners would not only continue to employ violence against one another, but also to construct competing discourses over what this violence meant and what types of racial violence were acceptable. Unfortunately for the freedmen, framing black violence as a positive good became an increasingly difficult task, even for some Republican politicians. When Governor Daniel Chamberlain of South Carolina wrote to Ulysses S. Grant in 1876 and described black men as having suffered from "the effects of their long slavery" that made them "yield to the more imperious and resolute will of white men," he demonstrated how the attitudes of northerners toward the freedmen and their well-being were ambivalent at best and hostile at worst.[74]

Ultimately, the weakness of black institutional violence – and the primary reason that it proved unsuccessful in defending Reconstruction – was not due to any deficiencies in its application by the freedmen. It provided many of them with a viable means of self-defense and allowed them to imagine themselves as citizens and men. These were important successes. Yet, just as important were the rhetorical and ideological bases that black men and Republican leaders used to defend it. In this regard, Republican leaders failed to offer a convincing justification for black violence to the country at large that could, in turn, provide a widely accepted basis for

[74] *South Carolina in 1876*, 481.

black citizenship and manhood. At times they argued that black violence was a positive good, but at others they contended that black men were inherently passive and incapable of defending themselves. In still other instances, white northerners expressed fears that arming black men would lead to a race war in the South. With such an unstable ideological foundation, it is little surprise that southern Republicans failed to defend Reconstruction practically and rhetorically. Where they failed, white southern Democrats happily employed violence to both further their own political goals and to appropriate the postwar discourse over what it meant to be a man and a citizen in the world the Civil War made.

Chapter 6: White Paramilitarism and the Politics of Redemption

After the Civil War, Americans grappled with two competing visions of how to reconstruct politics and citizenship in a post-emancipation world. Based on the efficacy of black martial manhood, black men and their Republican allies posited a version of biracial republicanism predicated on the full integration of the freedmen into the southern body politic. In the way that they sought to remake both the southern electorate and the premises on which politics were contested, their ideology was nothing short of revolutionary. This was not lost on those white reactionaries who remained devoted to Herrenvolk democracy and returning the South's racial order to a close approximation of the antebellum status quo. Given the long-standing connection between access to state-sanctioned violence and citizenship, former Confederates realized that black institutional violence was incompatible with ensuring that the South remained what the historian Ulrich B. Phillips described as "a white man's country."[1] Political violence was, then, a double-edged sword. Violence formed the foundation for black citizenship, but in the warlike political milieu of the world the war had made, it also provided white southerners with a familiar, potent, and mutually intelligible means of undermining black citizenship and the martial premises on which it rested. Counterrevolutionary white southerners sought to employ institutional violence to disarm black men physically and, in doing so, to delegitimize the ideologies and institutions on which black citizenship depended.

Biracial republicanism and Herrenvolk democracy could never coexist as functioning governing ideologies. The end of Reconstruction witnessed the triumph of one over the other. By marshaling institutional violence and turning it against the freedmen, the white South's counterrevolutionaries sought to appropriate the discourse of martial manhood and tailor it to

[1] Ulrich B. Phillips, "The Central Theme of Southern History," *American Historical Review* 34, no. 1 (1928): 30-31.

their own ends. White southerners framed black militia service as a hyper-masculine threat to white political and social power even as they launched waves of paramilitary violence themselves. This violence culminated in Redemption, a process wherein white southerners appropriated militia service and paramilitarism to disqualify black men from possessing access to state-sanctioned violence and viable means of asserting their claims to manhood and citizenship within an environment where violence remained a valuable form of political capital. Indeed, access to violence was integral to how both black and white southerners viewed their relationship to the state and to each other. As one member of the Crescent City White League put it, military organizations were "the only feasible means of asserting our manhood and obtaining at least a portion of our rights, which will never be conceded if we remain quiescent. No people are respected unless feared."[2] Put simply, because access to organized violence was central to how southerners defined and defended competing ideas about citizenship and manhood from emancipation to Redemption, Redemption is at its heart the story of how counterrevolutionary southerners were able to rend black men's ties to institutional violence as a precursor to excluding them from the body politic.

******

Violence was a persistent feature of Reconstruction, but it was not until nearly a decade after the war ended that white counterrevolutionaries were able to overthrow the Deep South's Republican administrations. That they were able to do so at that particular point in time sprang from two developments. The first was the continued evolution of white institutional violence after the war, and especially the form it reached by the middle of the 1870s. As Chapter 2 demonstrated, white southerners were remarkably adept at creating new methods to restore the

[2] U.S. Congress, House Select Committee on the Insurrectionary States in the South, *Conditions of the South – January 15, 1875*, 43rd Cong., 2nd sess., 223. Cited hereafter as *Conditions of the South – January 15, 1875*.

antebellum order of things, and especially through their imagining of new modes of extra-state and state-sanctioned institutional violence. From constabularies to the Ku Klux Klan, the history of white violence immediately after the war was one of adaptation. Adaptability, however, did not immediately lead to success. Between the end of the war and the onset of Military Reconstruction, white southerners failed to build efficacious institutions through which they could overthrow the Republican Party. White militia companies, urban and rural police forces, and the Ku Klux Klan all sought to circumscribe the rights of the freedmen. Tactically, they sought to wield fear and intimidation against their political opponents. Although they did so successfully, Ku-Kluxism, and its offshoots, proved to be a strategic failure in that it merely encouraged Republicans to organize their own companies in self-defense and for the federal government to intervene in the South.

Paramilitarism was the next stage in the evolution of white institutional violence, but it needed fertile soil in which to germinate and thrive. As Military Reconstruction and the Grant administration's use of the Enforcement Act demonstrated, northerners remained committed for a time – for reasons both realistic and idealistic - to supporting southern Republicans. The North's interest in Reconstruction began to fade, however, when the United States' postwar economic expansion came to a sudden halt in 1873. In September, Jay Cooke and Company collapsed after millions of dollars in bonds it invested in the Northern Pacific Railroad were deemed worthless. Other institutions followed suit, leading to tight credit, stock devaluation, and persistent unemployment. The effects of this contraction lasted for nearly five years and resulted in a profound shift in the partisan composition of Congress and the terms of political debate in the North. The years after the Civil War witnessed the rise of industrial capitalism and with it a significant expansion in the country's wealth and productivity. Rather than being a nation of

shopkeepers, the loyal states became cradles of industry and concentrated wealth. Part and parcel to this process was the emergence of an urban working class whose presence belied free labor ideology's emphasis that the United States was (or ought to be) a nation of independent artisans, farmers, and shopkeepers. When the recession of 1873 laid bare the deep tension between capital and labor, it became clear that free labor ideology could not adequately describe the nation's political economy. Consequently, northern politics became less about touting the strength of free labor and pursuing sectional politics, and more about disputing the various class conflicts between northern industrialists, middle class shopkeepers, the urban working class, and farmers. So profound was the ideological reorientation of many northern Republicans that instead of looking at freedmen with sympathy, they began to view their demands for government intervention in the South in the same vein that they viewed the radicalization of the northern working class or the antics of the Paris Commune. In short, the politics of economics and class subsumed the North and drew its attention away from sectional matters.[3]

The partisan dynamics of the North witnessed a profound shift as well. Secession granted the Republican Party a distinct advantage in Congress during the Civil War. Thanks to the political incompetence of Andrew Johnson and the violence directed toward the freedmen in New Orleans and Memphis, the Republicans won a veto-proof majority in Congress following the elections of 1866. A succession of congresses passed significant civil rights and Reconstruction legislation that benefitted the freedpeople until the congressional elections of 1874 ended this era of Republican dominance on Capitol Hill. This began in 1872 with the exposure of corruption within the Grant administration in the form of the Credit Mobilier

[3] See Heather Cox Richardson, *The Death of Reconstruction: Race, Labor, and Politics in the Post-Civil War North, 1865-1901* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); William Gillette, *Retreat from Reconstruction, 1869-1879* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979); Michael Fitzgerald, *Reconstruction in Alabama* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press), 285-337.

scandal. Then in 1873, Congress doubled the President's salary and gave itself a 40 percent raise. The Panic of 1873 proved to be the final nail in the coffin for the Republican congressional majority. As is the case of many an economic downturn, voters laid the blame for the crisis at the feet of the party in power. The northern public punished the Republicans in the House of Representatives with one of the most crushing electoral defeats in American history. The Democrats gained 94 seats, garnering the party its first congressional majority in the House of Representatives since the antebellum era. The Republicans held their majority in the Senate, but Democrats gained nine seats in the upper chamber. The freshman Congressmen who took their seats in 1875 had little interest in a vigorous enforcement of Reconstruction.[4]

So too did the political dynamics of the South change during the 1870s. Between 1868 and 1872, both the Republican and Democratic leadership attempted to occupy the political center in order to construct broad party coalitions. Conservatives such as L.Q.C. Lamar in Mississippi sought to pay lip service to black suffrage and appeal to Whiggish white southerners. Southern Republicans, meanwhile, hoped to build a coalition of northern immigrants, former Whigs, and the freedmen. This race to find a political center proved an utter failure for both parties in the Presidential election of 1872. Democrats lost the election, but the Republicans, despite having won the presidency, made no discernible gains among white voters in the South. This failure compelled both parties to reassess their strategies and adopt explicitly racialized politics. Finally, the Panic of 1873 put the coffers of many southern states under stress. As J. Mills Thornton has argued, concerns over fiscal policy in many southern states compelled southern farmers to reject the Republican Party for its spending habits and tax increases.[5] All of

[4] Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 512-525.

this made it far more likely that white insurgents could overthrow southern Republicans, and that they could do so with far less risk of northern interference.

******

The polarization of the two-party system in the South and the North's waning support for Reconstruction created the opening that reactionary white southerners needed to topple Republican governments, suppress the freedmen, and end Reconstruction. Just as violence had been inseparable from emancipation and the imposition of Reconstruction on the former Confederates, so too would it play the decisive role in Reconstruction's demise. For white southerners, however, the question remained of *how* to use violence to overthrow the Republicans. For all of the terror the Klan wrought in the South, their successes were far more psychological than political. Klansmen might have intimidated the freedmen and spread terror, but they failed to stop the ascendance of Ulysses S. Grant to the White House or to oust a significant number of Republicans from office in the Deep South. Moreover, after its limited success, white violence experienced a lull in much of the Deep South following the passage of the Enforcement Acts.

In 1874, white southerners began rearming and creating new forms of institutional violence to meet the political moment they faced. These new institutions would germinate in the soil of the states from which they sprang, and their leadership, political goals, and tactics would be specific to these states. On the whole, however, the waves of white paramilitary violence that overthrew Reconstruction in Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina shared important similarities. In each state, white paramilitarists operated in the open, had a clear relationship to

[5] Michael Perman, *The Road to Redemption: Southern Politics, 1869-1879* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984); J. Mills Thornton, "Fiscal Policy and the Failure of Radical Reconstruction in the Lower South" in *Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward,* eds., James McPherson and J. Morgan Kousser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 351-352.

the Democratic Party and its leading politicians, and sought to drive the Republican Party from power through force. These institutions, like their predecessors, continued to provide white men a means to assert their manhood and citizenship through exercising violence. In their goals and tactics, however, they represented a departure from previous forms of white violence.

The process occurred first in Louisiana, where the Supreme Court's evolving interpretation of the 14th Amendment and the aftermath of the Colfax Massacre coalesced to provide the impetus for a far more intense wave of white paramilitarism. In the Slaughterhouse Cases – a series of legal actions over the constitutionality of Louisiana's state-chartered meatpacking facility in New Orleans – the court interpreted the Privileges and Immunities Clause of the 14th Amendment to mean that states bore the primary responsibility for protecting its citizens' civil rights rather than the federal government.[6] Shortly after the ruling, the lawyers representing the white assailants from Colfax – who were being prosecuted under the power of the Enforcement Act – seized on this logic and argued that the law was unconstitutional. In 1874, a federal appeals court agreed and overturned the men's convictions. To many would-be insurgents in Louisiana, the ruling signaled that the federal government would not enforce Reconstruction.

The victory in the courts in turn emboldened white reactionaries stirred to action by the violence in Grant Parish. The fighting at Colfax ended in a decisive victory for white Democrats, but whites in the state paid less attention to their victory than they did to the reality that black men had taken up arms and engaged them in combat in the first place. Democrats consequently were less concerned with celebrating their victory than they were in anticipating when they would have to act next. The white press provided them with endless possibilities. The *Alexandria*

[6] See Ronald Labbe and Jonathan Lurie, *The Slaughterhouse Cases: Regulation, Reconstruction, and the Fourteenth Amendment* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press).

Caucasian--perhaps the most vehement opponent of Reconstruction in the state's Democratic press--warned that across the Mississippi River in Vicksburg, armed black men patrolled the streets of the city and were making sexual advances on white women.[7] The *New Orleans Bulletin* similarly reported that in St. Martin parish black men planned to "rise and gobble up all the white women and kill all the men," and then, in one of the more fantastic claims made by a Reconstruction propagandist, that they would "then burn all the nice houses down so they would have to keep their white women in an alligator swamp."[8] Other screeds were less fantastic but equally powerful. In New Orleans, the *Picayune* warned that black men, armed with state weapons, sought to "seize the occasion of the coming Fourth of July for a grand coup on the white people to enforce their 'civil rights.'" Rumors spread that the black men would march on soda-fountains and forcibly enter at the point of a bayonet.[9] In each instance, the Democratic press emphasized the well-worn but effective trope that white women and children were the intended victims of black companies.

The freedmen were a great beast in the eyes of many white Democrats, but reactionaries did not believe that they acted alone. White Louisianans argued that carpetbaggers such as Henry Clay Warmoth and William Pitt Kellogg, as well as federal authorities in the South, had enabled the freedmen through the nefarious means of emancipation, political patronage, and positions in the militia. A cartoon published in the *New Orleans Bulletin* depicted Louisiana as a white clad woman, lying on an altar. With the assistance of President Grant, the freedmen held her down.[10] The implication was clear: the sacrifice and rape of Louisiana was just as much the result of

[7] *Alexandria Caucasian*, August 15, 1874.

[8] *Conditions of the South – January 15, 1875*, 197

[9] *Conditions of the South – January 15, 1875*, 186.

