

The Paradoxical Twenty-Fifth: Performance, Race, and Conditional Belonging on the American
Imperial Frontier, 1882-1918

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Dedicated to Bliss B. Ragsdale
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ABSTRACT:

The Twenty-Fifth Infantry Regimental Band was part of only four segregated Black Army regiments assembled from the Union's Black volunteer units in the aftermath of the Civil War. Through nearly eight decades of public entertainment, the Band's performances were both carefully circumscribed as well as spontaneous, choreographed but with room for improvisation. The Band not only acted as military public relations. It was instrumental in the production of a historical consciousness that bound the expanding settler citizenry of new U.S. territories to the idea of nationhood and to the places to which these settlers felt newly entitled. Through extensive archival and ethnographic research, I examine performance as both discourse and ritual mediated by the standards of the Department of War, making the Band's performances a valuable tool of the ideological state apparatus. The Band's performances were in support of the ideology of the United States but were also a site of struggle over its terms. That struggle took place in the medium of performance. This dissertation analyzes these performances and how the Band adapted to the changing boundaries of American geography and cultural memory through a variety of frameworks focusing on the visual, aural, and kinesthetic qualities of each type of performance. The musicians' performative dynamic with a given audience was necessarily reconfigured each time the regiment was assigned to a new location. With each move, the Band contended with novel intersections of the U.S. settler and imperial project and the myriad social relations—interethnic, interracial, and international—that undergirded them.

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INTRODUCTION

“That’s the Negro’s way of life.
Dissonance is our way of life in America.
We are something apart, yet an integral part.”
--Duke Ellington¹

It was a perfect late August day in the Bitterroot Mountains. The year was 1891. The recently built Northern Pacific Railroad cut through the mountain pass, straddling the divide between the new states of Montana and Idaho. The Schitsu’umsh, Salish, and Kootenai that for centuries had called these mountains home had long been relegated to the Flathead Indian Reservation. In their place was the white landowning elite of Helena, Montana and Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, spending the afternoon engaged in the precursor to the Great American Road Trip: the railroad excursion. This type of event was characterized by pleasure, leisure, and most of all, a sense of proud ownership over the land as far as the eye could see. On this excursion, the train stopped midway to allow the engine to take in coal and water. By happenstance, once the engineer applied the brakes, the train was evenly split, with the front portion resting in Idaho, and the rear coaches still in Montana. It was at this moment that a Helena resident, described in the record only as Mr. Appleton, orchestrated a seemingly spontaneous and rapturous settler fantasy. To capture the essence of this moment, it is necessary to include the full reportage of the event:

“Mr. Appleton...filled with a spirit of patriotism, took our beloved stars and stripes, climbed up the mountain side, and fastened it to the pine. As its beautiful folds waved in the pure mountain breeze, Prof. Howard, leader of the Twenty-fifth Infantry band, of Fort Missoula, called out his band and after forming them into two lines, half standing on Montana soil and half in Idaho, he raised his baton and the sweet strains of our national anthem, “The Star Spangled Banner,” broke on the air. Far out over the mountains was borne the notes of the song so dear to the hearts of all

¹ Mark Tucker ed., *The Duke Ellington Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 150.

Americans, and as it echoed and re-echoed from each lofty peak it found a response in the 300 patriotic sons of this grand republic, who stood about and reverentially listened.”²

This performance of orchestrated patriotism was all in a day’s work for members of the Black segregated Twenty-Fifth Infantry Regimental Band (hereafter referred to as ‘the Band’).³ Though the incident is reported as an act of joyful spontaneity, it could just as easily have been a choreographed moment between the organizers of the excursion and the Commanding Officer of the Twenty-Fifth Infantry. It was normal for the Band to be hired out for these excursions, playing lively tunes as wealthy pleasure-seekers boarded the train, and providing appropriately adventurous accompaniment when the passengers disembarked at their destination. The routine would be repeated for the return excursion.

This was just one of many types of performance with which the Band was tasked throughout nearly eight decades of public performance.⁴ As it moved from Texas to the plains of Dakota Territory and up the river to Minnesota throughout the 1880s, before finally reaching the mountains of Montana in the 1890s, the green forests of the Pacific Northwest in the first decade of the twentieth century, and the tropical breezes of Hawai’i in the second decade of that century

² “Fall and Winter Gaiety,” *The Independent Record* (Helena, MT), August 23, 1891.

³ In this dissertation, I capitalize “Black” when used as a racial, ethnic, or cultural descriptor. “Black” connotes a shared sense of identity and community. It is a recognition of an ethnic identity in the United States as well as inclusive of the entire Black diaspora. It signifies the historical fact that slavery deliberately robbed Black people of all other ethnic and national ties. However, when writing a direct quote, I follow the lower-case “b” used by the original author. In some quotes, the word “Negro” may be capitalized or not. I follow the case that the original author chose to use. Similarly, I also capitalize “Indigenous” and “Indigeneity” when referring to people with ancestral lineage to a land prior to colonization. However, when I discuss white or Black settlers attempting to “indigenize” themselves, I do not use capitalization. I use the terms “Indigenous,” “Native American,” and “American Indian” interchangeably. After much deliberation, I have chosen to not capitalize “white” when used as a racial, ethnic, or cultural descriptor. I acknowledge that it is also an encompassing descriptor, and that white people have their own shared historical experience in the United States, however, capitalizing the word in this context risks following the lead of white supremacists, which I am unwilling to do. I also choose to not put non-English words in italics because it indicates an “otherness” that I do not feel is necessary or appropriate. A reader can plainly see when a word is not English. There is no need to set it apart with italics.

⁴ This dissertation encompasses only forty years of the Band’s performances.

before World War I, the Band's performances were both carefully circumscribed as well as spontaneous, choreographed but with room for improvisation. This was not yet the strictly regimented Army Band so familiar to a twenty-first century audience.

The Twenty-fifth Regiment was one of only four segregated Black Army regiments, assembled from the Union's Black volunteer units in the aftermath of the Civil War.⁵ My dissertation examines the performances of the Twenty-Fifth Infantry Band from approximately 1880-1920, specifically during periods that military historians might consider times of peace. Within this period, the United States Army was transitioning from decentralized and sporadic clusters of fighting units to a more standardized institution. Charles R. Schrader calls this the "Era of Professionalization," and it shaped the repressive and increasingly imperialistic military presence across the United States, Mexico, Cuba, and the South Pacific.⁶ Why focus on this small example of a larger military apparatus? The presence of a band in a military unit indoctrinates "sustainable social attitudes" in both soldiers and civilians through official and unofficial rituals led by a regimental band.⁷ The rhythms of martial music are woven into a unit's daily routine, from reveille to taps. Since the Civil War, the United States Department of War (renamed the Department of Defense in 1947) has employed military bands to ingratiate regiments to local townspeople and assist in recruiting campaigns, often visiting high schools and local community celebrations, adding an energetic and exciting flair to the prospect of

⁵ The four Black regiments include: the Ninth and Tenth Cavalries and the Twenty-Fourth and Twenty-Fifth Infantries.

⁶ Charles R. Schrader, *United States Army Logistics, 1775-1992* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 1997), 2.

⁷ Marina Kukartseva and Mikhail Chertok, "Martial Music and Military Rituals as 'Political Texts,'" *International Affairs: A Russian Journal of World Politics, Diplomacy and International Relations* 59, no. 4 (2013): 235.

military service. The Band participated in this form of public relations and recruitment throughout its history. As the Montana scene suggests, the Band was not only engaged in military public relations. It was instrumental in the production of a historical consciousness that bound the expanding settler citizenry of new U.S. territories to the idea of nationhood and to the places to which these settlers felt newly entitled.

How does the State, through the Department of War, employ spectacle and bombast in the service of collective memory? What are the visual and aural qualities of historical consciousness and how do these qualities permeate ideological acts of place-making? When I define historical consciousness, I intentionally think of it not only phenomenologically but also as a physical mode of action, something that must be done, a process that begs for completion. Historical consciousness is not simply an idea or a subjective perception of experience of the past and how it relates to the present and future. It is also a deliberate act of creation, passed down through generations, guided not only by memory and narrative and realized in law and policy, but also physically manifested—embodied—through performance and spectatorship. It is not just the stories that we tell ourselves. It is also how the stories we tell ourselves become so deeply embedded in our physicality that, when these stories are challenged or critiqued, we feel it in how the stomach churns or when the heart beats faster, as if faced with a primal threat. In a sense, when it comes to historical consciousness, the body most certainly keeps the score.⁸

⁸ See: Bessel van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York, New York: Penguin Books, 2015). “Overwhelming experiences affect the development of brain, mind, and body awareness, all of which are closely intertwined. The resulting derailments have a profound impact on the capacity for love and work.”

When nearly every regiment and cavalry at the time had its own band, why focus specifically on this one? Africana Studies scholar, Keith Wilson, notes that Black bandsmen in the American military have always been an essential cog in “the machinery of war.”⁹ He argues for the “psychological victory” of Black volunteers who played music in the midst of Civil War battles, whether it was the martial music that accompanied Union soldiers as they marched through conquered Southern cities, or the moral support of Black musicians placed on the battlefield to “console the dying and uplift the morale of the defeated.”¹⁰ However, while the Era of Professionalization in the U.S. Army worked toward inserting a band in each regiment, the Black bandsmen of the segregated units had to contend with more than just inclusion in the state military apparatus. They often had to insinuate themselves into the good graces of white settlers who, too frequently, did not welcome Black soldiers in their communities. Black soldiers and Black bandsmen deliberately adapted their cultural and social lives to seek new opportunities in the rigors of military deployment and, more broadly, acceptance into a predominantly white social milieu. My analysis of the Band’s performance practices explores an under-researched contradiction in the history of the United States—how Black performers were enlisted in the project of U.S. imperial expansion, how they inhabited their paradoxical position, and how they made art amid those contradictions.

In the Era of Professionalization, the Department of War found itself with a standing army that served as little more than militarized police whose primary objective was to protect

⁹Keith Wilson, “Black Bands and Black Culture: A Study of Black Military Bands in the Union Army During the Civil War,” *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 9, no. 1 (1990): 31.

¹⁰ Wilson, “Black Bands and Black Culture,” 32.

white settlers as they steadily encroached on Indigenous land.¹¹ The U.S. military apparatus expanded its purpose when it became the physical force of U.S. empire in Hawai'i and the South Pacific. Throughout this transitional period, regimental army bands became more purposeful as a cultural force of militarism undergirding the territorial expansion. Rachel Woodward defines militarism as “an extension of military influence to civilian spheres, including economic and social political life.” The Department of War established an ideology of militarism as an essential part of the narrative of a national historical consciousness across the country through ostensibly benign performative militant acts, including the live performances of the regimental bands. The historical conditions of the Black band members, coupled with their strategic performative choices and the perception of these soldiers by different types of spectators, both supported and negated this ideology through their performances, while also attending to their own place in the ongoing narrative of American historical consciousness. Woodward also argues that “representation [is] a strategic military act.”¹² I contend that the vocal improvisations, choreographic choices, and musical repertoire of the Band are also strategic acts which similarly assert Black bodies as essential to the development of a nascent national narrative.

I examine performance as both discourse and ritual mediated by the standards of the Department of War, making the Band's performances a valuable tool of the ideological state apparatus. Following Louis Althusser, I define ideology as the discourses, institutions, and rituals of the state in which every person takes part, likely without critical examination of why they do

¹¹ Garry D Ryan and Timothy K. Nenner, *Soldiers and Civilians: The U.S. Army and the American People* (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1987): 27.

¹² Rachel Woodward, *Military Geographies* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2004), 8.

so.¹³ This lack of insight into one's own participation occurs because ideology is varied in both its attributes and objectives and is so subtle as to render its outcomes as seemingly natural or inevitable. However, Henry Odera Oruka contends that "expression of culture is invariably wrapped up in ideology."¹⁴ This means that because the expression of culture is a dynamic process that is never stable, the substance of an ideology is fallible and therefore becomes a site of struggle between the institutions that wish to uphold it and the people who are ultimately the most harmed by it. I see the performances of the Band as walking a tenuous line between the imperatives of ideology and the importance of asserting both collective and individual agency. In other words, the Band's performances were in support of the ideology of the United States but were also a site of struggle over its terms. That struggle took place in the medium of performance.

Prior to WWI, there was no central focal point for music within the United States Army. Each regiment had its own band, but there was not a unified entity intended to represent the entire service. Until "Pershing's Own" U.S. Army Band was created in 1946, the Department of War did not have a centralized command for specific musical responsibilities.¹⁵ It was understood that a regimental band would maintain morale within the unit, but it was also assumed that a band would create a favorable impression on the public, promote patriotism, and give the Army a way to present itself as an exciting and integral component of daily American

¹³ Louis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (Verso, 2014), 18.

¹⁴ Sabrina Binte Masud, "Sage Philosophy: Revisiting Oruka's African Ideology." *Journal of black studies* 42, no. 6 (2011): 879.

¹⁵ David Clement McCormick, "A History of the United States Army Band to 1946," ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1970, 6.

life.¹⁶ The regiments (both Black and white) stationed west of the Mississippi River in the period between Reconstruction and the Spanish-American War were largely considered to be undesirable people doing a most undesirable duty in forts and barracks that were in various states of disrepair. The enlisted soldiers were rarely accepted by community members near the forts, and this was especially true for the soldiers of the segregated Black regiments. Because of this, the Department of War explicitly expected the enlisted—in both white and Black regiments—to ingratiate themselves into a community with the help of its regimental band. The Department of War based this regulation on sound theory of the time that argued that the influence of music was both spiritually and morally uplifting and also beneficial to a person’s overall health and wellbeing.¹⁷ Regimental bands were expected not only to promote sociality and conviviality in the military community, but they were also expected to “stimulate patriotism and enthusiasm for military activities” and especially to “present to civilians a desirable impression of the military.”¹⁸

This dissertation is about how distinct racial lines, too often conflated with a static notion of culture, were shaped through military activities in non-conflict situations, particularly through the medium of regimental band performances. The men who participated in these performances bore witness to (and participated in) Indigenous suppression, northern migration, labor strikes, race riots, and as prioritized in my dissertation, exhibitionary parades and public performances that rallied for American patriotism and nationalism, while at the same time imagining and then

¹⁶ McCormick, “History of US Army Band,” xvii.

¹⁷ McCormick, “History of US Army Band,” 1.

¹⁸ McCormick, “A History of US Army Band,” xviii.

enforcing performative ethnic and racial essentialism. I agree with Mary Ryan, who has described the institutionalization of the American parade as a civic celebration that gradually became an ethnic festival.¹⁹ A performance perspective offers another dimension to understanding the ways in which a hegemonic white settler “identity” was militantly, yet seemingly benignly constructed, through acts of celebration and commemoration. My research helps us understand how the Twenty-Fifth Infantry Band navigated the paradoxical expectation of assimilation into white settler citizenship while tasked with enforcing and reinforcing segregationist ideology. The performances of the Band throughout these decades, under the direct command of the Department of War, were a crucial instrument in both the production and critique of this particularly American form of essentialized identity.

To analyze these performances, I ask: how much of the content and choreography of these performances were directed by the Department of War and how much did the Band members infuse their own experiences and knowledge? Were these two options invariably at odds with each other? When and how did they overlap, for whose purpose, and to what end? My dissertation will analyze these performances and how they adapted to the changing boundaries of American geography and cultural memory through a variety of frameworks focusing on the visual, aural, and kinesthetic qualities of each type of performance. To further understand this, I will locate the Band’s trajectory along what Jennifer Lynn Stoeber refers to as “the sonic color

¹⁹ Mary Ryan, “The American Parade: Representations of the Nineteenth-Century Social Order,” in *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 131.

line,” or how sound and listening not only register racial politics, but also actively produce them.²⁰

The music of Black bandsmen is rarely discussed within the canon of what is considered to be representative of Black American music. Its omission prevents us from understanding the cultural contribution of Black people to the professionalization of the United States’ military industrial complex. I contend that the *spectacle* of Black bodies parading in the streets, coupled with the *auditory* bombast of band music as played by Black bandsmen, inculcated new ways of thinking about Blackness in conjunction with American nationalism, both for the men of the Band and the spectators/auditors who encountered them. These evocative technologies of vision and sound were not stagnant. They were shaped and reshaped over the decades of the Band’s history. Their performative dynamic with a given audience was necessarily reconfigured each time the regiment was assigned to a new location. With each move, the regiment contended with novel intersections of the U.S. settler and imperial project and the myriad social relations—interethnic, interracial, and international—that undergirded them.

In my analysis, I develop the notion of a performative double historical consciousness. The Band’s performances illustrate this concept through the act of performing a narrative of history that can be perceived in more than one way. Double historical consciousness in this sense is an act of imagination; imagining how to fit oneself into a narrative as well as how others might believe one fits into a narrative. The Band performs in a way that signals an idea of history based upon the perspective of the audience (or the organizers) and becomes a space for the Band

²⁰ Jennifer Lynn Stoeber, *The Sonic Color Line: Race and the Cultural Politics of Listening* (New York: New York University Press, 2016), 4.

members to work out their own place in history on a variety of different scales. The doubling comes from having a “Black” historical consciousness—a lived understanding of the ways in which racial hierarchies work within the U.S., coupled with the imperative to perform a “white” historical consciousness. The Band likely labored under this sense of twoness, working out the parameters of each historical consciousness through performance and interactions with spectators.

In the Band’s performances we see the duality of being a Black soldier in the U.S. Army and being a descendent of the enslaved, of wearing the symbols of American citizenship when so many would deny that citizenship. In one moment, the musicians are “playing Indian” to the visceral shock and delight of military cadets and family, in another moment, they are parading through the principal streets of St. Paul or Missoula to the pride and jubilation of Black citizens and laborers. The Band continued to perform patriotic tunes throughout decades of mass lynching, and it played a key role in the beginning of the exploitative relationship between the military and tourism in Hawai’i—always in the name of the American flag and the project of expansion at the heart of the Army’s Era of Professionalization.

Literature Review and Chapter Outlines:

In my review of literature while researching this topic, I noted a dearth of scholarship related to military band music in the field of performance studies. Thus, I embarked on a cross-disciplinary approach to form my questions and theoretical conclusions. Perhaps the most in-depth study of the intersections of race and military music comes from ethnomusicologist Mary Talusan. While she specializes in Filipino and Filipino American music and culture, her insights

on Walter H. Loving, Jr, the Black American bandmaster of the Philippine Constabulary Band in the early twentieth century, has been crucial to my own analysis.²¹ Even military historians give relatively short shrift to the subject of military bands. In my research, I relied on the academic scholarship of musicologist Mark Clague and his cultural biography of the “Star-Spangled Banner” as well as his work on Alton Augustus Adams, the first Black bandmaster in the United States Navy.²² Historian Horace D. Nash researched the Twenty-Fourth Infantry Regimental Band (another of the four segregated Black regiments) and that band’s role in community building on the U.S./Mexico border in the early twentieth century.²³ Professor of Music, Peter M. Lefferts, wrote a comprehensive overview of the regimental bands of the segregated Black army regiments with a particular focus on the appointment of the first Black bandmasters in the early twentieth century.²⁴ The scholarship of Keith Wilson, also a Professor of Music, focuses on the Black bands of the United States Colored Troops regiments in the U.S. Civil War and the ways in which these performances acted as both sources of morale for Union troops and acts of intimidation in battle against Confederate soldiers.²⁵ Though their research on Black regimental bands is self-published, I found the writing of amateur historians Susan Hintz and Anthony Powell to be a valuable contribution to my own thinking. Powell’s research into Black musicians

²¹ Mary Talusan, *Instruments of Empire: Filipino Musicians, Black Soldiers, and Military Band Music During US Colonization of the Philippines* (University Press of Mississippi, 2021).

²² Mark Clague, *O Say Can You Hear?: A Cultural Biography of “The Star-Spangled Banner”* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2022).

Alton Augustus Adams (author) & Mark Clague ed., *The Memoirs of Alton Augustus Adams, Sr.: First Black Bandmaster of the United States Navy* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2008).

²³ Horace D. Nash, “Community Building on the Border: The Role of the 24th Infantry Band at Columbus, New Mexico, 1916-1922,” *Fort Concho and the South Plains Journal* 22, no. 3. (1990): 71-83.

²⁴ Peter M. Lefferts, “U.S. Army Black Regimental Bands and the Appointments of Their First Black Bandmasters,” *Black Music Research Journal* 33, no. 2 (2013): 151-175.

²⁵ Keith Wilson, “Black Bands and Black Culture: A Study of Black Military Bands in the Union Army During the Civil War,” *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 9, no. 1 (1990): 31-37.

in the Army from the Civil War through World War II, from his own position as a Black musician, provided me with valuable historical context that I may not have thought of on my own.²⁶ Hintz corresponded with me frequently via email and provided me with genealogies of all the musicians of the Twenty-Fifth Infantry Regimental Band during their decade spent at Fort Missoula in Montana. She also sent me a recording of a reenactment of the Band's Emancipation Day celebration repertoire, as performed by the Missoula Municipal Band on the first celebration of Juneteenth as a national holiday in 2021.²⁷

In trying to examine my own biases and blind spots about racial formation in the United States, especially in relation to the complex articulations of Blackness, Indigeneity, migration, and settler identity in crafting U.S. nationhood, I frequently revisited the works of scholars from fields as diverse as Indigenous Studies, Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies, Sociology, and African American Studies: Waziyatawin (Wahpetunwan Dakota),²⁸ Tiffany Lethabo King,²⁹ Adria L. Imada,³⁰ Howard Winant,³¹ Mark Rifkin,³² Mitch Kachun,³³ and Frank B. Wilderson III.³⁴ The motivations and philosophy behind Black political conservatism, especially in the

²⁶ Anthony Powell, *Keep Step to the Music of the Union: the African American Soldier Musician, 1776-1945* (Independently Published, 2020).

²⁷ Susan Hintz, *Buffalo Soldiers and Band Music: 25th Infantry Band at Fort Missoula, 1888-1898* (Independently Published, 2022).

²⁸ Waziyatawin, *What Does Justice Look Like?: The Struggle for Liberation in Dakota Homeland* (St. Paul, MN: Living Justice Press, 2008).

²⁹ Tiffany Lethabo King, *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019).

³⁰ Adria L. Imada, *Aloha America: Hula Circuits Through the U.S. Empire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

³¹ Howard Winant, *The New Politics of Race: Globalism, Difference, Justice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

³² Mark Rifkin, *Fictions of Land and Flesh: Blackness, Indigeneity, Speculation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019).

³³ Mitchell A. Kachun, *Festivals of Freedom: Memory and Meaning in African American Emancipation Celebrations, 1808-1915* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003).

³⁴ Frank B. Wilderson III, *Afropessimism* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2021).

nineteenth and twentieth centuries, were entirely new to me. To better understand this perspective, I relied on the works of American law professor, Christopher Bracey³⁵ and historian of Black America, Clarence E. Walker.³⁶ The debut publication of historian Anthony W. Wood helped me to articulate what was at stake for the early Black settlers of the West and the complex relationships these settlers shared with both Native Americans and white settlers in their journey to establish roots in the years following the Civil War.³⁷ Scholars in both performance studies and sound studies that helped me to theorize how performance embeds and negotiates identity claims in specific times and spaces are Jennifer Lynn Stoeber, Joseph R. Roach,³⁸ Dylan Robinson (Stó:lō/Skwah),³⁹ Ronald Michael Radano and Tejumola Olaniyan.⁴⁰ All of these scholars have contributed to what is the first comprehensive analysis of a Black American military band in the field of performance studies.

Because the re-writing of history through popular culture performance has long been a part of the process of military colonization, the musicians of the Twenty-Fifth Infantry Regimental Band were constantly authors of American History. Throughout its long existence, the Band contested, revolutionized, and “Blackened” the master narratives of American colonial settlement through its insinuation into military public relations and the very fabric of multiple

³⁵ Christopher Alan Bracey, *Saviors or Sellouts: the Promise and Peril of Black Conservatism from Booker T. Washington to Condoleezza Rice* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2008).

³⁶ Clarence E. Walker, *Deromanticizing Black History: Critical Essays and Reappraisals* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991).

³⁷ Anthony W. Wood, *Black Montana: Settler Colonialism and the Erosion of the Racial Frontier, 1877-1930* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2021).

³⁸ Joseph R. Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

³⁹ Dylan Robinson, *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020).

⁴⁰ Ronald Michael Radano and Tejumola Olaniyan, *Audible Empire: Music, Global Politics, Critique* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

settler communities. In Chapter One, I argue that the performances of the Band were part of a technology that produced a paradoxical subjectivity for the men themselves. I will analyze the Band's performances of "redface" that were a typical part of its regular repertoire during its time in Minnesota and Montana. My analysis is under the guidance of W.E.B. DuBois' idea of "double consciousness", which he articulates as "a peculiar sensation" that highlights the existential "twoness" of being part of a society, yet also excluded from that society's public politics and culture.⁴¹ By referencing this complicated duality, I will be able to tease out a multitude of relationships of spectacle and surveillance in which the Band was a part, and the shifting subjectivities therein. As the Band moved from one location to another, losing members and gaining new ones, plunging headfirst into a multitude of social contexts, the shape of the musicians' double historical consciousness, and the new structures of feeling in which they become immersed, might be as mobile as the regiment itself.

In Chapter Two, I analyze the Band's participation in Emancipation Day celebrations throughout the 1880s-90s in both Minnesota and Montana and its modes of communal sociability. I continue the framework of double historical consciousness to analyze how emancipation celebrations in the North ritualized this dialectic, often with the help of the Band, to assert Black American citizenship as well as to debate the ways in which the end of slavery should be commemorated and celebrated.⁴² The small Black communities in both these states invited the Band to lead their celebrations to "appropriate the powerful sound of military might

⁴¹ W.E.B. Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Signet Classics, 2012), 9.

⁴² William B. Gravely, "The Dialectic of Double-Consciousness in Black American Freedom Celebrations, 1808-1863," *The Journal of Negro History* 67, no. 4 (1982): 302.

to publicly parade their own numerical strength.”⁴³ Using a military band within these celebrations helped to spread the influence of the U.S. Army beyond that of the battlefield and military parade.⁴⁴

In Chapter Three, I frame the Band’s performances around the rise of lynching in the United States to try to understand how the musicians could keep performing patriotic tunes in a country that seemed determined to exterminate Black success from its national historical consciousness. Willard Gatewood argues that most Black soldiers “seemed to consider participation in the military an obligation of citizenship which they would gladly fulfill if they could do so in a way that would enhance rather than degrade their manhood.”⁴⁵ Yet, during the Band’s time in both Washington and Oregon in the early twentieth century, Black manhood was not only degraded. It was also terrorized. I analyze whether the Band’s performances were a way in which to provide moral support for their fellow Black soldiers and community members and how the Band’s embodied performances “create[d] a collective identity and a sense of movement in an emotional and physical sense” that assured Black spectators of their importance to the American nation.⁴⁶

In Chapter Four I analyze how the Army utilized the Band to shore up an ideology of American patriotism in the service of streamlining a generalized (white) American historical consciousness in the newest addition to U.S. Empire—the Territory of Hawai’i. I argue that the

⁴³ Suzel Reily and Katherine Brucher eds, *Brass Bands of the World: Militarism, Colonial Legacies, and Local Music Making* (London: Routledge, 2016) 3.

⁴⁴ Reily & Brucher, *Brass Bands of the World*, 4.

⁴⁵ Willard B. Gatewood, “*Smoked Yankees*” and *the Struggle for Empire: Letters from Negro Soldiers, 1898-1902* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1987), 5.

⁴⁶ George McKay, “A Soundtrack to the Insurrection: Street Music, Marching Bands and Popular Protests,” *Parrallax* 13, (2007): 20.

performances of the Band are an extension, or another type, of Tony Bennett's theorization of the Exhibitionary Complex of the long nineteenth century and Nicholas Mirzoeff's concept of "visuality." These frameworks help us understand the settler colonial field of vision, both in terms of how of race and ethnicity were conceived and in how the popular imagination in America centered on constructing and monumentalizing a heroic national narrative.

CHAPTER ONE

Playing Indian During and After the Indian Wars: 1884 and 1895

“Buffalo Soldiers, Buffalo Soldiers

Will you survive in this new land?

Buffalo Soldiers, Buffalo Soldiers

When will they call you a man?”

--Big Al Downing⁴⁷

I imagine that this graduation day in 1884 started out much like any other. It followed all the important steps of the ritual of a rite of passage. Proud parents watched as their sons reached the pinnacle of their military academy training. Perhaps some were tempted to fall asleep in the humid June afternoon. Speeches praised “the boys,” the bishop intoned the benediction. The white spectators saw that the “colored” band from Fort Snelling was there to add to the martial spirit of the occasion. The settlers of Minnesota had grown accustomed to the presence of a Black regiment, though those who had never fought in the Civil War had probably never seen as many Black men in one place as those who made up the Twenty-Fifth Infantry Regiment. But the regimental band was by then well-known across the state. Many of the spectators at the graduation had likely seen the Band perform at the State Fair in Rochester the previous summer. They may have seen the Band on the same day that they saw Sitting Bull at the Fair, signing autographs in exchange for money that he would take back to his people. The audience and graduates at Shattuck Military Academy may have expected the Band to play the usual tunes that

⁴⁷ Big Al Downing. 1976. “Buffalo Soldiers.” Track 18 on *60s Soul Power: Soul Music in a Time of Protest and Change*. Sun Entertainment Corporation, 2020, R&B/Soul.

accompany a military graduation. Thus, when the gathered crowd found places outside to watch the Band, they were likely happy, calm, maybe even ready for the occasion to end. The local newspapers offered excruciatingly few details of what happened next, however, it was this single sentence describing the following event that inspired my entire dissertation: “After the bishop’s benediction the colored band from Fort Snelling performed a piece entitled ‘The Battle With Sitting Bull,’ so graphically descriptive as to astonish the auditors, the Indian music and war whoops being particularly startling and effective.”⁴⁸

The focus of this chapter is the Band’s performances of “redface” in front of a white settler audience. I will analyze its performance of “The Battle With Sitting Bull” at the Shattuck Military Academy’s Class of 1884 graduation ceremony in Faribault, Minnesota. To a lesser extent, I will also analyze another Sitting Bull performance that occurred in Missoula, Montana as part of a Thanksgiving celebration in 1895. Through these performances, we see the ways in which the Band encompassed the complicated emotional politics of place-making, race-making, Indigeneity, and belonging that are unique to the United States. To that end, the focus in this chapter is on performances that show the high emotional stakes of sovereignty and citizenship that define who can claim these concepts and how.

These performances are indicative of the Department of War’s desire to inculcate a historical consciousness that naturalized the militarism of place-making. They were also a way in which the Band employed its own narrative of historical consciousness that sought not only to ensure that the forced labor of Black people was acknowledged as a vital component of the birth

⁴⁸ “Holidays Begun,” *St. Paul Daily Globe* (St. Paul, MN), June 20, 1884.

of the nation, but also to “indigenize” the descendants of the enslaved. In this sense, “indigenize” means to create a narrative that holds non-Indigenous people as equally native to the North American continent as the Indigenous peoples themselves. I see these performances as establishing a double historical consciousness in which the descendants of the enslaved were integral, as well as unruly, contributors to a national narrative that made Indigenous suppression and nation-wide militarization seem just and inevitable. My analysis of the Band’s “redface” performances show its multiplicity, affirming the emerging hegemonic discourse of a national settler identity while also affirming the centrality of Black people in building the new nation.

For the state military apparatus, the default representation of an American historical consciousness would be through the eyes and ears of the white settler, protected by outside threats through the military strength of the nation’s standing army. Because the goal of settler colonialism is to form a society by replacing the Indigenous population with settlers, this new historical consciousness would necessarily “indigenize” the settlers from disparate parts of Northern and Western Europe for the sake of creating a unified American national identity.⁴⁹ The hierarchy of this identity would be based upon the ability to speak English, to own land and vast wealth, and above all else, become part of the changing landscape of whiteness.⁵⁰ Anything below this tier was an auxiliary narrative to the primacy of white settler continental expansion. Above all else, America must be claimed as the natural and rightful home of a certain type of white settler and entrepreneur. The Regular Army had the potential to be an invaluable resource

⁴⁹ Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 17.

⁵⁰ Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014), 32.

for this mission, however, perhaps the Department of War did not consider the variations to a unified historical consciousness that the presence of a Black regiment might bring. Perhaps the Department of War did not anticipate how a Black regiment might undermine the constructed hierarchy on which the entire American project presumably stood. More likely, it didn't even consider the possibility that the descendants of the enslaved had a history, much less an historical consciousness about their role in the creation of the United States.

