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Linda Hervieux. *Forgotten: The Untold Story of D-Day's Black Heroes, at Home and at War.* New York: Harper Collins, 2016. 368 pp. $16.99, paper, ISBN 978-0-06-231380-5.

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Few moments in recent American history ring the bell of patriotism quite like D-Day. And for good reason. Operation Overlord, as it was code-named, was the much-desired—especially for Joseph Stalin—opening of a second front in Europe. It was impressive in its size and scope but costly for the Americans, and their allies, who stormed the beaches of Normandy in early June 1944. Several books have covered the subject, beginning with Cornelius Ryan's classic, *The Longest Day: June 6, 1944* (1959), followed by John Keegan's *Six Armies in Normandy: From D-Day to the Liberation of Paris* (1982); Max Hastings's *Overlord: D-Day and the Battle for Normandy* (1985); and Stephen Ambrose's *D-Day: June 6, 1944: The Climactic Battle of World War II* (1994), *Citizen Soldiers: The U.S. Army from the Normandy Beaches to the Bulge to the Surrender of Germany* (1997), and the wildly successful *Band of Brothers: E Company, 506th Regiment, 101st Airborne from Normandy to Hitler's Eagle's Nest* (1992), which served as the backbone for the equally successful HBO mini-series of the same name. More recent treatments of the struggle include Antony Beevor's *D-Day: The Battle for Normandy* (2009) and Rick Atkinson's *The Guns at Last Light: The War in Western Europe, 1944-45* (2014). Many movies of yesterday and video games of today have also touched on, in some way, whether accurate or not, this seminal moment of the European theater of the Second World War. But many of these works focus on the larger contribution of the white majority. Whether deliberate or not, this has given Normandy, historically, an ivory hue. Many studies ignore the contributions of black Americans who spilled their blood with their white colleagues on those same beaches of northern France.

Linda Hervieux's *Forgotten: The Untold Story of D-Day's Black Heroes, at Home and at War* seeks to right the record as it applies to African American service during the Normandy beach invasion. She does not, though, begin her informative treatment with the tale of these men splashing ashore; instead, Hervieux introduces her audience first to the America of Jim Crow racial segregation. For those thinking this means a quick historical jaunt to Dixie, you will be surprised as she takes readers to Atlantic City, New Jersey. She does this to make a point about racism in America. It was a ubiquitous reality throughout the nation. "America's Playground" proved no different.

Atlantic City served, as it still does, as a resort town for middle- and upper-class Americans to come, relax, and play. Toiling behind the scenes of this tourist hotspot were African American waiters and domestic servants. According to the unwritten rules of 1930s-40s America, they were to

remain in the backdrop, out of sight and out of mind. This, of course, does not mean all worked in this fashion as some of the most famous black entertainers of the era performed in the limelight, though largely in the city's all-black clubs. Still, African Americans, famous or not, lived and worked in a largely segregated world north of the axiomatic Mason-Dixon line—including members of the 320th.

That said, the men of the 320th faced the most vitriol-laced form of racism in the South. It manifested itself in various forms, from the simplest, but still biting, use of slurs by whites to the more vicious use of extralegal justice—often exemplified by lynching. Some of it appeared in the way the army viewed its black soldiers, too: typically, the army, borrowing heavily from age-old stereotypes of blacks, believed that they were too lazy, too sexual (especially when it came to their supposed lustful pursuit of white women), and too dumb to be of any use as combat soldiers. Furthermore, based on these beliefs, the military often placed African American personnel in supply or supporting positions. Worse, the army often entrusted southern white officers, who supposedly understood how to handle black soldiers, as their leaders. This and other forms of bigotry helped define the African American training experience.

For war and society historians, however, much of this is not new or revealing. Where Hervieux's work shines is in the examination of the 320th itself; indeed, prior to this volume very little has been written about them. Much like other military units, the men of the 320th came from all parts of the country and represented different classes of people. They all shared the burden of being black men fighting for a country that did not respect them as men, let alone as soldiers. Yet they soldiered on. They "went over there" with millions of other Americans, Hervieux demonstrates, and made friends with the locals: the story of a 320th soldier, Wilson Monk, serves as a notable example of this. All the while, they prepared themselves for their turn to engage in the action. They got it on June 6, 1944.[1]

Barrage balloons, though they seem terribly antiquated in our era of computer-guided precision weapons systems, provided effectively a blanket, albeit not a perfect one, over advancing infantry, armored, and support units that operated beneath. Considering that at Normandy the Americans and their allies had only one way to go, forward, they proved to be an important layer of protection against Luftwaffe airborne attacks. But, before they could deploy their Very-Low-Altitude (VLA) balloons, they had to get off the boats and out of the English Channel. This moment matters because prior to this, and as alluded to earlier, most popular accounts focus on a sea of mostly white faceless and nameless Americans who stormed the beaches. With them, however, were African Americans, the men of the 320th and others, who were just as scared, just as seasick, and just as determined to get off their transports; to get off the beaches, where death waited at every turn; and to get into the fight.

Members of the 320th landed at Utah and Omaha Beaches and did their job as best as they could. Part of the problem was the unpredictability of war. The schedule for landings proved chaotic. If they survived getting off their landing craft, which meant surviving incoming hostile fire, they found themselves bunched up with other American soldiers pinned down on the beach; worse yet, their balloons were either damaged, lost, or ordered by some white commanders, who feared the floating apparatuses were nothing more than giant targets giving away the positions of personnel below, to either cut them free or destroy them.

Like other popular military history accounts, ***Forgotten***, at times, suffers from a great deal of hyperbole. That is, though, the point of an account short on jargon, long on narrative. It is to sell the extraordinary difficulties of combat, and in this case, the added issue of racial discrimination. To be frank, this story does not need it at all. The sto-

ry of these men is compelling on its own. Their role was to protect those below their balloons, regardless of race, color, or creed. They did just that. More than anything else, what *Forgotten* provides is a bit more clarity for the professional historian seeking to understand the racial climate of the era and the importance of African American service in combat units—including their notable service during D-Day. It scratches the surface at the deeper question of why black military service during the nation's wars, including arguably its most important during the twentieth century, remains a topic we are still struggling to understand and integrate into the larger history of the nation.[2]

Notes

[1]. A cursory examination of the historiography of African American military service demonstrates only a handful of books that acknowledge the 320th, let alone provide any detail about it. For more, see Ulysses Lee's classic, *The Employment of Negro Troops* (Honolulu: The University Press of the Pacific, 2004); Gail Buckley, *American Patriots: The Story of Blacks in the Military from the Revolution to Desert Storm* (New York: Random House, 2001); Gerald Astor, *The Right to Fight: A History of African Americans in the Military* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1998); and Neil Wynn, *The African American Experience during World War II* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010).

[2]. The story of Normandy, as far as it applies to black military service, is far from over. Other African American units, as noted by historian Ulysses Lee, were there as well. For more, see Lee, *Employment of Negro Troops.*

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