[10] *New Orleans Bulletin*, September 27, 1874.

white Republicans as it was black barbarism. Biracial republicanism in the South was defined by both, and it was connected to the attempts by white Republicans to arm the freedmen. As the *Shreveport Times* warned its readers, the continuation of Republican rule meant "the ultimate Africanization of Louisiana….the history of Martinique, of San Domingo, and Jamaica" forecast Louisiana's fate if it continued under to be ruled by malfeasant Republicans and their black wards.[11]

Editorials that attacked the federal government for enabling the freedmen sought to render the sexual apocalypse wrought by Republican rule in the South as an inevitable result of the failure of biracial republicanism. Thus, reasserting white manhood and political supremacy became intertwined. The unholy alliance of the freedmen and their white allies led the South to the precipice of catastrophe, and in particular, the destruction of responsible, competent, and republican government. The *Caucasian* reminded its readers that the South had

> been plundered by just such a carpet-bag and scalawag government as Mr. Kellogg's, until we have nothing left but despair. All security for life has been taken away or left to perish in the hands of venality, imbecility and ignorance. Our fields have been made desolate, our homes have been made the homes of poverty, want, nakedness, and famine almost stare us in the face; and all this has been brought about that public plunderers may be made rich. With all these wrongs, we will not sit quietly by and see these American satraps plunder, arm, and drill the tools and instruments through whom they have reached their power and thus secure our chains forever."

[11] U.S. Congress, House, Select Committee on the Insurrectionary States in the South, *Conditions of the South – February 23, 1875*, 43rd Cong., 2nd sess., 756. Cited hereafter as *Conditions of the South – February 23, 1875*.

White Democrats' only option was to fight "against a despotism more desolating than war and more degrading than that of Poland; and to the God of battles for the justice of our cause." Instead of submitting, the *Caucasian* promised that white men would not "stop until every carpet-bagger and scalawag who represents Mr. Kellogg is expelled from our midst." [12]

Democratic newspapers reflected southern whites' commitments to not only defend their manhood and home rule, but crucially also justified violence as the proper means to do so. The *Shreveport Times* counseled readers, "We are not disposed to be blood-thirsty; but when a people who have suffered with patience so long as we have, have cried aloud to the world for help, and that help has been denied us, despair and desperation have filled out nature, and we are determined upon one of two things; that Louisiana must be governed by white citizens, or that in sixty days she will be blotted from the map of the free states."[13]

In the late summer of 1874, the rage inspired by the southern press bore fruit. The movement began to coalesce around specific leaders and to articulate more formal political goals. In July, the Crescent City Democratic Club transformed itself into the Crescent City White League. Under the leadership of Frederick Nash Ogden, a veteran of both William Walker's filibustering expedition to Nicaragua in the 1850s and the Confederate Army, the unit drew significant support from the city's Confederate veterans who had become disaffected with Republican rule.[14]

---

[12] *Alexander Caucasian*, June 27, 1874.

[13] *Conditions of the South – February 23, 1875,* 760

[14] James Hogue, *Uncivil War: Five New Orleans Street Battles and the Rise and Fall of Radical Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 129-130.

The following month, the state's various White League affiliates held a convention in Baton Rouge at the behest of John McEnery, the failed Democratic gubernatorial candidate from 1872. The convention adopted a platform that articulated the anti-black and anti-Republican screeds of the state's white supremacist newspapers into a formal platform.[15] Attacking black enfranchisement, it argued that "instead of improving in his capacity to make an intelligent and patriotic use of the ballot, we do not hesitate to affirm that he is to-day less qualified for the duties of self-government than he was seven years ago." The reason for this was a combination of black men's inability to govern themselves and the malice of white men who had enfranchised them. The platform averred that a close study of the South demonstrated the superiority of white supremacy to biracial republicanism: "We could show … that the negro's right to vote, to labor, to secure a tenure of the profits of his industry, are far better guaranteed by the white rulers of Virginia than by the black rulers of Louisiana ... we would show him that where the white man rules, the negro is peaceful and happy; that were the black rules, the negro is starved and oppressed; that where our race bears sway, his race is mentally, morally, and materially progressing; that where his race governs, there is increasing ignorance, distress, and brutality." The goals of the movement were clear: "by arraying ourselves in the name of white civilization, resuming that just and legitimate superiority in the administration of our State affairs to which we are entitled by superior responsibility, superior numbers, and superior intelligence."[16] The only means to achieve this goal was through violence. As McEnery implored those in attendance,

[15] *Conditions of the South – January 15, 1875*, 187.

[16] Ibid, 194-195.

white men should make war on the Republicans and "not leave one of them alive to return to tell the tale."[17]

The white insurgency in Louisiana did not contain itself to that state's borders. Paramilitarism spread like a virus into Mississippi, where it found a healthy incubator for political violence. In 1873, Adelbert Ames, the state's former military governor, won the state's gubernatorial election against sitting United States Senator James L. Alcorn. Although both were Republicans, Alcorn appealed to moderate whites and Democrats, while Ames drew his support primarily from the state's freedmen. This polarization notwithstanding, Ames's initial pledges to back retrenchment and to lower Mississippi citizens' tax burden heartened conservatives. By early 1874, however, their patience had evaporated after the Republican-controlled legislature failed to take meaningful action to reduce taxes. That fueled the rise of Tax-Payer Leagues across the state that became increasingly militant. The state's white opposition became further radicalized when Ames responded to the Vicksburg Riot in December of 1874 with plans to reconstitute the state militia.[18]

The passage of the militia bill marked the moment when Mississippi's white-line movement spread from the confines of a core group of malcontents in the Mississippi Delta to a state-wide movement. As in Louisiana, the Democratic press played an unmistakable role in fanning the flames of white paramilitarism. Viewing the creation of a militia as racialized despotism, the state's Democratic newspapers cast Ames's military organization as a hyper-masculine threat to white supremacy and manhood. The *Hinds County Gazette* proclaimed that

---

[17] Ibid, 187.

[18] William Harris, *The Day of the Carpetbagger: Republican Reconstruction in Mississippi* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 626-627; Ames to Morgan, August 14, 1874, Adelbert Ames Governor Papers, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, M.S.

that bill was nothing less than "Ames's great effort to get up a standing army to intimidate and overawe the people of Mississippi."[19] And to an extent, it was. But when the Democratic press began to imagine what this "standing army" meant for white manhood, it struck at the essence of how white men defined themselves. Addressing the Vicksburg white-liners on February 5th, 1875, the *Jackson Clarion* mocked what it saw as Ames's heavy-handed response and wryly remarked to the white participants of the Vicksburg Riot that, "You would not permit your homes to be invaded by a lawless mob with murderous intent, and because you repelled them and protected your hearthstones and your wives from slaughter, and worse than slaughter – take that!"[20]

The *Clarion* continued five days later in more provocative terms, suggesting that a Republican militia meant the destruction of white patriarchy and white men's sexual monopoly over white women's sexuality. The editors warned that, "When your wives and your children are driven out from their homes by the remorseless tax gatherer," they will then, "go with them." The *Clarion*'s prophesy undoubtedly wreaked havoc in white Mississippians' imaginations, conjuring up apocalyptic visions detailing the demise of white supremacy and a reign of Republican sexual misrule that would overshadow their failure to manage the state's finances. The state militia would provide the vehicle for this cataclysm. The *Clarion* warned its readers that once the militia took the field, "husbands and fathers will be torn from the fond embraces of their wives, amidst the piteous cries of helpless children."[21] Fear of black martial masculinity became inseparable from Ames's attempt to organize the militia.

---

[19] *Hinds County Gazette*, February 10, 1875.

[20] "Metropolitan Police Atrocity," *Jackson Daily Clarion*, February 5, 1875.

[21] *Jackson Daily Clarion*, February 10, 1875.

The *Clarion's* rendering of women as political objects, and control over their sexuality as a signpost of the social order, provided a potent discursive tool that cast the militia as a hypermasculine threat to the sexual and political sovereignty of white men. Nothing ignited white southerners' rage and anxiety quite like the image of black men having sexual dominion over white women. An anonymous pamphleteer writing under the pen name "Sister Sallie" evoked this nightmare scenario in lurid fashion. As northern immigrant and Yazoo County sheriff Albert T. Morgan recalled, Sister Sallie "declared that all the woes with which the South had been afflicted during the twenty years' war which the Yankees had waged against them, were directly traceable to the unnatural and wicked relations which had previously existed between the white men of the South, her brethren, and their female slaves." Sallie contended that their indiscretions had wrought all of the maladies of the era: war, disfranchisement, and economic hardship. This, however, was only the beginning of God's wrath. The pamphleteer added that "there was but one step remaining to complete their degradation to the level of the negroes, and that was the marriage of their sister – their own, dear sister Sallie, to a buck negro." The work's appeal to politics, power, and sex resonated with the state's white men, and surely frightened more than a few. Morgan recalled that, "old and young read it with avidity, and renewed their oaths of allegiance to Sister Sallie and to King Cotton's 'Table-round.'"[22]

Democrats further argued that the sexual apocalypse wrought by the mobilization of a black militia found its root in the destruction of responsible, republican government by Ames and his party. Ames had demurred from sharing power with his political opponents. Nothing exemplified this more than white men's exclusion from the militia, a service that many conflated with their republican heritage. The *Jackson Clarion* reminded its readership that "The right of

[22] Albert T. Morgan, *Yazoo; Or, on the Picket Line of Freedom in the South* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1968), 455-456.

the citizens to keep and bear arms has justly been considered as the palladium of the liberties of a republic, since it offers a strong moral check against the usurpation and arbitrary power of rules." To the minds of many whites in the state, the Republicans were guilty of not just misrule, but in disqualifying white men from militia service in favor of black men, so too was the Ames administration teetering on tyranny. "How worthless would be such a right and how thin the protection it would secure," the paper proclaimed, "if the people could not act without the permit of negligent or usurping rulers! It is the right and the duty of the State to regulate the militia – to provide for their organization. But it cannot suppress the militia, nor in any degree infringe the right to keep and bear arms, nor the right to use them on proper occasions in defense of the community."[23] To the white-liners, violence was an inalienable right, as was the right to make war on a government that sought to oppress them.

White-line paramilitary companies were organized from Meridian to Vicksburg by the late summer of 1875. Unlike the Louisiana White League, the Mississippi movement was neither centralized nor concentrated in urban areas. It instead grew out of local political disputes and the festering animus between the freedpeople and white Democrats over control of local governments. Its decentralized nature, however, made the movement much more difficult to suppress. In Vicksburg, white paramilitarism continued to grow out of Warren County's Tax-Payer League and it sought to both disfranchise black men and to force white men to vote as a block. In neighboring Claiborne County, an association of white tax payers organized to oppose local Republicans. There, however, the movement took on more urgency when the white community expressed outrage at the marriage of the freedman Haskins Smith to a white woman. A white company organized with the purpose of murdering Smith, who had to seek protection

[23] *Jackson Clarion*, September 22, 1875.

from his fellow freedmen.[24] In Yazoo City, where Union veteran Albert T. Morgan married a biracial woman and was elected sheriff, white citizens similarly organized military groups and staged a coup against the sheriff after accusing him of murdering a political opponent.[25]

The economic and political turmoil that roiled Louisiana and Mississippi was also present in South Carolina. Emancipation wrought havoc on the plantation economy and destroyed the wealth the plantation class had accrued in the form of its chattel. Moreover, free laborers were more recalcitrant than slave laborers. Adding to this economic uncertainty, the state's post-war Republican legislature raised the *ad valorem* tax on land. The state's white men had initially reacted by embracing Ku Kluxism in the late 1860s and early 1870s, but terroristic violence achieved neither a return to the antebellum political-economy nor the rise of a viable political alternative to the Republicans. The Democratic Party in the state remained moribund, with the only opposition to the Republicans coming in the form of the Reform Party, an amalgamation of men who opposed Reconstruction for a variety of reasons ranging from skepticism to black rule to opposition to corruption in the state. In the absence of a formal institution to express their political opposition to Reconstruction, white men formed the South Carolina Tax Payers League by 1873. The loosely-knit organization openly opposed the Republicans on the ballot and expressed their grievances to the government in Columbia. Unlike in Mississippi, however, tax payer associations did not immediately seek to institute military coups against Republican officeholders. Conservative and reactionary Carolinians remained steadfast in their opposition to

[24] U.S. Congress, Senate, *Mississippi in 1875*, 44th Cong., 1st Sess., 1876, No. 527, 161, 191. Cited hereafter as *Mississippi in 1875*.

[25] Morgan to Ames, Sept 25 1875, Adelbert Ames Governor Papers, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, M.S.

Republican rule, but they lacked effective institutional means to express this opposition violently.[26]

Rifle clubs instead provided these means. Unlike the Louisiana White League and Mississippi's white-line companies, South Carolina's rifle clubs did not initially begin as paramilitary institutions. As one recent study of Columbia's rifle clubs has argued, many of the original men in these companies were too young to have been hardened Confederate veterans, and the initial purpose of their clubs was more social than political. The members of the first rifle clubs were upper class men whose main concern was economic development, not a firm commitment to racial politics. The leaders of the Richmond Guards, for example, were members of Columbia's banking and merchant class. Moreover, clubs that formed in the counties where Klan violence was nonexistent tended to be more moderate at first and were initially used to foster friendship and economic networks among South Carolina's emerging middle class. The Richland Rifle Club's membership expanded from only 41 men in 1874 to 422 in May of 1876, before the violent political canvass of that year had even commenced. Each member paid social dues of $2.50. This went to good use, as the club was most concerned with holding social events such as balls and dinners. For example, in June of 1874 the club spent $100 on a band for a summer barbecue. In December of 1874, the club's primary expenses were $60 for wine, $252 for dinner, and $15.40 for decorative plumes. Other units based in Columbia performed similar functions. The Governor's Guards planned frequent balls and enlisted local women to stage their venues and host the events.[27]

---

[26] Stephen Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 53-64; George Rable, *But There Was No Peace* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985), 163-166.

[27] Andrew Abeyounis, *Before They Were Red Shirts: The Rifle Clubs of Columbia, South Carolina* (Master's Thesis, University of South Carolina, 2014), 2-3; Ibid, 41-42; Richland Rifle Club Cash Book, 1874-1882, Records of the Richland Rifle Club, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, S.C. $2.50

But while the clubs were at least initially generally apolitical, they were not non-ideological. They provided an institutional basis for white men to express their conceptions of citizenship and manhood. Moreover, while their displays were not necessarily violent – that would not come until the late summer and fall of 1876 - they were nonetheless militaristic in that they allowed white men to perform a white, republican form of martial pageantry. The Georgetown Rifle Guards, for example, placed a premium on public drilling and marching. Linking its social and military functions, the group mandated drilling on every Monday and Friday night.[28] Moreover, the group prescribed a strict code of conduct for these drills that was consistent with the type of masculinity it sought to project. The club's regulations mandated that, "Any member found intoxicated on parade, drills, or in uniform shall be fined five dollars for the first offense and be expelled for the second. Such member shall be reported by the Orderly Sergeant and if that Officer shall willfully neglect to report such offender, he himself shall be held responsible to the Company."[29] If these men were to appropriate political space and use it to project their claims to masculinity, they wanted to do so in a way that highlighted their restraint and respectability. Given that black militia parades were frequently derided for their lack of order, the regulations suggest that white men sought to draw another sharp distinction from their black counterparts.