I frame my argument to account for the aural and visual dimensions of historical consciousness and the unique doubling of that consciousness as performed by the Band. Its “redface” performances, at first glance, adhered to the Department of War’s doctrine of performative militarism.⁵¹ At a second glance, these same performances sought to “indigenize” the nation’s growing Black population through the act of “playing Indian.” I adopt Jennifer Stoever’s theorization of the “sonic color line”, which she defines as a “cultural materialist approach to a series of resonant events between slavery and the end of segregation that reveals race to be fundamental to any historical consideration of U.S. listening practices.”⁵² I add to Philip Deloria’s incomparable work on the white settler penchant for “playing Indian” as indispensable to the formation of an American nationalism rooted to North American soil, with my own argument regarding the ideology and motivations behind the Band’s popular performances of Indigenous (mis)representation.

⁵¹ By “performative militarism” I am referring to a Foucauldian definition of performativity as “that reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains.” The Department of War tasked the regimental bands with inculcating a sense of normalcy to the increased militarism of the United States in everyday life. Through their performances, the regimental bands continuously helped the American public to define a national identity centered around military power by encouraging the public to enthusiastically participate in military parade rituals no longer confined to military posts.

⁵² Stoever, *Sonic Color Line*, 6.

It is too simplistic and too unrealistic to argue that the performances of the Band could have changed the hearts and minds of settlers guided by the ideology of white supremacy. The span of decades covered by my dissertation is, after all, considered by many historians to be “the nadir of race relations in America.”⁵³ This “nadir” is commonly associated with the period encompassing the end of Reconstruction in 1877 through the early decades of the twentieth century. During this period, Black Americans lost access to many of the civil rights which they had gained during Reconstruction. This era also saw the rise of lynchings as popular public entertainment, increased segregation, and legalized racial discrimination whilst different expressions of white supremacy openly reigned throughout the United States. The performances of the Band in this period embedded (unevenly and incompletely) an idea of Black bodies as essential to American historical consciousness, even as it celebrated white supremacist militant expansion across the continent. This is a rhizomatic argument, wherein I assert that the Band’s use of a patriotic repertoire and popular culture stereotypes of Plains Indians naturalized the Black body as an essential piece in the narrative of American history as continuous and progressive growth, and (following popular culture trends) cast the Indigenous body as a source of entertainment, a visceral thrill, and ultimately non-essential to the progress of American history.

The waning years of the Indian Wars presented the United States federal government with the perception of a blank canvas on which to paint any number of origin stories, whether unified or to serve individual and specific purposes. The process of imagining a postbellum

⁵³ Rayford Logan, *The Betrayal of the Negro: from Rutherford B. Hayes to Woodrow Wilson* (New York: Collier Books, 1967), 17.

national narrative wherein European settlers could shed the confines of settler status and become a people with roots in the soil of North America required that the Indigenous peoples be pushed from contemporary memory. They could only exist in historical memory, even as they continued to exist in the present. The American Indian is always already a distant memory in the mind of the settler. For the Black soldiers who actively suppressed Indigenous uprisings, they were very much present. And yet, because the soldiers were tasked with vanquishing Indigenous claims to place, American Indians had to be compartmentalized as something not modern, something that no longer belonged, something against which the soldiers could write their own histories, necessitated by the desire to make the United States their own ancestral home.

I argue that the historical consciousness of the non-Native on North American soil enforces the necessity to remember a myth and forget the real. This is not a phenomenon unique to white settlers, however, different historical conditions and the ideology of white supremacy on which this nation was built produces different responses to and narratives of this conundrum. This was not just a problem for white Americans, but also for the descendants of the enslaved. Place requires the search for a sustaining mythology about origins. Because historical consciousness is part of complex socio-cultural process that goes beyond finding its expression in historical scholarship, I will consider the performances of the Band during this period to tease out the sonic and visual qualities that buttressed a given narrative. I will analyze the ubiquity of the “Indian war whoop” and the way the Band employed it while “playing Indian.” I will consider the Band’s choreographed display of violent imagery coupled with a minstrel-esque mockery of the American Indian body. And I will explore how the white spectators likely

internalized these sights and sounds in ways that differed from the lived experience of the Black musicians.

The Contested Idea of Black Settlers:

The idea of returning the enslaved to the African continent was thrown around quite a bit in the years prior to emancipation, most notably through the American Colonization Society. While there was a small percentage of Black people who chose to participate in the foundation of Liberia, for the most part, returning to Africa was a dream held by white people who could see no place for those of African descent in the United States. Although Black people were treated as outsiders by white Americans, that does not mean that they thought of themselves as a peripheral part of American history. They often embraced the ideals expressed in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution far more than most white Americans. Clarence Walker argues that if Black people “had any criticism of America, they deplored its failure to live up to the ideals it proclaimed.”⁵⁴ Frederick Douglass stated in 1883, “Africa is too far off, even if we desired to go there. Which we do not...There is but one destiny...left for us, and that is to make ourselves and be made by others a part of the American people in every sense of the word.”⁵⁵ This does not mean that all Black soldiers rejected an affinity with the African continent. In 1884, the Ninth Cavalry reportedly adorned their barracks “with the flags of Hayti and Liberia.”⁵⁶ Yet, in letters to Black newspapers throughout the United States, Black soldiers

⁵⁴ Clarence Walker, *Deromanticizing Black History*, 88.

⁵⁵ Frederick Douglass. “The United States Cannot Remain Half Slave and Half Free,” in *Frederick Douglass: Selected Speeches and Writings* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1999), 668.

⁵⁶ William A. Dobak, “Licit Amusements of Enlisted Men in the Post-Civil War Army,” *Montana: the Magazine of Western History* 45, 1995, 39.

frequently wrote about their experiences with racism in a country they sought to protect but did not express a desire to abandon the United States or to return to Africa.⁵⁷ In general, in the latter years of the nineteenth century, Black soldiers had an overt desire to make themselves native to the soil, to establish roots for their descendants and in honor of their enslaved ancestors. In the colonial nationalist ethos, to be rooted in place is to be home. To be home is to be free, to have more self-determination, more choice, more opportunities. For a Black soldier in the immediate years after the unceremonious end of Reconstruction, nothing could be more important than owning and asserting a sense of belonging within the country in which they were born and raised.

Mark Rifkin warns of the danger in conflating Black participation in the “indigenizing” process with that of the settler colonial state. He argues that Black people are not and cannot be considered “simply as stand-ins for the state” in a “homogenizing misrepresentation” of the character and nature of northern migration.⁵⁸ With this in mind, I am trying to be careful to consider the Black soldiers and bandmembers not as “stand-ins,” but certainly as active participants with their own agendas that may or may not be aligned with that of the state. I also take into consideration Tiffany Lethabo King’s warning to not see Blackness or Black people as “fungible.” For King, this notion of fungibility is indicated when “Black bodies appear as tools through which to enact desired transformations...and to figure normative conceptions of the human.”⁵⁹ However, neither Rifkin nor King speaks of the specificity of Black regiments. Taking

⁵⁷ Frank Schubert. *Voices of the Buffalo Soldier: Records, Reports, and Recollections of Military Life and Service in the West* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003), 46.

⁵⁸ Rifkin, *Fictions of Land and Flesh*, 57-59.

⁵⁹ King, *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies*, 16.

willing participation in the Army into account (no matter the circumstances for enlistment) is an important thread in the discussion of Black settlement that is largely overlooked in these discussions. I certainly do not wish to imply that the regiment and the Band were nothing more than useful tools to the Department of War's ideological designs. I do, however, think it is important to consider their participation in the Indian Wars and in wars of imperial expansion and to explore the contradictions that are created by the very fact of their cooperation with the Department of War's policy of Indigenous displacement. In other words, I want to avoid thinking of the Band as a metaphor and instead to consider the implications, both short and long term, of its performance practice.

The Relationship Between Black Soldiers and Indigenous Peoples:

Several popular myths abound about the Black regiments that suggest their historical (arguably natural) affinity or alliance with Native American peoples. The most prominent is that of the origin of the moniker "Buffalo Soldiers." The most common narrative is that "the Indians" (a particular Indigenous nation is rarely specified) gave the soldiers this nickname out of respect for them as worthy opponents in battle. This myth is uncritically perpetuated by national institutions such as the Buffalo Soldiers National Museum in Houston, Texas and the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C., as well as numerous books focused on these regiments. It is steeped in popular culture as common knowledge. However, the research of military historians William A. Dobak and Thomas D. Phillips has shown that none of the regiments ever used the term in their letters written to the Black press,

nor did it appear in court-martial testimony or pension applications.⁶⁰ They argue that it was white journalists who began using the name starting in 1873.⁶¹ Frank Schubert, one of the foremost historians of the Black regiments, claims that it was another military historian, William H. Leckie, who popularized the term in his 1967 book *The Buffalo Soldiers: A Narrative of the Black Cavalry in the West*. Leckie's "cautious guesses" of the origins of the name subsequently "evolved into hyperbole."⁶² Not only does Schubert confirm that there is no evidence that shows the soldiers using the term, but his research also reveals that, despite another popular myth, the Black regiments did not seem to have any kind of special rapport or mutual understanding with Native Americans. He states, "They used the same dismissive epithets and the same racist caricatures employed by whites." Schubert provides an example of the use of "redface" among the soldiers, with one private attending an 1894 masquerade ball dressed as what his fellow soldiers referred to as "an idiotic Indian squaw."⁶³

I do not want to fall under the assumption that Black and Indigenous peoples had a mutual affinity for each other primarily because of their similar experiences under the ideology of white supremacy. It is a rather romantic notion to suppose that "oppression produced a class of people who were inevitably kind and generous to their peers."⁶⁴ I also do not want to assume

⁶⁰ Though "Buffalo Soldiers" may be an ahistorical term of dubious origins, one should not discount that in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the moniker became a source of pride for many Black Americans. It is a term that Black Americans can point to as an example of the importance of Black people in the creation and defense of the United States and in the military overall. Thank you to the kind Black gentleman who, politely but pointedly, reminded me of this after one of my public talks regarding the mythical origins of the term.

⁶¹ William A. Dobak and Thomas D. Phillips. *The Black Regulars, 1866-1898* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001) 29.

⁶² Frank N. Schubert, "The 25th at Brownsville, Texas: Buffalo Soldiers, the 'Brownsville Six,' and the Medal of Honor," *The Journal of Military History* 75, (2011): 1218.

⁶³ Schubert, "The 25th at Brownsville," 1219.

⁶⁴ Walker, *Deromanticizing Black History*, xvi.

that the relationship was necessarily antagonistic due to Black participation in the Indian Wars and settlement of the West. There is no simple conclusion to draw on the historical relationship between Black and Indigenous peoples, because their relationships were complex, contradictory, and historiographically shrouded by popular myths that speak more toward the present moment than to historical encounter. Barbara Krauthamer points out two prevailing narratives for this relationship in historiography. One narrative presupposes the idea that slavery in the Indigenous nations of the “Five Civilized Tribes” was somehow more favorable to the enslaved and categorically different from white ownership.⁶⁵ The second narrative fudges the implications of Black migration in the post-Reconstruction era by adhering to abstractions—they migrated to “the West” rather than plainly stating that they settled on Indigenous land rendered available through broken treaties.⁶⁶ On the other hand, Tiffany Lethabo King, Jenell Navarro, and Andrea Smith state that there is a “popular position that Black and Native peoples, and by extension Black and Native politics, are at an impasse represented by their incommensurability.”⁶⁷ This predicament is a direct result of the imperative of survival within settler colonial states that forces one “to compromise the well-being of the other.”⁶⁸ King argues that “Blackness” is an explicitly structural position and is in complete opposition to the process of settler colonialism. She suggests that the notion of a “Black settler” shows the extent to which historians who engage

⁶⁵ The “Five Civilized Tribes” was a term applied by white Americans to refer to the five major Indigenous nations in the Southeast United States. These nations are the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Muscogee (formerly called “Creek”) and Seminole. These nations gained this classification by adopting attributes of Anglo-American culture, including the enslavement of Black people.

⁶⁶ Barbara Krauthamer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters: Slavery, Emancipation, and Citizenship in the Native American South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 153.

⁶⁷ Tiffany Lethabo King, Jenell Navarro, and Andrea Smith, eds. *Otherwise Worlds: Against Settler Colonialism and Anti-Blackness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 1.

⁶⁸ King et al, *Otherwise Worlds*, 8.

with the term have a “conceptual block” that refuses to consider other modes of placemaking that may be specific to Blackness and antithetical to settler domination.⁶⁹

It is not only white military historians who question the presumed mutuality between Black soldiers and Indigenous nations. Historian William Gwaltney, himself a descendent of a Buffalo Soldier, argues against the idea of widespread interracial harmony between the regiments and Native Americans by stating that Black soldiers “fought for recognition as citizens in a racist country and...American Indian people fought to hold on to their traditions, the land, and their lives.”⁷⁰ These two distinct goals do not promote the idea of shared kinship. Finally, in response to the 1994 issuance of a commemorative Buffalo Soldiers stamp, the American Indian Movement leader, Vernon Bellecourt (White Earth Band of Ojibwe) rejected the idea that the term had any connotation of respect. Calling the Black regiments “raiding deadly mounted force units,” he claimed that, if the name had any historical veracity, it would only have been due to “their brown complexion and surface of their hair.”⁷¹ Because of the “two-category racial system” that prevailed in nineteenth century America, proximity to reservations was fundamental to shaping the attitudes of both local white townspeople and the Black soldiers assigned to the area. Frank Schubert argues that to maintain the dichotomy of the two-category system, white people would accept Black soldiers to ensure that American Indians remained the lower of the two. The existence of a reservation “may well have exerted a greater positive influence on

⁶⁹ King, *The Black Shoals*, 45.

⁷⁰ William W. Gwaltney, “The Making of *Buffalo Soldiers West*,” *Colorado Heritage* (1996): 47.

⁷¹ Vernon Bellecourt, “The Glorification of Buffalo Soldiers Raises Racial Divisions Between Blacks, Indians,” *Indian Country Today* (Phoenix, AZ), May 4 1994.

Black/white relations than American egalitarian rhetoric on the frontier itself.”⁷² This discussion allows for me to argue that, for Black soldiers in the Army, containing and eliminating the Indigenous threat was a priority to prevent their own annihilation. If the racial hierarchy placed Blackness at the very bottom of a history-less void, it was up to the soldiers and Black settlers in the West to negotiate and forcibly move themselves up the ladder.

The U.S.-Dakota War of 1862:

To begin my analysis, I must take quite a bit of time to set up the context that led to the Band’s performance at the Shattuck military academy. I will situate the Band in context to its relationship with Sitting Bull, and with the Indian Wars in general. I will briefly discuss the impact that Sitting Bull had on American society, whether as a celebrity or a dangerous enemy of the state. I will also offer a short explanation of the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862. Though it occurred a full twenty years before the Band’s performance, I argue that the performance at Shattuck would not have been as significant had the white settlers in Minnesota not lived through the experience of war with some of the Dakota people. Personal experience and memory combined to advance a moment of co-created historical consciousness between the white settler community and the Black musicians.

I can only provide a brief overview of what is alternately known as The Dakota War, the U.S-Dakota War, or the Dakota Uprising of 1862. Historian Gary Clayton Anderson calls it “the

⁷² Thomas R. Buecker, “Prelude to Brownsville: The Twenty-Fifth Infantry at Fort Niobrara, Nebraska, 1902-06,” *Great Plains Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (1996): 98.

most horrific and destructive ethnic massacre in American History.”⁷³ Due to deeply entrenched and self-serving corruption by the “founding fathers of Minnesota” and faced with starvation and lack of control over its own sovereignty and land use, the Mdewakanton Dakota systematically destroyed settler villages and farms over a 150-mile swath across southwestern Minnesota. Twenty-three counties were almost entirely depopulated of white settlers who fled east hoping to find refuge in Minneapolis and St. Paul.⁷⁴ Over the course of five weeks, more than 600 settlers (including women and children) and dozens of soldiers and militiamen died at the hands of the Mdewakanton. Approximately 40,000 white settlers were displaced from their homes and consigned to several refugee camps. The number of Dakota who also died in battle is not known, but historians believe the death toll was substantial.⁷⁵

In retaliation to the uprising, Henry Sibley, the first governor of Minnesota rushed 392 Dakota through a series of hearings. The Dakota men were not given due process or proper representation by the illegal military commission. Sibley sentenced 303 of these men to be executed by hanging. Abraham Lincoln reduced the number of executions to 39 men. One man received a pardon only hours before the hangings. They were executed in Mankato on December 26, 1863; two more Dakota men, Sakpedan and Owakanzazan, were executed at Fort Snelling on November 11, 1865. Over 1,600 Dakota women, children, and elderly men (as well as a group of Ho-Chunk people who did not participate in the war) were tightly packed into a concentration camp, rife with disease and starvation, below the walls of Fort Snelling along the west bank of

⁷³ Gary Clayton Anderson, *Massacre in Minnesota: The Dakota War of 1862, the Most Violent Ethnic Conflict in American History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2019), 111.

⁷⁴ Gary Clayton Anderson and Alan R. Woolworth. *Through Dakota Eyes: Narrative Accounts of the Minnesota Indian War of 1862* (St Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1988), 1.

⁷⁵ Anderson and Woolworth, *Through Dakota Eyes*, 1.

the Minnesota River. About 300 people died in the camp over the winter of 1862-1863. Another 6,000 Dakota died after the Minnesota legislature voted to force the Dakota out of Minnesota to barren reservation land.⁷⁶ Incidentally, the very same steamboat that carried the exiled Dakota out of their homeland brought a group of Black refugees, escaped from plantations in the South, to Fort Snelling. Many of these refugees worked at the Fort and joined the punitive expeditions led by the Army in search of any Dakota who may have escaped punishment.

The Dakota Uprising is a conflict that is still a source of contention in Minnesota in the twenty-first century. The most notable disagreement is between the historical interpretation of the Minnesota Historical Society, guided by the Dakota Community Council, and some of the descendants of the murdered settlers, who feel the deaths of their ancestors have been negated and erased in the name of “weaponizing history.”⁷⁷ The memory of the war loomed large in the imaginations of Minnesota residents for decades after the event, even in those who had no personal experience. These vivid memories were galvanized by the salacious and often highly exaggerated reportage of local Minnesota newspapers. Anderson points out that the conflict occurred at the beginning of a “period of sensationalistic fiction which often influenced journalism.”⁷⁸ The highly embellished accounts of violence do not hold up to historical scrutiny. The Mdewakanton certainly killed women and children; however, Anderson argues that the commonly accepted rhetoric of indiscriminate mutilation does not align with either Dakota spiritual beliefs or tactics of war. Nevertheless, newspapers published increasingly gruesome

⁷⁶ Anderson, *Massacre in Minnesota*, ix.

⁷⁷ Katherine Kersten, “Weaponizing History,” *American Experiment*, Center of the American Experiment, <https://www.americanexperiment.org/magazine/article/weaponizing-history>.

⁷⁸ Anderson, *Massacre in Minnesota*, 87.

accounts. Most importantly for my argument, these wild exaggerations became commonplace, especially in the years following the war when publishers sold books of supposed first-hand settler accounts. These journalistic exaggerations were just one more aspect of a developing settler narrative that would justify the attempted eradication of the Dakota people.⁷⁹

The Twenty-Fifth's Relationship to Sitting Bull:

Throughout the Indian Wars, Black soldiers remained on the frontier, however, even as the United States massacred and confined Indigenous nations to reservations, it became clear that the Department of War fully intended to keep the Black regiments out West. The mere suggestion of moving one of the regiments back East brought protest from citizens.⁸⁰ After a decade in Texas, the Twenty-Fifth regiment moved to Dakota Territory in April 1880. Upon its arrival at Fort Randall, the regiment was faced with overcrowded barracks in desperate need of repair.⁸¹ The Band itself suffered further depredations when, in the winter of 1881-1882, their private kitchen and mess room burned to the ground.⁸² Rather than going on scouting patrols and acting as guards and escorts to stagecoaches filled with supplies, as they did in Texas, the regular soldiers spent their time in telegraph construction, wood cutting details, and protecting railroad workers against possible Indian attacks.⁸³ They also provided disaster relief for settlers after devastating floods and protected settlers who feared the annual summer Sun Dances, which

⁷⁹ Anderson, *Massacre in Minnesota*, 91.

⁸⁰ Edward M. Coffman, *The Old Army : a Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784-1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 370.

⁸¹ Arlen L. Fowler, *Black Infantry in the West: 1869-1891* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 50.

⁸² Jerome A. Greene. *Fort Randall on the Missouri, 1856-1892* (Pierre, SD: South Dakota State Historical Society Press, 2005), 127.

⁸³ Fowler, *Black Infantry in the West*, 51-52.

brought together several groups of Lakota to the Rosebud Reservation.⁸⁴ While the regular soldiers stayed busy with these tasks, the Band “was actively engaged in projecting a favorable image of Black soldiers” to the surrounding settler communities.⁸⁵ They were invited by neighboring communities to perform public concerts. They also showed off their talent at local school activities, dances, and in celebration of national holidays.⁸⁶ Besides the overall task of making settler life calmer and paving the way for further expansion into the West, the regiment’s assignment to Fort Randall along the banks of the Missouri River had one primary goal: guarding Sitting Bull as a prisoner of war.

Sitting Bull and his people were the last of the Lakota to surrender after the resounding defeat of General George Custer at the Battle of Little Big Horn in 1876.⁸⁷ After six years of seeking refuge in Canada and faced with the imminent starvation of his people, Sitting Bull made the difficult decision to surrender at Fort Buford on July 11, 1881.⁸⁸ Amid the “rabid anti-Indian mania” that gripped the nation after the Battle of Little Big Horn, Sitting Bull’s group was brought to Fort Randall as prisoners of war on September 18, 1881.⁸⁹ There was a total of 167

⁸⁴ Fowler, *Black Infantry in the West*, 52-53.

⁸⁵ Fowler, *Black Infantry in the West*, 57.

⁸⁶ Greene, *Fort Randall on the Missouri*, 138.

⁸⁷ The Dakota and Lakota nations are part of a confederacy often grouped under the umbrella term of the “Sioux Nation.” The groups in this confederacy are also known as the Oceti Sakowin—the Seven Council Fires. Each of these Council Fires is made up of individual bands, based on kinship, dialect, and geographic proximity. The Seven Council Fires are: Mdewakanton, Whapekute, Sisitonwan, and Wahpetonwan Dakota (or Eastern Dakota), Ihanktown and Ihanktowana Nakota, and Tetonwan Lakota (or Western Dakota). “Nakota” is a contested term, and so the three dialects can also be grouped into designations of Eastern and Western Dakota. Within the Tetonwan are seven separate bands including the Hunkpapa of which Sitting Bull was a leader. See: “Oceti Sakowin—Seven Council Fires,” *Aktá Lakota Museum & Cultural Center*, An Outreach of St. Joseph’s Indian School, <https://aktalakota.stjo.org/oceti-sakowin-seven-council-fires/>.

⁸⁸ Dennis C. Pope, *Sitting Bull: Prisoner of War* (Pierre, SD: South Dakota State Historical Society Press, 2010), 5.

⁸⁹ Mitch Kachun, “Before the Eyes of All Nations: African-American Identity and Historical Memory at the Centennial Exposition of 1876.” *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 65, no. 3 (1998): 307.

Hunkpapa Lakota imprisoned consisting of 26 families. At first, Sitting Bull's camp was placed directly next to the fort, however they soon relocated to an open field a half mile west.⁹⁰ Sitting Bull was apparently already aware of the Twenty-Fifth regiment as active participants in battle during the Indian Wars. The Hunkpapa reportedly had a friendly relationship with their guards. They were under constant supervision, even as they were allowed to move independently both inside and outside the fort.⁹¹ The Lakota prisoners tried to live their lives as normally as possible, which meant each morning Sitting Bull and One Bull took their place outside of the chief's tipi to sing prayers to Wakan Tanka. The Lakota families also played games with each other and held many feasts wherein they danced and sang.⁹²

The members of the Band had frequent interactions, not only with Sitting Bull, but with other leaders of the Eastern and Western Dakota nations. Part of the settler process of subjugation was to exercise power and control through performance, often by enlisting Indigenous people to perform at community-bonding state rituals. The regimental bands in conjunction with Indigenous leaders were an integral part of these displays. In 1882, the Band participated in a Fourth of July parade in Yankton, Dakota Territory. The Band spent two days in Yankton playing a variety of public concerts before taking its place in the parade, marching second only behind the Grand Marshall himself. Bringing up the rear of the long procession was the Ihanktonwan leader, Struck by the Ree, alongside a "squad of 40 Yankton Sioux Indians."⁹³ The local white settlers found this to be the grandest celebration of "America's birthday" that the

⁹⁰ Pope, *Sitting Bull*, 43.

⁹¹ Pope, *Sitting Bull*, 45.

⁹² Pope, *Sitting Bull*, 47.

⁹³ "Local Laconics," *The Press and Daily Dakotian* (Yankton, Dakota Territory), July 3, 1882.

town had ever seen, though they were disappointed that Sitting Bull had not traveled the short distance from Fort Randall to also participate in the parade.⁹⁴ Even after the regiment was moved to Fort Snelling in November 1882, the Band had the opportunity to see Sitting Bull in person again when they performed at the Minnesota State Fair in 1883.⁹⁵

The Band Performs “Battle With Sitting Bull” at the Shattuck Academy:

The account of the Band’s performance in June 1884 at the “graduating class exercises at Shattuck School” in Faribault, Minnesota, as written in the *St. Paul Daily Globe*, is brief but paints a compelling image. The entire article detailing the graduation of young, white, military cadets takes up one and a half columns of the page, with the Band’s performance described near the end, appearing only before a summary of the history of Shattuck Academy and a description of “the boys” who were graduating. The graduation ceremony was standard, with the cadets marching solemnly to their seats, accompanied by a processional hymn and “the voices of the trained choir of about forty male voices from the shrill falsetto of the youth to the deeper tones of the grown boys.” After a morning prayer and more selections from the choir, the young cadets marched out of the chapel to the tune of “Onward, Christian Soldier!” From there, the cadets and audience, “numbering at least eight hundred,” proceeded to the Manney Drill Hall for an exciting afternoon of military exercises.

The audience sat in the middle of the hall, flanked by faculty, trustees, and distinguished guests at the front, and the “Fort Snelling band” at the rear. The exercises began with an

⁹⁴ “Yankton’s Celebration,” *The Daily Press and Dakotian* (Yankton, Dakota Territory), July 5, 1882.

⁹⁵ Pope, *Sitting Bull*, 112.

unnamed selection from the Band, followed by an oration on the subject of “the great moral warrior”, Savonarola, an Italian preacher and martyr of the Renaissance, most famous for the Bonfire of the Vanities in 1498, which saw the destruction of thousands of items of secular art and culture. This was followed by a screed against the American jury system and a speech by Cadet W.G. Bronson who “got in a strong whack on the Irish question...a quiet little dynamite charge well directed” which seemed to advocate support for Irish nationalists.⁹⁶ Following the valedictory address and a final speech imploring the graduates to carry their military discipline into their future lives, the students were handed their diplomas and special medals and Bishop Whipple led the gathering in a final benediction. It was after this long, labored, solemn ritual that “the colored band from Fort Snelling performed a 1884. piece entitled the ‘Battle with Sitting Bull,’ so graphically descriptive as to astonish the auditors, the Indian music and war whoops being particularly startling and effective.”⁹⁷

There are several elements to this performance that must be taken into consideration to understand how an ordinary performance became an extraordinary one.⁹⁸ First, the music itself as it was written versus how it was performed in the moment. Second, the improvisational

⁹⁶ I add this to illustrate that any kind of unified national narrative that the Department of War hoped to inculcate was still largely unsettled on the Midwest periphery. It is indicative of the resistance of frontier settlers to the idea of a federal union and their desire to remain largely separate from the machinations of the political elite in Washington, D.C.

⁹⁷ “Holidays Begun”. *St. Paul Daily Globe*. (St. Paul, MN), June 20, 1884.

⁹⁸ The bulk of the research for this dissertation was done from 2020 to 2022. Covid-19 made in-person archival research nearly impossible, especially at the National Archives locations, the Center for Military History, and the Army Heritage Center. I have only been able to search through digital collections for sheet music that may have been played by the Band. I was unable to locate any music with the exact title of “Battle With Sitting Bull.” While numerous songs have been written about Sitting Bull, most of them were written in the twentieth century. The only viable piece of sheet music I have been able to locate is “Sitting Bull March” by Henry Wienskowitz and published in 1884 by S.T. Gordon & Son. This is the sheet music I have chosen to ground my analysis of the Band’s performance at Shattuck.

liberties taken by the Band during the performance. Third, the viscerally emotional response of the spectators to what was ostensibly a standard Tin Pan Alley tune. The composition of the “Sitting Bull March” is written primarily in the style of a Sousa march, however, there is also a hint of syncopation mixed into the rhythm. There is nothing sonically that seems to specifically reference the Lakota people or the battle itself beyond a generic rhythmic cadence popularly associated with “Indian drumming.” The cover of the sheet music depicts an illustration of a popular half-length portrait of Sitting Bull. He is seated, facing front, staring straight ahead, holding a peace pipe with both hands resting on his lap. Despite the presence of the peace pipe, directly beneath the image are the words, “Introducing an Indian War Song.” The composition in and of itself is not unusual for the period. It is a standard piece of music common for the era which, as cultural anthropologist, Charles Keil, argues was a time when there was “a brass band for every public rite of passage.”⁹⁹ There is nothing particularly shocking about the composition that would cause such a stir. It was the Band that added the drama that astonished the audience of settlers to such an extent.

The regimental bands of this time were all “highly individualistic.”¹⁰⁰ Army regulations were less restrictive than they are today. They allowed “wide latitude in the outfits worn by the bands,” thus, each band took on a distinctive appearance and musical approach. No two bands looked or sounded exactly alike.¹⁰¹ The lack of restrictions gave the Band’s performances a vitality that came not from the standard military musical repertoire but from the “essential

⁹⁹ Reily and Brucher, *Brass Bands of the World*, xiv.

¹⁰⁰ John P. Langellier, *More Army Blue: The Uniform of Uncle Sam’s Regulars, 1874-1887*, (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Military, 2001), 10.

¹⁰¹ Thomas C. Railsback, and J. Phillip Langellier, *The Drums Would Roll: a Pictorial History of US Army Bands on the American Frontier, 1866-1900*, (Poole, England: Arms and Armour, 1987), 17.

performance practice” of the musicians themselves.¹⁰² The Band used its time in Minnesota to develop a distinctive performance style. The drum major of the Band, John N. Norton, probably initiated the use of “baton twirling and gymnastics” in the 1880s while the regiment was assigned to Fort Snelling.¹⁰³ This innovation in military band performance was soon adopted by many more regimental bands and is a key component in marching band performances to this day. The Band was also able to redefine the visual landscape of a large military graduation ceremony by being proud, confident Black men wearing uniforms that represented the most vaunted symbols of American power. In other words, the Band was able to claim control of a broad perceptual field both visually and sonically to tell the story of the Indian Wars from its unique point of view. The vitality and obvious emotional impact of the composition, in this moment, does not come from the sheet music. It comes from the act of performance itself.

How the Band Made the Ordinary Extraordinary:

The performance at the Shattuck Academy took place in a time that musicologists consider “pre-ragtime”, as ragtime as a musical style itself was not prevalent in white mainstream musical culture until the rise in popularity of the “King of Ragtime,” composer Scott Joplin, in the early twentieth century. However, Joplin himself claimed that his compositions, and those of his Black peers, were part of a distinctive style of music that existed well before it came to the attention of white audiences in the early 1890s.¹⁰⁴ The rhythmic syncopations that

¹⁰² Reily and Brucher, 53.

¹⁰³ Railsback and Langellier, *The Drums Would Roll*, 17.

¹⁰⁴ W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Beyond Blackface: African Americans and the Creation of American Popular Culture, 1890-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 173.

constitute ragtime had been part of Black life in the South for generations. Enslaved Africans brought to North America often did not speak the same language but were able to communicate through musical expression particular to the Eastern and Western African societies from which they came. First brought to North America in the early days of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the enslaved used drums as a form of communication, “sending coded rhythmic messages, often over long distances, which Europeans could not understand.”¹⁰⁵ However, following the Stono Slave Rebellion that began on September 9, 1739 in the colony of South Carolina, as well as subsequent uprisings over the next two years in both Georgia and South Carolina, plantation slave owners finally realized that drumming was not just mere entertainment—it was a form of communication.

Rhythm instruments were banned across plantations; however, the slavers could not ban rhythm itself. The performance practice of “pattin’ juba” arose. The body as a rhythm instrument—stomping the feet and slapping the arms, legs, chest, and cheeks—replaced drumming instruments with pure physicality. Frederick J. Taylor contends that this “physicality used in slave dance music...eventually led to piano rags.”¹⁰⁶ However, this practice was not simply a replacement for drumming. Saidiya Hartman argues that it was also a “coded text of protest [which] utilized rhythm...as cover for social critique.”¹⁰⁷ The sonic power of a military marching band lies in its large acoustic spectrum which can “redefine the soundscape

¹⁰⁵ Joseph E. Holloway, *Africanisms in American Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019), 58.

¹⁰⁶ Frederick J. Taylor, “Black Music and Musicians in the Nineteenth Century,” *The Western Journal of Black Studies* 29, no. 3 (2005): 617.

¹⁰⁷ Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth Century America* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2022), 70.

encompassed by its range.”¹⁰⁸ I contend that the Band leaned into the style of ragtime, perhaps adding even more syncopation than the sheet music suggested. I come to this conclusion based on local newspaper accounts of the Band that specifically described its music as “novel,”¹⁰⁹ and “of that lively sort that quickens the pulse and livens the steps.”¹¹⁰ When the Band played standard “patriotic airs” at events, newspapers rarely described the style of the Band, yet when the Band played tunes that were not common to the repertoire, newspapers often described the rhythm of the Band in a manner that suggests it was not as familiar to an ear accustomed to European styles.

The “war whoops” were certainly an improvisation. There is nothing in the sheet music to suggest that it is a purposeful part of the composition. The music begins with a slow, steady cadence—what the reporter refers to as “Indian music”—that is soon overturned by the lilt of western European musical conventions. It can be read as a musical metaphor for colonization itself. Dylan Robinson states that “non-Indigenous composers...largely followed a compositional model that resourced Indigenous music and often placed it in the service of musical nationalism.”¹¹¹ The stark rhythm that begins the song is subsequently crowded out and eliminated in a way that indicates a triumphant army marching in and overtaking the ominous but ultimately subdued Native. In more technical terms, the composition that begins this piece—meant to sound “tribal”—is a straightforward melody line played in a simple minor key with little to no musical development. This percussive rhythm is then overcome by instrumentation

¹⁰⁸ Reily and Brucher, *Brass Bands of the World*, 17.

¹⁰⁹ “The President’s Journey.” *The Appeal*. October 22, 1887.

¹¹⁰ “Parade Notes.” *St. Paul Daily Globe*, February 2, 1888.

¹¹¹ Robinson, *Hungry Listening*, 1.

organized by western musical standards and conventions imbued with harmonic complexity. In other words, the music theory of western Europe, consisting of a melody and a chromatic scale, triumphs over Indigenous North American music, with a twist of African polyrhythmic style which is in opposition to “the usual order and regularity of...the 4/4 time of marches.”¹¹²

The spectators, likely not versed in theory, hear the transition, and perceive a story that they do not even realize they are being told. The syncopation particular to ragtime focuses on the space between the beats instead of on the beats themselves, showcasing a subdivision of musical time. It is “a disturbance or interruption of the regular flow of rhythm.”¹¹³ In this performance, the syncopation can be read as the Band putting its own story in the spaces of the beats that are already taken up by Western musical consciousness. Thus, even though the song itself is reliant on a mythos that centers the settler as triumphant over the vanquished native, the Band, through improvisation and a feel for syncopation not yet common to Euro-American musical tastes, is able to place itself into the mythos, interrupting what is ostensibly the preferred musical narrative with a story of its own devising.

The most obvious improvisation that can be gleaned from the scant description of this event is that of the dramatic gestures and vocalizations meant to represent not only Sitting Bull, but the American Indian in general. At this time, Sitting Bull held national celebrity status in the white American imagination, feared and hated by those still bitter at the defeat of George Custer and the Seventh Cavalry, and held on a pedestal by the “long-haired men and short-haired

¹¹² Brundage, *Beyond Blackface*, 132.

¹¹³ Miles Hoffman, “Syncopation 2,” South Carolina Public Radio, January 24, 2023, <https://www.southcarolinapublicradio.org/show/a-minute-with-miles/2023-01-24/syncopation-2>.

women” of the East Coast cities.¹¹⁴ Most people who knew of Sitting Bull had never had direct contact with him, nor had they much actual contact with Indigenous peoples overall. This song could have been played in the private homes of anybody who owned a piano and would later be taught to young children in public schools. On its own, the composition was just one in a slew of Tin Pan Alley compositions sold for popular consumption. However, this moment at the Shattuck Military Academy was different. I argue that the impact of this performance was due to the direct experience both performers and spectators had with American Indians—specifically the Mdewakanton Dakota and the Hunkpapa Lakota.

In this space, at this time, with these historical actors, the song was more than just a popular ditty, and more than a mere program note for the graduation. The visceral reaction of the spectators indicates that not only were they responding to something new, but they were also responding to events not far in the past that carried over into the present. While the song may have been part of a standard repertoire that the Band had played before and would play for at least another decade, at this moment it became imbued with meaning. The spectators’ reaction indicates an emotional recognition followed by catharsis. The Band’s commitment to the performance indicates it was a story that the musicians were eager to tell. There was a double historical consciousness to the perception of this performance and the history that it embodied. The spectators saw and heard remnants of a terrifying past that had not been laid to rest. The Band inserted its own personal knowledge and agency into the story of a notorious figure. Sitting Bull may have been the nominal focus of the composition, but it was the combination of lived

¹¹⁴ Henry Davenport Northrop. *Indian Horrors or the Massacres of the Red Man* (United States of America: np, 1899), 27.

experiences by both spectators and performers that raised the stakes for everyone, allowing for the co-creation of memory and historical consciousness that sought a way to delegitimize the Indigenous to “indigenize” both white and Black Americans. The performance of this song touched not just on nationalist mythology but, for the Minnesotan spectators, also on recent community experience. Thus, the engagement between the spectators and the Band played a ritual, cathartic role that allowed the Black musicians to assert their own relevance and presence in a way that was emotionally powerful using a double appropriation of displacing (through representing) the Indigenous and inserting themselves in the moral narrative of settlement.

The audacity of the Band’s performance for the surprised audience came from the rhythm but also from the enactment of Indians and settler/Indian warfare. This performance was telling a narrative of history that was still fresh in the minds of the observers as well as telling a history of the regiment. It was a performance of conquest even though it represented a battle in which the Army was soundly defeated. It featured Sitting Bull as a “character,” but also someone with whom the Black regiment had been interacting for several years. Sitting Bull was both in the past, triumphant in battle, and in the present as a prisoner of war. The war whoops and dances were not something replicated by the Band, but something co-created by the musicians and the spectators. The performance took a sound that had historically been either uttered as an act of defiance and war or perceived as a threat that haunted the memories of settlers and made it into a complex and paradoxical narrative. The Band portrayed the Battle of Little Big Horn through the dramatized actions of Sitting Bull and his compatriots—a major victory in terms of Indigenous defense of homeland, but also a symbol of the dying Indian’s last gasp after which the white (and possibly Black) settler emerges triumphant.

Black Bandsmen Playing Indian:

In *Playing Indian*, Philip Deloria focuses on the performative phenomenon of white settlers adopting what they considered to be the characteristics of a generalized American culture. He describes this performativity as a way “through which Americans redefined themselves as something other than British colonists...white Americans molded similar narratives of national identity around the rejection of an older European consciousness and an almost mystical imperative to become new.”¹¹⁵ I argue that the members of the Band also had a vested interest in redefinition. This kind of staging between Black performers and white audiences is part of what Elizabeth Dillon calls “the ongoing effort to erase Native peoples from the polity and to eradicate their claims to Indigenous sovereignty.”¹¹⁶ Joseph Roach argues that “the relentless search for the purity of origins is a voyage not of discovery but of erasure.”¹¹⁷ Was the Band performing Indianness because they “could identify with Native Americans, bitter exiles in their own land” as Roach suggests?¹¹⁸ Or did the Band members use “Indianness to signify freedom, inversion, rebellion, and aboriginality” as Deloria suggests when discussing the Black Mardi Gras Indians of New Orleans?¹¹⁹ It is important to distinguish between the performances of the Mardi Gras Indians and those of the Band, as the impetus for these practices likely came from very different perspectives and motivations. Unlike the Black men who

¹¹⁵ Philip Joseph Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 2.

¹¹⁶ Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, *New World Drama: the Performative Commons in the Atlantic World, 1649-1849* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 132.

¹¹⁷ Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, 6.

¹¹⁸ Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, 205.

¹¹⁹ Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 199.

originated the Mardi Gras Indians, the members of the Band were a part of the repressive state apparatus tasked with eradicating the Indigenous nations rather than to seek affinity or kinship. Whereas the performances of the Mardi Gras Indians can be understood in the context of carnival, which presumes an inversionary logic of misrule, the Band's performance at the Shattuck Academy occurred in the context of the settler institutional ritual of a military graduation.

Deloria describes the white act of playing Indian as a “dialectic of simultaneous desire and repulsion...[seeing] Indians as oppositional figures against whom one might imagine a civilized self.”¹²⁰ He only considers a single example of Black Americans engaged in Indianness in the context of Mardi Gras, perhaps because the history of Black regiment band members playing Indian is not well-known and until this dissertation has gone completely unexamined. Deloria further argues that “playing Indian offered Americans a national fantasy—identities built not around synthesis and transformation, but around unresolved dualities themselves.”¹²¹ In the nineteenth century, following emancipation and the Civil War, questions of this kind of duality for the formerly enslaved and their descendants proliferated in both the Black and white press. White settlers, especially those who arrived from non-Anglo European countries, felt the pressure to assimilate and to make themselves known as truly American and worthy of belonging in their new continental home. The pressure for emancipated Black citizens was even greater.

A Black man who joined the Army at this time did so, in part, to negotiate the narrative of how somebody of African descent could fit into the American national project. Seeking an

¹²⁰ Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 8.

¹²¹ Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 185.

attachment to the land on which they lived and labored was integral to this realization. Some joined the Army to be accepted as American. In contrast to Roach who claims that the Mardi Gras Indians disguised themselves as Indians in an “imaginative re-creation and repossession of Africa,” I argue that when the Band played Indian, its goal was to indicate a possessive investment in American citizenship. Its performance worked to separate the notion that Blackness and slavery were intertwined and to promote the image of a land-owning Black citizen willing to fight the white man’s war while also asserting Black people as vital to the origins of the United States. The act of “playing Indian” was a provocative and popular mode in which to accomplish this goal, allowing the Band to define themselves as something other than the abject descendants of African slavery and become an equal player in the new American national identity. Though this perspective would be subject to change at the turn of the twentieth century, in the decade discussed in this chapter, much of the intellectual output of Black journalists and scholars underscores the desire to see the emancipated as essentially American and indisputably separate from the African continent.

The stereotypical “war whoop” is still embedded in American popular culture and historical consciousness, even in the twenty-first century. In 2016, Indigenous activist Sarah Sunshine Manning (Shoshone-Paiute, Chippewa-Cree) reported on the actions of a group of young white students toward her own Native American students at the South Dakota Student Council State Convention. In an incident that Manning refers to as “hand-over-mouth mockery,” a group of white students mocked the Native American students as they sang an Indigenous honor song for their fellow student council leaders from across the state. This mockery took the form of the stereotypical “Indian war whoop,” a sonic phenomenon that is so ubiquitous in

American culture that the white adults attending the gathering “struggled to even call out the mockery as blatant racism.”¹²² It is a gesture nearly as old as the nation itself. The soldiers of the Confederacy appropriated it and turned it into the “rebel yell.” It has been seen and heard at sporting events, on cartoons, in movies, and even on the Trump campaign trail in 2018 as a mockery of Elizabeth Warren. This utterance is embedded in the sonic historical consciousness of our nation and is primarily deployed either in mockery of Indigenous peoples or as a misguided tribute. The Band’s representation of Sitting Bull and “Indianness” in general worked to supersede the prejudice a spectator may hold due to the Blackness of their skin. The visceral thrill of the war whoop made it clear that the savagery did not come from men dressed in the colors of the United States Army. Instead, the real savage, the real threat to American sovereignty and white supremacy was the stubborn and heroic Sitting Bull and all that he represented as the last holdout to white domination.

The members of the Band were more than just performers and producers of a greater Department of War agenda. They were active theorists and agents of the way they performed to control, to an extent, the way in which they were perceived by their audiences. In this moment, the performance, “The Battle With Sitting Bull,” was both a popular ragtime tune that represented one of America’s most captivating personalities—Sitting Bull—as well as a medium in which to perform their own direct lived experience as participants in the Indian Wars and as guards to Sitting Bull during their time at Fort Randall. The performance placed Black bodies in

¹²² Sarah Sunshine Manning, “Pushing Back Against Racist War Cry Mockery,” *Indian Country Today News*, The Arena Group, September 12, 2018, <https://indiancountrytoday.com/archive/manning-pushing-back-against-racist-war-cry-mockery>.

uniform as integral to the pacification of the Indigenous threat. It portrayed the soldiers as brave men who were up to the challenge of imprisoning a larger-than-life figure like Sitting Bull. It also gave the Band the opportunity to turn the assumption of the savagery of the African on its head through embodiment of the Indigenous savage—arguably a more salient threat to the spectators at Shattuck Academy than a descendant of Southern slavery could ever be. By embodying Sitting Bull, members of the Band could at least temporarily upend the presumed hierarchies embedded in a white supremacist ideology. They could do this through choreography as well as through the iconic Indian war whoop.

Conclusion:

As the notion of the war whoop and the reputation of Sitting Bull became associated more with entertainment than with warfare in the American imagination, the Band continued to keep this mode of performance in its repertoire until at least the end of the nineteenth century. A local Missoula newspaper documented another performance of Sitting Bull in 1895—the same year that the Band became the central feature of a multi-day Emancipation Celebration held in Butte. At a concert given for the public the evening after Thanksgiving, the Band “scored a decided hit in the Indian War Dance, in which Drum Major Joseph White took the role of ‘Sitting Bull,’ the famous Indian Chief.”¹²³

By the 1890s, Black communities in Montana were firmly established. The core of many of these communities was Black families whose patriarchs had served in one of the four

¹²³ “Fort Missoula Notes,” *The Missoulian* (Missoula, MT), November 30, 1895.

segregated Army regiments. Their “connection to settler violence was direct and inescapable.”¹²⁴ As settlers, these families both directly engaged in the social formations that robbed Native Americans of their homelands and also challenged many of the settler logics of white supremacy that sought to justify dispossession.¹²⁵ Always in a paradoxical position, the Band often performed those logics by bolstering settler ideology while also, by its mere presence, cutting deep into some of the most foundational settler beliefs about home and belonging. This same dichotomy would come into play as the Band celebrated the end of slavery with different Black communities throughout the West.

¹²⁴ Wood, *Black Montana*, 54.

¹²⁵ Wood, *Black Montana*, 22.

CHAPTER TWO

Performing Emancipation Days: 1887 and 1895

“My emancipation don’t fit your equation.”

--Lauryn Hill¹²⁶

What circumstance could possibly lead to the cancellation of an annual Emancipation Day event? Establishing commemoration as an annual event is a vital part of remembering and celebrating the end of slavery, whether in the British West Indies, Washington D.C., or the Confederate States. The repetition is part of the memory-making process as well as a way to mark the progress of the present moment and to imagine how Black people will continue to influence the nation in the future. These annual celebrations were an important ritual that the musicians in the Band seemed to take quite seriously.

The Band was frequently involved in Emancipation Celebrations in a variety of locations. While assigned to Fort Randall in 1882, the Band crossed almost the entirety of Dakota Territory to perform alongside the Seventh Cavalry Band for an August 1 celebration at Fort Meade, located east of what is now Sturgis, South Dakota. The Seventh Cavalry was the regiment, under the command of Lt. Col. George Custer, that was soundly defeated by the Lakota, Northern Cheyenne, and Arapaho nations at the Battle of the Little Bighorn (known to the Indigenous nations as the Battle of the Greasy Grass) only eight years before in 1876.¹²⁷ A battalion of the Twenty-Fifth occupied Fort Meade alongside the Seventh, and the Band annually embarked on a

¹²⁶ Lauryn Hill. 1998. “Lost Ones.” Track #2 on *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill*. Ruffhouse Records, Hip-Hop.

¹²⁷ “Emancipation Day,” *Black Hills Daily Pioneer*, (Deadwood, Dakota Territory) July 18, 1882.

journey from Fort Randall to Fort Meade to include this battalion, as well as Black residents of the Black Hills, to ensure a lively musical component to the festivities.

The commemoration of 1882 appears to have been led by Black non-commissioned officers of the Twenty-Fifth, with a Sergeant reading the Emancipation Proclamation and a Captain delivering the main address. A battalion drill and review parade were prominently featured in the program.¹²⁸ The following year, the Band traveled from Fort Snelling back to Fort Meade to celebrate, once again in partnership with the Seventh Cavalry band. Newspaper reports indicate that the planning for the 1883 celebration had been taken over by “a committee of colored citizens.”¹²⁹ The Band returned to Fort Meade a third time in 1884, performing at what had become the standard commemoration in the Black Hills of Dakota Territory.¹³⁰

The Band did not return in 1885. There was no celebration that year. Instead, a month before the celebration would have taken place, “a small body of armed men with shotguns” seized Cpl. Ross Hallon of Company A of the Twenty-Fifth Infantry from the local jail and hung him from a tree.¹³¹ Hallon had been accused of murdering the town doctor. Hallon’s culpability in the crime was never proven as he was lynched before any action could be taken. Members of the white Seventh Cavalry were convinced of his guilt and soldiers in the Twenty-Fifth Infantry believed Hallon was innocent. The tension between the two regiments grew until, in the early morning of September 20, a group of soldiers from the Twenty-Fifth allegedly opened fire on

¹²⁸ “Notice,” *Black Hills Daily Pioneer*, (Deadwood, Dakota Territory) July 22, 1882.

¹²⁹ *Black Hills Daily Pioneer*, (Deadwood, DT) July 21, 1883.

¹³⁰ “Emancipation Day,” *Black Hills Daily Pioneer*, (Deadwood, Dakota Territory) July 18, 1884.

¹³¹ Thomas R. Buecker, “Confrontation at Sturgis: An Episode in Civil Military Relations, 1885,” *South Dakota History* 14, no. 3 (1985): 251.

three saloons patronized by Seventh Cavalry troops.¹³² After deliberating for two days, on September 22 the board of officers tasked with the investigation of the case charged four privates of the Twenty-Fifth. The very day that should have held a joint musical performance between the Twenty-Fifth and Seventh regimental bands was instead the day these four Black soldiers were “transported under heavy guard to the county jail, where they were held pending trial.”¹³³

What puts a stop to an annual tradition of the celebration of Black freedom? The “national pastime” of extrajudicial violence against Black bodies and the retaliatory actions in kind that fueled further animosity between two groups whose tenuous affiliation with each other would never recover.¹³⁴ Even in the act of celebration, the Black soldiers were to be constantly reminded of the limits of being Black and free in the United States.

Whereas in the first chapter I focused on the Band’s popularity, particularly regarding its “redface” performances of Sitting Bull and the War Whoop in both Minnesota and Montana, the focus of this chapter analyzes two Emancipation Day celebrations in which the Band performed in those same two states. The first performance I analyze is the 1887 Emancipation Day celebration held at the Minneapolis Industrial Exposition. The second performance is an 1895 celebration that spanned four days in Butte, Montana. These events are in tension with the Sitting Bull performances in that they assert Black freedom and Black futurity that has no place in white-settler nationalist historical consciousness. Rather than asserting the importance of Black labor in the white imagination of the building of a new nation on the land of vanquished

¹³² Buecker, “Confrontation at Sturgis,” 252.

¹³³ Buecker, “Confrontation at Sturgis,” 253.

¹³⁴ John Henry Adams, “The National Pastime,” *The Crisis*, January 1911, 19.

Indigenous nations, in the emancipation celebrations, the Band inserted itself into the multifaceted debates in Black communities as to the place that the memory of slavery had in building a sustainable future for Black Americans. Emancipation celebrations offered a rare opportunity to publicly shape a narrative of American history that centered Black people “at the heart of the American past, drenched in the blood of antislavery martyrs.”¹³⁵

An examination of the Band’s participation in these celebrations shows the tensions and contradictions of celebrating emancipation in a settler regime, particularly when the disciplinary apparatus of the settler state is invited to participate and even becomes a central element of the commemoration. These performances often utilized certain “tropes” of Blackness that could be interpreted in wildly different ways depending on the racial historical consciousness of the musician and the spectator. The Band played at a “cultural crossroads by creating multifaceted musical representations that supported complex, even contradictory, readings, depending on the subject position of the listener.”¹³⁶ The Band played nimbly across these divergent imaginings of a Black American future with a polyvalent musical repertory that implied varied conceptions of ideological belonging. The musicians accomplished this seemingly without any sense of contradiction or tension.

The history of the Band’s performances at these commemorative events is often a study in contradictions. To fully realize the conflicting interests and often disparate goals of these events, it is necessary for me to paint a fuller picture of the Band’s involvement beyond the

¹³⁵ Amber Bailey, “Days of Jubilee: Emancipation Day Celebrations in Chicago, 1853-1877,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 109, no. 4 (2016): 366.

¹³⁶ Mark Clague, “Instruments of Identity,” 29.

period and locations specified in the introduction of this chapter. As the Band roamed the continent, each new assignment presented a different historical consciousness dependent on the lived experiences and passed down memories of the spectators and organizers involved. While assigned to Fort Niobrara in Nebraska in 1902, the Band “gave its usual ball the twenty-fourth of September.” The language of this news item indicates that the Band had a reputation for choosing the anniversary of the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation as a day to connect and commemorate with local Black communities. This celebration featured a ball with music provided by the Band in addition to a “well attended” production of “Uncle Toms Cabin.”¹³⁷ And on September 22, 1918, along the previously unobstructed boundary line on International Street separating Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Senora, Mexico, the Band celebrated emancipation even as the United States erected what was most likely the first permanent barrier to control the movement of people across the U.S.-Mexico border.¹³⁸ This celebration coincided with the Band’s weekly public concert. As Nogales was primarily populated by white and Mexican American residents, the local newspaper reported “an unusual crowd” in attendance—Black miners from the nearby mining towns of Patagonia and Washington Camp.¹³⁹

Emancipation celebrations offered an opportunity for the musicians in the Band to form kinship bonds with local Black residents across the West. In a time when newly emancipated and enfranchised Black Americans had more freedom of self-expression and were motivated by a desire to insert their own narratives into the nation’s historical consciousness, the members of the

¹³⁷ “News From the Frontier,” *The Colored American*, October 4, 1902.

¹³⁸ “At the Methodist Church,” *The Daily Morning Oasis*, (Nogales, AZ), September 22, 1918.

¹³⁹ “Local and Personal,” *The Daily Morning Oasis*, (Nogales, AZ), September 25, 1918.

segregated Black regiments remained vigilant about adhering to the Army's standards in a way that proved agency over their own choices, within the limits of the military apparatus. This was not only for their safety but was also built out of a desire to root themselves to the North American soil, to overcome "an ongoing experience of placelessness that follows from the absence of an enduring connection to a landscape or people."¹⁴⁰ These emancipation celebrations had the potential to make the cities in which they took place into "a proper space of collective inhabitance."¹⁴¹

The Band's time at Fort Snelling in Minnesota and its time at Fort Missoula in Montana share many similarities. Like Fort Snelling, Fort Missoula was located close to a major metropolitan area with small Black communities. The relative time of inactivity, militarily speaking, afforded the Band and the enlisted soldiers the same opportunity to network among both white and Black citizens, using martial music to embed a certain degree of Blackness into social spaces that were often accustomed to segregation. While there was always the background noise of derogatory comments and assumptions of innate inferiority, the Regiment's time in the Mountain West proved to be socially and culturally similar to its time in the Upper Midwest. Many members of the Black regiment decided to make Minnesota or Montana their home following the end of their enlistments. These emancipation celebrations were only one way of transforming the space which they occupied into the place where they lived.

Always dwelling within the paradigm of paradox, the Band and soldiers who took part in these events also unintentionally highlighted the ways in which the settler state violently

¹⁴⁰ Rifkin, *Fictions of Land and Flesh*, 43.

¹⁴¹ Rifkin, *Fictions of Land and Flesh*, 13.

attempted to uphold its own ideological goals. Black settlement of the West, facilitated by the colonial project of Indigenous removal and elimination of which the Twenty-Fifth Infantry was part, “would come to be a defining theme in the experiences of Black communities... across the American West.”¹⁴² The performative choices by the Band at these celebrations were not only a declaration of sovereignty for Black settlers, but also an affirmation of the United States military geographies—“the seemingly benign ways in which a military institution establishes control over land.”¹⁴³ The musical repertoires for these celebrations were standard settler favorites with Southern airs once beloved by the Confederacy as well. Some celebrations consisted of picnics and sports contests, while others featured the symbolically violent mechanisms of Black derogation: minstrel shows and cakewalks.¹⁴⁴ The participation of the Black regiments served as a reminder of how many Black men and women lost their lives in the fight for emancipation. These occasions also celebrated something that not every Black person wanted to remember, and that others considered distasteful to what should be a solemn occasion. There was a battle among Black communities for a narrative of historical consciousness, and there was a nationwide battle for a national historical consciousness. Emancipation celebrations were just one of the many ways that historical knowledge and consciousness were disseminated among Black communities and especially across generational lines before written histories and school instruction were widely available.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Anthony Wood, *Black Montana*, 33.

¹⁴³ Woodward, *Military Geographies*, 12.

¹⁴⁴ See “The Cakewalk Business” (2008) by Saidiya Hartman and *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (2013) by Trent Lott for in-depth discussion on the origins of both blackface minstrelsy and cakewalks.

¹⁴⁵ Kachun, *Festivals of Freedom*, 13.

Mitch Kachun notes that emancipation celebrations in locations such as Minnesota and Montana were part of a “mature commemorative tradition...widely recognized by both Black and white as a defining feature of a vibrant free Black culture in the North.”¹⁴⁶ As defining as these features may have been, they were not universally agreed upon within various Black communities and the activities within the events could vary widely depending on factors as varied as the time of year, the organizations involved in planning, the source of funding, and the vagaries of current local and national politics.

The two celebrations that I analyze in this chapter show us that these events were not only about emotional expressions of jubilee. They were also examples of accommodation to white standards of remembrance, and for the Band, the standards of behavior and comportment expected of them by Army regulations. Still performing in the Era of Professionalization, the Band worked alongside the Army’s interest in becoming a major contributor to the economic and social development of the United States. During the 1887 celebration at the Minneapolis Exposition, the Band joined a commemoration that emphasized the entrepreneurial spirit of capitalist enterprise and the importance of Black citizens in building wealth and capital to ensure a stable future. However, the Band, normally at the forefront of any occasion to which it was invited, was relegated to the role of backup band, providing the accompaniment for a white celebrity as he roused the crowd with popular minstrel songs.

The Band may have been hired out independently by the white organizing committee of the 1887 celebration as the Department of War had not yet prohibited the practice of allowing

¹⁴⁶ Kachun, “Before the Eyes of All Nations,” 302.

regimental bands to earn extra income through local patronage. The local newspapers, as well as regimental returns, do not give any indication as to whether the management of the Minneapolis Expo sought permission from the government. Conversely, during the 1895 commemoration in Butte, Montana, the Band participated in a celebration tinged with plantation nostalgia and doubt, by some Black community members, that these celebrations were for the benefit of Black Americans at all. For the celebration in Butte, the secretary of war “kindly granted permission” to provide the music for the occasion.¹⁴⁷

Emancipation Celebrations in Wider Context:

Before discussing the specificities of emancipation celebrations in Minnesota and Montana, it is important to understand the wider context of freedom festivals in the northern United States, and how different dates became marked for commemoration.¹⁴⁸ Following Susan O’Donovan, it is important to remember that “emancipation” does not adequately describe the halting progression toward the end of slavery. Emancipation was a process, not a singularity. It cannot be pinned down to a particular moment or date because it is an ongoing historical development.¹⁴⁹ Historians of freedom celebrations concur that beginning in 1834, when the British Empire’s Abolition of Slavery Act came into effect, August 1 became the most popular day to advocate for the emancipation of the enslaved within the antebellum United States. It was

¹⁴⁷ “Emancipation Day,” *The Butte Daily Post*, (Butte, MT), September 20, 1895.

¹⁴⁸ While emancipation was recognized, defined, and celebrated by enslaved populations in the South, the mode of commemoration and the political goals behind them differed from those of the North and is outside the scope of this chapter.

¹⁴⁹ Susan O’Donovan, “Freedom’s Revolutions: Rethinking Emancipation and Its History,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 72, no. 4 (2013): 252.

an aspirational holiday as well as an irresistible opportunity to publicly challenge the federal government to follow in the footsteps of the British Empire.¹⁵⁰ For free Northern Black communities in thirteen states across the US, the First of August also became an established counter-celebration to the Independence Day festivities, which they were often barred from attending, or chose not to attend for their own safety.¹⁵¹ Fourth of July festivities could too often turn into an excuse to inflict violence on entire Black communities. James Forten, a nineteenth century Black businessman in Philadelphia, once remarked that it was a “well-known fact that Black people...dare not be seen after twelve o’clock in the day” on the anniversary of American Independence.¹⁵²

Celebrations on August 1 expanded throughout the North for the next 28 years until the Emancipation Proclamation brought both “calendrical and geographical expansion” to emancipation celebrations.¹⁵³ William B. Gravely notes that, prior to August 1, 1834, the “characteristic form of black double-consciousness in the freedom celebrations was an explicit ‘Afri-American’ identity.” However, once the British West Indies was emancipated, celebrants tended to pay less attention to an African past and instead began to emphasize “how American slavery originated and the struggle for freedom in America.”¹⁵⁴ What had before been an

¹⁵⁰ Emily Blanck, “Juneteenth and Emancipation Celebrations,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedias, American History*, (2021): 4.

¹⁵¹ dann j. Broyld, “‘A Success in Every Particular’: British August First Celebrations in Canada and America and the Black Quest for Unblemished Commemorations, While Critiquing July Fourth, 1834-1861,” *American Review of Canadian Studies* 47, no. 4 (2017): 337.

¹⁵² Charles Johnson and Patricia Smith, *Africans in America: America’s Journey through Slavery* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1998), 225.

¹⁵³ Kachun, *Festivals of Freedom*, 11.

¹⁵⁴ Gravely, “The Dialectic of Double-Consciousness,” 304-305.

increasingly unified tradition began to unravel, expand, and develop regional idiosyncrasies and ideologies.

Fragmentation of the early traditions of emancipation festivities began in Washington, D.C. The city became the site of the nation's largest postbellum freedom festivals, celebrating every April 16 in commemoration of the District of Columbia Compensated Emancipation Act of 1862.¹⁵⁵ Nearly concurrently, the anniversary of the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation issued on September 22, 1862, also became a popular date for picnics and celebration. The Black Christian community in Boston and other Northern cities further decentralized the preferred date by adapting the Christian tradition of Watch Night into an annual emancipation event.¹⁵⁶ Each year, Black churches held services in commemoration of the long vigil held by Frederick Douglass and others in Boston's Tremont Hall as they awaited the issuance of the final Emancipation Proclamation at the stroke of midnight on January 1, 1863.¹⁵⁷ Finally, June 19, 1865, marked the first Juneteenth in Galveston, Texas. It was not until the 1970s that June 19 became the preferred date not only in Minnesota, but throughout the United States. What began as an informal Texas holiday spread throughout the country only in the late twentieth century when Black Texans themselves migrated to other states and brought the spirit of the celebration with them. Juneteenth was designated as a national holiday in 2021.

¹⁵⁵Blanck, "Juneteenth," 5.

¹⁵⁶ The tradition of Watch Night began in eighteenth century Moravian churches. The occasion was marked with a vigil in reflection of the year past and contemplation of the year to come. Alicja Zelazko, "Watch Night," *Brittanica, Encyclopedia Brittanica*, January 5, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Watch-Night>.

¹⁵⁷ Blanck, "Juneteenth," 5.