The Palmetto State's rifle clubs not only allowed Carolinians to express appropriate masculine behavior, but also to project a more orderly version of southern gender relations than those that had been destabilized by the war and its aftermath. Just as they had done when newly

---

in 1874 equals over fifty dollars today; Governor's Guards Minutes, January 12, 1875, Records of the Richland Rifle Club, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, S.C.

[28] Georgetown Rifle Guards Minute Book, February 14, 1876, Records of the Georgetown Rifle Guards, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, S.C.

[29] Ibid.

minted Confederate regiments marched off to battle in 1861, white women sewed and presented flags to rifle clubs in public ceremonies. On November 13, 1874, for example, the Governor's Guards marched through Columbia to the Columbia Male Academy, where Kate McMaster of the Ladies of Charleston presented a flag to the unit. McMaster—in a new departure from women's roles in 1861--addressed the unit on behalf of the organization. While before the war women would have had scant opportunities to address a gathering of men in public, the early years of Reconstruction had thrust women into the public eye. According to Caroline Janney, the exigencies of war "necessitated the development of a collective women's consciousness and a new sense of direct participation in the state" and public affairs. This continued during Reconstruction. Whereas Confederate veterans' commemorative efforts looked treasonous to occupying Union soldiers, women could veil their paeans to the Confederacy in public displays of grief. Leveraging their politicized grief, white southern women became much more engaged in public life, and this continued into the latter years of Reconstruction and the New South.[30] When McMaster spoke, she sought to not only affirm the men's sense of martial masculinity, but also the place of women in the construction of it. She noted that it was the duty of the city's women to "spread joy and happiness" in times of plenty and in times of war to provide "cheer, comfort, and the solace." McMaster emphasized that the women hoped for the former, but in the case of the latter, she forebodingly conceded that "should war once more raise his horrid front in our land, then at this flag be a pledge from us that we have abiding faith in your courage and patriotism."[31] In a world marked by a stark disruption in gender relations, the presentation of the flag and the dedication McMaster proffered reassured the men of the unit that the women of the

[30] Caroline Janney, *Burying the Dead but Not the Past: Ladies' Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 38.

[31] Governor's Guards Minutes, November 13, 1874, Records of the Richland Rifle Club, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, S.C.

city needed to be defended, that the men were capable of doing so, and that a war might be on the horizon.

Rifle clubs also allowed their members to celebrate their martial heritage in a way that affirmed the place of institutional violence in the history of American republicanism. McMaster reminded the men that the flag, which bore the state coat of arms and the palmetto tree, was "sacred to us on account of the memories of the past rendered more dear and tender from the misfortune through which our state has passed."[32] Confederate defeat was never far from the minds of these men and women, nor was their desire to redeem the South.

South Carolinians would use their rifle clubs violently in the fall of 1876, but before their radicalization, they provided a militarized but less violent means to accomplish redemption. As William Blair has shown, militia companies participated in the commemorative movements of the immediate postbellum years, and South Carolinians mobilized their rifle clubs to both pay homage to their Confederate past just as they sought to reconfigure and express new martial identities in the world the war made.[33] In 1875, for example, the Richland Rifles escorted the women of Columbia's Ladies Memorial Association to a local cemetery, where they laid wreathes and joined the men in offering orations lauding both the sacrifice of the Confederate dead and the martial efficacy of veterans who joined rifle clubs.[34] In 1876, the executive committee of the Georgetown Guards canvassed the county's local merchants in order to persuade them to allow their clerks who belonged to the club to drill on April 18th in order to observe Memorial Day. Underscoring the importance of the occasion, the club resolved "to urge

[32] Ibid.

[33] William Blair, *Cities of the Dead: Contesting the Memory of the Civil War in the South, 1865-1914* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 77-105.

[34] Richland Rifle Club Minutes and Pictures, 1874-1879, Records of the Richland Rifle Club, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, S.C.

upon the members the necessity of attending the Drills, in order to be well drilled for the occasion."[35] Attendance at Confederate Memorial Days not only reminded these men of their martial past, but also affirmed their devotion to martial masculinity and citizenship in the present.

From their formation in 1874 to the early summer of 1876, rifle clubs allowed white South Carolinians to express their manhood and citizenship in a militarized but non-militant manner. Aside from those located in some of the state's more volatile counties, they were not on a war footing. That changed in July following the Hamburg Riot. A once bustling river town located in Edgefield County, Hamburg had seen its white population dwindle and its economic fortunes decline after the war. The ensuing economic and social dislocation wrought by Confederate defeat exacerbated racial tensions in the county. Even in the years of relative quiet that were bracketed by the Klan violence of the late 1860s and the Red Shirt campaign of 1876, race relations in "Bloody Edgefield" remained volatile. Black militia captain Ned Tennant frequently antagonized the white community. The Sweetwater Sabre Club, a rifle club that unlike its counterparts in Columbia had embraced violence at its inception, opposed Tennant.[36]

Edgefield teetered on the precipice of a race war, and an incident in Hamburg on July 4, 1876 provided a spark for one of Reconstruction's worst racial conflagrations. It began with a scene that was typical of Reconstruction: a dispute over the meaning of space. Two white men – Thomas Butler and Henry Getzen – rode through the town in a carriage and encountered a militia company under the command of black Republican Doc Adams drilling in the road. When neither

[35] Georgetown Rifle Guards Minute Book, March 11, 1876, Records of the Georgetown Rifle Guards, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, S.C..

[36] "Plan of the Campaign," Folder 10 MSS 16 Nov. 1876, Martin Witherspoon Gary Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, S.C.

ceded the right of way, Adams's unit fixed their bayonets while the two white men drew their pistols. After a tense stand-off, Butler and Getzen passed, but then Adams's men feigned a bayonet charge when the two white men turned their backs. Although Butler and Getzen escaped unscathed, the matter found its way to court when magistrate Prince Rivers – an ally of the Chamberlain administration and himself a member of the state militia – scheduled a hearing on July 8 for what had been in his mind the overzealousness of Adams's men. With the black company in the open and vulnerable, white paramilitarists under the leadership of Confederate veteran Matthew Butler saw an opportunity to retaliate. Butler crossed into Georgia, organized a company of men from Augusta, and returned to Hamburg. He demanded that the black unit surrender its weapons. When they refused, Butler's unit attacked, forcing the freedmen to occupy the upper floor of a store in Hamburg. Butler's company eventually drove the black men from the store and murdered a number of militia members in cold blood.[37]

The Hamburg massacre galvanized white reactionaries and conjured up white Carolinians' worst fears of what black freedom meant. The specter of Saint-Domingue and Jean-Jacque Dessalines 1804 massacre of the island's whites weighed like a nightmare on the minds of white Carolinians. Their thoughts of what might have been possible in defeat proved more important than the reality that Butler's company secured a definitive victory. One Red Shirt informed an associate in Hamburg that before Butler intervened, black men wanted to "kill the men, women, and children, and burn up the houses on the plantations."[38] A spell of *rage militaire* swept over the state, and white men relied on a familiar institution to make war against

[37] Prince Rivers Testimony, Folder Scrapbook 1876, Martin Witherspoon Gary Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, S.C.

[38] U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections, *South Carolina in 1876*, 44th Cong., 2nd sess., 1877, 663. Cited hereafter as *South Carolina in 1876*.

the freedmen: their rifle clubs. Wade Hampton testified that rifle clubs multiplied throughout the state because white men were "very much uneasy, and feeling that they had no protection."[39] White Carolinians immediately militarized their clubs and placed them on a war footing in response to what seemed to be a new wave of black violence. In Ellenton, the local rifle club murdered a black man accused of assault. The club hunted the man down, shot him fatally along a well-travelled road, and allowed everyone who passed to watch him to bleed out. Similarly, in Rouse's Bridge, a posse formed to hunt down a freedman named Frederick Pope for having assaulted a white woman. Men from the town's local rifle club composed the posse[40]

In addition to becoming militarized, so too did the state's rifle clubs become more partisan. In Columbia, the Richland Rifle Club had invited a politically diverse group of men to its social functions through 1875, including Governor Chamberlain. It sought to create social and economic bonds between a diverse group of men, primarily for the economic advancement of the state in general and Columbia in particular. The aftermath of the Hamburg Riot caused the clubs to rethink their associations. In August 1876, the organization expelled a man named J.W. Cook for what appears to have been his political affiliations and "conduct unbecoming of a gentleman." As the clubs abandoned their identity as social organizations and instead became the paramilitary arm of the state's Democratic Party, they became much more aware of their membership and how that membership reflected their political goals. Such was the politicization of the Richland Rifle Clubs that by the fall of 1876 it was Wade Hampton's escort as the gubernatorial candidate campaigned against Daniel Chamberlain.[41]

---

[39] Ibid, 985

[40] Ibid, 113, 610

[41] Richland Rifle Club Minutes and Pictures, 1874-1879, Records of the Richland Rifle Club, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, S.C.

In rifle clubs, South Carolinians found the institutional basis that they would need to redeem their state. Looking westward to Mississippi and its campaign of violence in 1875, they found a blueprint for using these institutions. S.W. Ferguson, a leader of Mississippi's white-line movement, encouraged Martin Gary "to carry the election at all hazards, and, in the event of any blood being shed in the campaign, to kill every white Radical in the country." Ferguson assured Gary that white Republicans had little desire "to sacrifice themselves on the altar of rascality; so instead of fomenting strife, they counseled peace." This had the added effect of demoralizing the freedmen. Ferguson contended that when the freedman saw his "leaders cower and finally retire from the contest, and this prepared him to submit to what was to follow."[42]

Ferguson again counseled Gary that "the success of our plan depended, at least, upon our being in condition to make a fight if necessary, and to impress on the leaders the individual dangers each of them ran if any disturbance took place. To accomplish this, a thorough organization and arming were essential. Winchester Rifles and Colt's peace-makers kept the Peace."[43] Gary encouraged white South Carolinians to take a similar approach. He implored white men to use their clubs to march on rallies and polls and, through both veiled and outright violence, to ensure that Democrats carried the election. He encouraged white men to arm themselves and help the freedmen to "see things in a new light." White rifle clubs would march on rallies and polls to ensure that "every strange negro must be challenged." In doing so, Gary drew a clear link between violence, voting, and redemption: "Kill time should be our motto when

---

[42] General S.W. Ferguson to Martin W. Gary. Folder 10 MSS, 7 Jan. – 15 Nov. 1876, Martin Witherspoon Gary Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, S.C.

[43] Ibid.

the negroes are voting. It is not yet too late to hack the leaders if the opportunity occurs."[44] If blacks were in the majority at the polls, Gary challenged white men to embrace the moment. "If they are very much in the majority," he encouraged his Sweet Water Sabre Club, "make some boys load their pistols with blank cartridges and get up a fight at the box." His advice on tactics was blunt, as when he informed his men to "shoot straight and hit a leader" for maximum effect.[45]

The militarization of South Carolina's rifle clubs signaled that the fall campaign would be a military rather than strictly political affair. The state's Republicans took note. Governor Chamberlain warned the *New York Tribune* in October that on the eve of the election, the rifle clubs consisted of nearly the whole body of white men in some South Carolina counties. He predicted that nearly 16,000 men filled their ranks, nothing less than a veritable army. Chamberlain wrote that "they marched and maneuvered as ordinary military companies," providing escorts to Democratic politicians wherever they went. They interjected themselves in Republican political gatherings, "and in all instances enforced their demand for participation in republican meetings by their presence as armed, organized bodies." Beyond formal politics, they continued the Klan's campaign of terror and intimidation against the state's Republicans. Chamberlain lamented that with the federal government having demurred in its responsibility to enforce order, "they have ridden by day and by night as a menace to the members of the republican party, especially its colored members, uttering threats and not seldom executing them."[46]

---

[44] Plan of the Campaign, Folder 10 MSS 16 Nov. 1876, Martin Witherspoon Gary Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, S.C.

[45] Ibid.

[46] *South Carolina in 1876*, 527-528.

Chamberlain described not just the condition of affairs in South Carolina, but also those in the Deep South as a whole on the precipice of Redemption. White southerners had long rejected the precepts of biracial republicanism and its central premise that the freedmen would be full participants in southern politics. That had remained constant since the end of the war. The means through which white southerners sought to overthrow Reconstruction, however – and through which they sought to wield political violence – had been in a constant state of flux. From patrols, to constabularies, to the Ku Klux Klan, white southerners had sought out access to institutional violence in order to express their citizenship and manhood. Paramilitary units were the latest iteration in this evolution, and Reconstruction's opponents rushed to join these companies with gusto. In a moment when the North's interest in Reconstruction was waning, white southerners were as committed as ever to defeating the Radicals with bullets, ballots, or both. And not only did they have a strategy to overthrow Reconstruction, but more importantly they possessed the institutional means to do so.

******

Seizing political power meant little if white men could not establish a basis for why they deserved to wield it in the first place. Institutional violence played an important ideological function in this regard. Violence also allowed white and black southerners to engage in a mutually intelligible discourse on what it meant to be a man and a citizen in the post-war South. When black and white southerners relied on institutional violence to engage in politics through marching, drilling, and killing, they made specific and widely understood claims regarding what manhood meant and on what basis men could be citizens in a political climate where access to force was constitutive of political power. For the freedmen, institutional violence was a leveling mechanism that legitimized their claims to citizenship in a biracial republic and, in essence,

proved their worthiness for citizenship. Necessarily, then, the precepts of Herrenvolk democracy – and in particular the notion that black subordination provided the basis for white political equality -- dictated that white institutional violence would act as the antithesis to these claims. When white men joined paramilitary organizations, their violence thus had a dual ideological purpose: to first affirm white men's own claims to citizenship and manhood, and secondly, to undermine the efficacy and credibility of black martial manhood. Given the exclusionary basis of Herrenvolk democracy, white southerner's sense of collective equality and political worth was predicated on black men's subordination in southern society. Exercising institutional violence consequently allowed white men to remake the body politic to conform to their ideological views and to ensure their place atop a hierarchical social order. White Leaguers, white-liners, and Red Shirts worked toward the same goal: to appropriate the discourse of martial manhood in such a way as to delegitimize black men's claims to state sanctioned violence and the political capital that came with it.

White men utilized their companies to target the freedmen in a variety of contexts, but the most visible occurred through pitched engagements. Democrats who emerged victorious in these skirmishes and battles inflicted crippling blows to the credibility of the Republican Party and its ability to claim legitimacy. This was no more evident than in Louisiana at the Battle of Liberty Place. The origins of the battle stemmed from the same controversial gubernatorial election of 1872 that had provided the catalyst for the Battle of Colfax. Republican William Pitt Kellogg ascended to the governor's mansion after the election. Like Republican governors in other states, he struggled to cobble together a functional political coalition, a problem exacerbated by the diversity of Louisiana's electorate. Kellogg's lingering personal dispute with prominent black leader and United States Senator P.B.S. Pinchback undermined his support in the black

community. Meanwhile, the state's financial difficulties after the Panic of 1873 caused the state's Whiggish commercial class to question his competence. To compound these matters, the state's conservatives especially disdained Kellogg given his support for civil rights legislation.[47] The embattled Kellogg had few allies remaining in the state.