According to Mitch Kachun, freedom festivals serve three active purposes: to “congregate, educate, and agitate.”¹⁵⁸ Black Americans in both Minnesota and Montana had conflicting ideas of how to create a space of action, necessitating different methods of remembrance and public discourse. In the era before Juneteenth became the primary day of observance, settling on a single date was only part of the lively debates that kept commemoration and historical consciousness at the forefront of local politics. While it is possible to separate these debates thematically (for example: sacred, secular, and patriotic), it is also important to remember each anniversary resonated with communities in a multitude of ways. While some observances were more steeped in religious or folk iconography, no celebration was purely secular or sacred. Each gathering combined different elements of politics, patriotism, jubilation, and prayer, with many organizers, attendees, and non-participating observers advocating for their own preferred method of engaging the public.

Emancipation Celebrations in Minnesota:

The first recorded emancipation celebration in Minnesota took place the year that Minnesota achieved statehood in 1858. Despite the state of Minnesota being the first to send a volunteer regiment to fight for the Union during the Civil War, the decision to outlaw slavery in the new state of Minnesota was contentious. Slavery had been practiced in the region since the arrival of French fur traders in the eighteenth century and continued inside the walls of Fort Snelling until shortly before the Civil War, directly contravening federal law prohibiting the

¹⁵⁸ Kachun, *Festivals*, 9.

expansion of slavery on the northern frontier.¹⁵⁹ The growth of steamboat traffic on the Mississippi made it easy for agents from Fort Snelling to access the St. Louis slave market, which facilitated their importation to the fort.

Col. Josiah Snelling, the commanding officer of the Fifth Infantry for whom the fort was named, held enslaved people to attend to the domestic needs of himself and his family. Indian Agent Lawrence Taliaferro brought enslaved people with him during his nearly twenty years at the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers, among them a young girl named Harriet Robinson who would meet and marry Dred Scott at Fort Snelling. Dred Scott himself was brought to Fort Snelling by the Army surgeon John Emerson.¹⁶⁰ Col. Zachary Taylor, commander of the post in the late 1820s, later a Major General in the army and eventually the twelfth president of the United States, also brought enslaved labor to the fort.¹⁶¹ These are only a few examples of the scores of Army officers who perpetuated slavery in free territory for decades. From 1820 through the Civil War, over half of all the domestic labor at Fort Snelling was performed by enslaved Black people brought from the South by the officers of the Army. This practice, endemic to the nineteenth century Army, only ended with the adoption of the new

¹⁵⁹ William D. Green, *A Peculiar Imbalance: The Fall and Rise of Racial Inequality in Minnesota, 1837-1869* (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2007), 5.

¹⁶⁰ Dred and Harriet Scott's enslavement at Fort Snelling formed a key component of the court case that ultimately ended up in the Supreme Court in 1857. In the infamous "Dred Scott Decision," the majority in the Supreme Court ruled that Black people have no right to citizenship and no right to protection under the nation's laws. The Supreme Court also ruled that Congress does not have the authority to prohibit slavery in the western territories because to do so would be to violate the Fifth Amendment property rights of white American citizens. This overtly political court ruling became a major focus in Abraham Lincoln's presidential campaign and was ultimately one of the final instigators of the U.S. Civil War.

¹⁶¹ Green, *A Peculiar Imbalance*, 9. Zachary Taylor was also the last president to bring enslaved people to the White House as domestic servants.

state constitution in October 1857 which expressly prohibited slavery and involuntary servitude.¹⁶²

Less than a year later, on August 14, 1858, *The Minnesotian* reported on a celebration of West Indian emancipation that took place at “the beautiful grove on Nicolett Island.” This gathering was presided over by local abolitionist, W.D. Babbitt.¹⁶³ The weekly newspaper grudgingly praised the occasion, claiming that even though “the meeting was called for an unpopular purpose, at a short notice, on a busy working day, in the open air, and under threatening skies, the demonstration was a remarkable success.” The reporter observed that “a large majority were in evident sympathy with the object of the gathering.” Babbitt read from a previously prepared set of ten resolutions, proclaiming that “whatever may have been the motives of the British government in the measure of Emancipation, the day we celebrate...is a day dear to Humanity...Emancipation is both safe and wise.” The resolutions further contended that “the political rights and liberties of ‘white’ men, can be maintained in no way but by defending the equal rights and liberties of *all* men.” (emphasis in original text). Professor G. B. Stone of the Minneapolis Union School assured the gathered audience that the success of West Indian emancipation had proven that “violence and anarchy” would not take place in the event of

¹⁶² Green, *A Peculiar Imbalance*, 90.

¹⁶³ It is unlikely that the crowd of approximately 500 people in attendance was a multiracial one. The Black population in Minnesota before the Civil War was vanishingly small. As a rule, white newspapers of the day diligently specified race when writing about Black people, usually with the descriptor “colored”, but also with more derogatory choices like “sable” or “darkie.” Given the anonymous *Minnesotian* reporter’s apparent skepticism of the rationale behind the event, it is reasonable to assume he would have commented upon anyone in the crowd who did not appear to be white. It is most likely that this emancipation celebration attracted primarily white community members sympathetic to the abolitionist cause.

emancipation. He predicted that crime would decrease, and the value of real estate would only increase.¹⁶⁴

Describing a freedom celebration in St. Paul held on January 1, 1868, the *Minneapolis Tribune* informed its readers that “a good many local democrats were surprised at the dignity, decency, moderation, and propriety” of the Black organizers and attendees.¹⁶⁵ On August 1, 1871, the *Mower County Transcript* noted the presence of Lansing’s own “lone colored barber” who celebrated West Indian Emancipation by putting on “an extra air, due to his remembrance of the time when he wore the shackles of bondage.”¹⁶⁶ The next year, the *Minneapolis Tribune* provided coverage of an August 1 celebration at Minnehaha Falls that was attended by Black Minnesotans from all over the state.¹⁶⁷

In 1886, the *St. Paul Daily Globe* reported on a meeting held at 110 Washington Ave. S. and attended by the “colored citizens of Minneapolis...at which it was decided to celebrate the emancipation of slaves on New Year’s Day.”¹⁶⁸ This year also marked the first year in which Black organizers of the Twin Cities attempted to commemorate emancipation on September 22, planning a day-long affair at Oak Lake Rink. For reasons never made entirely clear, the celebration “failed to materialize.” The *Minneapolis Tribune* reported: “The speakers, including Dr. A.A. Ames and Judge J.P. Rea were on hand, but not a handful of colored brothers were present at 9:15 p.m. when the speakers adjourned.” Instead, the few Black band members that also showed up decided “that they would wait till the waiters from the hotels and the barbers

¹⁶⁴ “Anniversary of West Indian Emancipation,” *Minnesotian*, (St. Paul, MN), August 14, 1858.

¹⁶⁵ “The Celebration of the Colored Men,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, (Minneapolis, MN), January 5, 1869.

¹⁶⁶ *Mower County Transcript*, (Lansing, MN) August 3, 1871.

¹⁶⁷ “Rejoicings of the Colored Race,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, (Minneapolis, MN), August 2, 1872.

¹⁶⁸ “Meeting of Colored Brethren,” *St. Paul Daily Globe*, (St. Paul, MN), December 23, 1885.

would come” so that the laborers would have a chance to dance all night long.¹⁶⁹ Despite the disappointment of this event, September 22 was celebrated for the next three years at the Minneapolis Industrial Exposition.

Emancipation Day at the Minneapolis Expo, 1887:

The Band was frequently a defining feature of emancipation celebrations in the Twin Cities, participating in at least four of the six years of its assignment at Fort Snelling, often lending musical accompaniment to multiple celebrations held throughout the year. These celebrations tended to increase in size over the years as the Black population of the Twin Cities grew. For the Band, the largest celebration occurred in 1887 at the Minneapolis Industrial Exposition. This celebration coincided with the twenty-fifth anniversary of the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation; therefore, it was held on September 22. It was the most widely attended celebration to date, drawing Black citizens from across Minnesota, as well as Iowa and Wisconsin.

The event was widely promoted by John Q. Adams, the editor of the regional Black newspaper, the *Western Appeal*. In a slew of editorials placed in each edition for months before the actual event, Adams exhorted his readers to attend in droves to “show the people of the great Northwest that we are here in very considerable numbers and that we are able to successfully cope with them in our acquired abilities.” Adams encouraged local Black businesses to close on the day of the celebration “in order to allow their employees an opportunity to attend the

¹⁶⁹ “In General,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, (Minneapolis, MN), September 23, 1886.

celebration at the expo.” He opined that a show of “our large attendance and genteel deportment” would show the white organizers of the exhibition “that we fully understand and appreciate their motives in according us this special day.” Adams acknowledged the narrow view that many white Minnesotans held and how their general disregard of their fellow Black citizens curbed most opportunities for economic and social equality by stating: “Of course we know that we are just as much American as any people can be, having been to the manor born, but as a distinct class we should endeavor in every way to impress our more highly favored brothers and sisters with the importance of paying more attention to us than they usually do.”¹⁷⁰

The Appeal estimated that 5,000 Black people attended that day and remained until late into the evening, some even lingering until two o’clock in the morning. The immense exhibition hall was filled with “the marvelous production of man’s skill.”¹⁷¹ In previous years, the participation of the Band was remarked upon as the most prominent feature of any celebration in which they attended. Only the year before, on August 1, 1886, the celebration prominently featured the Band who launched the festivities by parading “through the principal streets [of St. Paul] and then marched to the depot.” The celebrants followed the Band along their parade route and then boarded the train that took them to the main celebration at White Bear Lake. Once there, the Band played music all day long while members of the communities enjoyed a picnic lunch, dancing, and baseball games long into the evening.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ *Western Appeal*, (St. Paul, MN), September 10, 1887.

¹⁷¹ “Emancipation Day,” *The Western Appeal*, (St. Paul, MN), September 24, 1887.

¹⁷² “Emancipation Day,” *St. Paul Daily Globe* (St. Paul, MN) August 3, 1886.

The source of funding and the organizational committee for the Minneapolis Expo accounts for the Band's secondary role in the 1887 celebration. Whereas previous emancipation events had been organized and paid for by Black fraternal and community organizations, along with contributions from individual members of the Twin Cities Black communities, Emancipation Day at the Expo was organized and funded by a group of the most prominent and wealthy white businessmen and politicians in Minneapolis. An article in the *Appeal* lists the names of the organizing committee: William D. Washburn, former Republican congressman, future U.S. Senator, and one of the wealthiest men in Minnesota, the industrialist W.G. Byron, George Huhn, a druggist who had already served in two state legislative sessions, and Charles M. Palmer, a newspaper broker who claimed part ownership of all the newspapers in Minneapolis and who would eventually become an organizer of the Associated Press.¹⁷³

The day of the big celebration, the Band acted as accompaniment to the famed Italian cornet virtuoso Alessandro Liberati. As a soloist, Liberati was invited to expositions across the United States throughout the 1870s and 1880s. He frequently played with local brass bands wherever he traveled.¹⁷⁴ In the case of Emancipation Day at the Minneapolis Industrial Exposition, the Band remained in the background for much of the day. Coverage from white newspapers of the event focuses primarily on Liberati, with the soldiers and musicians of the Black regiment receiving only incidental mentions. *The Appeal* made no mention of the Band at all. The newspapers only comment upon a few popular tunes that Liberati, with the accompaniment of the Band, played: "Swanee River" and "Old Kentucky Home," both written

¹⁷³ "Emancipation Day at the Minneapolis Industrial Exposition," *The Appeal* (St. Paul, MN), September 17, 1887.

¹⁷⁴ Glenn D. Bridges, *Pioneers in Brass* (Detroit: Sherwood Publications, 1965), 61.

by Stephen Foster, a prolific composer of minstrel music, and “John Brown’s Body,” a song composed to the tune of “Battle Hymn of the Republic” and one of the most popular songs among the Union Army during the Civil War.¹⁷⁵

Emancipation Day at the Industrial Exposition attracted prominent Black orators and politicians determined to assert themselves, first and foremost, as American. As the distinguished guest of honor, John Mercer Langston, the future first Black Representative of Virginia, pondered aloud the meaning of a public emancipation celebration. This was, and continues to be, a contentious debate surrounding the commemoration of emancipation. For Black Americans living under the hypocrisy of segregation in both the North and the South, the reasons for marking the anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation often boiled down to a stark binary: the occasion should either be a solemn holiday to honor the history of their enslaved ancestors and demonstrate the productive capabilities of the free Black Americans, *or* the date should adopt a forward-looking, carnivalesque atmosphere where people could choose to remember their ancestors while also taking a break from the stresses of daily life.¹⁷⁶

The 1887 celebration blurred the lines of the binary. In his speech, Langston envisioned a holiday that was inclusive of all races, combining both the sacred and raucous. He contended that the occasion was not just for “rejoicing over the proclamation of Lincoln” but was also a time for “both Black and white [to] unite and lift up their voices and proclaim from the house tops that all are celebrating a liberal citizenship in a country common to all.” He reminded his audience to

¹⁷⁵ Andrew Limbong, “One Song Glory,” *Morning Edition*, National Public Radio, July 4, 2018. npr.org/2018/07/04/625351953/one-song-glory.

¹⁷⁶ Blanck, “Juneteenth,” 6.

refute anyone who would argue that Black citizens were not Americans and urged white Minnesotans to “let the Colored People be true to themselves.”¹⁷⁷ Guest speaker, Mr. F.E. Wilson, read aloud the Emancipation Proclamation with a voice that was “distinct and forcible.” The selection of Stephen Foster songs, which to our modern standards are irredeemably racist, “reminds us that many Black Americans considered them a sympathetic evocation of their ancestral rural South...that may have meant more, in certain ways, to Black musicians and audiences than to whites.”¹⁷⁸

The affection and nostalgia that Black attendees may have felt for the Foster tunes, however, could not be understood by some of the white attendees of the celebration. Of course, the day could not be ignored by the white newspapers of the Twin Cities whose coverage of the event shows the ambivalence and blatant racism that white residents held for their Black neighbors, as well as a fundamental lack of understanding of how the memory of slavery was honored through music. John Q. Adams noted the “impartial fair and satisfactory manner” in which the newspapers in the Twin Cities reported the occasion with the single exception of the *St. Paul Globe*, “whose low flung reporter assigned to that duty let his nature get the better of his spirit of fairness, if indeed he possessed any.”¹⁷⁹ The *Globe* reportage described the Black attendees as “simple people” who are characterized by “melancholy pathos [with] rollicking humor.” The reporter describes one elderly man as the “ole pap from Virginey [who] is sitting; a living Uncle Tom in all respect.” While the reporter takes notice of some of the Black attendees

¹⁷⁷ “Emancipation Day,” *Western Appeal* (St. Paul, MN), September 24, 1887.

¹⁷⁸ Lawrence Schenbeck, *Racial Uplift and American Music, 1878-1943* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 101.

¹⁷⁹ *Western Appeal* (St. Paul, MN), September 24, 1887.

“quietly wiping their eyes and cheeks suffused with tears” in response to Liberati and the Band’s rendition of “Old Kentucky Home,” this emotional response does not seem to humanize them in any way. Rather, the reporter understands the presence of tears to be a confirmation of his own assumptions about the supposedly simpler times of slavery in the antebellum South.¹⁸⁰ For the reporter from the *Daily Globe*, these Black American citizens were caricatures frozen in time for whom the future of Minnesota, indeed of the entire nation, was irrelevant. They had no place in a larger narrative of a unified American historical consciousness.

The guest speakers, however, did not dwell on the conditions of slavery but instead emphasized that the day was intended to “proclaim from the house tops that all are celebrating a liberal citizenship in a country common to all, and ruled over by a just constitution, and protected by a law against any internal foe and every external enemy.” The speeches of the day eschewed the notion that a return to Africa was a viable option for the millions of Black citizens of the United States, stating that any notion of return was part of an attitude better left to the antebellum period. Instead, the attendees were urged to “rejoice in the fact that we are free Americans” who have the opportunity of “taking an active part in the affairs of everyday life.”¹⁸¹

That the Band played an integral role in how the soldiers and musicians of the Twenty-Fifth Infantry formed relationships in the Twin Cities is undeniable. The Band was a staple in several community events throughout the six years the regiment spent at Fort Snelling. The musicians participated in several Emancipation Day celebrations that were organized by local Black community and fraternal organizations. The small, local festivities were attended by many

¹⁸⁰ “The Sable Brother,” *St. Paul Daily Globe* (St. Paul, MN), September 23, 1887.

¹⁸¹ “Emancipation Day,” *Western Appeal*, September 24, 1887.

living in the established Black communities of the Twin Cities. The Band led parades through the streets of St. Paul to celebrate emancipation and provided brassy bombast to picnics and orchestral accompaniment to evening balls. Yet, during the largest public commemoration of emancipation held in the Twin Cities and attended by both Black and white citizens, the Band took a backseat, nearly disappearing in the shadow of the great Liberati. The prominent white men who organized the entire event had decision making and financial power to impose the terms of the celebration. They controlled the overt representations of historical consciousness for the largest gathering of Black citizens in Minnesota throughout the 1880s. Perhaps it did not occur to these white organizers that the Band would be a prominent symbol of futurity for the Black spectators. The Band represented mobility, creativity, and autonomy at an institutional level. Then again, perhaps the organizers did, in fact, consider this and deliberately chose musical entertainment that would undermine the powerful performances that the musicians were known for. Yet, a decade later, the Band would join another state-wide Emancipation Day festival in Montana, largely sponsored by a white politician seeking an inroad to the increasingly valuable Black vote. At this celebration, the Band was the center of attention.

Emancipation Day in Montana, 1895:

The Band arrived at Fort Missoula on May 26, 1888, one year before Montana joined the Union as the forty-first state.¹⁸² The Twenty-Fifth Infantry entered this new territory on the heels of a wave of Black settlement that was already establishing Black communities throughout. In

¹⁸² John H. Nankivell and Quintard Taylor, *Buffalo Soldier Regiment: History of the Twenty-Fifth United States Infantry, 1869-1926* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 42.

the years following emancipation, several thousand Black Americans fled the violence of the South during Reconstruction hoping for stability and prosperity in the West, eventually making their way to the new state of Montana. The Western territories seemed a viable option for many of Reconstruction's refugees as their basic rights of citizenship were denied them not only in the South but also increasingly in the urban North. This wave of migration to Montana "peaked following the end of Greater Reconstruction in 1877 and lasted into the early decades of the twentieth century."¹⁸³ In 1880, only 346 Black Americans claimed Montana Territory as their home, however, by 1890, the Black population reached 1,490. They formed communities in Anaconda, Billings, Butte, Great Falls, Helena, and Missoula, choosing, with only a handful of exceptions, urban life over rural.¹⁸⁴ Settling in Montana offered opportunities for education and property ownership that was violently withheld from those who remained in the South. Each community eventually became home to a small Black working middle-class. For these residents, emancipation gave them opportunities to achieve not only the politically conservative goals of property ownership and capital accumulation but also allowed space for "a more radical posturing that demanded immediate civil and social equality for the masses of Black Americans."¹⁸⁵

The Band's time in Montana was marked, as it was in Minnesota, by the evocation of a Black settler ideology that was predicated upon the Black regiment's "role as federal agents forcing tribes onto reservations across the state and then patrolling their borders."¹⁸⁶ The Band

¹⁸³ Wood, *Black Montana*, 33.

¹⁸⁴ Wood, *Black Montana*, 35.

¹⁸⁵ Wood, *Black Montana*, 81.

¹⁸⁶ Wood, *Black Montana*, 56.

portrayed this ideology through its popular Sitting Bull performances that I discussed in Chapter One. The Band also participated in a variety of torchlight processions for different political candidates on both sides of the two-party divide. In their first year at Fort Missoula, the Band led the processions for four Democratic rallies and three Republican rallies. Throughout the decade spent at Fort Missoula, the Band divided its talents evenly between the two parties.

The Band spent much of its time engaging with the city of Missoula by celebrating national holidays, providing music for society balls, rail excursions, weddings, and funerals. In 1896, some members of the Band even toured the state under the banner of “R.W. Tellies Refined Colored Minstrels.” Robert Tellies was one of the most renowned members of the Band, often referred to in local papers as “the great burnt cork comedian” and “the next greatest colored comedian on the stage.”¹⁸⁷ In one of the frequent paradoxes exhibited by the Black regiments, the Band provided musical entertainment for labor union picnics while the soldiers of the regiment frequently acted as strike breakers during the wave of violent labor strikes that spanned Montana and Idaho throughout the 1890s. The Band even tested the public’s tolerance for its seemingly limitless participation when, in 1893, it drew criticism for “leading the advertising procession of the local variety theater.” Although the townspeople had grown accustomed to the Band’s almost ubiquitous presence at public occasions, a local newspaper opined that “the utilitarian theory as applied to army tactics was somewhat strained by the officer in command and that advertising private institutions is not one of the legitimate functions of the army.”¹⁸⁸ Overall, however, the Band was remarkably popular all over the state of Montana throughout its

¹⁸⁷ Hintz, *Buffalo Soldiers and Band Music*, 89.

¹⁸⁸ *The Weekly Missoulian*, (Missoula, MT) January 25, 1893.

duration at Fort Missoula. The Band was mentioned in local newspapers no less than 115 times over the course of the decade.

Despite the Band's obvious popularity, it seems that the musicians only participated in a single emancipation celebration during their time in Montana. That is not to say that the Black communities of the state did not celebrate emancipation. There appears to have been at least one annual celebration on September 22 throughout the entirety of the 1890s. The Band was an integral component of the 1895 celebration, marking the thirty-third anniversary of the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. This was a multi-day celebration attended by over 700 Black Montanans, though *The Anaconda Standard* speculated that the unseasonably cold weather "interfered greatly with the attendance."¹⁸⁹ The Band arrived in Butte on the evening of September 21 and returned to Fort Missoula on September 25. The honored guest speaker was Reverend Charles Cushingberry formerly of the Butte A.M.E. Church. He had been forced to resign in 1894 when it was alleged that William A. Clark, railroad tycoon and future senator of Montana, paid Cushingberry an undisclosed amount for his support in campaigning to make Helena the state capitol of Montana.¹⁹⁰

Upon the Band's arrival at 11:45 p.m., it first played a public concert on the evening of September 21. The members were greeted at the depot by "a number of prominent colored citizens of Butte" who escorted them to their lodging at the Southern Hotel. After registering, the citizens accompanied the Band around town as it stopped to play at different locations. *The Butte*

¹⁸⁹ "It Was 33 Years Ago," *The Anaconda Standard* (Anaconda, MT) September 23, 1895.

¹⁹⁰ "Methodism on the Richest Hill on Earth, 1873-2023," Aldersgate UMC, Aldersgate United Methodist Church, <http://www.aldersgatebutte.org/history.html>.

Miner noted that, while the Band was normally under the leadership of the white bandmaster, Vincent F. Safranek, for the occasion of the emancipation celebration, the Band was conducted by John N. Norton, who would go on to become the Twenty-Fifth Infantry Regiment's first Black Bandmaster twelve years later in 1907.¹⁹¹ The Band played long into the night, from one corner of Butte to another.

Early on September 22, “notwithstanding the cold, miserable character of the day,” the crowd gathered at the Columbia Gardens. The honored guests, Governor Rickards, Mayor Thompson, and the members of Lodge No. 2989 Grand United Order of Odd Fellows (a Black fraternal organization) took seats upon the outdoor stage to the music of the Band. Reverend Cushingberry delivered the opening prayer after which the Band requested that he sing the hymn “In the Shadow of the Rock.” The mayor delivered the welcoming address. He credited “our most illustrious president, Abraham Lincoln, who by his wisdom blotted out slavery in this nation.” Whereas newspaper coverage of the Minneapolis Expo celebration made no indication that Abraham Lincoln was mentioned beyond being credited for writing the Emancipation Proclamation, the celebration in Butte, Montana placed a heavy emphasis on a heroic and wise Lincoln. Governor Rickards, giving the next speech, was “frequently interrupted by applause,” while he deemed the slain president to be “the noblest of the noble men who have lived for their country and died for their countrymen.” After his speech, he unveiled a bust of Lincoln.

His address was followed by a reading of the Emancipation Proclamation, another number played by the Band, then the address by the Reverend Cushingberry. The Reverend

¹⁹¹ “A Musical Treat,” *The Butte Miner* (Butte, MT), September 22, 1895.

began his speech by pondering on “the state of this so-called negro” and the question of “has the negro advanced and what is his future?” Cushingberry stated that “the greatest evidence of the progress of the negro is to be found in the homes which they have built.” Cushingberry passionately lectured the crowd on the limits of religion in uplifting the race. He exhorted the audience to educate their children, to buy houses, and to go into business for themselves. He ended his speech by saying, “Stop all this talk ‘you can have all the world but give me Jesus.’ We want some of the world and Jesus too...Get education, get religion, but in all your getting, get money and save it.”

In the afternoon, a local quartette sang “Slavery Days” written by the Irish American minstrel Edward Harrigan and English vaudeville star Dave Braham. This was followed by a 50-yard footrace. *The Butte Miner* reported that the race was only open “to sons of freedmen.” When this announcement was made “a white boy who had come prepared to enter with the sprinters wanted to know who ‘Freedman’ was.” After the ladies also participated in a foot race “came the most amusing event of the day, the watermelon-eating contest,” followed by “a prize to the person who reached the highest point on the greased pole” and a cake walk which was “won by Joseph White, drum major of the Twenty-fifth Infantry Band, with Miss Cora Howard. The major was also voted the handsomest man in the band.”¹⁹² All of this revelry continued into the evening with a concert given by the Band and Robert Tellies and his minstrel troupe taking the lead in a “laughable sketch” entitled “Life on the Banks of the Mississippi.”¹⁹³

¹⁹² “It Was 33 Years Ago.” *The Anaconda Standard*, September 23, 1895.

¹⁹³ “Emancipation Day.” *The Butte Daily Post*, September 20, 1895.

While coverage from the local white newspapers portray the celebration as one of unproblematic revelry with thoughtful speeches and activities harkening back to the plantation, the short-lived Black newspaper, *The Colored Citizen*, had a more cynical view of the day's events. First and foremost, the editor of the newspaper, J.P. Ball, Jr., revealed that the sponsor of the celebration was none other than Marcus Daly, one of the three "Copper Kings" of Butte, Montana.¹⁹⁴ Ball questions Daly's "selfish interests" in planning an event so that Black Montanans could commemorate the end of slavery. The newspaper editor bristles at the notion that, while Daly, the "smooth talking gentleman informs...the colored people of Butte [that they] are going to give a grand Emancipation celebration," he also plans to pass the expense of the event to those same Black citizens. Ball implored his readers to cease, "in the name of decency," the music and games that reminded both Black and white people of their enslaved origins and served to entertain white people through a lens of antebellum nostalgia. Ball claimed these antics only served "to further the sinister designs and promote the selfish interests" of white politicians. Ball argued that "the 'Emancipation Racket' was just the thing to make the colored brother swallow bait, hook and all."¹⁹⁵

Ball's critique of Black representation framed through the historical consciousness of white America is indicative of a slew of turn-of-the-century performances that seemed to paint the antebellum South with a broad nostalgic brush. One example of this representational practice was *Black America*, a theatrical production that took place in Brooklyn in June 1895. This large-scale, outdoor production featured "acres of white cotton and a hundred wooden cabins housing

¹⁹⁴ "Marcus Daly Dead," *Toledo Weekly Blade* (Toledo, OH), November 15, 1900.

¹⁹⁵ "Like Sheep He Would Lead Us," *The Colored Citizen* (Helena, MT), September 17, 1895.

five hundred Black workers.” The performance, a spectacle of slavery reenactment, ethnographic exhibition, and Black performance, “created a dangerous form of cognitive dissonance [with]...a built-in assumption...that Black people were moving toward a form of modern twentieth-century respectability (defined entirely in white terms).”¹⁹⁶

Several editors of Black newspapers across the country were taking a stand against the performance of plantation nostalgia evident at these celebrations in the 1890s. In 1892, editors from the *Detroit Plaindealer*, Chicago’s *Advance*, the *Afro American* of Cincinnati, and the *Indianapolis Freeman*, among others, took a unified position against the practice of cakewalks at public commemorations. These editors described the cakewalks as “disgraceful to the colored race” and “as inherently degrading as gladiatorial scenes which devoted the valor of slaves of barbarous to entertainment.” The editors declared those who indulged in cakewalks to be “of the lowest class.” They spoke for the portion of the Black communities across the country who found the “cakewalk extravaganzas” a means of “undermining and corrupting an African American tradition for the amusement of white people.” They found that “these commercial cakewalk ventures served to minstrelize Black identity by exploiting a rustic slave custom.”¹⁹⁷

Despite the rampant critique of a “plantationese” mode of commemoration, the 1895 event in Butte seemed to embrace all the tropes of a nostalgic antebellum past. Perhaps for the celebrants, rather than seeing the events as disgraceful, they found them comforting, and a valuable way to honor their enslaved ancestors. In any case, the celebration did not end there.

¹⁹⁶ Dorothy Berry, “Black America, 1895,” *The Public Domain Review*, February 24, 2021, <https://publicdomainreview.org/essay/black-america-1895>.

¹⁹⁷ Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff, *Out of Sight : the Rise of African American Popular Music, 1889-1895* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002), 205-209.

The crowd (and Band) returned to their homes for a well-earned rest but rallied again the following evening for a concert given by the Band at the Butte Auditorium. Vincent Safranek took his place as the bandmaster and led the Band through a program consisting of tunes by European composers Charles Gounod, Franz von Suppé, Émil Waldteufel, and Giuseppe Verdi among others. The final tune of the evening was “The Black Brigade,” originally published during the Civil War as a “plantation song and dance,” and written by Dan D. Emmett, founder of the Virginia Minstrels (a white troupe who performed in blackface) and composer of the song “Dixie.”¹⁹⁸ After the concert, “the 21 members of the band transformed themselves into an orchestra and furnished the music for a dance which was indulged in by the colored people, the white portion of the audience retiring to the gallery.”¹⁹⁹ This ball lasted into “the wee small hours.” John Norton and Robert Tellies were “conspicuous by their graceful dancing.”

The very next evening, a reception was held for the Band “at which the boys were wined and dined, and here again the boys were treated to the culture and refinement of Butte’s society belles.” The musicians then moved on to yet another reception held for them by a different hostess. The Band took the opportunity to extend a heart-felt thanks to the entire city of Butte for its hospitality. An unnamed musician eloquently summed up the feelings held by the entire Band: “In after life when thinking of the reminiscences of the past, Butte with her fair belles and the citizens in general will pass vividly before our memory and our trip there will be classed among the many pleasant events spent during our lives.”²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ “About the City,” *The Butte Miner* (Butte, MT), September 22, 1895.

¹⁹⁹ “A Pleasant Affair,” *The Butte Miner* (Butte, MT), September 24, 1895.

²⁰⁰ “Fort Missoula Items,” *The Missoulian* (Missoula, MT), September 28, 1895.

Conclusion:

The Band returned to Fort Missoula on September 25 “profuse in their praise for the manner in which they were treated by the citizens [of Butte], both white and colored.” The musicians remarked that the committee fulfilled their every wish. “Everything was thrown open wide for the boys in blue and their uniforms was the signal that opened every door.” While these sentiments may seem a bit florid, many of the musicians may indeed have looked back upon their time in 1895 with fondness. After leaving Fort Missoula in 1898 for the Spanish-American War, followed by the Philippine-American War, and returning to a country in which the Twenty-fifth Infantry would be subject to some of the worst kinds of discrimination that the white American public could offer, the time spent in extended revelry as they celebrated emancipation might have seemed like something from a different life.

The Emancipation Day celebrations in Minnesota and Montana show different perspectives on Black historical consciousness and Black futurity. The events of these separate holidays were informed by the differing priorities of the various Black communities as well as the powerful white men who organized and often sponsored the occasions. The Band’s performances show that the musicians could ably walk the sonic color line, actively producing racial politics that supported the classically liberal agenda of commerce while at the same time supporting the myriad historical perspectives of Black communities across the West.

CHAPTER THREE

Patriotism in the Face of Violence, 1903-1913

“O, country, ‘tis of thee,
Land of the Lynching Bee,
Of thee I sing.”

--Chas. Fred White ²⁰¹

The black and white photo depicts a jubilant Black baby, likely only a year old. His eyes look up at something beyond the camera, the smile on his face indicates that he is laughing—the pure, innocent giggle of a young baby who has only known love. You can almost hear him squeal with joy. His little arm is raised in the air as he points toward the sky with his index finger, the rest of his hand held in a loose fist. He sits on a pillar, the kind one might find in a photographer’s studio at the turn of the twentieth century. The American flag—attached to a pole—rests against the pillar at an angle. The baby’s legs drape comfortably over the pole, his feet crossed. The flag is arranged so that part of it wraps around baby’s middle, acting as a sash around his lower torso. The title of the photograph is “The Young Colored American.” It appears in several early issues of the periodical entitled *The Colored American*, described as “size 18x24 inches, on heavy plate paper...given FREE with a year’s subscription” to the magazine. The advertisement urges the reader to make haste as “the new edition of the picture is being rapidly exhausted.”²⁰² The photo represents the devoted patriotism to the United States advocated by the editors of *The Colored American*. The child is optimistic. He does not yet know how cruel his country will be to him as he grows into manhood. It seems as if the editors of the magazine want

²⁰¹ Chas. Fred White, “Afro-American,” *The Colored American*, September 1900, 245.

²⁰² *The Colored American*, July 1901, 161.

to remind the readers of how the paradoxes of their beloved country fall on the shoulders of future generations.

The bulk of any issue published from 1900-1909 will consist of countless reports of the rampant lynchings of Black Americans throughout the country. These descriptions will be followed by admonishments of the white press for downplaying and even advocating the ways in which white Americans terrorize Black Americans, simply for the act of exercising their Fifteenth Amendment rights or, too often, being accused of crimes they did not commit. The issues rail against ongoing discrimination throughout the South and the imposition of Jim Crow laws. As the years progress, the editors increasingly emphasize that these horrific actions are not isolated to the South. A perusal of every issue reveals the reality that chips away at the myth of the noble North. The magazine also includes photos and stories of Black Americans who have achieved academic or professional success, as well as regular reports of the exploits of the Black Army Regiments. But it is the photo of this young child that precedes it all. He is the beacon of hope upon which the editors of the magazine choose to focus. He is America as they want it to be.

What does it mean, then, to be a Black man in uniform at that time? To be part of the Band, fighting the local townspeople who threaten arms against them, all the while stepping out into the public to play patriotic American music? How could the Band keep performing? During the “nadir of race relations,” when white Americans waged a reign of terror upon Black bodies, the Band doggedly continued to perform patriotic music in front of the very audiences who could easily decide to lynch them, for any reason at all, and face little to no ramifications. Not only did the Band continue to play, but it also divided and doubled to reach more audiences. In my

introduction, I state that I am interested in the performances of the Band during times of peace, meaning times when the American army is not actively participating in military action. But in writing this chapter, I have come to realize that “peace” is relative, and for the Twenty-Fifth Infantry and the Band, the primary war is and always has been in the land of their birth. For white Americans, historical consciousness of the Civil War throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century became enveloped in a “culture of reunion, which downplayed sectional division and emphasized the heroics of a battle between noble men of the Blue and the Gray.”²⁰³ The issue of slavery, the participation of Black soldiers in the war, and the failed promises of emancipation and Reconstruction faded from white America’s historical memory. The Band, once again, labored under a double historical consciousness—a segregation of Black and white memory. The musicians who participated in so many Emancipation Day celebrations throughout their careers also had to perform for a public that, by and large, engaged in a politics of memory that worked to eradicate Blackness from its national historical consciousness. The Band played across these wildly divergent imaginings of the Black American past without missing a beat.

This chapter is not only about Black performance, but also white rage, and how that rage was directed upon Black bodies in the uniform of the United States Army. To borrow a phrase from Public Enemy, the fuel for this rage was the fear of a Black planet.²⁰⁴ This fear has held a primary place in the white settler imagination at least since the Stono Rebellion of 1739, but

²⁰³ David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 3.

²⁰⁴ Public Enemy. 1990. “Fear of a Black Planet.” Track # 12 on *Fear of a Black Planet*. Def Jam Recordings, 1990, Hip-Hop/Rap.

particularly after the Haitian revolution that began in 1791. The Civil War, the Emancipation Proclamation, and the passage of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments only seemed to stoke this fear, and it became a feverish inferno upon the Black soldiers' widely publicized successes in the Spanish-American War and the Philippine Insurrection. While the soldiers' battlefield experiences in Cuba and the Philippines, along with the congressional medals awarded to them, hardened their resolve for equal treatment under the law, a "surge of white supremacy, which reached epic proportions at the turn of the century" greeted the Band and the soldiers at nearly every fort in which they garrisoned.²⁰⁵ Military historian, Willard B. Gatewood claims that "the mere sight of smartly dressed, precision drilled Negro soldiers was sufficient, it seemed, to arouse envy and hostility among some whites. But animosity toward Black troops was even more evident whenever they were placed in positions to exercise authority over white soldiers."²⁰⁶ The more success a Black person achieved, the more that Black Americans asserted themselves as equals, the more hostile a large majority of white Americans became. Various colonization schemes had not rid the United States of its melanin as so many white people had hoped. Instead, the population of Black Americans steadily increased as they continued to migrate north and west. By the turn of the twentieth century, the Black population had increased from four million just after the Civil War to nearly ten million.

The Colored American and *The Crisis* were two of the leading monthly periodicals ostensibly written for a Black audience in the early twentieth century. These magazines were not

²⁰⁵ Bruce A. Glasrud and Michael N. Searles, *Buffalo Soldiers in the West: A Black Soldiers Anthology* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2007), 186.

²⁰⁶ Willard B. Gatewood, Jr. "Negro Troops in Florida, 1898." *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 49, no. 1 (1970): 5.

simply a conduit of information and ideas, they were also editorial exercises of power, often framing their arguments in ways that might sway white Americans who too often defined the terms of debate in discussions of Blackness in American culture and history.²⁰⁷ *The Colored American* was the first monthly publication in the U.S. to cover Black culture. Initially published in 1900 by the Colored Co-Operative Publishing Company, Booker T. Washington purchased it in 1904 and took the helm as editor.²⁰⁸ *The Crisis*, founded in 1910 by W.E.B. Du Bois, continues to be the official magazine of the NAACP and is the oldest “Black-oriented” magazine in the world.²⁰⁹ These periodicals helped me to understand what may have motivated the Band as they returned home from war in Cuba and the Philippines to a country that too often refused to recognize the basic rights and citizenship of Black Americans. The more I learned about the first two decades of the twentieth century, the more I found myself unable to fathom why or how the Band would want to keep playing patriotic songs for primarily white spectators. My own cynical perspective did not allow me to recognize the strong patriotism of Black Americans at that time. While reading through these two magazines, I was struck by the extent to which the writers and editors seemed to believe in the ideals set forth in the Declaration of Independence and how much faith they put in the tenets of liberal democracy. In a rhetorical move that Ibram X. Kendi calls “uplift suasion...the idea that white people could be persuaded away from their racist ideas if they saw Black people improving their behavior [by] uplifting themselves from their low station in American society,” the editorial teams urged patriotism, not only because they believed

²⁰⁷ William G. Jordan, *Black Newspapers and America's War for Democracy, 1914-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 4.

²⁰⁸ Lois Brown, *Encyclopedia of the Harlem Literary Renaissance*. (New York: Facts On File, 2006) 233.

²⁰⁹ Benjamin Hooks, “Publisher’s Foreword,” *The Crisis*, December 1985, 6.

in the ideals of America, but also because they deemed it the most assured way to raise Black Americans to an equal level of “civilization” as that held by the most successful white Americans.²¹⁰ The Band’s performances in the early twentieth century managed a complicated balance of militancy against and accommodation to white supremacy.

During this time, the Department of War finally authorized the Army to allow for Black bandmasters to lead the bands of the four Black regiments. This decision was based partially on the blowback received by the handling of the Brownsville incident (which I will describe later) but was also brought about by a sustained campaign from Black newspapers which demanded that Black bandmasters should preside over the bands filled with Black musicians. I will discuss the campaign for Black bandmasters and the presumption of Black musical influence as essential to a broader American identity and how these ideas led to the first Black bandmasters, including Leslie King, who reigned as Bandmaster of the Twenty-Fifth Infantry for two decades.

Since the Department of War formed what became the four Black regiments in 1866, white civilians in the towns located next to forts protested, often violently, their arrival. Some towns would eventually come around to a state of tolerance, if not a sometimes-paternalistic pride in the “colored” regiments. Often this goodwill was facilitated by the Band whose performances helped to normalize the presence of a garrison of Black soldiers. In the previous chapters, I analyzed their time in Minnesota and Montana and the relationships formed with local Black communities in these states. I also examined the evolving acceptance of the Twenty-Fifth by white communities when the Band was assigned to forts in the area. In this chapter, I will

²¹⁰ Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning : the Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (New York, NY: Nation Books, 2017) 124.

discuss another example of a town that welcomed the regiment without protest and happily accepted their patronage at local businesses, as well as two cities that did not welcome the Black regiment. This juxtaposition illuminates how the Band worked within the confines of a location-based racial hierarchy as well as the limits of uplift suasion.

Greg Dening argues that historians “always make a drama out of what the participants experienced...always see the past from a perspective the past never could have had. They get their certainties from consequences.”²¹¹ As I try to make narrative sense of the Band’s performances, I am certainly thinking of the Band’s performances in terms of drama. The stakes of being a Black person in American culture and society at that time (at any time) are simply too high for me not to think of the Band as players on a dangerous stage. The Band performed in a climate of moral uncertainty and indeterminacy, employing different tactics for distinct audiences. Under such high stakes, these tactical decisions had to be made on the fly even while the implications of the Band’s actions were not clear in the moment they were chosen. Racial formation in the early twentieth century was extremely unstable and varied widely by location, dependent on myriad factors including the local population, the leadership of that population, the local economy, and the divergent circumstances faced by specific communities. As such, the same performance could be perceived differently in locales only a few miles apart.

²¹¹ Greg Dening, *Performances* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 58.

The Ideology of Black Conservatism in the Early Twentieth Century:

Focusing on the Band's public expressiveness can lead one to assume that its performances were predominantly characterized and motivated by resistance, however, this would be an oversimplification. Kevin Quashie asks: "What else beyond resistance can we say about black culture and subjectivity?" What other qualities "are overwhelmed by resistance's status as the predominant or even solitary cultural framework" of a generalized Black historical consciousness?²¹² This is a good chapter to think of the Band's performances through the framework of Black conservative thought in the early twentieth century. A hallmark of Black conservatism at that time was the accommodationist "bargain in which black conservatives agreed to play by the rules...in exchange for greater acceptance and inclusion in American society."²¹³ As Christopher Bracey points out, Black Americans at the turn of the century "were by and large proponents of conservatism." Bracey explains that twenty-first century liberals tend to think of Black racial empowerment as always already in "flagrant opposition to the American status quo."²¹⁴ This is a conceptual trap in which I found myself. However, as I continued to read through issue after issue of *The Colored American*, a periodical that heavily promoted the works of Booker T. Washington, I came to understand that, for the soldiers and the Band of the Twenty-Fifth Infantry, much of their resistance to white supremacy may have, paradoxically, come in the form of accommodation and a steadfast faith in "a slow, organic, and moralistic program of black improvement premised upon cooperation rather than confrontation and

²¹² Kevin Everod Quashie, *The Sovereignty of Quiet: Beyond Resistance in Black Culture*, (Rutgers University Press, 2012), 23.

²¹³ Bracey, *Saviors or Sellouts*, xxi.

²¹⁴ Bracey, *Saviors or Sellouts*, 26.

conflict.”²¹⁵ Black conservative thought in the early twentieth century was anti-utopian, pragmatic, accommodationist, and fixated on the reality of the present rather than the struggle for an ideal society. The majority of Black Americans pragmatically set themselves to the task of making do with the society in which they found themselves.²¹⁶

And yet, the beginning of the twentieth century also saw the beginnings of the “New Negro.” This term describes the conceptual shift of Black consciousness becoming more assertive and militant. Most historians agree that this shift did not fully rise to the mainstream until after World War I. The building blocks, however, become evident by the turn of the twentieth century with the contributions of W.E.B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey and an emphasis on Pan-African unity. These intellectual leaders found value in renewing Black Americans’ ties with the African continent. Rather than dismissing the ideas set forth by the American Colonization Society throughout the nineteenth century, Black Americans began to consider a future in which Black people would return to Africa. This way of thinking was neither integrationist nor accommodationist in the way that Black conservative thought was. If members of the Band were influenced by these ways of thinking, how could they justify going out into the towns surrounding the forts at which they were garrisoned or touring through the Western states tirelessly performing public concerts and marching in Fourth of July parades?

The ideological distinction between Washington and Du Bois is summed up in the March 1914 edition of *The Crisis*. Although Du Bois was the editor in chief of the periodical, the editorial advocates for striking a balance between the two ideological extremes. *The Crisis*

²¹⁵ Bracey, *Saviors or Sellouts*, 6.

²¹⁶ Bracey, *Saviors or Sellouts*, xxi.

quotes an issue of the *Chicago Evening Post* which describes the annual convention of the Chicago branch of the NAACP. At this gathering, Professor J.E. Spingarn led his keynote speech with the concept of “the new abolitionism.” This ideal was described as “fiery” and contrasted with Washington’s “calm meliorism.” Washington’s point of view “emphasizes duties above rights, the actual over the abstract, and urges [the acquisition of] money and commercial power” through farming and manual labor rather than teaching and other white-collar pursuits. Washington believed that finding empowerment through these methods would make it so that racial prejudice would “no longer hurt...even if it persists.” The editorial describes Washington as the “utilitarian of the Negro movement.”

Du Bois, then, is the “fiery idealist” who can unite both Black and white toward a common future. As a leading member of the NAACP, Du Bois “specializes...in the work of redressing grievances...in education of both white and colored people in the idealistic attitude.” The editorial contends that Du Bois’ advocacy “urges the Negro to do what he is perhaps not naturally inclined to do, to go after his rights himself [and] urges its white members not to patronize the colored man...out of sentimental pity for an underdog, but...because he is fighting the battle of American freedom and American idealism.” The editorial expresses a “deep admiration” for Washington’s ideology and work while insisting that it must be supplemented by advocating “the old abolitionist flame of right for right’s sake.” The editorial concludes: “Together they represent that balance of utilitarianism and idealism which is the characteristic gait of American progress.”²¹⁷ This could also describe the performative choices that the

²¹⁷ “The New Abolition,” *The Crisis*, March 1914, 227.

musicians in the Band made throughout the decades as co-authors of American historical consciousness.

The Dangers Faced by the Black Regiments:

Throughout most issues of *The Crisis* and *The Colored American*, the editors fill pages and pages of detailed accounts of weekly, sometimes daily, lynchings. From the span of 1900-1922, which both periodicals cover, the reactions by the Black writers are visceral. They are astonished, angry, afraid, and indignant that the white newspapers seem to both overtly and tacitly support the insanity of the lynch mob. And throughout, these Black writers ask “why?” They struggle to understand the mind of a white person so filled with irrational hate that they can hunt Black bodies as if they were hunting rabbits. They repeatedly touch on the ideals of the Declaration of Independence and emphasize again and again,

“We honor the flag. Standing beneath its folds we declare our loyalty to be as deep as its azure blue...The Negro has both directly and indirectly been an influential element in American life...America owes a debt to Negro labor...Never has the nation been in peril but that a black hand has been reached forth to save it...[We are] American not by mere accident of birth but by measuring up to requirements of American citizenship and becoming an element of the national life...”²¹⁸

With the withdrawal of federal troops from the South in the late 1870s, Black Americans were subjected to a degree of retaliatory violence that rivaled the horrors of centuries of enslavement. Joining the Army offered no guarantee of safety. The uniform of an American soldier did not command respect or provide armor for Black soldiers. If anything, the uniform—and the successes of the men who wore those uniforms—further stoked the rage of white

²¹⁸ Rev. A.L. Demond, “The Negro Element in American Life,” *The Colored American*, April 1902, 357.

Americans in general. Even as the soldiers actively worked to subdue Indigenous people so that American expansion could continue apace, for most white Americans, they remained a threat. By joining the Army, these Black soldiers and musicians chipped away at the bedrock of white supremacy. By gaining a reputation as fierce fighters and loyal soldiers with exemplary records and the medals to show for it, the imagined foundation of white supremacy crumbled ever further. By the time of the Spanish-American War, the Black regiments were fighting two wars—the war against the Spanish Empire and the war against White Empire in the United States. However, the war at home had been fought by the Black Regiments since they became part of the Regular Army in the years following the Civil War.

All four regiments faced fierce opposition as they made their way through the western continent. James Leiker describes how the Tenth Cavalry's time at Fort Hays, Kansas, near the town of Hays, Kansas, was a key moment in the formation of race in the western United States.²¹⁹ Arriving in 1867, only two years after the Civil War, the uniformed soldiers, walking down the streets of Hays, elicited rude jokes from snickering white townspeople.²²⁰ The jokes took a darker turn once the civilians realized that the soldiers were not going to remain passive in the face of prejudice. The Black regiments were among the most disciplined in the Army with far fewer desertions than the white regiments. Leiker posits that it was the soldiers' close relationships with each other that discouraged desertion, even in the worst of times. This

²¹⁹ James N. Leiker, "Black Soldiers at Fort Hays, 1867-1869: A Study in Civilian and Military Violence," *Great Plains Quarterly* 17, no. 1 (1997): 5.

²²⁰ Leiker, "Black Soldiers at Fort Hays," 8.

closeness also made the men protective of each other. When one soldier was wronged, his comrades would seek retribution.²²¹

Only a decade before, Kansas was the site of guerilla warfare between pro and anti-slavery factions. This brief war is often known as “Bleeding Kansas,” a prelude to the Civil War.²²² In 1867, Kansas was at the very western edge of American expansion. The town of Hays was new and rough, as were the people. The town itself, as well as Fort Hays, was rife with cholera. The isolation of the fort led many soldiers to drink for solace. The soldiers had little time for leisure, thus when they did have time, many would spend their paychecks inside the town’s taverns and brothels.²²³ The combination of boredom, alcohol, and residents of a town who outwardly hated not only the Army as an institution, but especially Black soldiers who represented the Army, created the conditions for violence.

A drunken argument in one of the town’s saloons led to a Black soldier fatally shooting a civilian, most likely in self-defense. A series of sparks ignited into a conflagration. The citizens of Hays lynched the Black soldier and were subsequently praised by the local newspapers. Two years later, more than 75 civilians hanged three Black soldiers “from the ties of a railroad bridge half a mile west of town.”²²⁴ Only four months after that lynching, “two years of animosity climaxed in an armed confrontation.”²²⁵ Local newspapers reported that several Black soldiers, enraged after not being allowed into a brothel, opened fire on the town. The townspeople

²²¹ Leiker, “Black Soldiers at Fort Hays,” 9.

²²² “Bleeding Kansas.” *Kansaspedia*. Kansas Historical Society. Retrieved August 22, 2023. <https://www.kshs.org/kansapedia/bleeding-kansas/15145>.

²²³ Leiker, “Black Soldiers at Fort Hays,” 7.

²²⁴ Leiker, “Black Soldiers at Fort Hays,” 12.

²²⁵ Leiker, “Black Soldiers at Fort Hays,” 12.

returned fire, “exchanging more than four hundred shots in about half an hour.”²²⁶ The regiment was soon relocated to other forts along the Mexican border.

A pattern of violence perpetrated against Black soldiers by nearby townspeople, sometimes met with retaliatory violence on the part of the Black regiments, continued throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century. In these raw, newly settled regions of the United States, the violence between the Black regiments and civilians was more akin to tribal warfare than disagreements between settlers and the authoritative representatives of the United States. Examples abound from the South as well as North and West. In Tampa, Florida “white citizens in the area...would tolerate no infractions of racial customs.”²²⁷ On the way to Texas in 1899, a train transporting Black soldiers was “fired on while it passed through Mississippi.”²²⁸ In Laredo, Texas the townspeople “expressed outrage at the sight of blacks in the company of their women.”²²⁹ An officer report on the conditions in El Paso, Texas stated: “A negro soldier in uniform is frequently subjected to insult though behaving with perfect propriety for no other reason than his color.”²³⁰ Two cavalymen of the Tenth Cavalry “were killed by a black civilian, motivated by the rumor of reward for every dead black soldier.”²³¹ White civilians frequently physically and verbally abused Black soldiers assigned to Fort Robinson in Crawford, Nebraska.²³² Residents of South Denver protested against Black soldiers coming to Fort

²²⁶ Leiker, “Black Soldiers at Fort Hays,” 3.

²²⁷ Gatewood, “Negro Troops in Florida,” 8.

²²⁸ Glasrud and Searles, *Buffalo Soldiers in the West*, 121.

²²⁹ Garna L. Christian, “The Twenty-Fifth Regiment at Fort McIntosh: Precursor to Retaliatory Racial Violence,” *West Texas Historical Association Yearbook* 55 (1979): 152.

²³⁰ Edward M. Coffman, *The Regulars: the American Army, 1898-1941* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2004), 127.

²³¹ Glasrud and Searles, *Buffalo Soldiers in the West*, 121.

²³² Glasrud and Searles, *Buffalo Soldiers in the West*, 72.

Logan.²³³ Johnson County, Wyoming demonstrated its contempt for Black soldiers by performing “coon dances” at the arrival of the Ninth Cavalry.²³⁴ At Fort Douglas near Salt Lake City, Utah, “citizens were furious and fought to get the assignment changed.”²³⁵ It became increasingly difficult for the Department of War to assign the Black regiments “since white communities usually protested when news of the imminent move of black troops into nearby forts became known.”²³⁶

These violent clashes instigated primarily by white townspeople sometimes resulted in retaliatory violence by the Black troops. In response to verbal provocations and denial of service by local businesses, soldiers opened fire on the residents of Suggs, Wyoming.²³⁷ Members of Company D of the Twenty-Fifth Infantry assaulted a peace officer in Laredo, Texas. Soldiers in Company A killed a lawman in El Paso, Texas. Company D of the Ninth Cavalry fired on the town of Rio Grande City, Texas.²³⁸ The culmination of the constant war between Black soldiers and non-Black civilians can perhaps be located in the “Camp Logan Mutiny” of 1917, in the wake of which nineteen Black soldiers of the Twenty-Fourth Infantry were executed, and forty-one others were sentenced to life imprisonment.²³⁹

Along the Mexican border, many Latino residents formed a “symbiotic relationship of racial prejudice” with white residents and joined in rallying against any newly arrived Black

²³³ “Protesting,” *The Colorado Statesman* (Denver, CO), December 26, 1908.

²³⁴ Glasrud and Searles, *Buffalo Soldiers in the West*, 177.

²³⁵ Coffman, *The Old Army*, 371.

²³⁶ Coffman, *The Regular Army*, 127.

²³⁷ Glasrud and Searles, *Buffalo Soldiers in the West*, 178.

²³⁸ Glasrud and Searles, *Buffalo Soldiers in the West*, 185.

²³⁹ “Camp Logan Mutiny,” NAACP, January 1, 2018, <https://naacp.org/resources/camp-logan-mutiny>.

regiments.²⁴⁰ This was yet another manifestation of the “two-category racial system” to which I referred in the first chapter.²⁴¹ In the hierarchy of humanity that was endemic to American ideology throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, the bottom rungs of the ladder were not fixed, but were subject to change based on perceived threat to white Americans and to American expansion in general. The Black regiments existed in a liminal space between being an insider and an outsider. Whereas Black soldiers were often more likely to be accepted by white civilians who lived close to reservations, these same Black soldiers were met with tremendous animosity in towns with a mixed white and Latino community. From 1906-1916, “proposals to eliminate blacks from the Army were presented in Congress annually. No bills came to a vote and the Department of War officially showed no interest in eliminating the regiments.”²⁴² These conditions proved challenging for the Band as it moved from one location to another, particularly in its attempts to be the face of public relations for the rest of the regiment.

The Band had to always be aware of the audience for which it was playing. Its performances were always public. The musicians would “quickly have to be good readers of an audience’s reactions.”²⁴³ Immediately following the Philippine Insurrection, there was one notable exception to the violence that was so common to the arrival of a Black regiment to a

²⁴⁰ Glasrud and Searles *Buffalo Soldiers in the West*, 186.

²⁴¹ Frank Schubert, one of the foremost scholars of Black soldiers in the U.S. Army, theorizes that the closer a Black regiment was to a reservation, the more accepted that regiment would be by the white citizens who also resided close to reservation land. While any regiment would provide a buffer between those who lived on the reservation, and those who lived off it, the Blackness of the segregated regiments proved to be more acceptable than the Indianness of whichever Indigenous nation lived nearby.

²⁴² Coffman, *The Regular Army*, 127.

²⁴³ Denning, *Performances*, 20.

Southern or Western fort. In 1903, while the Twenty-Fifth was posted at Fort Niobrara near Valentine, Nebraska, the soldiers and the Band were welcomed by the citizens of the town in a way that few communities had ever done. By 1900, the town of Valentine had a population of 973, including twelve Black residents. Valentine did not protest the arrival of the Twenty-Fifth Infantry. Instead, the townspeople welcomed the benefits that a large garrison would bring to the town's businesses. The town even organized an emancipation celebration in 1903.²⁴⁴ Throughout the summer months, the Band offered weekly public concerts on the parade grounds of Fort Niobrara. In 1904, the Band launched a tour through many of Nebraska's fledgling towns located along the railroad. Each town hosted a dance that was followed by one of the Band's famous concerts.²⁴⁵

After the Spanish-American War, as the Army tightened up its regulations in its efforts to become a fully professionalized enforcer of American imperialism, the Band seems to have lost the individuality that defined it in the latter part of the nineteenth century. By this time, the Band was still under the leadership of white bandmaster Vincent F. Safranek, however, Black principal musician George S. Thompson was identified by a local newspaper as the "leader of the band" as he was reported to be making arrangements for a series of concerts over six days in October in Norfolk, NE. When the soldiers and the Band arrived in Norfolk for their brief stay, the local newspaper proclaimed that "the colored troops marching into Norfolk came as though they were in the enemy's country."²⁴⁶ This is an interesting description written from the point of view of a

²⁴⁴ Buecker, "Prelude to Brownsville," 97.

²⁴⁵ Buecker, "Prelude to Brownsville," 100.

²⁴⁶ "Troops Reach Norfolk," *The Norfolk Weekly News Journal* (Norfolk, NE), October 16, 1903.

local white journalist. Were the soldiers overly cautious about their reception in the town, based on prior experiences when arriving in other towns? Or was the journalist the one acting upon a suspicion? Just this small description in a local newspaper indicates the divide that existed between the Black regiments and white civilians no matter where the regiment was assigned. In a separate news brief in that same issue, the newspaper states “the command presented a better appearance when it marched down to take the train for Riley than it did when it entered the town. It came with the band in the lead and in marching order.”²⁴⁷ This perception indicates that the Band, once again, used performance to normalize the appearance of Black soldiers in a white frontier town. A column of Black soldiers bearing brass instruments was clearly a less threatening proposition than one bearing guns.

The time spent in Norfolk seemed to be an overall positive experience. There was a regimental concert Saturday night consisting of a 30-piece band, led by Black principal musician George S. Thompson. Thompson announced to the crowd that the Band would return to Norfolk in the winter for another series of concerts.²⁴⁸ The newspaper reported that “military and patriotic spirit [was] rife in Norfolk.”²⁴⁹ Residents of the town drove to the location in which the regiment and the Band were camped and “looked at the colored fighters.” The soldiers reportedly flirted with the “the many good-looking girls who visited the camp” and the townspeople presented the soldiers with cake. The soldiers then handed out their hardtack rations for the residents to keep as

²⁴⁷ “Soldiers Notes,” *The Norfolk Weekly News Journal* (Norfolk, NE), October 16, 1903.

²⁴⁸ “The Regimental Concert,” *The Norfolk Weekly News Journal* (Norfolk, NE), October 16, 1903.

²⁴⁹ “Soldiers Notes,” *The Norfolk Weekly News Journal* (Norfolk, NE), October 16, 1903.

souvenirs.²⁵⁰ The citizens of Norfolk apparently did not overtly fear miscegenation and Black male sexuality in the same way so much of the rest of the country did.

The Band continued its tour of small Nebraska towns throughout the winter and spring of 1904. They performed in both Basset and Ainsworth, Nebraska in January of that year. The local newspaper proclaimed that the Band would perform “a first class concert made up of standard and popular selections.” The newspaper further claimed that “this band is known...to be the best in the surrounding country.”²⁵¹ During those concerts, Safranek, who often referred to the musicians as his “boys,” announced that the Band would go on tour in the summer and that tickets were already selling fast. Safranek also announced that after nine years as bandmaster, he would be leaving the regiment as of February 1, 1904.²⁵² He was replaced by another white bandmaster, Joseph Belisle, who enlisted with the Twenty-Fifth regiment in March 1904.²⁵³

Belisle made his public debut with the Band toward the end of March at an evening concert in Valentine.²⁵⁴ The Band returned to Norfolk in April to provide entertainment for an “enormous auction of city property.” Though the Band had only recently received a new white bandmaster, a local newspaper reported that George S. Thompson once again led the Band not only for the auction, but also for “a grand concert and ball at Marquardt Hall on Arbor Day.”²⁵⁵ Throughout 1904-1906, the Band continued to perform at special events in nearly every town

²⁵⁰ “Soldiers Leave Norfolk,” *The Norfolk Weekly News Journal* (Norfolk, NE), October 16, 1903.

²⁵¹ *The Ainsworth Star Journal* (Ainsworth, NE), January 21, 1904.

²⁵² “Talk of the Town,” *The Valentine Democrat* (Valentine, NE), January 21, 1904.

²⁵³ Returns from Regular Army Infantry Regiments, June 1821-December 1916. NARA Identifier: 168887179. Accessed online from Ancestry.com.

²⁵⁴ “More Local,” *The Valentine Democrat* (Valentine, NE), March 24, 1904.

²⁵⁵ “To Be a Grand Concert,” *The Norfolk Weekly News Journal* (Norfolk, NE), April 8, 1904.

throughout northwestern Nebraska. These performances were apparently well-received wherever they went.

The Brownsville Affair:

The relatively good feelings and calm that the soldiers and Band enjoyed while in Nebraska came to a devastating end when a battalion of the regiment was reassigned to Fort Brown in Brownsville, Texas in 1906. Located across the river from Mexico, Brownsville had a reputation as a town that hated the Army. This enmity was shared between both the white and Mexican residents of the town—one of the few points of agreement between the two groups. The townspeople also shared a deep hatred of Black people. This double enmity would inevitably lead to one of the most well-known clashes between townspeople and a Black regiment.

The white officers of the Twenty-Fifth were aware of the troubles that awaited them and repeatedly requested that the Department of War allow them to be assigned to Fort Leavenworth in Kansas where they thought they would be more openly received. The Department of War repeatedly denied the request, and so in the summer of 1906, a battalion of the Twenty-Fifth Infantry headed to Brownsville. The Band was not assigned to this fort, but the trouble at Brownsville had an impact on every member of the regiment, whether they were there for the events or not. This impact would last for decades, following anybody associated with the Twenty-Fifth wherever they went, even after their terms of enlistment had ended and they attempted to return to civilian life.

I can only offer a brief description of what became known as the “Brownsville Affair,” but a full recounting of the events can be found in John D. Weaver’s *The Brownsville Raid*.²⁵⁶ This book, published in 1970, led the Nixon administration to posthumously exonerate the soldiers in 1973.²⁵⁷ The citizens of Brownsville made it known that the Black regiment was not welcome in their town. The white officers advised the soldiers to be extra cautious of the way they spent their leisure time and money in town. In all regiments of the U.S. army, soldiers would often spend their earnings in bars and brothels and could often cause quite a ruckus in whatever town they were in. The Black regiments were no different, although the soldiers in these regiments were always more cognizant of how their behavior, no matter how innocuous, could be used against them. Thus, the Black regiments had a much lower rate of alcoholism and were often reported to hold themselves to a higher standard than white soldiers did.²⁵⁸

In Brownsville, the Black soldiers added extra care to the precautions they were already accustomed to taking. The regiment co-existed with the citizens of Brownsville for a full two weeks before the night of the “raid.” In those two weeks, the townspeople barred the soldiers from entering local saloons and one soldier was accused of touching the hair of a white woman. On the night of August 6, 1906—a moonless night in a town with no streetlights—gunshots rang through the air. The officers of the regiment could hear the shots from within the walls of the

²⁵⁶ John D. Weaver, *The Brownsville Raid* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1970).