Under the command of Frederick N. Ogden, the Crescent City White League spoke to the concerns of white Democrats. In the midst of the rising tide of paramilitarism in the state's rural parishes that followed the Colfax massacre, white paramilitarists sought to overthrow the Kellogg government by figuratively taking the war to Africa and attacking the Republicans' seat of power in New Orleans. Throughout July and August of 1874, men in the Crescent City White League began to drill in the streets in anticipation of a battle with the Republican state militia in the coming November election. Realizing that they would need military grade weapons in order to successfully engage the Republicans, they shipped Springfield rifles to New Orleans. When Algernon Badger, the leader of the Metropolitan Police, learned of the shipment, he sought to confiscate the weapons upon their arrival. Outraged at the state militia for withholding the arms from his men, Ogden declared D.B. Penn – a white politician who had been the running mate of John McEnery in 1872 – the state's acting governor and promised to attack the Metropolitans in order to procure the weapons.

On September 14th, nearly 5,000 men in the White League marched down Poydras Street in New Orleans and attacked the Republican militia of 3,500 men along Canal Street. One northerner living in New Orleans wrote that the city remained "fearfully excited," while "all of the merchants on duty (are) fully armed." As the White League fanned out throughout the city, "all the streets leading into Canal (were) barricaded and Kellogg's forces (were) in line on

[47] Hogue, *Uncivil War*, 127-129.

Chartres, Decatur, and Peters streets."[48] From there, the White League struck a series of decisive blows against the Republican militia. The brunt of the fighting began after 4:00 P.M., when Badger opened fire on the White Leaguers as they approached a dock adjacent to Canal Street. The white paramilitarists responded by charging directly into the center of the Metropolitans' line while simultaneously enveloping its right flank with enfilade fire. The effect on the Metropolitans was demoralizing. Nash wrote after the battle that, "After removing the captured guns I resumed my original intention of preparing for an advance early the next day upon the enemy's stronghold below Canal street; but so complete, in my opinion, was the demoralization of the enemy from the action of Monday … that the capture of these strongholds seemed but a question of time."[49] Ogden had orchestrated a crushing defeat of the New Orleans state militia. This allowed him to temporarily install D.B. Penn as the state's governor after Kellogg fled to the safety of the United States Custom House.

The battle was a resounding victory although Democrats' military coup was short lived. The federal army eventually intervened and reinstalled Kellogg to the governorship. His control was, however, fleeting. Never again would Louisiana possess a meaningful Republican militia. Without the means to defend itself, Louisiana's Republican Party was in an increasingly perilous position. Yet, even beyond weakening the party's practical means of self-defense, so too did the defeat undermine the credibility of the Republican Party in popular opinion. If wielding violence effectively made men and citizens, Liberty Place demonstrated that the Louisiana Republicans were neither. Democrats not only mocked the Republican militia for its cowardice in battle, but also drew a sharp contrast between the conduct of the combatants by extolling the manliness and

[48] Frank I. Richardson, "My Recollections of the Battle of the Fourteenth of September, 1874, in New Orleans, LA," *The Louisiana Historical Quarterl*y 3, no. 4 (1920), 502.

[49] *Conditions of the South – January 15, 1875*, 213-214.

bravery of the white insurgents. W.T. Vaudry, the captain of Company A of the Crescent City White League, wrote in the *New Orleans Bulletin* that his men "were conspicuous for their heroism and courage on that day, and the first to reach the deserted guns of the flying metropolitans."[50] His message was clear: not only did his men deserve praise for their gallantry, but the Metropolitans were unmanly cowards who abandoned their artillery before fleeing in poor order.

Another White Leaguer likewise boasted how his company "bravely fired at the enemy drawn up facing Canal Street" while their enemies fled through the streets, took refuge in the Custom House, and, under the guise of federal protection, took cowardly pot shots at the White Leaguers rather than facing them in the open. The man especially singled out General James Longstreet and his black troops. After realizing that black men "would not stand fire," he noted with derision that Longstreet was "last seen galloping on his horse down town."[51] For this man, scalawags and freedmen alike—even former Confederates--lacked the requisite manliness to stand and fight. Combat allowed white paramilitarists to take their experiences with organized violence and to create a narrative that fit their conceptions of what the South's ideal racial order ought to look like. Legitimate, masculine, and republican violence was the sole province of white men. The ineffectiveness of the Republican militia in battle confirmed not only the cowardice of the freedmen and their Republican allies, but that they were unfit to hold power.

The narrative that white men sought to create regarding their performance in combat further allowed them to reconstruct their sense of manhood after the long and humiliating experience of Reconstruction. Remaking white manhood via violence presupposed the return of

---

[50] *Conditions of the South – February 23, 1875*, 811.

[51] Frank Richardson, *My Recollections of the Battle of the Fourteenth of September, 1874, in New Orleans, LA*, 500.

white dominance in state politics. The *New Orleans Bulletin* praised the White League and the people of New Orleans in general for their "most unmistakable determination … to take some action … to convince Mr. Kellogg that he could no longer lord over them as he had done. The idea seems to have spread through the entire city like wildfire that the time had come when a lesson had to be taught the usurper and his Hessian soldiery that they would never forget." Drawing on the imagery of the American Revolution, the *Bulletin* situated the Redeemers as the rightful heirs to the republican violence and virtue of the Revolution. It praised the "marching companies and battalions of armed citizens, whose martial steps and earnest faces betokened no good to those who would have the effrontery to confront them with arms." It contrasted this behavior with the cowardice of the Metropolitans, who left their leader Badger wounded on the battlefield and who retreated by "throwing down their guns, pulling off their hats and coats, and … actually jumping into the river."[52] Liberty Place affirmed both what white men believed about themselves and what they wanted to believe about the Republicans.

White violence worked toward the larger ideological goal of ensuring white manhood, white political liberty, and Herrenvolk democracy. Ogden praised his men for striking "a decisive blow for the freedom of your State and for American civilization," and for doing so following the calls of "the noble women of our city" who had "urged you to reassert your manhood."[53] Such was the success of Ogden's men that the Democratic press argued that it signaled the final triumph of white southerners over unscrupulous Republicans and freedmen. The *New Orleans Bulletin* proclaimed, "Let the world know that the white people of this State are once more free and have a government of their own choice." White men had "made a fight

[52] *New Orleans Bulletin*, September 15, 1874.

[53] Ibid, September 18, 1874.

for our manhood, our lives, our liberties, and our property and our right to self-government. We have gloriously vindicated the grand principles of republican government."[54] This vindication had occurred through violence, and in particular a form of violence that had bolstered white men's very claims to rule under the auspices of white supremacy.

The men who commented on the aftermath of Liberty Place and used the battle to cast doubt on black martial efficacy were not alone. Theirs was a common tactic among both southern and northern opponents of Reconstruction. In contrast to the role of the press in boosting black citizenship and black soldiering in the aftermath of Civil War battles such as Port Hudson and Battery Wagner, Reconstruction battles demonstrated how decisively the political winds of the era had shifted. In the 1860s the northern press had turned black dying into a form of political capital; by the latter years of Reconstruction it had become a political liability. This was especially evident in the aftermath of the Vicksburg riot, where the city's white population used the aftermath of the battle to not merely argue on behalf of white martial manhood, but to also denigrate the freedmen's very same claims and, by extension, the entire basis on which black men could lay claim to citizenship. Although the white-liners dealt a severe blow to the Republican Party's practical ability to organize in the city, how whites interpreted the incident proved as important as the outcome of the battle itself.

Experiencing combat and driving a black company from the field rejuvenated many white Mississippians' sense of self and their claims to racial superiority. In a speech made before the Mississippi legislature, Democrat Charles Furlong extolled the courage of Vicksburg's paramilitarists. Furlong thundered through the chamber that white men belonged to "a free race, and are determined that they and their race should remain free forever." Perhaps forgetting that

[54] Ibid, September 16, 1874.

the white-liners had actually won the confrontation, he framed Vicksburg as white Mississippians' Thermoplyae, where white men risked their lives for the sake of self-government.[55] The *Vicksburg Herald* framed the incident as an "Attempted Invasion," and the Vicksburg Tax Payers League attacked Ames and Crosby for inciting the "ignorant plantation negroes of Warren County." Moreover, the Tax Payers League lauded white Vicksburgers for their bravery when they "armed for the defense of their homes, their wives, and their children."[56] This bravery was in opposition to the behavior of the freedmen, who Democrats and their allies in the press went to great pains to mock. According to the *Vicksburg Herald*, when the two forces collided, "firing commenced on both sides," with, "the negroes fleeing after the first rounds, followed by the citizens with a desultory fire." The *Herald* added for good measure that the white-liners followed by making a "terrific charge" that induced the Republicans to retreat from the field in poor order.[57]

Mississippi's Democrats viewed the combat outside of Vicksburg as nothing less than a violent ritual that rehabilitated white martial supremacy following its defeat in 1865. When white men reimagined the gallant charges and synchronized volleys of the Vicksburg white-liners, they described a martial idealization of southern white men who were fit to govern themselves and their inferiors. These battles were spectacles that afforded white men the chance to both affirm their own claims to manhood and citizenship while simultaneously dismissing those of the freedmen. Since the antebellum years, access to and a monopoly on legitimate violence had been integral to defining racial hierarchy, white manhood, and citizenship in the South. When white

[55] Charles Furlong, *Origins of the Outrages at Vicksburg: Speech of Hon. Chas. E. Furlong* (Vicksburg: Vicksburg Herald Company, 1874), 16.

[56] Origins and progress of the Vicksburg Troubles as reported daily in the columns of the *Vicksburg Herald*: the responsibility clearly fastened on Gov. Ames (Vicksburg: Vicksburg Herald Company, 1874), 16.

[57] Ibid, 6.

southerners joined paramilitary organizations, they were acting on a long-standing and ingrained impulse in southern politics. While the institutions through which southerners had practiced violence had taken a different shape, their internal logic remained consistent, as did their overall objective of maintaining white citizenship, solidarity, and supremacy through participation in collective and institutional violence. These pitched battles and the experience of combat were spectacles that had significant implications for formal politics insofar as they influenced who controlled the levers of power at the state level. Moreover, combat allowed white men to participate in a process of self-realization as they sought to piece back together their sense of manhood and place of belonging in the postbellum world.

******

Combat played an indispensible role in the reconstruction of white manhood, but not all paramilitarists could reenact their Civil War experiences and mount one last charge against the Yankees and freedmen. Far more common was the presence of violence in the routine aspects of formal politics. Indeed, politics itself became an inherently violent endeavor. From voting and marching as a militia unit to assaulting their political opponents, white southerners mounted a grassroots campaign of mundane, everyday violence that created a climate of fear and intimidation throughout the Deep South. In doing so, they were able to oust the remaining Republican regimes in the South from power and reverse many of the freed community's political gains.

Targeting Republican campaign rallies became a favorite tactic of white paramilitarists. As a practical matter, rallies were accessible targets due to their public nature. Moreover, targeting party events through intimidation proved fundamentally different than white paramilitarists making open war on Republican state governments. Southern Democrats and their

allies in the North could slyly claim that discrete incidents of armed, racial violence were political rather than military conflicts, and any attempt by the Grant Administration to intervene was tantamount to election interference.[58] The architects of the Mississippi Plan said as much. According to one veteran of the state's 1875 shotgun campaign, whites maintained well-armed organizations, made veiled threats to Republican leaders and the freedmen, and adopted a policy of "attending rallies with their units, debating speakers, cutting off their time, and abusing the candidate to their faces."[59] This followed white newspapers editors' logic that the campaign would be carried peacefully if white men could, but forcibly if they must. And in the case of the latter, white Mississippian S.W. Ferguson wrote, "we determined to carry the election at all hazards, and, in the event of any blood being shed in the campaign, to kill every white Radical in the country."[60]

When they targeted campaign events, white paramilitarists drew on a well-worn tactic of Reconstruction militias and paramilitary groups: the militarization and manipulation of political space. Intimidating or attacking Republican campaign rallies allowed white men to act out their own martial masculinity by militarizing political space and then circumscribing white and black Republicans' access to it. In doing so, paramilitarists drew directly on their Confederate heritage to taunt and intimidate the Republicans. Governor Daniel Chamberlain recounted to Congress that the Red Shirts attended rallies and presented themselves as "organizations of a military appearance, and of military conduct, mounted, marching under officers who were recognized and obeyed as military officers, and who issued military commands." Chamberlain estimated,

[58] Hogue, *Uncivil War*, 149-159.

[59] General S.W. Ferguson to Martin W. Gary, Folder 10 MSS, Jan. 7 – Nov. 15 1876, Martin Witherspoon Gary Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, S.C.

[60] Ibid.

moreover, that in Edgefield nearly 800 armed Red Shirts descended on a Republican meeting during the fall campaign. J. K. Jillson, the Republican state superintendent of education, testified that these men mobilized and began patrolling the streets on horseback. When the men allowed for a division of time with local Democrats during one meeting, the same white men taunted them with the rebel yell before drowning out the speakers and dismantling their speaking platform as they spoke. Eventually the rebel yell gave way to generalized "jeers and yells" before the Republicans realized the futility of debate.[61] These tactics spread elsewhere. Chamberlain reported that in Abbeville and Newberry "the array of rifle clubs was greater" and had the general effect of "overawing and threatening the republican speakers more generally."[62]

Campaign gatherings and public debates had been a staple of American politics since the Age of Jackson. With drinking and brusque behavior, these affairs did not always live up the republican ideal of learned and reasoned discourse.[63] White paramilitarists, however, abandoned even the pretense that campaign meetings would provide a forum for high-minded political debate, and instead used them as opportunities to ambush Republicans. In September of 1875, for example, nearly three thousand freedpeople gathered in Clinton, Mississippi to engage in a joint discussion between Republican and Democratic candidates before the state's November election. Shortly after the meeting began, a disturbance broke out between a number of the freedmen in attendance and a group of white men who had taken to heckling the Republican speakers. When the men involved in the dispute discharged their weapons, the meeting devolved into a riot, with black men allegedly shouting "Kill the whites." Word of the uproar spread to

[61] *South Carolina in 1876*, 677-678.

[62] Ibid, 8.

[63] Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 411-445.