²⁵⁷ By the time the Nixon administration exonerated the men, only one was still alive. Dorsie Willis was only 19 years old and had been in the Army for six months when he was discharged without honor with the rest of the battalion. He spent 60 years working a series of odd jobs in Minneapolis. In November of 1973, Willis received an honorable discharge along with a check for \$25,000. He died in 1977 at the age of 91 and was buried with honors at Fort Snelling National Cemetery. For more about his life see John D. Weaver, *The Senator and the Sharecropper’s Son: Exoneration of the Brownsville Soldiers* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1997).

²⁵⁸ Coffman, *The Regulars*, 328.

fort. Fearing the worst, they immediately roused all the enlisted men and lined them up for roll call. All men were present and accounted for, and those who were absent were on leave across the river in Mexico with plans that had already been arranged. The officers also inspected every gun cabinet within the fort, accounting for every single firearm, and observing that all firearms were securely locked up, with only the officers holding the keys. The regiment dared to believe that this was an issue confined to the town of Brownsville itself. However, in the early morning hours, throngs of townspeople descended upon the fort with weapons, shouting that the Black soldiers had murdered one man and severely wounded another. The soldiers were convinced that the townspeople were intent on lynching the first soldier they could lay their hands on. The men took up arms, ready to go to battle to defend themselves, as they had before, and as the Black regiments would have to in the future. The officers were barely able to contain the violence, finally convincing the townspeople that the only way to solve the crisis was to allow for an investigation.

The investigation was corrupt from the start and operated under the assumption that the Black soldiers were guilty. The townspeople brought in their own investigator, a Texas Ranger, who essentially just agreed with the story that he was told, largely ignoring, or dismissing the arguments of the officers. None of the soldiers admitted to any involvement in the shooting. The results of the investigation eventually ended up in the hands of President Theodore Roosevelt who reasoned that the soldiers were engaged in a “conspiracy of silence.” His circular logic concluded that because none of the soldiers would admit to wrongdoing, that was proof that they were all covering up for each other. In essence, Roosevelt also presumed the guilt of the soldiers. Even though only a handful may have actively participated in the murder and destruction of

property, he considered them all guilty. The men were not offered any kind of due process. There was no formal trial or court martial. Roosevelt unilaterally decided that the only appropriate action was to discharge without honor the entire battalion—167 soldiers. Major Penrose, a white officer who had served in three white regiments before taking command of the Twenty-Fifth stated that Roosevelt’s decision “wiped out...the best drilled and best battalion that I ever seen in the Army...without trial.”²⁵⁹

Mingo Sanders became the public symbol of the events. Sanders was a career soldier, a non-commissioned officer who had served in the army for twenty-four years. He began his long career at Fort Snelling, was one of twenty soldiers to be selected to participate in the Bicycle Corps experiment of 1897,²⁶⁰ fought alongside Teddy Roosevelt and the Rough Riders at the Battle of San Juan Hill during the Spanish-American War and received a Medal of Honor for his actions during the Philippine Insurrection. Roosevelt’s decision cost Sanders everything. He lost his source of income, his pension, his medal of honor, and he (along with every other soldier) was not allowed to ever seek employment in the public sector for the rest of his life. Sanders went on a speaking campaign around the country, seeking justice for himself and his comrades.

In a moving speech before the 1907 Senate Committee on Military Affairs, Sanders pleaded:

“I’m a poor man. I’ve served my country honest and faithful. I offered my life to be destroyed for the Government, my body to be buried in the earth, and cattle to eat grass off the substance of my

²⁵⁹ Coffman, *The Regular Army*, 130.

²⁶⁰ The Bicycle Corps experiment, led by a white lieutenant, consisted of twenty soldiers from the Twenty-Fifth Infantry traveling overland, on fixed-gear bicycles with no brakes, from Fort Missoula, Montana to Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis, Missouri. They rode 1900 miles in just 41 days through several types of rough terrain. The point of the experiment was to see if the Army could replace horses with bicycles to move an infantry across the West. While the Army ultimately decided that horses were still the better option, an unforeseen result of the experiment, according to General Andrew S. Burt, commanding officer of the regiment, was the positive public relations for Black soldiers in the Army. Burt was so enthusiastic about the positive press that he proposed another bicycle excursion to take place in 1898. Though planned, this trip never came to fruition. The men of the Twenty-Fifth were one of the first regiments to be assigned to Cuba to fight in the Spanish-American War.

blood, and now I am to be cast on the world as a condemned man. Can't you do something for me?"²⁶¹

A small contingent of congressmen in Washington D.C., led by Ohio Senator Joseph Foraker, attempted to bring justice to the men, but Roosevelt was a man who would not back down and would not risk losing face in the eyes of the public. The charges and dismissals stuck to the men for the rest of their lives and Senator Foraker was shunned from D.C., never to work in politics again. For nearly sixty years, the guilt of the Brownsville soldiers was assumed and their discharges without honor seen as just punishment for their crimes.

The Aftermath of Brownsville and the Appointment of Black Bandmasters:

The events of the "Brownsville Affair" of 1906, and the subsequent discharge without honor of 167 soldiers of the Twenty-Fifth Infantry, is not only an example of the Black soldiers' tenuous position on the two-tiered hierarchy, but it also shows how widespread media coverage of these type of events perpetuated more violence upon the soldiers with each new fort, including their assignments to Fort Lawton in Seattle and Fort George Wright in Spokane, Washington.

As much as the incident at Brownsville had a profoundly negative impact on the entire regiment for decades to come, it also created the conditions that allowed for the Department of War to change its stance on accepting Black bandmasters to lead the bands of the Black regiments. Historically, the Department of War had always drawn a hard line against Black commissioned officers in the Army (except for Army chaplains). From 1866 until the first World War, only twelve Black soldiers were accepted to West Point Academy. Only three graduated

²⁶¹ Schubert, "The 25th Infantry at Brownsville," 1222.

and were appointed as commissioned line officers to the segregated Black regiments. Only one, Charles Young, remained in the military long enough to make it a career.²⁶² Krewasky A. Salter I claims that the officers that received a commission did so because they followed the accommodationist philosophy of Booker T. Washington.²⁶³ Washington, in his capacity of ‘the great accommodator,’ served as the spokesman for all Black Americans to both Roosevelt and his successor, William Howard Taft. He encouraged Black citizens to “accept their status quo as second-class citizens while seeking progress through self-help.”²⁶⁴ Black officers made themselves as non-threatening as possible, often keeping to themselves, and putting white officers and soldiers at ease by assuming (at least outwardly) the stance that Black people were, in no way, the equal of white people. However, the events at Brownsville marked a sea change in the acceptance of this accommodationist philosophy. Historian Harry Lembeck argues that, by remaining loyal to Roosevelt throughout the Brownsville debacle, many Black Americans began to reject Washington’s point of view and instead turned to W.E.B. Du Bois as an intellectual and political leader.²⁶⁵

Peter M. Lefferts credits the Black newspapers of the time for leading the charge to appoint Black bandmasters as leaders of the Black regimental bands. Were the newspapers as passionate about seeing Black men commissioned as officers as they were in seeing Black bandmasters? Or did the newspapers find that music and performance were far more influential mediums in the constant battle against white violence? While my archival research of Black

²⁶² Krewasky A. Salter I, *The Story of Black Military Officers, 1861-1948* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 34.

²⁶³ Salter I, *The Story of Black Military Officers*, 53.

²⁶⁴ Jordan, *Black Newspapers*, 10.

²⁶⁵ Harry Lembeck, *Taking on Theodore Roosevelt: How One Senator Defied the President on Brownsville and Shook American Politics* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Publishing, 2015), 253, 310.

newspapers and periodicals is by no means exhaustive, I have yet to find any indication that including commissioned Black officers in the Army was a rhetorical priority for Black editors until the beginning of World War I. That is not to say that Black editors did not advocate for it. The direction of my research may have led me to archival and secondary sources that show how Black newspapers advocated for bandmasters more so than for officers. However, historian William G. Jordan's research into the Black press is quite thorough and he does not indicate that the Black press grabbed onto the issue of Black officers until the outbreak of World War I, almost a full decade after the Black press campaigned for the inclusion of Black bandmasters.²⁶⁶

It seems that, perhaps, the editors of these newspapers found greater purchase in advocating for Black bandmasters. It was certainly a less controversial means of asking the Army to accept Black military leaders. Several issues of *The Colored American* suggest, at that time, many advocates for Black civil rights considered music to be something with which Black people could truly take ownership in terms of an American identity. Many Black contributors to *The Colored American* emphasized what they understood to be the unique musical qualities inherent to people of African descent. The ideological influence of "race science" on Black writers and editors of the early twentieth century cannot be overstated. The emergence of the "New Negro"—Black consciousness characterized by confidence, assertiveness, militancy, and a rejection of scientific racism—would not become dominant until after World War I.²⁶⁷ Black newspapers and periodicals in the pre-war period often referred to the distinct musical qualities considered "characteristic" of the race in general. An issue of *The Colored American* from June

²⁶⁶ Jordan *Black Newspapers*, 56.

²⁶⁷ Jordan, *Black Newspapers*, 134.

of 1900 celebrates the idea that “the Negro is fast becoming a factor in the production of popular music.” The editorial cites the “innate ability” that Black people have for music and proudly asserts the fact that Antonín Dvorák “advanced the theory that the basic principle of American music was the melody of the plantation negro.”²⁶⁸ Perhaps for these reasons, Black editors advocated so vociferously for the inclusion of Black bandmasters a full decade before the issue of Black commissioned officers came to the forefront. If Black editors felt that white supremacy disallowed political and social purchase in the idea of American nationalism, they were far more confident on the undeniable influence of Black music and performance. Arguing for Black bandmasters was a way of forcing integration of Black leadership into the military by using a cultural “back door.” It inserted the idea of Black contribution to national identity into a broad American historical consciousness through bypassing the threat posed by militancy and instead appealing to music.

The incident at Brownsville was a catalyst toward the making of Black bandmasters. Seeking an advantage amidst the injustice after Brownsville, Emmett J. Scott, assistant, and personal secretary to Booker T. Washington lobbied Taft, then the secretary of war, as well as President Roosevelt, to replace white bandmasters with Black bandmasters to head the four regular Black regimental bands. Scott was counting on the “sustained personal contact” of Roosevelt and Taft with Black soldiers and regimental bands.²⁶⁹ Prior to Brownsville, both men were widely considered, by the Black press, to be advocates for Black Americans.

²⁶⁸ “Here and There,” *The Colored American*, June 1900, 123.

²⁶⁹ Lefferts, “U.S. Army Black Regimental Bands,” 156.

The Black press followed Scott's campaign closely. These publications made it clear to readers what was at stake: an official promotion to an official rank and duties for a standard term of enrollment, and the significant increase in pay that came with it. Several editorials in various Black newspapers noted that Black musicians had already served as de facto bandmasters for years, taking over chief musician duties when a white bandmaster took leave (as George S. Thompson did in Nebraska), or in the case of many emancipation celebrations, when the white bandmaster deferred leadership to the top Black musician.²⁷⁰ These newspapers also pointed to the two honorary promotions of senior musicians about to retire. These honorary appointments were given with the understanding that the two musicians in question, James H. Thomas of the Tenth Cavalry and John N. Norton of the Twenty-Fifth Regiment, would hold the position for no more than two or three months.²⁷¹

By 1909, all four Black regimental bands had Black bandmasters at the helm. Although Roosevelt had long positioned himself as a friend to Black people, the debacle over the Brownsville Affair proved that Roosevelt could be just as capricious in his support as nearly every other white Republican politician had proven to be. Roosevelt had lost the support of the white Southern voters by inviting Booker T. Washington to dine in the White House (an act which he never repeated during his presidency). He rallied the white Southern vote with his strong stance against the Brownsville soldiers, however, many Black Republicans began to abandon the party and their support for Roosevelt in response. In his desire to both have his cake

²⁷⁰ "Making History Where Great Men Abide," *The Indianapolis Freeman* (Indianapolis, IN), December 19, 1908.; *Cleveland Gazette* (Cleveland, OH), May 11, 1907.; R.W. Thompson, "Short Flights," *The Indianapolis Freeman* (Indianapolis, IN), October 26, 1907.

²⁷¹ *Cleveland Gazette* (Cleveland, OH), May 11, 1907.

and eat it too, Roosevelt made a political decision to respond to the demands of Emmett J. Scott and the Black press by authorizing Black musicians to be promoted to the role of bandmaster. However, he was careful to specify that the racial segregation in the army would remain. In the closing months of President Roosevelt's presidency, he issued an executive order that officially instituted the policy of the "transfer of colored regiments' white bandmasters to white regiments and assignment of colored bandmasters to colored regiments."²⁷²

Peter Lefferts argues that the "replacement of white by black bandmasters...in the first decade of the twentieth century represented...an important public battle in the struggle for civil rights and racial fairness in the military."²⁷³ Prior to 1907, a Black bandsman in the regular army could only rise to the number two spot of principal musician.²⁷⁴ The four Black regimental bands were, of course, well known by the Black communities for whom they performed and their renown spread in the Black press so that even those who had never witnessed a live performance "appreciated that the bands were an important training ground and a source of steady employment for black musicians outside the entertainment industry and that they offered blacks one of the few opportunities for learning woodwind instruments in the post-Civil War era."²⁷⁵

²⁷² Lefferts, *Black Bandmasters*, 160.

²⁷³ Lefferts, *Black Bandmasters*, 151.

²⁷⁴ Lefferts, *Black Bandmasters*, 152.

²⁷⁵ Lefferts, *Black Bandmasters*, 152.

Fort George Wright and the Volunteer Band:

Formally designated on March 16, 1908, Elbert B. Williams, born in New York in 1860, was appointed as bandmaster for the Twenty-Fifth Infantry's regimental band.²⁷⁶ He served in this position for three years with a young man named Leslie V. King as his assistant. On the 1910 U.S. Census, King is identified as "mulatto" with a birthdate of 1881. King was "a well-trained musician and composer...who entranced everyone with his gymnastics...After twirling the stick around his body and neck, he would hurl it yards straight up in the air, then catch it nonchalantly and salute the commanding officer."²⁷⁷ In his capacity as principal musician under Williams, King was sent from where the Band was assigned at Fort Lawton in Seattle to Fort George Wright in Spokane. While there, he spent months training regular enlisted soldiers to play instruments and learn the most popular tunes, forming a second regimental band. When Williams transferred to the Ninth Cavalry in 1911, King stepped into the role of bandmaster and held his post for nearly 25 years until his retirement in 1935.²⁷⁸ Leslie King would play a key role in how the musicians used performance in an attempt to establish positive social attitudes among white residents during the Band's assignment to Fort Lawton in Seattle and the creation of a volunteer band at Fort George Wright in Spokane, Washington.

The citizens of Spokane were already gearing themselves up for conflict before the regiment even arrived in 1909. This was the regiment's first stateside assignment since

²⁷⁶ 1910 United States Federal Census (database online). Records of Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29, NARA.

²⁷⁷ George S. Schuyler, *Black and Conservative: the Autobiography of George S. Schuyler* (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, 1966), 39.

²⁷⁸ Lefferts, *Black Bandmasters*, 163.

Brownsville.²⁷⁹ Unlike most of the older frontier forts at which the soldiers had been assigned within the continental United States, Fort George Wright was nearly brand new by the time they arrived. The fort officially opened in 1899. The town's leadership, prominent citizens, and business owners had been eagerly lobbying for a fort starting in 1895, anticipating an influx of money into the town. The Secretary of War noted approvingly that the people of Spokane supported and welcomed the Army and was impressed with the "thorough business-like way in which the Spokane people had presented their proposition."²⁸⁰ The community officials waxed poetically about how the presence of an Army regiment would serve as a "perpetual lesson in patriotism" that would "exert a fine influence on the rising generation."²⁸¹ Beyond these lofty ideals, Spokane also looked forward to the soldiers spending their monthly pay in local businesses. In the four years between the beginning of construction and the official opening of the fort, the citizens of Spokane continued to expound on the monetary advantages and moral virtues that the fort would bring. These high expectations crashed suddenly when the Department of War announced that the Twenty-Fourth Infantry, consisting of Black soldiers and white officers, would be the first regiment assigned to the newly named Fort George Wright.

The press of rival towns to Spokane found great amusement in the situation, sarcastically deeming Spokane to be the "Negro City of the North." In her historical geography of Fort George Wright, Bette E. Meyer states that "segments of the Spokane community worked

²⁷⁹ Mary Ellen Rowe, "The Early History of Fort George Wright: Black Infantrymen and Theodore Roosevelt in Spokane," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 80, no. 3 (1989): 96.

²⁸⁰ Bette E. Meyer, *Fort George Wright: Not Only Where the Band Played* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1994), 12. Rowe, "The Early History of Fort George Wright," 94.

²⁸¹ Meyer, *Fort George Wright*, 12.

feverishly with the War Department to have the Black soldiers placed elsewhere.”²⁸² This was, of course, nothing new for any of the Black regiments. The Twenty-Fourth had previously been assigned to Fort Logan in Salt Lake City and had faced vehement opposition upon their arrival. However, upon the regiment’s first anniversary in the Utah capitol, “the community’s primary newspaper published a strong editorial concerning widespread prejudice in relation to the soldiers and apologized for it.”²⁸³ Specifically mentioning the popular performances of the Twenty-Fourth Infantry Band, civilians even saw fit to “give them a rousing send-off, strewing them with flowers as they marched through the city.”²⁸⁴ The town of Spokane, however, would not be so easily swayed. Rather than attempting to incite violence, as so many towns had done, the citizens of Spokane lapsed into apathy, choosing to make no public protest.²⁸⁵ Various companies of the Twenty-Fourth continued to reside at the fort with frequent reassignment to the Philippines. While the town certainly welcomed the money the soldiers spent, the patriotic zeal that the fort was supposed to bring seemed to deflate. Thus, when the Second and Third battalions of the Twenty-Fifth replaced the soldiers of the Twenty-Fourth, the town did not protest, but its apathy remained.

While the rest of the regiment, including the Band, were assigned to Fort Lawton in Seattle, the companies at Fort George Wright settled into a town that, while not welcoming to the Black soldiers, also made no overt effort to have them removed. A local newspaper even reported that the police of Spokane did not expect the Black soldiers to be nearly as troublesome

²⁸² Meyer, *Fort George Wright*, 32.

²⁸³ Meyer, *Fort George Wright*, 33.

²⁸⁴ Coffman, *The Old Army*, 371.

²⁸⁵ Rowe, “The Early History of Fort George Wright,” 96.

as some of the white soldiers of other regiments had been. The Spokane police reasoned that since Spokane had such a small Black population, the Black soldiers would not have any reason to cause trouble.²⁸⁶ Of course, this shows that the reporter did not understand that, in every situation in which the Black regiments were met with trouble at a fort, it was always at the instigation of the white townspeople. When the soldiers of the Twenty-Fifth arrived, “the only reception given at their arrival was by the small black community A.M.E. [African Methodist Episcopal Church].”²⁸⁷

The Band was consistent in its musical manifestation of a white American patriotic militarism; however, elements of Black aesthetics were likely insinuated into its performances. These elements escaped notice because of the increasing normalization of Black musical culture into a broader American popular culture. Records of the repertoire of parades and public concerts between 1900-1911 are scarce. Local newspapers would report that a performance took place but did not often reveal the specific content of those performances beyond brief descriptions of style or spectator reaction. Based on local newspaper accounts that did list each tune for ten public performances from 1888-1897, two performances in 1904, and nine performances in 1912, the Band continued to play favorites by classical composers from Europe. The twentieth century also saw the rise in popularity (for white audiences) of the ragtime genre. Perhaps the acceptance of ragtime into mainstream culture of popular music accounts for the lack of newspaper commentary on the surprising qualities of the Band’s performances. The Band continues to garner praise in the press, however, the compliments are broad and do not specify that the Band

²⁸⁶ “Expect Less Trouble with Colored Troops,” *The Spokane Press* (Spokane, WA), July 13, 1909.

²⁸⁷ Rowe, “The Early History of Fort George Wright,” 94.

is doing anything new or surprising, as the comments did when the Band performed in the 1880s-1890s. The only commentary I can find of the Band doing something unexpected is a single line in a newspaper article that states that the Band played “several compositions brought from the Philippines.”²⁸⁸ This seems to imply that the Band was playing music considered to be exotic, or at least not the standard European fare audiences had grown used to, however, no other details are provided. The Band was likely influenced by Filipino culture as numerous articles written by the chaplain and different soldiers of the Twenty-Fifth published in *The Colored American* would indicate. Most significantly, the Band gained a new member in September 1908; a young Filipino man named Catalino Acayan, who remained with the Band throughout its time in the Pacific Northwest and Hawai’i. As far as I can tell, this is the first time that the Band welcomed a musician who did not identify as Black.²⁸⁹

Wherever the Band was located, it played an ambassadorial role, often placating disgruntled townspeople offended or threatened by the assignment of a Black regiment. The regimental band is always stationed wherever the Headquarters of the regiment resides. Army regulations specified that when one or more companies of a regiment were stationed at headquarters, the band was also to be located there. Those same regulations also stated that,

²⁸⁸ “Army Dance Was Feature,” *Spokane Chronicle* (Spokane, WA), January 20, 1910.

²⁸⁹ Mary Talusan’s research shows that the conventions of European marching bands have a long history in the Philippines due to Spanish colonization, however, throughout the decades, Filipino musicians added their own cultural musical stylings to their performances. Though Filipinos had, for centuries, mastered the genre of military marching music, American audiences remained convinced that the Filipino musicians had only recently learned how to perform due to the influence of white American regimental bands during the U.S. occupation of the Philippine Islands. Talusan also points out that, even though the Philippine Constabulary Band’s bandmaster was a Black American named Walter Loving, American newspapers rarely mentioned Loving and when they did, they failed to mention his race. Talusan argues that Loving was erased from news coverage because white Americans would not have been comfortable with the idea that a Black American could have had an influence on a Filipino marching band.

when practicable, regimental bands could be sent, for short periods of time, to different posts occupied by other companies from the regiment. This would allow the regimental band to stay for a few weeks at a time playing for dances and concerts.²⁹⁰ In this case, the Band remained in Seattle at Fort Lawton, leaving the companies of soldiers at Fort George Wright without a tried-and-true method of ingratiating themselves to the white public. Perhaps this is why Lieutenant Henry Wiegenstein almost immediately began making arrangements for a “volunteer band from the men in the different companies” at Fort George Wright.²⁹¹ The local newspaper reported that “arrangements are now being made to have an experienced man from the regimental band come over from Fort Lawton to give instructions.”²⁹² Even before Leslie King arrived to lead the volunteer band, plans for “a number of balls, banquets, and other special events” were already in the works.²⁹³

While Elbert Williams remained at Fort Lawton as bandmaster to the regular regimental band, King arrived in Spokane on November 14, 1909, with orders to remain at Fort George Wright for four months—quite a bit longer than the normal stay of only a few weeks. Some of the volunteer musicians already had their own instruments. The remaining instruments were provided by a local business called Chant Music.²⁹⁴ King recruited several musicians from among the soldiers and daily practice became an established part of the regular routine at Fort George Wright.²⁹⁵ The local newspapers, finally showing positive interest in the soldiers of the

²⁹⁰ Railsback and Langellier, *The Drums Would Roll*, 19.

²⁹¹ “Winter Garb for Troops,” *The Spokesman Review* (Spokane, WA), October 16, 1909.

²⁹² “Soldiers to Hike at Fort Wright,” *The Spokesman Review* (Spokane, WA), October 23, 1909.

²⁹³ “Some Boys at Fort Wright Have Snug Little Fortunes,” *The Spokane Press* (Spokane, WA), October 29, 1909.

²⁹⁴ “Band Leader at Fort,” *The Spokesman Review* (Spokane, WA), November 15, 1909.

²⁹⁵ “Band Practices at Fort,” *The Spokesman Review* (Spokane, WA), November 17, 1909.

Black regiment, reported on the progress of the volunteer band. After only a few days of practice, the soldiers turned musicians “mastered several marches” as well as the “Star-Spangled Banner.” The members of the volunteer band continued to practice their instruments in their free time. King spent extra time with the soldiers who were not able to read sheet music.²⁹⁶

Newspaper reports indicate that it was the soldiers themselves, assigned to Fort George Wright, that wanted to form its own band since the regimental band was assigned to Fort Lawton. Seeing the apathy of the white people of Spokane, the soldiers turned to performance to connect with the community. Bette Meyer indicates that the formation of the Fort George Wright band was instigated by the popularity of the ad hoc minstrel troupe that some of the soldiers participated in.²⁹⁷ By the end of October 1909, the first year of the regiment’s arrival, “the soldier’s minstrel troupe was booking public appearances. Their volunteer band...proved even more popular with locals.”²⁹⁸

Early newspaper reports indicate that a local Spokane musician was set to be the leader of this separate regimental band, however, in the end, it was Leslie King who was sent from Seattle to Spokane to train the soldiers—many of whom were only just starting to learn to play instruments.²⁹⁹ Perhaps the local Spokane musician declined leadership of the new regimental band in solidarity with other local musicians, not only in Spokane, but also in cities and towns across the country who protested that, by allowing the regimental bands to be paid by private benefactors for performances outside of the military institution, the Department of War was

²⁹⁶ “Band Plays National Air,” *The Spokesman Review* (Spokane, WA), November 20, 1909.

²⁹⁷ Meyer, *Fort George Wright*, 33.

²⁹⁸ Rowe, “The Early History of Fort George Wright,” 96.

²⁹⁹ “City News,” *The Spokane Press* (Spokane, WA), October 30, 1909.

essentially destroying any opportunities for local musicians living in towns that were adjacent to military forts.³⁰⁰ These protests from local musicians had been an ongoing issue in several locations throughout the United States. Regimental bands were in high demand, and local musicians could not compete with the pomp and swagger of bandsmen representing the Army. In 1908 the Department of War passed a regulation that the musicians of the regimental bands were no longer allowed to book private gigs.³⁰¹ They were now only allowed to play music that directly represented the interests of the US Army and that were authorized by the Department of War.

This new regulation would curtail the kind of community participation for which the Band was known, in both Black and white communities. The Band at Fort Lawton, and the newly formed band at Fort George Wright, would no longer play such a major role in the social life of the towns and cities in which they played. Each performance was now circumscribed by the new regulation. The newspapers no longer reported Band performances at weddings, funerals, society balls, etc. The exception to this, for the band at Fort George Wright, was invited engagements for Emancipation Day celebrations and commemorations of Abraham Lincoln's birthday.

The soldiers assigned to Fort George Wright may have been met with apathy by the white citizens of Spokane, but they were wholeheartedly welcomed by Spokane's small Black community. The Bethel A.M.E. church welcomed the companies of the Twenty-Fifth less than a

³⁰⁰ "Insinger Closes Labor Argument," *The Spokesman Review* (Spokane, WA), August 8, 1909.

³⁰¹ McCormick, *History of the US Army Band*, 7. This regulation would be reversed in 1974 after the formation of a single US Army Band (Pershing's Own) that represented the entire Army as a whole. See also: Daniel E. Ray, "Military Bands and Government Documents," *DttP* 44, no. (2017): 28.

month after their arrival with a reception and already had “plans for several brilliant functions to be given during the winter in honor of the soldiers.”³⁰² Throughout its time at Fort George Wright, the volunteer band would provide music not only for emancipation celebrations but also celebrations of Lincoln’s birthday and community carnivals. In turn, the enlisted soldiers at the fort organized a ball especially for Spokane’s Black citizens.³⁰³ These celebrations all took place at local A.M.E. and Baptist churches with Black congregations. Since the Department of War no longer allowed the musicians to earn outside income, my conjecture is that these were events in which the church congregations sought permission from the Department of War to invite the musicians to play, but they likely did not receive monetary compensation.

The Band at Fort Lawton:

A local Seattle newspaper reported that the “colored people of Seattle” planned a warm welcome for the arrival of the Twenty-Fifth Infantry at Fort Lawton when they arrived in the fall of 1909. The local committee of Black citizens had even worked with the commanding officer of the regiment to secure a furlough for the soldiers so that they could spend their first few days in Seattle enjoying the welcome celebration with the city’s Black populations. The Band planned a special concert for Seattle’s Black citizens as a gesture of appreciation.³⁰⁴

³⁰² “Welcome the Troops,” *Spokane Chronicle* (Spokane, WA) November 5, 1909.

³⁰³ “Lauds Lincoln, Praises Negro,” *The Spokesman Review* (Spokane, WA) February 20, 1910.; “City News in Brief,” *The Spokane Press* (Spokane, WA), April 8, 1910.; “Colored People Have Celebration,” *Spokane Chronicle* (Spokane, WA), February 13, 1912.; “Colored People Plan Rose Fete,” *Spokane Chronicle* (Spokane, WA), June 22, 1912.

³⁰⁴ “Will Welcome the Colored Soldiers,” *The Seattle Star* (Seattle, WA), October 14, 1909.

The white citizens of Seattle, particularly those living in the neighborhood closest to the newly built fort, had no intention of welcoming the regiment. From the moment of the regiment's arrival, the neighborhood vocalized its discontent by writing two separate petitions to the Department of War requesting the regiment's withdrawal.³⁰⁵ In contrast, by 1910, the citizens of Spokane had begun to change their perspective on the regiment. While the Mayor of Seattle made public speeches and petitioned the Department of War demanding the removal of the Twenty-Fifth, the people of Spokane took a different perspective:

“The contentions that have arisen over the Brownsville affair may have created in many persons' minds a prejudice against the negro soldier as such, which a calmer review of his record in the civil war and in Cuba and the Philippines would correct. But the city council of Spokane has just passed resolution thanking the 25th...for their soldierly bearing and correct deportment, their sympathy of good order, and their constant example of orderly, law-abiding sober and gentlemanly conduct at all times.”³⁰⁶

The people of Spokane continued to rally around the soldiers when faced with prejudice from “outsiders.” During the Merchant's and Traveler's Expo, the travelers from the Southern states refused to march in the celebratory parade that opened the event, citing the presence of the Fort George Wright volunteer band as the reason. Despite a great deal of concern over offending the Southern delegates and possibly losing their support in future expositions, the Travelers from Spokane still marched in the parade.³⁰⁷

The local Seattle newspapers did not report on any social occasions in which the Black soldiers or the Band may have participated. Newspaper coverage of the time largely focuses on how the citizens and Mayor of Seattle fought hard to get the entire regiment moved from Fort

³⁰⁵ Jack W. Jaunal, *Fort Lawton* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2008), 37.

³⁰⁶ “Colored Man a Good Soldier,” *Spokesman Review* (Spokane, WA), February 7, 1910.

³⁰⁷ “Balk on Colored Troops,” *The Spokesman Review* (Spokane, WA), April 20, 1910.

Lawton.³⁰⁸ As had become the norm for the Black regiments, a white woman made a vague accusation of being attacked by a Black soldier.³⁰⁹ Predictably, the white woman who reported being attacked by one of the Black soldiers was unable to identify the man, even when several of the soldiers were lined up in front of her. In only a few days, the press reported that the soldiers had been “exonerated.”³¹⁰ This did not mitigate the continued protests of the Seattle citizenry.

Only a few months later, in June of 1910, yet another white woman from the same neighborhood adjacent to Fort Lawton claimed that a Black soldier had attacked her in her home. Once again, the Seattle police and the officers of the regiment paraded the soldiers before the woman, but she was unable to identify any of them as the man who attacked her.³¹¹ The neighborhood’s white citizens organized a mass meeting, insisting that “Mrs. Redding” had indeed been attacked by one of the soldiers. They demanded the removal of the entire regiment, in the same way that Roosevelt had punished an entire battalion during the Brownsville affair. Participants at the meeting even called the soldiers at Fort Lawton the “Brownsville Battalion” even though every single soldier from that incident had been discharged without honor in December 1906.³¹²

Washington Senator Wesley Livsey Jones sprang into action for his constituents. He appealed directly to President Taft to have the entire regiment removed. President Taft, still working on rebuilding trust with Black voters after his involvement in the Brownsville Affair, refused to authorize the regiment’s removal from Fort Lawton. Remembering the events of

³⁰⁸ “Colored Soldiers Must Go,” *The Colorado Statesman* (Denver, CO), June 25, 1910.

³⁰⁹ “Negro Soldier Attacks a Woman,” *The Tacoma Times* (Tacoma, WA), February 12, 1910.

³¹⁰ “Negro Soldiers Exonerated,” *The Spokesman Review* (Spokane, WA), February 15, 1910.