Jackson and Vicksburg. White paramilitarists descended on Clinton. Fanning into the countryside, armed white men whipped and shot nearly 30 freedmen, including Republican state senator Charles Caldwell.[64] This continued during the fall campaigning season. In Copiah City, Republican leaders warned Governor Ames that whenever blacks organized, white paramilitarists "ordered them back to their homes" after threatening them with "army guns, bayonets, and cannons."[65] From Vicksburg, the city's Republicans warned the governor that armed whites were "going around the streets at night dressed in soldiers' clothes … drilling every night with guns." Unable to hold campaign gatherings or meetings, the men declared, "We hereby say that we will not vote at all unless there are troops to protect us."[66] The city's paramilitarists had monopolized access to force and to the levers of political power. One Republican in Macon summed up the situation most succinctly: "I dare not think a Republican meeting could be held in this county without trouble. The county was never in such a fix since the war."[67]

South Carolina's paramilitarists mastered the practice of campaign disruption. Alfred B. Williams, a veteran of the Red Shirt campaign in South Carolina, recalled in the late 19th century how the presence of Red Shirts at political rallies shuttered the chances of Republican speakers to even reach voters. At a meeting in Edgefield, "some 1,500 colored men had assembled when 600 mounted white men in cavalry formation rode up and demanded division of time." Governor

[64] *Mississippi in 1875*, 303-329.

[65] Sheriff A.B. Lowe to Ames, September 13, 1875, Folder September 11-16, 1875, Adelbert Ames Governor Papers, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, M.S.

[66] 300 Voters of Mississippi to Ames, September 14, 1875, Folder September 11-16, 1875, Adelbert Ames Governor Papers, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, M.S.

[67] J.B. Algood to Ames, September 12, 1875, Folder September 11-16, 1875, Adelbert Ames Governor Papers, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, M.S.

Daniel Chamberlain was the featured speaker at the rally, and out of a sense of intimidation, allowed for a division of time between the two sides. Williams was not impressed, noting that Chamberlain "did not make a vigorous or connected talk" due to the menacing ring of armed Red Shirts that had formed around him. The rally ended prematurely when "a number of white men crowding on the frail platform, causing it to break under him." Williams mused that the emasculated and humiliated Chamberlain "was thankful when he his half hour was up and did not care to ask for an extension of time. It was part of the deliberate policy of the Mississippi Plan to insult Republican leaders to their faces grossly and constantly to destroy confidence of the negroes in both their characters and their courage."[68] This was accomplished not through the spectacular use of force, but instead by intimidation and the militarization of a campaign event. This company of Red Shirts succeeded in disrupting a Republican rally that had nearly three times as many men in attendance. Interfering in campaign events not only caused the freedmen to question the strength of their party's leadership, but also confirmed white men's belief in the power of institutional violence suppress Republican politicians.

As the fall campaigns of 1876 degenerated into a violent form of street politics, southern rifle clubs and paramilitary companies swarmed Republican rallies. Republicans did not always stand by idly in the face of this intimidation, but their ability to withstand the jeers and outright violence of Democratic hecklers was limited. Daniel Chamberlain was the only Republican governor in the Deep South who took to the stump and made his case directly to the voters. Red Shirts hurled insults and derision at the Republican incumbent and his supporters. At one rally, a Red Shirt company threatened to shoot the governor and excoriated him as a "bald son of a

[68] Alfred B. Williams Scrapbook page 10, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, S.C.

bitch."[69] Chamberlain himself confirmed that wherever he campaigned, armed white men monopolized rallies. The presence of paramilitarists was, in Chamberlain's estimation, "so overawing and threatening in size and so brutal and determined in its character as to make it a practical denial of free speech."[70]

Not only did white paramilitarists use violence to disrupt party rallies, but so too did they target patriotic gatherings in general. In Jackson Parish of Louisiana, Allen Greene, a wartime Unionist who sympathized with the Republican Party, testified that the White League attacked a barbecue that he hosted in celebration of Independence Day. Greene used the gathering as both a celebration of the Union and as a party-building tool for the local Republican Party. Given the conflation of the Republican Party with the Union, the purpose of the gathering was at both once patriotic and partisan, and especially in terms of how it continued the freedmen's political socialization. This was not lost on the parish's former Confederates and anti-Reconstruction insurgents. Greene testified that ex-Confederates were offended in particular by the presence of the United States flag and that the freedmen possessed a kettle-drum. When paramilitarists intruded on the celebration they cursed the men at the gathering and "swore that that flag should not wave in Jackson Parish." Although Greene remained outnumbered, he attempted to drive the paramilitarists off with force. After a brief exchange of gunfire, Greene retreated to his home. The white interlopers tore the flag from its poll and rode away.[71] It was a small victory for the White League, but it nonetheless made a powerful statement. If the politics of space and movement in Reconstruction had primarily been focused on political expressions in explicitly

[69] *South Carolina in 1876*, 679.

[70] Ibid, 7-8

[71] *Conditions of the South – February 23, 1875*, 327.

public spaces, the White League had escalated this conflict by attempting to regulate even how Republicans could express their political beliefs on private property, including driving down the Stars and Stripes.

The war for political space extended to polling places as well. Aside from arms bearing, the ballot box was the most potent political tool that African Americans possessed to affect political change. When black men had marched with their militia units to vote, they made clear that they understood that arms-bearing and the franchise were mutually constitutive rights. When white paramilitarists sought to both militarize polls and to exclude black men from them, they sought to unmoor black men from a geography whose symbolic significance facilitated their claims to citizenship and manhood. White southerners had a keen understanding of polls' ideological potency, and especially the symbolic importance of controlling this most important of political spaces. This knowledge was derived in no small part from white men's own exclusion from polling places throughout Reconstruction, both by parading black militia companies and the federal army. The *Natchitoches Peoples' Vindicator* lamented in 1875, that when 53 white Democrats sought to vote in the previous fall's elections, federal soldiers allied with the very Republican officials who were candidates for county coroner and parish judge drove them from the poll.[72] Not only were white Democrats excluded from a visible and prominent masculine geography, but an unholy alliance of the strong arm of the federal government and the Republican politicians who controlled their exclusion engineered it. This spoke to many white men's sense of powerlessness and exacerbated their fears of domination at the hands of the Republican Party and its ascendant freed constituency.

[72] Ibid, 284.

Controlling access to polling places instead allowed white men to act as the gatekeepers of southern politics and who could rightfully participate in political life. On the most basic level, this provided an effective form of voter intimidation that might alter the outcome of closely contested elections. In the Red River region of Louisiana, for example, one Republican testified before Congress that, "In the parish of Saint Martin there were complaints of about two or three hundred persons who were unable to register because of intimidation. It appeared, from the best information that I could get, that a band of white men were in the habit of patrolling that parish in the night, armed and mounted, and it was represented that they intimidated blacks." The effect of these patrols was to deter black men from even registering to vote. Those who did attempt to vote found white paramilitary units stationed at polls throughout the campaign of 1874. Such was the extent of voter intimidation that Democrats carried Louisiana's 4th congressional district, which had previously been safely Republican with ease.[73]

When white companies gathered around polling places, their intent was not merely to intimidate, however. To be sure, every vote in closely contested Reconstruction elections mattered, but on a deeper level, controlling access to polling places contributed to the larger discourse on what it meant to be a man and a citizen. The manner in which the groups appropriated and dominated political space held a discursive meaning. Just as black militias transformed the social meaning of space in order to express black manhood and citizenship, so too would white militias use violence and hyper-masculine displays of martial pageantry to pursue a similar goal. White paramilitarists endeavored to revise the definition of manhood and

[73] *Conditions of the South – January 15, 1875*, 23.

citizenship by circumscribing blacks' access to political space, thereby creating an exclusionary definition of citizenship and manhood that buttressed white supremacy.[74]

Polling places in part became stages where white men could act out martial identities by drawing on their veteran past. In Mississippi, white Republican John E. Meek recalled that white-liners dressed in Confederate military garb and acted as sentinels at polls.[75] In Abbeville, South Carolina, white men organized into companies and marched to polling places in order to intimidate black voters. South Carolina freedman Richard Wright related that a white company marched from the town of Bordeaux to Calhoun's Mill, surrounded black voters, and unleashed a rebel yell of "whooping and hollering." The men were armed, some with rifles and others carrying "two to three" pistols. Fisticuffs broke out between the white and black voters. No one discharged their weapon, but white Carolinians deliberately sought to conjure up the ghosts of the Confederacy and the aura of white violence in order to dissuade the freedmen from exercising the franchise.[76]

Other times, this transformation entailed the physical alteration of political space itself. In Peytona, Mississippi one resident recalled that a white company, "had a trench dug, probably three or four days before the election, commanding the place where the polling was held, and they had their arms stacked there as we used to do in war."[77] The paramilitarists then drilled, taking up their arms and manning their trenches. While such a scene might have evoked wartime memories of trench warfare at Vicksburg or Petersburg in the previous decade, in this war over the meaning of manhood and citizenship, Mississippi's white-liners found a new use for their old

[74] Rable, *But There Was No Peace*, 144-162; Eric Foner, *Reconstruction*, 560-563.

[75] *Mississippi in 1875*, 1140.

[76] *South Carolina in 1876*, 728.

[77] *Mississippi in 1875*, 179.

skills. They terraformed the topography of the polling place, bending it to conform to their warlike definition of politics, as well as who they thought ought to have access to politics. White men acted out a martial identity that gave them the sole authority to define, with the threat of violence, who had access to political space. They did so in rituals that were necessarily warlike and that spoke in a language that all southerners understood. War and politics were each the domain of men, and by expressing their martial efficacy, white paramilitarists sought to stake a monopoly on the claims to manhood and citizenship that martial efficacy entailed.

The white-liners also expressed their dominance of polling places by donning their weapons at polls in a way that highlighted their martial prowess. The historical record abounds with accounts of white men bringing rifles, pistols, and, most notably, cannons, to the polls. In Mississippi, a rifle club carried an artillery piece to their political rallies, using it as a show of force and a symbol of the Democratic strength. In Monroe County, the local white-line company fired a piece of artillery in the mornings leading up to the election, ostensibly to intimidate the county's freedmen. In this case, domination of the freedmen's sensory perception, as well as political space, served to solidify the white-liners' claims to martial and political power.[78] No one summed up the symbolic meaning of weapons – and especially cannons – at polls better than Reuben Davis, who averred that amidst the uncertainty of Reconstruction there was "power and strength" in having a cannon.[79] Artillery provided an imposing presence over political space and offered a symbolic confirmation for the very basis of white authority. Just as white Mississippians had imagined Adelbert Ames's Gatling gun bill as a threat to their own claims to citizenship and manhood, the use of artillery pieces at courthouses, political rallies, and polling

[78] Ibid, 226, 1158.

[79] Ibid, 1054.

places confirmed white men's own sense of self in the way that it allowed them to dominate the state's warlike political milieu.

Their actions were most often intended to exclude the freedmen from southern polls, but the boldest of the South's white paramilitarists sought to eliminate any sort of meaningful federal government presence at southern ballot boxes. In 1876, for example, South Carolina freedman Lewis Clay journeyed with a group of freedmen to vote at Calhoun's Mill. Approaching the poll at nearly 6 o'clock in the morning, Clay found the area occupied by an encampment of nearly 50 Red Shirts, whose tents and smoldering campfires suggested that they had stolen a march on their Republican opponents and set up camp at the poll before it opened. As Clay waited to vote with nearly 100 other freedmen, yet another detachment of forty white men rode through the area. "They rode around there in general," Clay remembered, "and some of them had their carbines in their hands, and had them up in front of their faces so that we could see them, and they hollered and shot their guns, and they yelled, and they said, 'We intend to today to carry this election. We are going to have it anyhow, if we have to kill out all of the republicans." Clay noted that although the men fired their weapons into the air, the Republicans who had assembled to vote did not leave. Frustrated by his inability to drive the freedmen from the poll, one white man in the unit approached a federal marshal who was appointed to monitor the area and struck him in the face. Clay testified that as the marshal attempted to flee, white men threw rocks and discharged their pistols in a vain attempt to murder him. Realizing the sincerity of the Democrats' threats, Clay and the other Republicans fled. Having driven away the only semblance of national authority that remained at the poll, the county's white paramilitarists assured that no more Republican ballots were cast.[80] Jefferson Clay, a black man tasked with

[80] *South Carolina in 1876*, 432-433; Ibid, 482.

managing the ballot boxes in Calhoun's Mill, testified that after the United States marshal fled, the leader of the Red Shirts approached him and demanded that he authorize a certificate stating that the election had been carried on lawfully and without intimidation. Clay informed Congress, "I knew it was either to sign that or death, and I just signed it, and hence I didn't get to vote at all."[81]

Militarizing political space allowed the Redeemers to reconstruct and reclaim their citizenship and manhood at the expense of the freedmen. White men might have sought to militarize polling places by making them look like battlefields, replete with their Confederate uniforms, artillery pieces, and stacked arms, but often they turned these polling places into actual battlefields. Members of the White League maintained a campaign of intimidation and murder against black voters and officeholders in the seventeen months between the Colfax massacre and the state's 1874 elections, murdering 16 politically active freedmen. This culminated in November of 1874 when White Leaguers stalked polls in Rapides Parish, attacking black voters and even holding one Republican candidate hostage by holding a bowie knife to his neck in order to force black voters to demur from casting ballots.[82] The violence had the effect of impeding the election's clerk from certifying the results, leading to the results from that polling place being invalidated. There was no opportunity thereafter for freedmen in the parish to recast their ballots.

In Edgefield, South Carolina, black leaders protested how in 1876 the state's Red Shirts went to remarkable ends to physically circumscribe black voters' access to polling places. In Edgefield, white men drilled and stacked arms around ballot boxes, while "mounted men then crowded around said precinct and so remained as to make the poll inaccessible to Republicans

[81] Ibid, 483.

[82] *Conditions of the South – February 23, 1875*, 90-91.

who desired to vote." At Shaw's Mill, white men brought a "wagon load of guns" to the poll and deposited them with Democrat election managers. At Landrum's Store, Democrats drew their weapons on Republicans and threatened them with death if they cast ballots. With their supremacy over southern ballot boxes secured, Red Shirts and their Democratic allies allegedly allowed minors and other ineligible voters to cast ballots, in addition to allowing men from other precincts to cast multiple votes in favor of Wade Hampton. What black votes were cast were in favor of Hampton, whether by choice or by coercion.[83] In Natchitoches, Louisiana White League companies mustered and drilled around the town's polls, casting aspersions and committing acts of violence against black voters. Black men in the parish related that they abstained from voting for the Republican Party for fear of losing their labor contracts.[84]

To many freedmen and their white Republican allies, the various shotgun campaigns and voter intimidation schemes perpetuated by the South's white paramilitarists had grotesquely disfigured the republican ideal for which many black men had fought and died for in the Civil War. Having rendered their service to the republic in war and then having continued to battle white paramilitarists in the ostensible peace, many freedmen believed that their place in the body politic ought to have been secure. When they expressed exasperation at the inability of the federal government to enforce Reconstruction and at the incompetence of the South's Republican administrations, their sentiment was understandable. Freedman Raford Blunt, who was born a slave in Georgia and after emancipation had served in Louisiana's state senate, informed his constituents in the middle of the campaign that, "I have no further use for this country. I am more in favor of colonization now than any man that ever lived. Nothing else will suit the colored

[83] Newspaper clippings, Martin Witherspoon Gary Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, S.C.