³¹¹ “Rid Fort Lawton of Negro Troops,” *The Spokesman Review* (Spokane, WA), June 6, 1910.

³¹² “Demand Removal of Regiment,” *The Spokane Press* (Spokane, WA), June 6, 1910.

Brownsville, he stated that “removal upon unproved charges would be unwise.” However, he did agree to confine the regiment to the fort until the matter could be settled.³¹³

The residents of the neighborhood closest to Fort Lawton began to talk of arming themselves. The local newspaper reported that the “race feeling in the neighborhood is running high” and that the residents demanded that the entire regiment be sent to Alaska. The residents staked themselves outside the fort with their weapons and threatened any soldier who tried to leave its boundaries. An officer of the regiment, Colonel Miller, had no choice but to approach the Seattle police and ask for protection for the soldiers against the armed citizens of Seattle.³¹⁴ General Edwin G. Gill, then acting commanding officer of the regiment, made a public speech to the city of Seattle pointing out the blatant hypocrisy of the townspeople. In his speech, he quoted another former commanding officer of the Twenty-Fifth Infantry, General Andrew S. Burt.³¹⁵ General Gill pleaded with the people of Seattle to “judge the negro soldier as a man—not as a

³¹³ “Taft Refuses to Remove 25th Colored Regiment,” *The Spokane Press* (Spokane, WA), June 8, 1910.

³¹⁴ “Want Negroes Sent to North,” *The Yakima Herald* (Yakima, WA), June 8, 1910.

³¹⁵ The story of General Andrew S. Burt’s own personal revelations of his prejudice against Black soldiers and his personal journey of examining and changing his own racism is a fascinating story in and of itself. In brief, as a young officer in the post-Civil War era, he was outspoken about his displeasure in being assigned as commanding officer of a Black regiment. He found it an insult to his career and to his character. Yet, archival documents show that, by working closely with his Black soldiers, he realized that they were not the problem. He was. In a letter from 1897 to the Secretary of War, Burt narrates his own path toward changing his mind, and suggests this path should be taken by the white American public in general. He wrote approvingly of the Bicycle Corps experiment, stating that, for white Americans, seeing a Black man in an Army uniform often was like “waving a red flag at a bull.” He understood the anxiety and anger that many white people felt by allowing Black men as soldiers. In his letter he advocates for a second Bicycle Corps journey, asking if it was not better for the entire nation that Black soldiers should be more frequently seen by the public so that they, like him, could become accustomed to the idea and eventually come to the same conclusion that he did: that Black men in uniform are neither better nor worse than white men in uniform. By the time of the Brownsville Affair in 1906, General Burt was one of the few outspoken advocates for the rights of Black soldiers in the Army. He went on a public speaking tour admonishing the public for their treatment of Black soldiers and offering a history of Black men in the world’s militaries that drew quite a bit of public criticism. It is from these speeches that General Gill is quoting.

black man.” He reminded the public that the men of the Twenty-Fifth Infantry were soldiers who loved their country and that they should be treated as such.³¹⁶

The regiment’s treatment in Seattle became a national news item. An editorial in *The Colorado Statesman*, one of the most widely distributed Black newspapers of the time, eloquently detailed the outrage at the treatment of the Black soldiers and the system of surveillance under which they constantly lived. Dripping with sarcasm, the editorial suggests:

“If the colored soldiers...have strayed from the straight and narrow path, they have not done any more than hundreds of criminal civilians are doing in Seattle every day. It is awfully poor policy for persons living in glass houses to throw stones at the other fellow.”³¹⁷

Despite these public reactions, the Mayor of Seattle once again called for the regiment’s removal. In response, the Secretary of War traveled to Seattle to assess the situation for himself. He stated: “They can’t be moved off the earth and Seattle is as good a place as anywhere.” Further, Senator Jones received a letter from “a prominent businessman of Seattle” that defended the soldiers and called out the media for fueling the outrage for its own benefit. This Seattle citizen wrote: “I live near the fort and pass through it several times each day. As a whole these men are of better deportment, very much so, than the white troops which have been stationed here.”³¹⁸

These responses did very little in appeasing the faction of Seattle residents that would not tolerate the presence of the Black regiment, especially because those soldiers continued to form consensual relationships with white women. Nearly a full year later, these consensual encounters

³¹⁶ “Is Gallant Record of Twenty-Fifth Regiment to Go for Naught?” *The Seattle Star* (Seattle, WA), June 13, 1910.

³¹⁷ “Colored Soldiers Must Go,” *The Colorado Statesman*. June 25, 1910.

³¹⁸ “Defends Troops at Fort Lawton,” *The Spokesman Review* (Spokane, WA), June 29, 2010.

resulted in another false accusation of criminal assault upon a white woman. The people of the neighborhood persisted in making threats to the soldiers and to rally for their removal. The Quartermaster Sergeant of the regiment, George C. Anderson, wrote an editorial to the local newspapers castigating the white residents of Seattle:

“I have been in Company K [of the Twenty-Fifth Infantry] for twelve years and I assume this authority in defense of the company and regiment as it is nearly always the case that when a white woman is mixed up with a colored soldier it is pronounced assault...I am tired of hearing men wrongfully accused just because they are negroes associating with white women.”

Conclusion:

It seems the white citizens of Seattle never fully accepted the Twenty-Fifth Infantry at Fort Lawton. It is possible that, by circumscribing opportunities for band members to play music not associated with military events, the Band in Seattle lost its capability to connect with the public. The Band's engagement with audiences in towns located near forts had often helped the entire regiment find ways to form relationships within the confines of location-based racial hierarchies.

The volunteer band's success in Spokane, contrasted with the apparent lack of performances by the Band in Seattle, shows both the reach and the limits of uplift suasion. The experiences of the two bands indicates that the attitude of white townspeople could be altered through performance, or, when those performances were confined to the fort, their impact could be minimal. Spokane newspapers eventually settled into coverage of the regiments' movements that were neutral if not complimentary, as well as publishing the weekly public concerts given by the Fort George Wright volunteer band. Mary Ellen Rowe states that “men of the Twenty-Fifth

remembered Fort George Wright and Spokane as a city that was, if not always cordial, not often hostile.”³¹⁹ There is no indication that the Band was able to engage with the white Seattle public in the same way. If they did provide weekly public concerts at Fort Lawton, the local newspapers did not mention it. Eventually, after a brief foray back to the Philippines in 1912, the Band left Headquarters at Fort Lawton behind and spent the entire summer at Fort George Wright playing weekly concerts alongside the volunteer band.³²⁰ And while the Spokane newspapers remarked upon the regiment’s departure from Fort George Wright to Hawai’i in January 1913, the Seattle newspapers did not report the soldiers’ departure from Fort Lawton at all.

³¹⁹ Rowe, “The Early History of Fort George Wright,” 100.

³²⁰ “Regimental Band Comes to Spokane,” *Spokane Chronicle* (Spokane, WA), May 2, 1912.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Auditory Bombast of Rewriting History, 1913-1918

“The hist’ries we peruse in vain in quest of what I’ve stated,
Yet justice will admit my claim is not exaggerated.
In peace, in war, in church and state, in letters and in art,
In every worthy work and way, the Negro plays his part.”

--John Riley Dungee³²¹

In the preface to his book, *Unsustainable Empire*, Dean Itsuji Saranillio describes a moment of protest during the anniversary of Hawaiian statehood on March 18, 2009.³²² Members of the Hawaiian Independence Action Alliance (HIAA), an activist group that advocates for Hawaiian sovereignty, disrupted the spectacle of celebration by placing their bodies directly in front of the U.S. Pacific Fleet Band. While their small number could not possibly block the entire band, and certainly could not diminish the sounds of military celebration, they stood erect and silent wearing t-shirts that spelled out the word “THEFT.” There were several other actions partaken by the members of HIAA throughout that day, but it is this small part of a larger demonstration that is significant to this chapter. By choosing to place their bodies in front of the Fleet Band, the demonstrators were not only drawing attention to the illegal actions of the U.S. settler state; they were also linking the presence of a military band as a blatant symbol of those actions. It is easy to see how they made that connection. A fully

³²¹ John Riley Dungee, “Unwritten History,” *The Colored American*, April 1901, 477.

³²² “Hawaiian” is the word that describes a person who is Indigenous to the Hawaiian Islands. A person may be from Hawai’i but is not referred to as “Hawaiian” unless they are of Native Hawaiian descent. In this chapter, I use the word “Hawaiian” to signify those who have an ancestral, cultural, or historical connection to the Islands prior to colonization.

equipped military band is hard to miss, and of course, with all eyes on the band, what better way to agitate a crowd that uncritically celebrated the anniversary. But their choice to interrupt this band also speaks to the long and complicated role that military bands have played in Hawai'i through four political regimes—monarchy, republic, territory, and state.

In this chapter, I move on from the individual actions of select performances of stereotyped Indigeneity and the persistence of the Band in the face of white racial terror to focus on what Saranillio calls “the theatricality of the settler state” by analyzing the emblematic spectacle of the Mid-Pacific Carnival (MPC).³²³ The Band participated in this annual festival for five years, becoming an important part of the racial formation and historiographic amnesia particular to the Hawaiian Islands throughout the twentieth century. The Mid-Pacific Carnival was an audacious enterprise by the white oligarchy intended to mold a narrative of Hawaiian history that presented the arrival of white Christian missionaries and the autocratic governance of white American businessmen as the stuff of legend. By becoming a prominent feature of the Carnival festivities, the Band co-created a version of American History in which the marriage of corporate and civic interests was presented as an inevitability. Underneath the veneer of multiculturalism and collage of internationalism that the Carnival presented lay the foundation for strict ethnic partition based on superficial cultural stereotypes. Even as the Black musicians and soldiers, once again, faced violence and race-based degradation, the Carnival in which they all participated blatantly fabricated white supremacist histories that lingered in the historiography of Hawaii for decades to come.

³²³ Dean Itsuji Saranillio, *Unsustainable Empire: Alternative Histories of Hawai'i Statehood* (Duke University Press, 2018), 12.

In researching this chapter, I noticed a significant historiographical gap in much of the scholarship written about Hawai'i. This gap primarily excludes the Territorial Period of the islands from 1900 to the onset of World War I that must be addressed. Before I do this, however, I will provide a brief history of military bands on the Islands as a primary mode of performance used by both monarchs and haole usurpers to buttress support from what they perceived as an unruly or apathetic public.³²⁴ I will begin my analysis by narrating the steady patronage of military marching music by the Hawaiian monarchy and how that mode of performance—under the steady guidance of Czech bandmaster Henry Berger—survived the overthrow and accommodated the haole oligarchy. I contend that military marching music was a familiar—even comfortable—mode of performance for both Hawaiian interests and Hawai'i born white settlers.

King Kalākaua popularized this primarily European genre of music during his reign at a time when white missionaries and their descendants became active participants in the governance of the Islands. The continuity of this genre throughout the political changes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries encouraged Hawaiian participation in the new U.S. colonial regime. At the same time, the white minority, out of a sense of nostalgia for the Indigeneity they themselves sought to both suppress and embody, used the Mid-Pacific carnival as an opportunity to revive and appropriate the Hawaiian cultural tradition of pa-u riders, further stifling the dissent of Hawaiians who also longed for a sense of cultural continuity.

This context will guide the reader toward understanding the complicated interplay of Hawaiian monarchical tradition and European performance conventions that led to the

³²⁴ In Hawaii, “haole” indicates a person who is not a Native Hawaiian, especially a white person.

exponential growth and popularity of the Mid-Pacific Carnival. The Mid-Pacific Carnival marks the transition from a land still maintaining culturally Hawaiian priorities to a space becoming exponentially more ensconced in a paradoxical American nationalism. The paradox is that the organizers of the Carnival—the Hawai'i Promotion Committee (HPC)—wanted to present the Hawaiian Islands as the true American ideal: a multi-ethnic melting pot that was the ideal outcome of the liberal ideology of the Founding Fathers. Yet, the Carnival was carefully choreographed to tell a story of white supremacy and Hawaiian erasure, a story where multiculturalism thrives if it supports what W.E.B. DuBois called “the new religion of whiteness.”³²⁵ The Band would become a pivotal element in laying the groundwork for this ideology and eventual historical amnesia through its annual participation in the yearly festival, even as the soldiers and musicians of the Twenty-Fifth continued to face extreme racial prejudice.

In my analysis, I will use primary sources such as newspaper articles from Hawai'i's many newspapers written in English—most notably, *The Pacific Advertiser*, long understood to be the voice of the oligarchy. Due to my own linguistic limitations, I am not able to use any of the archive's local newspapers written in Hawaiian, Japanese, and Chinese, which is a detriment to my analysis, however these non-English newspapers did provide coverage of the MPC throughout the years. My evidence is very much based on an archive that centers the experiences and opinions of white and Black Americans, leaving the perspectives of the Hawaiian and Asian migrant workers in the dark. To compensate for this, I rely on secondary sources from Hawai'i's

³²⁵ W.E.B. Du Bois, *Darkwater : Voices from Within the Veil* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) 454.

leading scholars, whose work over the past three decades has dispelled the romantic image of Hawai'i as an unproblematic racial melting pot and has highlighted the role of not only white settler colonialism, but also Asian settler colonialism and the complicated role of those of African ancestry who have long called the Islands their home. My analysis also lacks the perspective of the soldiers in the Band, though I have an autobiographical account written by George S. Schuyler, a soldier in the Twenty-Fifth Infantry who became a writer, journalist, and conservative social commentator.

As a framework for my analysis, I will think through Tony Bennett's theorization of the Exhibitionary Complex, of which the organizers of the Mid-Pacific Carnival seemed particularly enthralled. I will also base much of my analysis on Nicholas Mirzoeff's explanation of the concept of visibility to explain how the Hawai'i Promotion Committee may have based the aesthetics of the Carnival on a particular understanding of historical consciousness. However, the Mid-Pacific Carnival was not only visually spectacular; it was an auditory powerhouse as well. With such features as massed band concerts and the voices of a thousand school children singing the "Star-Spangled Banner," Ronald Radano and Tejumola Olaniyan's theorization of the "Audible Empire" will be indispensable to my analysis. This chapter also uses Rachel Woodward's idea of "military geographies," defined as the seemingly benign ways in which a military institution establishes control over land and coerces the people to accept a perpetual state of military occupation.

Historical Amnesia in Hawai'i:

Recent historians of Hawai'i, such as Tom Coffman, Cristina Bacchilega, Elizabeth Buck, Judy Rohrer, Noenoe Silva, Haunani-Kay Trask, and Dean Itsuji Saranillio have pointed out that the most dominant academic and public historiographies of Hawai'i—written by scholars of European and Japanese descent—contributed to a cultural amnesia among and about Hawaiians that lasted for generations. Saranillio contends that “Statehood Day,” which became an official holiday in 1969, was the impetus that nudged Hawaiian historical amnesia from its slumber.³²⁶ Coffman argues that the resurfacing of knowledge did not begin to occur until 1993, the 100th anniversary of the overthrow, when “it dawned on a certain number of people” that the descendants of the usurpers had defined most of the written history of Hawai'i, ignoring (or not even considering) oral histories.³²⁷ A common refrain that historians use is that, for far too long, ordinary Hawaiians simply did not know that a large percentage of their ancestors resisted the overthrow and subsequent territorial years. Somewhere along the way, this knowledge got lost, tucked away in university archives, conveniently eliminated from historiography for decades. Silva counters that, though the Western school system in Hawai'i only validated history as written by haoles, it is “a persistent and pernicious” myth that Hawaiians “passively accepted the erosion of their culture and the loss of their nation.”³²⁸ She goes on to explain that her 1998 collaboration with the Bishop Museum, in which a never before seen reproduction of all 556 pages of the 1897 anti-annexation petition was made public, finally “gave people permission

³²⁶ Saranillio, *Unsustainable Empire*, x.

³²⁷ Tom Coffman, *Nation Within : the History of the American Occupation of Hawai'i* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 7.

³²⁸ Noenoe K. Silva, *Aloha Betrayed : Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 1.

from their ancestors to participate in the quest for national sovereignty.”³²⁹ The matter of cultural and historical amnesia was not simply a result of archives being hidden from public view. It was also a result of a long period of naturalized assimilation that was solidified through the exponential growth and popularity of public festivals, beginning with the Mid-Pacific Carnival. This assimilation was naturalized because it was both subtle and overt, giving the Island’s Hawaiian population, as well as its immigrant populations, the veneer of choice but also enforced by the constant and ever-expanding presence of the American military. To put it another way, the Mid-Pacific Carnival acted as a mechanism of the hegemonic historiographies of Hawai’i that dominated scholarship well into the twentieth century and naturalized a narrative about Hawaiian acquiescence to U.S. rule.

The early territorial years of Hawai’i—from 1898 to America’s entrance into World War I in 1917—do not receive as much historiographical attention as the years leading up to and including the 1893 overthrow and the years encompassing the World Wars. There is a significant gap, whether it is military history, social history, or even the biographical history of Queen Lili’uokalani herself, who during this time, was seen by the white oligarchy as a ceremonial figurehead with no real political power. A review of the literature shows that historians have written many volumes about the overthrow, the Republic of Hawai’i that followed, and its time during the World Wars leading to statehood in 1959. More recently, an expanded history is being written about Hawai’i before the encroachment of conquering explorers and white missionaries. Yet, there are two decades of Hawaiian history that have received comparatively less scholarly

³²⁹ Silva, *Aloha Betrayed*, 5.

attention. This was a formative time in Hawaiian history as the white oligarchy positioned itself to be competitive on the world stage, with or without the support of the United States government. This was a time when symbols of American nationalism that we now take for granted—such as the “Star-Spangled Banner”—had not yet been firmly established. It was a time when white Americans were only beginning to learn to construct an idea of a racial melting-pot without giving thought to their own racialization. It was also a time when people of color living in Hawai’i were learning to accommodate the conventions of American nationalism through strict ethnic and racial boundaries (an inherent contradiction to the concept of a melting pot). Squarely within the middle of this gap and acting as the main conduit for “a pattern of white dominance imported from the continent...and a general but unwritten rule affirming the status of whites over nonwhites”—is the Mid-Pacific Carnival.³³⁰

The Royal Hawaiian Band:

The disciplinary force of a military marching band has been part of Hawaiian history since 1836 when King Kamehameha III formally organized the King’s Band. A Weimar musician named Wilhelm Merseburgh assumed leadership of the band in 1848 as part of the growing European presence in Hawai’i during the nineteenth century.³³¹ The King’s Band soon became known as the Royal Hawaiian Band (RHB). The band performed for diplomatic ceremonies, parades, funerals, and traveled with Hawaiian royalty on international excursions. In

³³⁰ Judy Rohrer, *Staking Claim : Settler Colonialism and Racialization in Hawai’i* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2016), 98.

³³¹ “Royal Hawaiian Band,” *Local Legacies*, The American Folklife Center, Retrieved October 11, 2023. memory.loc.gov/diglib/legacies/loc.afc.afc-legacies.200002878/.

1876, King David Kalākaua—crowned as Kamehameha V—accepted a “loan” from the newly formed nation-state of Germany in the form of a 27-year-old musician named Henry Berger.³³² Like the Ottoman rulers who first brought the concept of a military marching band to Europe, the Hawaiian monarch desired a mode of performance intent on “creating scripts for people to believe and believe in”.³³³ Kalākaua enjoyed the optics of an official marching band, reveling in the spectacle and the prestige that it added to his reign. But it was more than that. It was a way to bring a sense of purpose and unity to a population that had been disrupted and systemically decimated by the rise of global capitalism and settler colonialism. The Hawaiian monarchy had a standing army, but it was small, and the monarchy, more often than not, opted for diplomacy out of caution for losing more of its already dwindling numbers. King Kalākaua, and the Hawaiian people in general, had a vested interest in adopting “Western” cultural and religious practices as both an act of survival and as part of their long history of being open to adaptation and change.

Originally, Berger was on loan for a period of four years, however, after the end of his service, he decided that Hawai’i was the place he wanted to call home. Under his direction, the European-style of military marching music fused with native Hawaiian mele (oral story-telling conventions) into a form that would be a source of pride and identity for Hawaiians for decades to come. Upon Berger’s arrival to Hawai’i, he was surprised that most Hawaiian music was not in print. He immediately started to arrange and print Hawaiian music for voice, piano, band, and

³³² Helena G. Allen, *The Betrayal of Liliuokalani, Last Queen of Hawaii, 1838-1917* (Glendale, Calif: A.H. Clark Co., 1982), 185.

³³³ Sara Brady and Lindsey Mantoan, *Performance in a Militarized Culture* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2018), 2.

orchestra.³³⁴ He became the bandmaster for the Royal Hawaiian Band, the “oldest and most important band in Hawaii” as well as the oldest municipal band in the United States.³³⁵ Berger would have a congenial relationship with four Hawaiian monarchs with his closest relationship being with Queen Lili’uokalani. Their relationship is part of the historical record, though the nature of it is contested and often romanticized.

The Royal Hawaiian Band played a major role in the development of Hawaiian music and for decades was the center of communal life in Honolulu.³³⁶ Prior to the overthrow, Berger regularly included Hawaiian vocal music and encouraged the members of the band to use their talents to perpetuate Hawaiian musical heritage. The band ended each public concert with “Aloha ‘Oe” or the Hawaiian national anthem that Berger arranged entitled “Hawai’i Pono’i.”³³⁷ The RHB was initially part of the Hawaiian army, however, the band’s military ties were dropped when it became a municipal band following the 1893 overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy.³³⁸ Financial support of the band fell to the usurpers who changed its name to the Provisional Government Band, and later, to the Territorial Band. The new government actively suppressed the band’s repertoire of Hawaiian music for a decade.³³⁹ By 1905, at the same time that the oligarchy strategically sought to reestablish some Hawaiian cultural traditions on its own

³³⁴ George S. Kanahale, *Hawaiian Music and Musicians: an Illustrated History* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1979), 37.

³³⁵ Kanahale, *Hawaiian Music and Musicians*, 335.

³³⁶ Kanahale, *Hawaiian Music and Musicians*, 335.

³³⁷ “Aloha ‘Oe” (Farewell to Thee) is a Hawaiian folk song written c. 1878 by Lili’uokalani. It is her most famous song and is a common cultural symbol for Hawai’i. “Hawai’i Pono’i” is the Hawaiian Kingdom’s national anthem, composed by King Kalākaua in 1876 in honor of King Kamehameha, founder of the Hawaiian Kingdom in 1810. The music was arranged by Berger based on the Prussian hymn, “Heil Dir im Siegerkranz.” See: “National Symbols,” *Hawaiian National Anthem*, Retrieved October 11, 2023. hawaiiankingdom.org/national-anthem.shtml.

³³⁸ Kanahale, *Hawaiian Music and Musicians*, 339.

³³⁹ Patrick D. Hennessey, *Henry Berger: From Prussian Army Musician to Father of Hawaiian Music: The Life and Legacy of Hawai’i’s Bandmaster* (Tutzing: Verlegt Bei Hans Schneider, 2013), 190.

terms, the band was once again called the Royal Hawaiian Band. Though it continued to be funded by the haole oligarchy as part of the government's ideological state apparatus, Berger reinstated "Aloha 'Oe" in every performance and often ended a performance with "Hawai'i Pono'i" followed by the "Star-Spangled Banner." Meanwhile, the Hawaiian musicians of the RHB, who had refused to take the oath of allegiance, formed their own band "to maintain their cultural and national identity." These 38 musicians named their band the Hawaiian National Band.³⁴⁰ This group survived for several years but was forced to disband due to the deliberate actions of the oligarchy to silence this "highly visible remnant of the monarchy." Many of the musicians then returned to Berger and resumed their positions in the new Territorial Band.³⁴¹

Through monarchy, overthrow, and US territorial governance the RHB marked the significant transfers of power that occurred during Berger's tenure through the music he composed and the venues in which the band performed. The RHB was, at its height, a point of pride for Hawaiian royalty, and after the overthrow, an entity to which Queen Lili'uokalani begrudgingly showed her support through rare public appearances. "Aloha 'Oe", considered to be the national song of the Hawaiian people, was written by Queen Lili'uokalani, and arranged by Berger. "Hawai'i Pono'I," the anthem of the Territorial Government, was written and arranged by Berger as part of his career-long interest in fusing the cultural specificity of Hawai'i with the long tradition of European military music. In short, the Royal Hawaiian Band's repertoire and significance among the Hawaiian people marked the genre as of the utmost cultural importance to both the Hawaiian nationalists and haole oligarchy that held the power.

³⁴⁰ Hennessey, *Henry Berger*, 158.

³⁴¹ Hennessey, *Henry Berger*, 164.

Berger's adaptations to different political regimes provided continuity for this genre. There were several months after the overthrow where there was no band and no engagements. Berger eventually returned with a much smaller number of musicians than ever before. The fact that the Royal Hawaiian Band was renamed the Provisional Government Band after the overthrow, and then was briefly known as the Territorial Band after the 1898 annexation illustrates how the group that was currently politically dominant recognized military marching music as a useful tool for self-imaging the kind of nation it desired.³⁴² During the Territorial Period, the participation of the RHB was not a foregone conclusion. The new government regarded such a widely popular group of mostly Hawaiian men with suspicion. There were some long-standing members of the band, with Berger since the beginning, that refused to play in the RHB after the overthrow. There were some that rejoined later, possibly more as a gesture of personal friendship to their Bandmaster than any kind of solidarity with the new regime. Those that did rejoin were required to take pledges of loyalty to the new government.³⁴³ The inclusion of military bands in the Mid-Pacific Carnival expanded upon the genre's influence, eventually even eclipsing the popularity of the Royal Hawaiian Band itself.

The Origins of the Mid-Pacific Carnival:

A good point of access into the Territorial period, and the relationship between the U.S. military and the usurper government, is the Mid-Pacific Carnival, which began as a modest floral

³⁴² Heather A. Diamond, *American Aloha : Cultural Tourism and the Negotiation of Tradition* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 18.

³⁴³ Diamond, *American Aloha*, 18.

parade in 1904. This annual event reached its peak as a massive, week-long pan-Pacific ethnic festival in the years leading up to 1917 and ended as a comparatively modest display of patriotism and nationalism in 1918. The Band of the Twenty-Fifth Regiment participated in the festival—and performed throughout the Hawaiian Islands—from 1913-1918. The progression of the festival is rife with exhibitionary pageantry and historical reenactment that sought to “indigenize” the white population while making the rest of the population seem like attractive “features” on par with Hawai’i’s natural wonders and mythic legends. The Mid-Pacific Carnival marks the first successful foray into haole Hawai’i’s long history “as a moral regime that facilitates settler colonialism and global imperial structures...in connection with the industries—tourism and militarism—that utilized Hawai’i’s racial diversity to their ideological advantage.”³⁴⁴ The ideological direction of this new regime was decided by the Islands’ minority rulers—the white men who controlled Hawai’i’s extractive industries. These men, in turn, sought volunteers with a vested interest in keeping Hawai’i under white minority rule.

Financially supported by the white oligarchy, the Hawai’i Promotion Committee, formed in 1903, sought to promote the “Big Five” industries on the Islands and to reap the commercial benefits of promoting the Islands for tourism.³⁴⁵ The HPC was created by the Chamber of Commerce as well as the Merchant’s Association and was “a first step in a new spatialization of the land of Hawai’i.”³⁴⁶ As places like Honolulu and Waikiki began to develop in the early twentieth century, “the tourism industry emerged as an extension of the plantation system.”³⁴⁷ In

³⁴⁴ Saranillo, *Unsustainable Empire*, 176.

³⁴⁵ Diamond, *American Aloha*, 24.

³⁴⁶ Kathy E. Ferguson and Phyllis Turnbull, *Oh Say Can You See?: the Semiotics of the Military in Hawai’i*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 38.

³⁴⁷ Diamond, *American Aloha*, 24.

other words, the largest percentage of the money to develop tourism via the HPC came from this corporate conglomerate. Through a long tradition of intermarriage and an overtly transactional relationship between governmental policy and commercial advisory boards, the corporations maintained economic and political control in the Islands.³⁴⁸ In 1903, the Attorney General of Hawai'i, Edmund Pearson Dole, stated: "There is a government in this Territory which is centralized to an extent unknown in the United States, and probably almost as centralized as it was in France under Louis XIV."³⁴⁹ Under the direction of corporate interests, the HPC naturalized that control through the persuasive power of spectacle and storytelling. The HPC organized and promoted the annual Mid-Pacific Carnival. The organizers were heavily influenced by the popular international exhibitions of the day. Among the Committee's other endeavors was Hawai'i's entry into the 1909 Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Expo, which took place on the grounds of the University of Washington. The palatial buildings of the typical exhibition housed all the technological innovations and industries that were seen as the means of progress toward a certain future. They were also the site of human exhibitions—today known popularly as human zoos.³⁵⁰

The conventions of human exhibition, and the field of perception that this type of performance relies upon and perpetuates, can also be found in the pageantry and aesthetic choices made by the men of the HPC when deciding what would put the new mid-winter festival on the map. These conventions can be explained and articulated through two frameworks:

³⁴⁸ Diamond, *American Aloha*, 25.

³⁴⁹ Maenette Kape'ahiokalani Padekan and Ronald H. Heck, *Culture and Educational Policy in Hawai'i: The Silencing of Native Voices* (London: Psychology Press, 1998), 137.

³⁵⁰ Diamond, *American Aloha*, 21.

visuality, as theorized by Nicholas Mirzoeff, and Tony Bennett's notion of the exhibitionary complex. These frameworks rely on what can be seen and how what is seen can be interpreted by what the spectator perceives to be real and true. However, it is also important to think through other senses, particularly the auditory qualities that proliferate in military band performance. This sensory experience can be explained in terms of what Radano and Olanyian refer to as "audible empire".

According to Mirzoeff, "visuality is an old word for an old project."³⁵¹ It can be summed up simply as the visualization of history, created from information, images, and ideas. It is a means of forming a vision of historical consciousness in which the authority of the visualizer is absolute. Visuality is an aesthetic that is invested in a particular narrative of history. This aesthetic goes beyond the physical. It is more than simple visual perception. It is a sense of unquestioning authority manifested through a set of relations that combines "information, imagination, and insight into a rendition of physical and psychic space."³⁵² Quite simply, it is part of a discursive formation that has material impacts that fall both inside and outside the purview of the author of a particular visuality. Visuality finds its most potent power in its ability to name, categorize, and define groups in a particular social and political milieu. This power acts to segregate political subjects to discourage solidarity. Foucault would call this process "the nomination of the visible."³⁵³ In other words, those with the most political and economic power

³⁵¹ Nicholas Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look : a Counterhistory of Visuality* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 2.

³⁵² Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look*, 3.

³⁵³ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things : an Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 37.

are able to establish what should be seen and have the authority to direct the attention of the populace to that which has been deemed visible.

This notion of the visible, and the desire of those who want the power to authorize the way a population perceives visual and auditory representations, is also addressed by Bennett's theorization of the Exhibitionary Complex. Bennett specifies that the perceptual field of the Exhibitionary Complex manifests in public institutions—arenas with access to the widest subset of a given citizenry. The purpose of creating this perceptual field is to respond to the potentially unruly—those whose unpredictable nature requires direction and control. Bennett argues that this response must insinuate itself culturally so that the populace is compelled to become unwitting participants in a state-sanctioned “social effort”.³⁵⁴ Bennett's argument is mainly focused on how a “progressivist taxonomy...based on nations and the supra-national constructs of empires and races” contributed to the moral and cultural regulation of the working class.³⁵⁵ I will extend his argument to account for the regulation of racial formation. Due to “an unsettling incompleteness both animating and disturbing to the colonizers,” the Mid-Pacific Carnival was a concerted attempt to regulate the perception of racial and national identity, as well as historical consciousness, through the medium of exhibitionary performance.³⁵⁶ Unlike their American-born missionary parents, who assumed that Hawaiian and Asian laborers held the potential to be reformed to become acceptably “white,” the descendants of American missionaries who were born in Hawai'i considered race to be “an active, marked, and socially subordinate category.”³⁵⁷

³⁵⁴ Tony Bennett, “The Exhibitionary Complex,” *new formations*, no. 4, (1988): 78.

³⁵⁵ Bennett, “Exhibitionary Complex,” 88.

³⁵⁶ Ferguson and Turnbull, *Oh, Say, Can You See?*, 5.

³⁵⁷ Ferguson and Turnbull, *Oh Say Can You See?*, 21.

Exhibitionary performance is a manifestation of visibility—it has the authority to categorize and name, to instruct and discipline, those who perform and those who watch from the sidelines. This authority is buttressed by the local territorial government and the expanding reach of the U.S. military.