[84] *Conditions of the South – February 23, 1875*, 220-221.

people now but to be separated from the white men."[85] If polling places were the soil that was supposed to nourish a new biracial republic, black men's exclusion from them exposed the impossibility of biracial republicanism in the face of white violence. If white violence erased black men from polling places and the southern body politic, the next logistical step in Blunt's mind seemed to be their erasure from the Union that they had succeeded in securing but had failed to remake.

This attitudinal shift was profound. Across the country, many white Americans viewed the success of white paramilitarists in the South as evidence that black men were not fit to govern themselves, much less white men. In 1875, white Louisianan F.C. Zacharie acknowledged the North's waning interest in enforcing Reconstruction and intervening on behalf of black men. Speaking to Congress, Zacharie was bold enough to observe to the committee investigating violence in the state that, "the North is becoming tired of the eternal nigger, to whom greatness, glory, and prosperity and of the country have been sacrificed." Republican malfeasance in the South and the calamity that the region experienced had demonstrated to Zacharie and other white southerners that black men were not citizens, but instead "the nigger is yet a pet and the ward of nation," and in this dependent status could never effectively exert legitimate political power. Zacharie was hardly surprised that "the conviction is breaking through the heads of the northern people that he is something of a failure as a legislator."[86]

Violence in the Deep South thus highlighted the tension evident between state intervention and the freedmen's ability to claim their status as citizens and as men. How could the freedmen, many white northerners asked, claim to be free and autonomous men who were

[85] Ibid.

[86] *Conditions of the South – January 15, 1875*, 223.

worthy of citizenship when they depended on the power of the federal government to ensure their equality. Congressmen Omar D. Conger and Stephen A. Hurlburt – a former Union general - articulated this tension in the starkest of terms when they asked northerners if they should,

> say to the enfranchised voters of the South – creatures of its own word, staunch, true, and faithful to its government – we have given you these rights – we have made you men and citizens – we have given you the right to bear arms and to vote; now work out your own salvation as others have done; fight your way up to full manhood, and prove yourselves worthy of the endowments you have received at our hands.[87]

Although Conger's and Hurlburt's interrogative was rhetorical, by 1875 many white northerners and southerners would have replied in the affirmative. Northern journalist Charles Nordhoff, who had spent 1875 traveling in the South and published his observations, lambasted southern Republicans for not using an "iron grip" to subdue anti-Reconstruction insurgents. President Grant chided southern Republicans too, urging them to demonstrate that they possessed "the courage and the manhood to fight for their rights and to destroy the bloody ruffians."[88] This conflation of manhood, political rights, and violence was also evident in northern newspapers. The *Chicago Tribune* asked that since African Americans, "have been made free and given the ballot, why don't they resort to the bullet when assailed by the White Leagues?" Comparing southern violence to Army's war against the Sioux on the Great Plains, the paper averred that, "Indians will fight for their lives, is the Negro less manly and less plucky than the Indians?"[89] Freedom was the privilege of men, and freedom was all the better when

[87] *Mississippi in 1875*, XVI.

[88] Edwards Pierrepont to Adelbert Ames, September 14, 1875, Folder September 11-14, 1875 Adelbert Ames Governor Papers, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, MS.

[89] *Chicago Tribune* is quoted in the *Daily Mississippi Pilot,* October 2, 1875.

forged in the crucible of violence and warfare. The freedmen seemed to have faltered in this crucible, and although many northerners found the methods of white paramilitarists detestable, rarely did they question that they were masculine and used violence effectively.

******

It was no coincidence that the freedmen's disarmament preceded their disfranchisement. White southerners succeeded in stripping black men of their ability to wield institutional violence. This set the stage for a series of demoralizing electoral defeats for southern Republicans in 1875 and 1876. These defeats occurred, moreover, at the national and the state level and were closely intertwined. The North's retreat from Reconstruction provided an opening for white paramilitarists to overthrow southern Republicans, while the inability of southern Republicans to suppress white paramilitarists confirmed the North's skepticism over whether Reconstruction was a valuable enterprise nearly fourteen years after it had begun.

Mississippi fell first. Spurred on by Democratic politician James Z. George, the white-line's campaign of military violence, intimidation, economic coercion, and fraud carried the state's 1875 election. Enacting their campaign in an off-year election that had few national implications was an important strategic decision. When Mississippi's Republicans pleaded for assistance from Washington, President Grant dismissed their concerns and pointed to the North's fatigue for the "autumnal outbreaks in the South."[90] With the state's Republican militia companies defanged, Mississippi's Democrats won enough seats in the state legislature to pass articles of impeachment against Ames. In March of 1876, the state legislature removed the governor and replaced him with Democratic state legislator James M. Stone.

---

[90] Edwards Pierrepont to Ames, September 14, 1875, Folder September 11-14, 1875, Adelbert Ames Governor Papers, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, M.S.

The Mississippi Plan provided a blueprint for other would-be Redeemers in the states that remained under Republican control as the nation entered its centennial. Borrowing from Mississippi's example, Confederate veterans Wade Hampton in South Carolina and Francis T. Nicholls in Louisiana benefitted from waves of paramilitary violence, intimidation, and fraud. Hampton claimed victory over incumbent Daniel H. Chamberlain. Nicholls, too, claimed a narrow, disputed victory over Union veteran and Republican Stephen Packard. Republicans leveled charges of fraud and chicanery at their Democratic rivals in both cases. Chamberlain and Packard refused to concede defeat, hoping that the federal government might once again intervene on their behalf. A combination of uncertainty and resignation reigned as these Deep South states entered 1877 with white paramilitarists in *de facto* control but still without formal power.[91]

The federal government – and especially the national Republican Party – would not sustain Chamberlain or Packard in their last stand. The campaign for President ran simultaneous to these violent state elections, and the Republican national convention portended the difficulties that southern Republicans would face. The Republicans' platform and presidential nominee in 1876 spoke to their waning interest in Reconstruction. The former lacked any meaningful promise to the freedmen, while nominee Rutherford B. Hayes – a man who gained the nomination by being the least offensive of a slate of candidates – promised to bring the South the "blessings of honest and capable local self-government." Opposite Hayes, the Democrats nominated Samuel J. Tilden of New York, a successful investor who campaigned to end political corruption and the post-1873 economic recession, two areas in which the Republicans were vulnerable. And with the northern public fatigued with the South's constant violence, the

[91] Rable, *But There Was No Peace*, 163-185.

Republicans were unlikely to promise more interventions in the South when northern voters were more concerned with economics and government reform. This was the harsh political arithmetic that faced the Republicans. As Kenneth Stampp put it, the Republicans ultimately decided to "save Ohio," and indeed, the rest of the North, "and sacrifice the Negroes."[92]

Tilden performed better than any Democrat candidate since James Buchanan in 1856. The New Yorker won the national popular vote and carried seventeen states, including Indiana, New Jersey, Connecticut, and the Empire State. In all, Tilden amassed 184 electoral votes, a single vote shy of the 185 he needed to secure a majority of votes in the Electoral College. Given the rampant voter fraud evident in the South due to the Redeemers' shotgun campaign, the electoral votes of Louisiana, South Carolina, and Florida remained disputed. Each state possessed racial parity that suggested they should have been competitive, but white violence had led to Louisiana's and South Carolina's Democrats holding de facto control over each and its electoral machinations. With their electoral votes in question – Congress was unsure of how to count disputed returns from these Deep South states – the country found itself unable to interpret the results of the campaign and who could rightfully claim the election. After weeks of tense political maneuvering and threats of violence, negotiations in Congress and in the Washington home of free black man James Wormley eventually led to a settlement between Hayes's supporters in the North and southern Democrats who wished to end Reconstruction, restore Herrenvolk democracy, and advance the economic fortunes of the region. Hayes would recognize Nicholls and Hampton as the rightful governors of their respective states and would

[92] Foner, *Reconstruction*, 567; Mark Summers, *A Dangerous Stir: Fear, Paranoia, and the Making of Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 245-267; Kenneth Stampp, *The Era of Reconstruction, 1865-1877* (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), 209.

support the return of "home rule" to the South. In return, Louisiana, South Carolina, and Florida would certify their electoral votes for Hayes, thus handing him the White House.[93]

The freedpeople were a casualty of this bargain. Political expedience and maintaining power outweighed the admittedly substantial political costs of reinforcing Reconstruction. Enforcement had become a political albatross, and this was due to many northerners' skepticism of whether black men were capable of governing themselves to begin with. If politics is indeed downstream from culture, ingrained prejudice against blacks ultimately seeped back into the political process, poisoning even the nominal allies of the freedmen. Ohio Governor and former Union general Jacob Cox confided to Hayes during the election that the southern freedmen's "new kindled ambition" needed to be checked, for they lacked the "hereditary faculty of self government" that white men possessed.[94] To be sure, Cox did not speak for all Republicans, but he did speak to the prevailing zeitgeist of late Reconstruction. By employing institutional violence and paramilitarism against the freedpeople, white southerners had undoubtedly influenced this zeitgeist by impressing upon the minds of northerners the notion that the freedmen were unmanly and unfit to govern either themselves or white men. In doing so, they triggered a sharp reversal from the heady days of the Civil War, when black citizenship and political equality – despite opposition from white discontents - was a distinct possibility. White resistance had outlasted northerners' commitment to Reconstruction and had done violence to the freedpeople and to the idea that black men could play a role in governing the nation. In this sense, white southerners might have lost the war, but in outlasting the North's will to enforce its outcome and in disarming and disfranchising the freedmen, they had won Reconstruction.

---

[93] Foner, *Reconstruction*, 579-581; C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 23-50; William Gillette, *Retreat from Reconstruction, 1869-1879* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press,1979), 335-362.

[94] Foner, *Reconstruction*, 577.

Epilogue: Forgetting Black Violence

Immediately after the proverbial stillness set in at Appomattox, Americans began to grapple with the confounding question of what it all had meant. Veterans and civilians alike curated convenient narratives to make sense of what they had experienced. Continuing the hard work of defending black freedom and citizenship, black and white abolitionists remembered, commemorated, and memorialized the war in terms of what it meant for African Americans. Their collective efforts developed over time into what David Blight has described as an "emancipationist" thread of memory that framed the war as the reinvention and re-founding of the republic. The war's cause was slavery, and its true legacy was the new birth of freedom it spawned in a republic that the formerly enslaved had defended in spite of its decades-long rejection of them.[1] Their sacrifice was a down payment on membership in that republic.

Prejudice, however, did not die easily, if at all. The Confederates lost the war, but white violence succeeded in ultimately ending what was left of Reconstruction in the middle of the 1870s. And even after the white South found itself "redeemed," the battle over the war's legacy continued apace into the New South. Instead of bullets, it was fought in ink and granite, in the veterans' magazines, memoirs, and monuments that provided the stuff of which the Lost Cause was made. Southern apologists did not always speak with one voice, nor did they come to a consensus on what purpose memory should serve in a changing South and a changing nation. Yet, through myriad institutions such as the United Confederate Veterans, the Southern

[1] David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2001), 2-5.

Historical Society, and the United Daughters of the Confederacy, the white South sought to justify both its defeat and the righteousness of its cause.[2]

Finally, a third strand of memory emerged from those Americans most concerned with sectional reconciliation. They constructed a narrative of the war that would mend the nation's wounds and chart a path forward based on national unity. What the war and its aftermath meant became, as social memory often is, a matter of political subjectivity, the stories people told one another, and the vagaries of human nature. Sectional reconciliation eventually came, however uneasily. When it did, reconciliation hinged on white Americans' appreciation of one another's wartime valor and bravery. Johnny Reb and Billy Yank embraced at battlefield reunions and scripted gatherings that highlighted their mutual heroism and sacrifice and overtly shied away from the divisive and passionate ideological and cultural fissures that had led Americans to kill over 600,000 of their countrymen to begin with. And as valorous and brave as these soldiers were, a casualty of this sectional truce was the memory of emancipation. As a new century dawned, emancipation was designated to an inconvenient footnote to what was the watershed event in American history. As at James Wormley's Washington home in 1877, black Americans were once again the losers in a bargain to which they were not a part. In this way, the terms on which Reconstruction ended and Reconciliation later rested were much the same. The emancipationist strand of memory and the role of the freedpeople were cast to the margins of historical memory.

[2] Gaines M. Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, The Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South , 1865-1913* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); 1-8; Thomas L. Connelly and Barbara L. Bellows, *God and General Longstreet: The Lost Cause and the Southern Mind* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 1-7; W. Scott Poole, *Never Surrender: Confederate Memory and Conservatism in the South Carolina Upcountry* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 1-5.

It only made sense that if emancipation was to be discarded from popular memory, so too would the memory of the engine that brought emancipation into being: black violence. The Battle of Liberty Place – and especially the way that Louisianans have chosen to remember that battle – speaks to the perils and fallibility of memory. On September 14, 1891, 17 years after Frederick Nash Ogden's paramilitarists swept James Longstreet's biracial state militia from the streets of New Orleans, the white residents of the Crescent City gathered to dedicate a monument to the men who had begun the war anew and sought to overthrow Republican rule in the state. The gathering had all of the trappings of the many dedications to monuments of Confederate soldiers that took place in the same era. As the city laid the cornerstone on Canal Street of what would be a 35 foot tall obelisk, a large crowd gathered to hear orations that eviscerated the carpetbaggers and lionized the White Leaguers who expelled them. Once the city erected the final monument, it was inscribed with the names of 16 White Leaguers who fell in the battle. Yet, for all of its similarities to the statues and commemorations for Confederate generals and soldiers that sprang up across the South in the same era, this was a monument to Reconstruction violence, not to Confederate service. That white southerners made little distinction in how they classified violence across the 1865 divide during this commemoration suggests that they understood this violence far better than generations of succeeding historians. This ought not be surprising, as the paramilitarism that engulfed the Deep South in the 1870s flowed from the same ideological wellspring as the Confederate war of the 1860s. It was logical that they would be remembered in the same terms.[3]

Battles, however, are not fought by one army, and the dedication along Canal Street was most notable for what it failed to mention. Missing from the commemorative landscape were the

[3] *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, September 15, 1891; James Loewen, "The Monument to White Power that Still Stands in New Orleans," *History News Network*, last modified September 3, 2015. https://historynewsnetwork.org/blog/153667.

men of the biracial militia and police force that opposed the White League. Black and biracial violence did not conform to the white supremacist memory of the war that had taken hold in the South. If reestablishing a white monopoly on legitimate violence had provided the basis for Redemption, exalting white violence in the narratives that sought to tell the story of the war and Reconstruction was the next logical step in converting the power of social memory into political authority.[4] The white supremacist narrative of the war and its violence reigned supreme. In the 1930s, with Jim Crow entrenched and the Dunningite view of Reconstruction occupying a place of cultural hegemony, another addition to the monument made direct reference to the folly of the carpetbaggers and the North's final admission that the "election of November 1876 recognized white supremacy in the South and gave us our state." There was thus little room for the memory of emancipation and black violence to exist in public forums or in the South's civic spaces. There would be no monument from the hands of August Saint-Gaudens to commemorate black militias in New Orleans, Vicksburg, or Hamburg. Indeed, although black soldiers did eventually receive their rightful due by the end of the 20th century, the same cannot be said for the black militias and paramilitary organizations that were the successors to these regiments.

Black paramilitarism remains buried in a fog of historical and cultural amnesia that obscures the importance of black violence in the sectional conflict. This is a strange development, because neither black militias nor black counter-memory disappeared in the latter part of the nineteenth century. In Mobile, Savannah, Jacksonville, and even Richmond, black companies continued to play a prominent role in black political and civic life. To be sure, these organizations were effectively de-militarized and largely ceremonial, but black men continued to march, drill, and parade on holidays such as Juneteenth, Decoration Day, and Independence Day.

[4] Bruce Baker, *What Reconstruction Meant: Historical Memory in the American South* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007), 7-10.

As W. Fitzhugh Brundage has argued, it was through these public rituals that African Americans were able to grasp a sense of their own history and their contributions to the republic.[5] And when African Americans lacked the funds or access to public space to construct physical edifices to black soldiering, or lacked the infrastructure to begin constructing a historical canon comparable to what Lost Cause writers were able to create, parading militia companies provided a means of curating an alternative strand of memory in public. Yet, if black militia companies became a means for the freedpeople to celebrate their history, they never became the subject of this history. Hidden in plain sight, by the twentieth century the militia tradition began to wilt away.

The tide of historical memory has slowly turned against the Liberty Place monument. In 1974, the city council of New Orleans voted to cover the 1932 inscription with marble slabs and added a counter-marker that noted the battle's significance but condemned white supremacy. By 1993, a construction project along Canal Street allowed the city to relocate the monument to a green space behind a parking garage. The monument continued to attract criticism, but the move allowed a significant change to be made to the edifice. On its west face, the city inscribed the names of Metropolitans who had perished in the battle. Their names were accompanied by a new inscription regarding the monument's origins: "In honor of those Americans on both sides who died in the Battle of Liberty Place, a conflict of the past that should teach us lessons for the future."[6] It was a trite banality that said both everything and nothing at once. Nonetheless, that the names of the Metropolitans finally found their way on to the monument outweighed whatever platitude accompanied their acknowledgement. The inclusion of their names suggested that black

[5] W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2005), 55-103.

[6] "Battle of Liberty Place Monument," The Historical Marker Database, last accessed July 22, 2019. https://www.hmdb.org/marker.asp?marker=34742.

and biracial violence – the engines of emancipation and black citizenship – had at least a fleeting presence in the city's commemorative landscape.

In spite of the intentions of its original patrons, the monument had become, even in all of its flaws, one of the few edifices to Reconstruction that even attempted to recognize, however obliquely, the importance of black violence. It could not, however, outrun its controversial origins. Vandals frequently targeted the obelisk and effaced it with graffiti reading "Black Power" and "Fuck You White People."[7] This sentiment is understandable, if perhaps not the best ground upon which to construct a useable past or a just present. With this aversion to the monument simmering in the city, a new wave of protests erupted in the summer of 2015, and not just against the Liberty Place obelisk. Following the murder of black parishioners at Charleston's Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church by a white supremacist, Americans began to take a second look at Confederate monuments. Some of these symbols came down peacefully, but others provided a catalyst for violent protest. On October 30, 2016 masked rioters effaced the Liberty Place monument with graffiti, smashed its base with sledgehammers, and attacked law enforcement officers who had attempted to restore the peace.[8] It would be little surprise that in early 2017, the city council voted to remove the obelisk after nearly 18 months of debate and litigation. Under the cover of darkness on--ironically--Confederate Memorial Day, a construction crew removed the monument. New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu observed of its removal, "This is about showing the whole world that we as a city and as a people are able to acknowledge, understand, reconcile – and most importantly – choose a better future. We can

[7] Loewen, "The Monument to White Power that Still Stands in New Orleans."

[8] "New Orleans: Mischief Night Parade Breaks History," *It's Going Down*, last modified November 5, 2016. https://itsgoingdown.org/new-orleans-takes-streets-halloween/.

remember these divisive chapters in our history in a museum or other facility where they can be put in context – and that's where these statues belong."[9]

It would appear, then, that over 150 years after the end of the Civil War, the emancipationist view of the war occupies the commanding heights of memory and culture. In 2017, blogger Kevin Levin celebrated the rapid disappearance of Confederate monuments from the southern landscape and what it meant for Civil War memory, noting with glee, "In the end, this is what this is all about."[10] This is well and good, but if *all* the current neo-emancipationist moment brings is the removal of offensive statues and the chance for progressive historians to pat themselves on the back, it will have delivered a hollow victory. At present, the Liberty Place monument – the one edifice that, however imperfectly, acknowledged black violence - is not, as Landrieu hoped, in a museum. It sits in storage, with both it and the history that it represents – and misrepresents - hidden away from the public eye. In one sense, this might be for the better. Between white supremacists' defense of the monument and left wing political radicals who have used its existence as a pretext to engage in violence, the statue has done little to bring out the better angels of our nature. Yet, by removing the monument and replacing it with nothing, the New Orleans city council and the activists who encouraged them have replaced one warped view of Civil War memory with another that is also divorced from reality. By razing New Orleans's commemorative landscape in an attempt to bring in into line with 21st century racial progressivism, opponents of white supremacy have failed to provide an alternative view of Reconstruction history grounded in the reality that black violence was not only a counterpoint to

[9] Kevin Litten, "Liberty Place monument to be removed on Confederate Memorial Day," *The Times Picayune*, last modified April 25, 2017. https://www.nola.com/news/politics/article_d6321090-7ee0-5cf4-b4e5-0a035ceb2104.html.

[10] Kevin Levin, "The Year Confederate Monuments Came Down," *Civil War Memory*, last updated December 23, 2017.

white paramilitarism, but that it was also the engine that drove emancipation and black citizenship. The removal of the Liberty Place monument erases an unpleasant memory without replacing or supplementing it with any meaningful alternative, much less an alternative that acknowledges the importance of black men and black violence to the story of the Civil War and Reconstruction. The opponents of the monument mean well, but they would rather tell no story than come to terms with the painful truth.

With the monument's removal, something has been lost: the opportunity to acknowledge a more complete history of race and violence as each relates to the Civil War era. Violence – and black violence specifically – was the engine that drove emancipation and the postwar struggle to come to terms with its implications. If the neo-emancipationist thread of memory that has emerged of late fails to recognize as much, it will be as flawed as its alternatives. Recognizing the importance of black violence might not fit cleanly into a centennialist, triumphalist, or mythological narrative about what the war meant, but history ought not make us comfortable, nor should it care about our political proclivities. While contemporary historians and political activists might point with derision to the mythmaking of Lost Cause apologists, it is the height of arrogance to assume that this type of selective memory applies only to those with whom they disagree. The fallibility of memory knows few boundaries, and it is this fallibility that feeds mythmaking to begin with. To write the history of emancipation and black citizenship without a full understanding of its violence and the republican ideology and notions of manhood that undergirded it is mythmaking indeed.

References

Archival Sources

Mississippi Department of Archives and History

Adelbert Ames Papers
Adelbert Ames's Annual Message to the Mississippi Legislature (1875)
James Garner Papers.
Militia 1870 Commissions
Mississippi Adjutant General Correspondence, 1870-1875
Vicksburg Herald, Origin and Progress of the Vicksburgh troubles as reported daily in the columns of the Vicksburg Herald.

South Carolina Department of Archives and History

Adjutant General Reports
Governor James L. Orr Papers
Governor Robert K. Scott Papers

South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina

Martin Gary Papers
Iredell Jones Papers
Benjamin Tillman Autobiography.
Alfred Brockenbrough Williams "Eyewitness to 1876" Scrapbook
Benjamin S. Williams Papers
Records of the Georgetown Rifle Guards Club
Records of the Governor's Guard/Richland Rifle Club

Newspapers

Alexandria(La.) Caucasian
Boston Daily Advertiser
Charleston Daily News
Christian Recorder
Cleveland Morning Leader
Edgefield Advertiser
Hinds County Gazette
Jackson Clarion
Jackson Mississippi Pilot
Lowndes County Republican
Macon Beacon

New Orleans Daily Picayune
New Orleans Republican
New Orleans Times
New Orleans Tribune
Rutland(Vt.) Herald
Vicksburg Herald
Yorkville Enquirer

Published Primary Sources

Albert, Octavia V. Rogers. *The House of Bondage or Charlotte Brooks and Other Slaves, Original and Life-like, as They Appeared in Their Old Plantation and City Slave Life; Together with Pen-pictures of the Peculiar Institution, with Sights and Insights into Their new Relations as Freedmen, Freemen, and Citizens.* New York: Hunt and Eaton, 1890. http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/albert/albert.html.

Aleckson, Sam. *Before the War and After the Union: An Autobiography.* Boston: Gold Mine, 1929. https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/aleckson/aleckson.html.

Berlin, Ira. *The Black Military Experience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Blassingame, John. *Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977.

Board of Metropolitan Police. *Annual Report of the Board of Metropolitan Police to the Governor of Louisiana, From October 31 1873 to December 31 1874.* New Orleans: Printed at the Republican Office, 1875. Google Books.

Brown, William Wells. *Narrative of William W. Brown, an American Slave.* London: C. Gilpin, 1849. http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/brownw/menu.html.

Bruce, Henry. *The New Man: Twenty-Nine Years a Slave; Twenty-Nine Years a Free Man.* York, Pa.: P. Anstadt and Sons, 1895. http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/bruce/bruce.html.

Campbell, Rev. J.P. "Give Us Equal Pay and We Will Go To War." *Blackpast*. Last modified January 28, 2007. https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/1864-rev-j-p-campbell-give-us-equal-pay-and-we-will-go-war/.

Childs, Arney Robinson(ed.). *The Private Journal of Henry William Ravenel, 1859-1887*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1947.

Cleveland, Henry. *Alexander H. Stephens, in Public and Private: With Letters and Speeches, Before, During, and Since the War.* Philadelphia: National Publishing Company, 1886.

Douglass, Frederick. *My Bondage and My Freedom.* Edited by William L. Andrews. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987.

Duncan, Russell. *Blue-Eyed Child of Fortune: The Civil War Letters of Colonel Robert Gould Shaw*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992.

Fedric, Francis. *Slave Life in Virginia and Kentucky; or Fifty Years of Slavery in the Southern States of America.* London: Wertheim, Macintosh, and Hunt, 1863. http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/fedric/fedric.html.

Foner, Philip. *The Life and Writing of Frederick Douglass. 5 Volumes*. New York: International Publishers, 1952-1975.

Furlong, Charles. *Origins of the Outrages at Vicksburg*. Vicksburg: 1874. https://archive.org/stream/originofoutrages00furl#page/n3/mode/2up

Gibbs, Rev. Jonathan C. "Freedom's Joyful Day." *Blackpast*. Last modified January 28, 2007. https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/1863-rev-jonathan-c-gibbs-freedoms-joyful-day/

Gibson, James M. *Memoirs of J.M. Gibson: Terrors of the Civil War and Reconstruction Days* (1966).

General Assembly of Louisiana. *Report of the Joint Committee of the General Assembly of Louisiana on the Conduct of the Late Elections and the Conditions of Peace and Order in the State*. New Orleans: State Printing, 1868. Google Books.

Hall, Samuel. *The Life of Samuel Hall, 47 Years a Slave; A Brief Story of His Life Before and After Freedom Came to Him.* Washington, IA.: Journal Print, 2012. http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/hall/hall.html.

Horrible Massacre in Grant Parish, Louisiana: Meeting of Colored Men in New Orleans. New Orleans: Republican Office, 1873. https://archive.org/details/horriblemassacre00newo

Marszalek, John. The Diary of Miss Emma Holmes, 1861-1866. Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1979.

Leland, John. *A Voice from South Carolina: Journal of a Reputed Ku-Klux*. Charleston: Walker, Evans, and Cogswell, 1879.

Looby, Christopher. *The Complete Civil War Journal and Selected Letters of Thomas Wentworth Higginson.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

Louisiana Adjutant General's Office. *Annual Reports.* New Orleans, 1870-1874. Google Books.

Lynch, James. *Kemper County Vindicated: And a Peep at Radical Rule in Mississippi*. New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969.

Main, Edward. *The Story of the Marches, Battles and Incidents of the Third United States Colored Cavalry: A Fighting Regiment in the War of the Rebellion, 1861-1865*. Louisville: Globe Printing Company, 1908.

Morgan, Albert T. *Yazoo; or, On the Picket Line of Freedom in the South: A Personal Narrative*. New York: Russell and Russell, 1968.

Neilson, Eliza Lucy Irion. *A New Southern Woman: The Correspondence of Eliza Lucy Irion Nelson, 1871-1883*. Columbia: South Carolina Press, 2013.

Northup, Solomon. *Twelve Years a Slave*. Buffalo: Derby, Orton, and Mullin, 1853. https://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/northup/northup.html

Redkey, Edwin S. *A Grand Army of Black Men: Letters from African Soldiers in the Union Army*(New York, 1992).

Richardson, Frank. "My Recollections of the Battle of 14 September, 1874, in New Orleans, Louisiana." *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 3 (1920): 498-501. Google Books.

Rock, John S. "A Deep and Cruel Prejudice." *Blackpast*. Last modified September 22, 2008. https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/1862-john-s-rock-deep-and-cruel-prejudice/.

Trowbridge, John T. *A Picture of the Desolated States and the Work of Restoration, 1866-1868*. L. Stebbins, 1868.

United States Congress. *Conditions of Affairs in Louisiana*. 42nd Cong., 3rd sess., 1873. House. Exec. Doc. 91.

United States Congress. *Conditions of the South*. 43rd Cong., 2nd sess., 1875. House Rpt. 101.

United States Congress. *Conditions of Affairs in the Southern States*. 42nd Cong., 2nd sess., 1872. House Exec. Doc. 268.

United States Congress. *Condition of the South*. 43rd Cong., 2nd sess., 1875. House Rpt. 261.

United States Congress. House Executive Documents, *Report of the Secretary of War.* 39th Cong., 2nd sess., 1866.

United States Congress. House Executive Documents, *Report of the Secretary of War*. 40th Cong., 2nd sess., 1867.

United States Congress, *Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy: Report of the Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States.*

United States Congress. *Memphis Riots and Massacres*. 39th Cong., 1st sess., House Rpt. 101.

United States Congress. *New Orleans Riots.* 39th Cong., 2nd sess., 1867. House Exec. Doc. 68.

United States Congress. *Papers in the Case of Isaac G. McKissick vs. A.S. Wallace*, 42nd Cong., 2d sess., H. Doc. 48(serial 1525)

United States Congress. *Papers in the Case of Christopher C. Bowen vs. Robert C. DeLarge*, 42nd Cong., 2d sess., H. Doc. 37 (serial 1525), 10-25, 30, 36-38.

United States Congress, *Testimony taken by the Select Committee to Investigate the Condition of Affairs in the State of Louisiana*. 42nd Cong., 2d sess., 1872. House Misc. Doc. 211.

United States Congress, *Vicksburgh Troubles*. 43rd Cong., 2nd Sess., 1875. House Rpt. 265.

United States Department of War. *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Edited by Robert N. Scott. 128 Volumes. Harrisburg: National Historical Society, 1985.

United States Senate. *Mississippi in 1875*. 44th Cong., 1st Sess., 1876. Senate Rpt. 527.

United States Senate. *South Carolina in 1876*. 44th Cong., 2d sess., 1877. Senate Misc. Doc. 48.

United States Senate. *Message of the President of the United States, communicating, in compliance with a resolution of the Senate of the 12th instant, information in relation to the States of the Union lately in rebellion, accompanied by a report of Carl Schurz on the states of South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana; also a report of Lieutenant General Grant, on the same subject*. December 19, 1865. 39th Cong., 1st sess., Senate Exec. Doc. 2 Serial No. 1237.

Warmoth, Henry Clay. *War, Politics, and Reconstruction: Stormy Days in Louisiana*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1930.

Weaver, C.V. *Thank God My Regiment An African One: The Civil War Diary of Colonel Nathan W. Daniels*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998.

Wells, Carol. *War, Reconstruction, and Redemption on the Red River: The Memoirs of Dosia Williams Moore*. Ruston: McGinty Publications, 1990.

Wells, James M. *The Chisholm Massacre: A Picture of "Home Rule" in Mississippi*. Chicago: Agency Chisholm Monument Fund, 1877.

Wesley, Dorothy Porter and Uzelac, Constance Porter. *William Cooper Nell: Nineteenth-Century African American Abolitionist, Historian, Integrationist – Selected Writings From 1832-1874.* Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 2002.

Williams, George Washington. *A History of the Negro Troops in the War of the Rebellion, 1861-65.* New York: Bergman Publishers, 1968.

Yacovone, Donald. *A Voice of Thunder: The Civil War Letters of George E. Stephens* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997).

Secondary Sources

Books

Abeyounis, Andrew. *Before They Were Red Shirts: The Rifle Clubs of Columbia, South Carolina.* Master's Thesis, University of South Carolina, 2014.

Ahearn, Marie. *The Rhetoric of War: Training Day, the Militia, and the Military Sermon.* New York: Greenwood Press, 1989.

Ash, Steven V. *A Massacre in Memphis: The Race Riot That Shook the Nation One Year After the Civil War.* New York: Hill and Wang, 2013.

Ash, Stephen V. *Firebrand of Liberty: The Story of Two Black Regiments That Changed the Course of the Civil War*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2008.

Ayers, Edward. *Vengeance and Justice: Crime and Punishment in the 19th Century South.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1984.

Baker, Bruce E. *What Reconstruction Meant: Historical Memory in the American South*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009.

Baptist, Edward. *Creating an Old South: Middle Florida's Plantation Frontier before the Civil War*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002.

Barnickel, Linda. *Milliken's Bend: A Civil War Battle in History and Memory.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013.

Berlin, Ira. *Freedom's Soldiers: The Black Military Experience in the Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Blair, William. *Cities of the Dead: Contesting the Memory of the Civil War in the South, 1865-1914.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.

Blight, David. *Frederick Douglass's Civil War: Keeping Faith in Jubilee*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991.

Blight, David. *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2002.

Boot, Max. *Invisible Armies: An Epic History of Guerrilla Warfare from Ancient Times to the Present.* New York: W.W. Norton, 2013.

Bradley, Mark. *Bluecoats and Tar Heels: Soldiers and Civilians in Reconstruction North Carolina*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2009.

Brasher, Glenn David. *The Peninsula Campaign and the Necessity of Emancipation.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012.

Brundage, Fitzhugh. *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2008.

Brundage, W. Fitzhugh. *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880-1930*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993.

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity.* New York: Routledge, 1990.

Camp, Stephanie. *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Every Day Resistance in the Plantation South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.

Carmichael, Peter. *The Last Generation: Young Virginians in Peace, War, and Reunion.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005.

Cimprich, John. *Slavery's End in Tennessee*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1985.

Clinton, Catherine and Silber, Nina. *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Connelly, Thomas L. and Bellows, Barbara L. *God and General Longstreet: The Lost Cause and the Southern Mind.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995.

Cress, Lawrence. *Citizens in Arms: The Army and the Militia in American Society to the War of 1812.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982.

Curtis, William J.R. *Modern Architecture since 1900.* New York: Phaidon Press, 1996.

Delgado, Richard. *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*. New York: New York University Press, 2012.

Dew, Charles. *Apostles of Disunion: Southern Secession Commissioners and the Causes of the Civil War*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001.

Downs, Gregory P. *After Appomattox: Military Occupation and the Ends of War*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015.

Downs, Gregory P. *Declarations of Dependence: The Long Reconstruction of Popular Politics in the South, 1861-1908.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011.

Du Bois, W.E.B. *Black Reconstruction in America: Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruction Democracy in America, 1860-1880*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2013.

Duncan, Russell. *Blue-Eyed Child of Fortune: The Civil War Letters of Colonel Robert Gould Shaw*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992.

Edwards, Laura. *Gender Strife and Confusion: The Political Culture of Reconstruction*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997.

Egerton, Douglas. *The Wars of Reconstruction: The Brief, Violent History of America's Most Progressive Era.* New York: Bloomsbury, 2014.

Emberton, Carole. *Beyond Redemption: Race, Violence, and the American South After the Civil War*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

Evans, Clement A. *Confederate Military History.* Seacaucus, N.J.: Blue and Grey, 1975.

Fields, Barbara. *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland in the Nineteenth Century*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.

Fitzgerald, Michael. *Reconstruction in Alabama: From Civil War to Redemption in the Cotton South.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2017.

Fitzgerald, Michael. *The Union League Movement in the Deep South: Politics and Agricultural Change During Reconstruction*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000.

Foner, Eric. *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Foote, Lorien. *The Gentlemen and the Roughs: Manhood, Honor, and Violence in the Union Army*. New York: New York University Press, 2010.

Lacy K. Ford. *Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Foster, Gaines M. *Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, The Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South, 1865-1913.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge.* New York: Vintage Books, 1982.

Fox-Genovese, Elizabeth. *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988.

Frampton, Kenneth. *Modern Architecture: A Critical History.* London: Thames and Hudson, 2007.

Frederickson, George. *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny.* New York: Harper and Row, 1971.

Gallagher, Gary. *The Union War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Genovese, Eugene. *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made.* New York: Vintage Books, 1974.

Harris, M. Keith. *Across the Bloody Chasm: The Culture of Commemoration among Civil War Veterans.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2014.

Harris, William. *The Day of the Carpetbagger: Republican Reconstruction in Mississippi.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979.

Howe, Daniel Walker. *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Giesberg, Judith. *Army at Home: Women and the Civil War on the Northern Home Front.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009.

Glatthaar, Joseph. *General Lee's Army: From Victory to Collapse.* New York: Free Press, 2008.

Gillette, William. *Retreat From Reconstruction, 1869-1879.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979.

Glymph, Thavolia. *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Greenberg, Kenneth. *Honor and Slavery: Lies, Duels, Noses, Masks, Dressing as a Woman, Gifts, Strangers, Humanitarianism, Death, Slave Rebellions, The Proslavery Argument, Baseball, Hunting, and Gambling in the Old South.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.

Grenier, John. *The First Way of War: American War Making on the Frontier, 1607-1814*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Gross, Ariella. *Double Character: Slavery and Mastery in the Antebellum Southern Courtroom*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006.

Guelzo, Allen. *Gettysburg: The Last Invasion.* New York: Vintage Books, 2013.

Hadden, Sally. *Slave Patrols: Law and Violence in Virginia and the Carolinas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001.

Hahn, Steven. *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2005.

Hogue, James. *Uncivil War: Five New Orleans Street Battles and the Fall of Radical Reconstruction*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005.

Hollandsworth, James. *The Louisiana Native Guards: The Black Military Experience During the Civil War*. Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1995.

Janney, Caroline. *Burying the Dead but Not the Past: Ladies' Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008.

Johnson, Walter. *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013.

Jordan, Winthrop D. *Tumult and Silence at Second Creek: An Inquiry into a Civil War Slave Conspiracy.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995.

Kantrowitz, Stephen. *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000.

Kaye, Anthony. *Joining Places: Slave Neighborhoods in the Old South.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007.

Keith, LeeAnna. *The Colfax Massacre: The Untold Story of Black Power, White Terror, and the Death of Reconstruction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Lang, Andrew F. *In The Wake of War: Military Occupation, Emancipation, and Civil War America*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2017.

Lawson, Melinda. *Patriot Fires: Forging a New American Nationalism in the Civil War North.* Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002.

Levine, Kevin. *Remembering the Battle of the Crater: War as Murder*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2012.

Link, William. *Roots of Secession: Slavery and Politics in Antebellum Virginia.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.

Labbe, Ronald and Lurie, Jonathan. *The Slaughterhouse Cases: Regulation, Reconstruction, and the Fourteenth Amendment.* Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2003.

Le Corbusier. *Toward an Architecture*, trans. John Goodman. Los Angeles, CA: Getty Research Institute, 2007.

Lynn, John A. *Battle: A History of Combat and Culture.* New York: Basic Books, 2003.

Mackey, Robert R. *The Uncivil War: Irregular Warfare in the Upper South, 1861-1865.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004.

Manning, Chandra. *What This Cruel War Was Over: Soldiers, Slavery, and the American Civil War*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007.

Merritt, Keri Leigh. *Masterless Men: Poor Whites and Slavery in the Antebellum South*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

McCurry, Stephanie. *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012.

McCurry, Stephanie. *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the South Carolina Low Country*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

McPherson, James. *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

McPherson, James and Kousser, J. Morgan. *Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982.

Mitchell, Reid. *Civil War Soldiers.* New York: Viking, 1988.

Mohr, Clarence. *On the Threshold of Freedom: Masters and Slaves in Civil War Georgia.* Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986.

Morgan, Edmund S. *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia.* New York: W.W. Norton, 1975.

Morgan, Jennifer. *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011.

Noe, Kenneth W. *Reluctant Rebels: The Confederates Who Joined the Army After 1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011.

Parsons, Elaine Frantz. *Ku-Klux: The Birth of the Klan During Reconstruction.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015.

Perman, Michael. *The Road to Redemption: Southern Politics, 1869-1879.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984.

Poole, W. Scott. *Never Surrender: Confederate Memory and Conservatism in the South Carolina Upcountry.* Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004.

Rable, George. *But There Was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985.

Richardson, Heather Cox. *The Death of Reconstruction: Race, Labor, and Politics in the Post-Civil War North, 1865-1901*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001.

Rodrigue, John. *Reconstruction in the Cane Fields: From Slavery to Free Labor in Louisiana's Sugar Parishes, 1862-1880*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001.

Roark, James. *Masters Without Slaves: Southern Planters in the Civil War and Reconstruction*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1977.

Rosen, Hannah. *Terror in the Heart of Freedom: Citizenship, Sexual Violence, and the Meaning of Race in the Post Emancipation South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009.

Royster, Charles. *The Destructive War: William Tecumseh Sherman, Stonewall Jackson, and the Americans.* New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1991.

Saville, Julie. *The Work of Reconstruction: From Slave to Wage Labor in South Carolina, 1860-1870*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996..

Severance, Benjamin. *Tennessee's Radical Army: The State Guard and its Role in Reconstruction, 1867-1869*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2005.

Shea, William. *The Virginia Militia in the 17th Century*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983.

Singletary, Otis. *Negro Militia in Reconstruction*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1957.

Sinha, Manisha. *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016.

Shaffer, Donald. *After the Glory: The Struggle of Black Civil War Veterans*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004.

Sheehan-Dean, Aaron. *The Calculus of Violence: How Americans Fought the Civil War.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018.

Smith, John David (ed.). *Black Soldiers in Blue: African American Troops in the Civil War Era*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.

Sternhell, Yael. *Routes of War: The World of Movement in the Confederate South*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012.

Stevenson, Brenda K. *Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Summers, Mark Wahlgren. *A Dangerous Stir: Fear, Paranoia, and the Making of Reconstruction.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009.

Trelease, Allen. *White Terror: The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction*. New York: Praeger, 1979.

Tse-tung, Mao. *Quotations From Chairman Mao Tsetung.* Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1972.

Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977.

Urwin, Gregory (ed.). *Black Flag Over Dixie: Racial Atrocities and Reprisals in the Civil War*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005.

Van den Berghe, Pierre L. *Race and Racism: A Comparative Perspective*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1967.

Williams, Kidada. *They Left Great Marks On Me: African American Testimonies of Racial Violence From Emancipation to World War I.* New York: New York University Press, 2012.

Wilson, Keith. *Campfires of Freedom: The Camp Life of Black Soldiers During the Civil War*. Kent: Kent State University Press, 2002.

Woodward, C. Vann. *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971.

Wyatt-Brown, Bertram. *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1982.

Zuczek, Richard. *State of Rebellion: Reconstruction in South Carolina*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996.

Articles

Alexander, Ted. "'A Regular Slave Hunt': The Army of Northern Virginia and Black Civilians in the Gettysburg Campaign." *North and South* 4, No. 7 (2001): 85-88.

Emberton, Carole. "Only Murder Makes Men: Rethinking the Black Military Experience." *Journal of the Civil War Era* 2, no. 3 (2012): 369-393.

Gallagher, Gary and Meier, Kathryn Shively. "Coming to Terms with Civil War Military History." *Journal of the Civil War Era* 4, no. 4 (2014): 487-508.

Grimsley, Mark. "Wars for the American South: The First and Second Reconstructions Considered as Insurgencies." *Civil War History* Vol. 58 (March 2012): 6-36.

Hardwick, Kevin R. "'Your Old Father Abe Lincoln is Dead and Damned': Black Soldiers and the Memphis Race Riot of 1866." *Journal of Social History* 27, no. 1 (1993): 109-207.

Lussana, Sergio. "To See Who is Best on the Plantation: Enslaved Fighting Contests and Masculinity in the Plantation South." *Journal of Southern History* 76, no. 4 (2010): 901-922.

McGuire, Samuel B. "The Making of a Black Militia Company: New Bern Troops in the Kirk-Holden War, 1870." *North Carolina Historical Review* 61, no. 3 (2014): 288-322.

Phillips, Ulrich B. "The Central Theme of Southern History." *The American Historical Review* 34, no. 1 (1928): 30-43.