The HPC consisted solely of members of the white oligarchy—the descendants of the American missionaries that settled in Hawai'i in 1820 and who grew up to become plantation overlords—as well as white American businessmen who began populating Hawai'i after the overthrow of the monarchy. Under the Territorial Government, the interests of the HPC were inseparable from those of the sugar industry, as the Island's sugar magnates supported the Committee both politically and financially. These parties exercised almost total political and economic control. Their overarching power was not based upon popular consent. It relied upon coercion rather than consent to maintain social stability among a diverse population with widely different loyalties and historical memories.³⁵⁸ After the overthrow, to dispel any remaining loyalty to Queen Lili'uokalani and the notion of Hawaiians as a sovereign people, coercion became more aesthetic and indirect. It needed to appeal to a larger ideal, one that might be able to stitch together a patriotic citizenry by manufacturing a shared history and promoting the idea of everyone contributing to the creation of a new, modern, and progressive shared cultural heritage. At the same time, the haole elite also needed to wedge the Islands' interests into the global economy and into the mainland American imagination.

³⁵⁸ Elizabeth Bentzel Buck, *Paradise Remade : the Politics of Culture and History in Hawai'i* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 165.

The oligarchy's numbers were small and often projected a lack of real authority to the displaced populace of Hawaiian and Asian workers. It found a key partner in the U.S. military, which shared the haoles' interests in "the industrialization of the islands and the maintenance of white settler rule."³⁵⁹ The Mid-Pacific Carnival was a key instrument in the expanding military geography of Hawai'i. The annual festival played a leading role in how American military operations came to shape the "wider economic, social, environmental, and cultural geographies" of Hawai'i to produce an ordering of space advantageous to American Empire.³⁶⁰ Though tourism would not emerge as the dominant industry of the Islands until the 1930s, paralleling the demise of Hawaiian's political and economic status, the seed for growth and expansion through tourism was planted with the success of the Mid-Pacific Carnival.³⁶¹ The haole elites needed to produce a cultural event so spectacular that it would become a must-see tourist event. The Mid-Pacific Carnival marks the first foray into creating "a tourism industry that is invested in obscuring its direct links to militarism, plantation histories, and the illegal overthrow of the monarchy."³⁶² The U.S. military, through infiltration of civilian institutions and through the management of discourse, was able to mask its imperial function in the tourist economy while it also "maintain[ed] its hegemony in Hawai'i through a complex and diffuse network of power and persuasion."³⁶³ In short, the Hawai'i Promotion Committee, through the spectacle of the

³⁵⁹ Camilla Fojas, Rudy P. Guevarra, and Nitasha Tamar Sharma, *Beyond Ethnicity : New Politics of Race in Hawai'i*. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2018), 172.

³⁶⁰ Woodward, *Military Geographies*, 4.

³⁶¹ Buck, *Paradise Remade*, 171.

³⁶² Foais et. al., *Beyond Ethnicity*, 115.

³⁶³ Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Y. Okamura, *Asian Settler Colonialism : from Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawai'i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 175.

Mid-Pacific Carnival, provided cover for the U.S. government's interest in imperial expansion through strategic military occupations.

The Visual and Aural Qualities of the Mid-Pacific Carnival:

The Mid-Pacific Carnival is a topic that deserves far more study than what I can offer in this chapter, yet it is an event that has received scant scholarly attention. The largest cultural event in the nascent Territorial Government is sometimes used as a footnote in reference to discussions of Hawai'i's post-war tourist economy, but little discussion exists of the content of the festival itself. It was a mobile microcosm of the exhibitions and trade fairs that peaked in popularity in the long nineteenth century. It began as a one-day celebration of George Washington's birthday, under the aegis of the newly formed Hawai'i Promotion Committee. For the white population, the stakes were enormous, and its success was not a foregone conclusion. It was the Territorial Government's main gambit in pushing for a tourist economy and statehood. Hopeful editorials in the *Hawaiian Gazette* opined that the success of the "fiesta parade" would "mark the entry of the Island City upon a new era in its progress."³⁶⁴ The decision to make an annual celebration of Washington's birthday was also a way for the Territorial Government to urge the multi-ethnic populations of Hawai'i to buy in to white minority rule.

The first parade relied mostly on trying to revive Hawaiian traditions that "fell into disuse" after the overthrow.³⁶⁵ The organizers of the MPC latched onto the idea that "Hawaiian

³⁶⁴ "Floral Parade," *Hawaiian Gazette* (Honolulu, HI) February 23, 1906.

³⁶⁵ "Lesson That Was Learned From the Floral Parade," *The Pacific Commercial Advertiser* (Honolulu, HI) February 25, 1905.

mo'olelo, or connected (hi)stories that were identified as 'legends,' served—like raw materials—to imagine and market...a new product, legendary Hawai'i."³⁶⁶ While, ostensibly, the inclusion of Hawaiian (hi)stories aimed to entice Hawaiians to enthusiastically join the festivities under the guise of reviving their suppressed culture, in actuality, it was a blatant appropriation of “a cultural product [that] served primarily non-Hawaiian interests at a crucial political juncture.”³⁶⁷ As the festival gained momentum in the following years, the organizers reached out to other “ethnic” organizations to allow them the opportunity to represent themselves in pre-defined ways that suited the HPC's vision of an orderly multi-ethnic society.³⁶⁸

In the festival's first year, the task of reviving Hawaiian traditions fell to the prominent white policymakers of Hawai'i, some who had been born on the Islands, and some who had lived there from a young age. Just as parade organizers in nineteenth century Dakota Territory sought to include Lakota leaders Sitting Bull and Struck by the Ree, celebrations of white progress and innovation would not be complete without also juxtaposing that progress against politically and culturally vanquished Hawaiian traditions. However, only the most aesthetically pleasing traditions could be revived. The organizers hoped to orchestrate an event that would be reminiscent of what “old-timers used to see on Saturday afternoons when the band played at Emma Square.” The idea to revive the Hawaiian pa-u riders was brought to fruition by a prominent young Portuguese-born lawyer named Frank Andrade.³⁶⁹ The pa-u riders would continue to be a feature of the carnival throughout its duration, however they received less press

³⁶⁶ Cristina Bacchilega, *Legendary Hawai'i and the Politics of Place: Tradition, Translation, and Tourism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 5.

³⁶⁷ Bacchilega, *Legendary Hawai'i*, 6.

³⁶⁸ Buck, *Paradise Remade*, 182.

³⁶⁹ “Pa-u Riders Lining Up,” *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* (Honolulu, HI) January 30, 1906.

attention in the festival's latter years. They were depicted on the cover illustration of the 1912 celebration, with text that explained their rise to prominence during the reign of King Kalākaua. The visual image of Hawaiian women on horseback became representative of the Territorial Government's idea of merging Hawai'i as it existed under the monarchy with the Hawai'i as it "should" be under haole rule. The *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* reassured its readers that the colorful pa-u riders—beautiful Hawaiian women wearing long skirts, with long black hair flowing freely behind them—were not "a revival of a barbaric display, [but] merely of a pretty custom which appeals as strongly to the eye of the modern as it did to that of the kama'aina."³⁷⁰ The editors of the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* were full of optimism that the revival of the pa-u riders would encourage Hawaiians to become fully invested in the Territorial Government, suggesting that "the native population might resurrect ceremonies which would give the celebration historical interest."³⁷¹ Of course, the historical interest that the editors hoped for would be for the sole purpose of creating a "space constructed for non-Hawaiians (and especially Americans) to experience, via Hawai'i legends, a Hawai'i that [was] exotic and primitive while beautiful and welcoming."³⁷²

The first few years of the festival, and the white minority newspaper coverage of it, indicate that the Hawai'i Promotion Committee experimented to find the Islands' greatest visual selling points. Newspaper editorials consistently remarked upon the striking colors of flowers and flags. Each year the organizers worked to add even more vehicles to the parade, each one

³⁷⁰ "Lesson That Was Learned From the Floral Parade," *The Pacific Commercial Advertiser* (Honolulu, HI) February 25, 1905. The term "kama'aina" describes Hawai'i residents regardless of their racial background, as opposed to "kanaka" which means a person of Native Hawaiian ancestry.

³⁷¹ "Where the Tourist Will Go," *The Pacific Commercial Advertiser* (Honolulu, HI) May 28, 1906.

³⁷² Bacchilega, *Legendary Hawai'i*, 5.

festooned with flowers. The organizers worked toward perfecting the timing of the parade route to give the spectators time to see all that passed by without becoming bored.³⁷³ The local newspapers goaded the HPC to settle on a strong message that would draw comparisons with the excitement and glamour of Los Angeles.³⁷⁴ The parade and pageantry could not be advertised as a mere floral parade, and although the birth of George Washington was considered a worthy reason for such a grand spectacle, how would that entice mainland tourists who sought adventure and difference?

Debates reigned in the newspapers and behind the closed doors of the HPC's weekly meetings. Should the parade "as its main purpose...illustrate to the world the summer in winter that prevails in Hawai'i?"³⁷⁵ Should it show "a happy combination of achievement with the customs of Hawaiian days of long ago?"³⁷⁶ As the festival began to hit its stride, the organizers became more comfortable with the use of special effects to dramatize the narrative of a "legendary Hawai'i." In the third year of the festival, the organizers combined the temperate landscape, Hawaiian tableaux, pa-u riders in their long, flowing skirts, and flower-bedecked automobiles with a new idea that would become a blueprint for how Hawai'i positions itself to tourists even into the twenty-first century: an ethnic parade, "with the national colors and emblems of all the nations of the polyglot population."³⁷⁷

³⁷³ "Lesson That Was Learned From the Floral Parade," *The Pacific Commercial Advertiser* (Honolulu, HI) February 25, 1905.

³⁷⁴ "Tourists Summer and Winter," *Evening Bulletin* (Honolulu, HI), January 31, 1906.

³⁷⁵ "Floral Parade of Wondrous Beauty," *Hawaiian Gazette* (Honolulu, HI), February 23, 1906.

³⁷⁶ "Second Annual Floral Parade," *The Hawaiian Star* (Honolulu, HI), February 22, 1907.

³⁷⁷ "New Features for Floral Parade," *Hawaiian Gazette* (Honolulu, HI), January 17, 1908.

These nations included residents on floats decorated to represent the nation from which each came. *The Advertiser* described the parade of distinctly categorized ethnicities in the 1906 carnival: “America, Hawai’i, Germany, Italy, Great Britain, Portugal, Denmark, Japan and China, while in another section will be a Korean car...a striking evidence of the polyglot nature of Honolulu's population and the harmony existing between the various nationalities.”³⁷⁸ From that point on, the “ideological usefulness of pluralism” became a permanent feature of Hawai’i’s allure.³⁷⁹ Each ethnic group was given the time and space to represent itself in predefined ways, however, the overarching message was one of a dominant American culture.

The promise that “the Mid-Pacific Carnival would keep pace with the growth of Honolulu in commercial and military importance” remained the primary goal of the HPC.³⁸⁰ The gradual progression toward an ethnic parade as one of the main features of the Carnival shows the ways in which “superstructural phenomena like cultural productions assist[ed] in the creation and maintenance” of local identity in Hawai’i.³⁸¹ A reportedly impromptu occurrence at the 1911 Carnival offered the Promotion Committee the final push to ensure that the multi-ethnic population of the Island would always be part of the standard fare. *The Advertiser* described an apparently astonishing scene in which Japanese spectators spontaneously paraded through the streets after the end of the parade. The newspaper remarks that they participated “on an American holiday, without either suggestion or request from anyone of the American community.”³⁸²

³⁷⁸ “Ten Nations Will Be in Parade,” *The Pacific Commercial Advertiser* (Honolulu, HI), February 20, 1908.

³⁷⁹ Buck, *Paradise Remade*, 182.

³⁸⁰ “Photographs of Carnival and Pageant: Honolulu,” *Hawaii Promotion Committee* (Honolulu, HI) 1913.

³⁸¹ Rohrer, *Staking Claim*, 97.

³⁸² “An International Event,” *The Pacific Commercial Advertiser* (Honolulu, HI), February 24, 1911.

While the organizers and spectators of the Mid-Pacific Carnival mainly emphasized the spectacular visuality of the increasingly popular festival, it was also the aural bombast introduced by the U.S. military that solidified the ideology that the haole elite most desired. Radano and Olaniyan argue for the importance of sound productions “as a colonizing force in the rise of empire...a key tool in imposing other forms of discipline and order.”³⁸³ The United States government, while at first seemingly hesitant to add Hawai’i to its expanding empire, soon enough decided to assert itself militarily into the Islands before Imperial Japan could. The Hawai’i Promotion Committee, whose primary goal was to get Hawai’i a seat at the table of an expanding empire, fully understood the opportunity at hand. While Henry Berger and the Royal Hawaiian Band had been part of the Mid-Pacific festivities since the very beginning, the local newspapers in Honolulu, if not the public, had grown too accustomed to their presence. The RHB had long played a leading role in setting and defining the “hapa-Hawaiian” landscape, but it was no longer exciting or new, and in fact, may have been working at cross purposes to the overall ideological goal of both the HPC and the US Military.³⁸⁴ Berger’s band consisted almost entirely of Hawaiians, as well as Polynesian musicians from other Pacific Islands, and a handful of mixed-race men who had various degrees of European ancestry. They were not singularized in the way that the continuous additions of discrete ethnic groups into the parade were. The Royal Hawaiian Band, with its multi-ethnic participants holding space in the same group, did not tell the kind of “melting pot but still distinctly separate” type of narrative desired by the HPC. Furthermore, Berger’s band, and its strong associations with the monarchy, did not fit in the

³⁸³ Radano and Olaniyan, *Audible Empire*, 2.

³⁸⁴ “hapa-Hawaiian” refers to the mixture of haole and Hawaiian cultures. “Hapa” means half.

unidirectional narrative of white oligarchical rule that would ensure tourists from the mainland would feel safe and at home. The American military offered the kind of decisiveness that discouraged open criticism and led to an eventual silence. If “silence is possible only after difference is reduced to sameness,” then the inclusion of mainland military bands in the parade could accomplish the kind of historical amnesia of which the historiography of Hawai’i has been accused.³⁸⁵ The Mid-Pacific Carnival contributed to the normalization of the military in Hawai’i by “sedimenting itself through accumulated familiarity into the everyday ways of life” that produced what residents and tourists alike came to perceive as normal.³⁸⁶

The United States Military Joins the Carnival:

The United States’ military presence in Hawai’i was “deep, extensive, and immediate” following the overthrow, beginning only four days after the Queen was deposed, with a single company of soldiers garrisoned near Diamond Head. The construction of a naval base at Pearl Harbor began in 1900. The first warship occupied Hawai’i in 1905.³⁸⁷ By that time, there were around 250 officers and soldiers in Hawai’i. In 1909, the U.S. military officially became a part of the spectacle and nationalistic goals of the parade with the participation of the U.S. Army’s Fifth Cavalry Regiment. By 1915, there were approximately 9500 officers and soldiers, “almost nine percent of the total strength of the Army.”³⁸⁸

³⁸⁵ Radano and Olaniyan, *Audible Empire*, 175.

³⁸⁶ Ferguson and Turnbull, *Oh Say Can You See?*, xiv.

³⁸⁷ Ferguson and Turnbull, *Oh Say Can You See?*, 34.

³⁸⁸ Coffman, *The Regulars*, 34.

Local newspapers reporting on the 1909 Carnival stated that “the participation of the Fifth Cavalry, with its mounted band, increased the effectiveness of the parade.”³⁸⁹ Radano and Olaniyan argue that military occupations, such as what occurred and that are still present in Hawai’i, are “not only noisy, but also often musical.”³⁹⁰ This kind of cultural intervention is seemingly benign, but carries serious consequences for the populations under its spell. The HPC embraced this new aspect of production and increased it exponentially in the years to follow. In 1910, “the military section of the parade...formed perhaps the most imposing spectacle of its kind ever seen in Hawai’i.”³⁹¹ According to local newspapers, however, the elite of the Islands wanted the participation of the military to increase even further. In an op-ed in the *Advertiser*, Charles F. Chillingworth, future president of the Territorial Senate, wrote, “...we hope to have a parade, in which most of the splendid military and naval forces stationed here by our Uncle Sam will take part.”³⁹² Encouraged by the positive reviews, and certainly taking notes from the Islands’ opinionated oligarchy, the HPC continued in 1911 and 1912 to lean heavily on the military while also highlighting the generational aspect of American occupation by featuring a “living flag formed by children of the public schools.”³⁹³ The Twenty-Fifth Infantry Band made its first appearance in the Mid-Pacific Carnival in 1913.

What did the U.S. Army hope to accomplish by having its regiments and bands participate in the yearly Mid-Pacific Carnival? Just as in the Dakota Territory, Montana, the

³⁸⁹ “History of the Mid-Pacific Floral Parade,” *The Pacific Commercial Advertiser* (Honolulu, HI), February 23, 1912.

³⁹⁰ Radano and Olaniyan, *Audible Empire*, 4.

³⁹¹ “History of the Mid-Pacific Floral Parade,” *The Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, February 23, 1912.

³⁹² “A Chance For Honolulu United,” *The Pacific Commercial Advertiser* (Honolulu, HI), December 29, 1912.

³⁹³ “History of the Mid-Pacific Floral Parade,” *The Pacific Commercial Advertiser* (Honolulu, HI), February 23, 1912.

Nebraska Plains, and the Pacific Northwest, the Department of War discovered that pageantry and music made civilians see a regiment's presence less like an occupying military force, and more as members of the community. More than this, though, was the Band's ability to mask as entertainment the Department of War agenda to gain a foothold into new territories by seeking out corporate cooperation. As discussed in previous chapters, and as will continue to be a theme in this chapter, the Era of Professionalization in the U.S. military worked alongside the interests of economic and social development of each area in which the regiment was stationed. The white commanding officers of the Twenty-Fifth were often in discussion with local Chambers of Commerce and other business associations who wanted the Band to perform at a grand opening or as part of an "excursion tour" throughout the state in which they were stationed. This partnership was sometimes met with a skeptical public or opposition by civilian musicians who lost income and performance opportunities because the Department of War could undercut a musician's normal wage.

Particularly in Territorial Hawai'i, where the U.S. government wanted to take ownership of all the Islands out of a "desire to sort out the lands that most readily facilitated turning Hawai'i into an elaborate system of military bases and training camps," gaining the trust of the civilian population was a top priority.³⁹⁴ This was not only due to ongoing resistance to the overthrow of Queen Lili'uokalani. The haole oligarchy's vested interest in developing and promoting the Hawaiian Islands was shared by the U.S. military. Teresia K. Teaiwa argues that the result of these shared goals is a phenomenon called "militourism." She defines this as "a phenomenon by

³⁹⁴ Coffman, *Nation Within*, 232.

which military or paramilitary force ensures the smooth running of a tourist industry, and that same tourist industry masks the military force behind it.”³⁹⁵ In the case of the Mid-Pacific Carnival, I contend that Hawai’i’s burgeoning tourist industry aestheticized the military force that was becoming ever more entrenched on the Islands. Rather than hiding this fact, the Federal and local governments found a way for the increased militarization to seem natural and even exciting. Adria Imada argues that “US militarism in the islands developed in tandem with tourism.”³⁹⁶ While Imada locates the beginning of this symbiotic relationship in the interim between World Wars, my research shows that this mutual interest began only a few years after the overthrow when members of the U.S. Congress and President Cleveland himself were still debating on the wisdom of allowing an island of Asian laborers and recalcitrant Hawaiians into the American fold. Under the government of the Territory of Hawai’i, a small oligarchy held the political framework of the Territory in place through its relationships with the American military and Federal government.³⁹⁷ What Imada refers to as “militourized stagecraft,” defined as the U.S. “military’s investments as an image-producer of the islands,” began to take shape upon its first participation in the mid-winter festival.³⁹⁸

The Twenty-Fifth Infantry in Hawai’i:

With each subsequent year, the military presence grew larger, with increasing levels of nationalist spectacle and patriotic musical bombast touted triumphantly by the haole newspapers.

³⁹⁵ Hereniko Vilsoni and Rob Wilson, *Inside Out : Literature, Cultural Politics, and Identity in the New Pacific* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), 251.

³⁹⁶ Imada, *Aloha America*, 181.

³⁹⁷ Coffman, *Nation Within*, 318.

³⁹⁸ Imada, *Aloha America*, 215.

While both the Army and the Navy had several of their military bands featured in the Mid-Pacific Carnival, the haole newspapers seemed particularly impressed by the segregated Twenty-Fifth Infantry. During its five years stationed in Hawai'i, the Band is featured multiple times in all the white publications. Just as in their previous assignments in far-flung and desolate outposts throughout the American West, the Black regiment was met with a degree of resistance upon its arrival. In his autobiography, George Samuel Schuyler, who served as a First Lieutenant in the Twenty-Fifth Infantry while in Hawai'i, wrote of the regiment's arrival:

“January 1913, arrival in Hawaii...What struck us all was that in marching through the narrow streets not one cheer or wave came from the crowded balconies, and this seemed odd. White people were far in the minority, much more so than now. There were swarms of Japanese, Chinese, and Filipinos and other Orientals sprinkled with Portuguese, some Russians, and a few Hawaiians...We did not know what significance to attach to this silence until we got our first pay, went to town in search of pleasure, discovered the sprawling Iwilei district of brothels, and learned of the anti-Negro propaganda which had been circulated by our white comrades of the other regiments and services. As a result, the populace was dubious, if not frightened, about fraternization.”³⁹⁹

Schuyler claimed that in 1915, “black soldiers in Hawai'i prevented movies of a racist nature from being shown three times, once by pelting a theater with rocks.”⁴⁰⁰ The regiment's struggle with white locals continued into 1916 with the so-called “Iwilei Riot.” The Ninth Cavalry Regiment, one of the four Black regiments, stopped over in Hawai'i enroute to the Philippines. The men of the Twenty-Fifth offered them a night of entertainment that began with a dinner at the National Guard Armory before visiting Iwilei, the red-light district of Oahu. The local white newspapers reported that the “trouble began when some of the white prostitutes refused to

³⁹⁹ Schuyler, *Black and Conservative*, 53.

⁴⁰⁰ Oscar Renal Williams, *George S. Schuyler : Portrait of a Black Conservative* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2007), 21.

entertain” the Black soldiers. In response, the soldiers “began to beat up the women and wreck the houses.”⁴⁰¹ The white officers of the Ninth Cavalry immediately placed the blame for the violence on the soldiers of the Twenty-Fifth, likely due to the regiment’s reputation after the events of Brownsville a decade earlier.⁴⁰² Unlike the events of Brownsville, the Department of War took no action against any of the soldiers. George Schuyler, a witness to the event, “reasoned that the investigators were sympathetic to the soldiers because they considered the cause of the riot a misunderstanding.” Apparently, “recalcitrant prostitutes” were of a lower social order than even the Black soldiers.⁴⁰³ The entire district would be shut down by May 1917 as a “byproduct of the riot.” Schuyler places the responsibility for this on “the antagonism of the powerful missionary element...echoed by the forces of organized tourism that each year promoted the Mid-Pacific Carnival.”⁴⁰⁴

Despite these issues, the regiment, with the help of the Band, were “taken up socially by the Hawaiian royalty.” The Queen was particularly impressed with Leslie King’s “use of baton twirling and gymnastics.”⁴⁰⁵ The Band had an opportunity to collaborate with and learn from Henry Berger and the Royal Hawaiian Band. The Band’s collaboration with the Royal Hawaiian Band put it in an environment in which the musicians did not stand out as completely different from most of the population. Berger had always preferred Hawaiian bandsmen and confirmed that “at no time did he ever employ more than twelve” white musicians.⁴⁰⁶ Finding a potential

⁴⁰¹ Coffman, *The Regulars*, 132.

⁴⁰² “Ninth Cavalry Officers Hold Men Blameless,” *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (Honolulu, HI), January 17, 1916.

⁴⁰³ Coffman, *The Regulars*, 133.

⁴⁰⁴ Schuyler, *Black and Conservative*, 68.

⁴⁰⁵ Schuyler, *Black and Conservative*, 58.

⁴⁰⁶ Kanahale, *Hawaiian Music and Musicians*, 41.

camaraderie while stationed in Hawai'i offered a rare opportunity for the Band to both blend in racially and stand out musically.

Black people in Hawai'i and Hawaiians experienced overlapping racialization by the white oligarchy with the "expropriation of Black stereotypes onto Hawaiian monarchs to discredit their royal ancestries."⁴⁰⁷ One example of this is the attempt by the oligarchy to discredit Queen Lili'uokalani by publishing political cartoons in the *Advertiser* comparing her physiognomy to that of the stereotypical black mammy. Judy Rohrer cites a former assistant editor for the *Advertiser* recalling "how American naval officers often referred to Hawaiians as 'niggers.'"⁴⁰⁸ In other words, though the Band may have been part of the U.S. Army and therefore an extension of the U.S. government's imperial practices, the haole oligarchy, who were also very much an extension of U.S. imperialism, would not necessarily have welcomed a regiment, much less a Band, that they viewed as inferior. And yet, the regiment's race also fit well into the Mid-Pacific Carnival's aestheticization of ethnic difference.

Continuing its paradoxical existence, however, the Band also positioned itself within the "ideological flows of colonialist discourse in the Pacific."⁴⁰⁹ The Band was not only influenced by these discourses, but also engaged in them and helped to shape them. What was the Band's repertoire for performing in the Mid-Pacific Carnival? Local newspapers throughout the Band's existence often documented the entire program, complete with genre, title of song, composer and/or arranger, and sometimes featured the name of Band members who performed solos. The

⁴⁰⁷ Fojas et. al., *Beyond Ethnicity*, 116.

⁴⁰⁸ Rohrer, *Staking Claim*, 97.

⁴⁰⁹ Etsuko Taketani, *The Black Pacific Narrative: Geographic Imaginings of Race and Empire Between the World Wars* (Hanover, New Hampshire: Dartmouth College Press, 2014): 82.

name of the Bandmaster was nearly always listed at the end. While many of the Band's performances while in Hawai'i were recorded in this level of detail, the record for the Carnival programs is more generalized. The Band was often singled out for praise in newspaper reviews of each Carnival in which it participated, however, in the wider context of a general discussion of Carnival features, details such as the songs chosen were often overlooked except for the "Star-Spangled Banner" and "Aloha 'Oe." By far the song most frequently played by the Band while in Hawai'i, whether during the Mid-Pacific Carnival or as part of an individual public performance, was the "Star Spangled Banner."

The national anthem of any nation is "the culmination of the role of music in constructions of national identity...and a means through which a sense of contemporary nation is created and contested."⁴¹⁰ The national anthem of the United States has a political history born of Federalist ideology—the "conviction that deference to an elite set of highly educated natural-born leaders was required to produce and preserve a harmonious society."⁴¹¹ The American national anthem seeks to emphasize consent to power by the deferential submission of its citizens. The repetitive performances of the "Star-Spangled Banner" throughout the years of the Mid-Pacific Carnival matches the colonialism of the Territorial Government of Hawai'i wherein the oligarchy exercised almost total political and economic control through "coercion rather than consent."⁴¹²

⁴¹⁰ John Connell and Chris Gibson, *Sound Tracks: Popular Music, Identity and Place* (London: Routledge, 2003), 127-128.

⁴¹¹ Coleman, *Harnessing Harmony*, 24.

⁴¹² Buck, *Paradise Remade*, 165.

The Mid-Pacific Carnivals from 1914-1918:

The Band's first participation in the Mid-Pacific Carnival occurred in 1914. The celebration was, at that point, still referred to as the Mid-Winter Carnival. Charles R. Frazier, the "chairman of Floats Section of Floral Parade," promised "more spectacular, more interesting, more 'live,' more costly floats than have ever before been collected together in one parade outside of cities the size of San Francisco or Denver."⁴¹³ The entire downtown of Honolulu was "a blaze of lights and color." The Capitol building was bedecked with "thousands of red, white, blue, yellow and green lights...[with] 'Aloha' in letters six feet in height and outlined in yellow electric globes."⁴¹⁴ At this point, the Royal Hawaiian Band still had top billing for the Carnival. The Army's Director-General (a position now known as Chief of Staff) was directly involved in arranging the performances of not only the Twenty-Fifth Infantry Band, but also the regimental bands of the Second Infantry, First Artillery, First Infantry, and Fourth Cavalry. He also secured permission from Honolulu's mayor "to have exclusive use of Captain Henri Berger's band during the period of celebration."⁴¹⁵ Each military band was assigned to perform every morning of the celebration on the palace grounds. On the opening day of the Carnival, the Band performed at the capitol. The program of songs included European standards as well as a cornet solo of "Old Kentucky Home."⁴¹⁶ The Band's rendition of this minstrel favorite suited the

⁴¹³ "Carnival Activities Bring Soldiers to Honolulu," *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (Honolulu, HI), February 18, 1914.

⁴¹⁴ "Everywhere in Downtown Honolulu the Carnival Lights are Blazing," *The Pacific Commercial Advertiser* (Honolulu, HI), February 18, 1914.

⁴¹⁵ "Mayor Fern is Good Supporter of Mid-Pacific," *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (Honolulu, HI), January 15, 1914.

⁴¹⁶ "25th Infantry Band to Give Concert at Capitol in Morning," *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (Honolulu, HI), February 18, 1914.

Carnival's theme of ethnic difference highlighted through stereotypes. None of the white bands had any minstrel songs attached to their repertoires.

The oligarchy's visualization of history hit its stride in the 1914 production. The Band's performance was followed by an elaborate pageant entitled "The Wooing of Umi and Piikea." Of the more than 100 men and women who participated in this historic pageant, "nearly all...[were] students of Kamehameha School for Boys and Kamehameha School for Girls." The performance included "costumes, chants and ceremony." The costumes were reportedly "characteristic of the Hawaii of Columbus' time."⁴¹⁷ The organizers of the Carnival increasingly chose to use children of all races and ethnicities to narrate their preferred perception of history, ensuring that a layer of historical amnesia might become an impenetrable wall in the coming generations. The oligarchy would name, categorize, and define how Hawaiian history unfolded so that the only solidarity among the people would be to the Territorial Government.

Later in the week, the Band participated in a massed band concert, described as "perhaps the most pretentious and inspiring musical feature" under the direction of Berger, who opened and closed the concert.⁴¹⁸ The massed band consisted of about 150 musicians from all the Army regiments and the Royal Hawaiian Band. Each bandleader took turns "wielding the baton" for the program. Berger directed an original composition entitled "Mid-Pacific Carnival," and an "inspiring" rendition of "Aloha 'Oe."⁴¹⁹ Leslie King directed a Sousa march and a piece by French composer Alexandre Luigini entitled "Egyptian Ballet."⁴²⁰ It is interesting to note that, of

⁴¹⁷ "Big Hawaiian Spectacle," *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (Honolulu, HI), February 7, 1914.

⁴¹⁸ "Massed Band Concert Promises Treat," *The Pacific Commercial Pacific Advertiser* (Honolulu, HI), February 16, 1914.

⁴¹⁹ "Massed Band Concert," *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (Honolulu, HI), February 7, 1914.

⁴²⁰ "Massed Band Concert Promises Treat," *The Pacific Commercial Advertiser* (Honolulu, HI), February 16, 1914.

the six bandmasters who directed a portion of the performance, King was the only bandleader to direct a piece that may be interpreted as “ethnic.” The other leaders directed Sousa marches and other European compositions that did not evoke imagery of a foreign land.

For the 1915 celebration, the same regimental bands participated as had the year before. Local newspapers featured a photo of the five military band leaders, including Leslie King. He stands fourth in line, among the tallest of the men, looking off into the distance, a typical pose for King. He is the only leader not sporting a moustache. He has a slight smirk on his face, an erect posture, with wide shoulders that slope slightly downward. He appears to be quite muscular under his uniform, a product of the baton twirling and gymnastics for which he was known.⁴²¹ The Royal Hawaiian Band continued to be a central feature of the musical offerings, playing every day of the Carnival.⁴²² While the other military bands received only one solo day in the spotlight each, the Band performed three solo slots on three separate days of the Carnival.⁴²³

The 1915 festivities began on a Saturday morning with the “Peace Parade” and continued into the evening with a “Carnival of All Nations.” The celebration extended the trend of growing larger each year.⁴²⁴ The organizing committee counted 500 Filipino participants, a large Chinese marching section, 150 Koreans, “one section marching in old Korean costumes, another in Korean women’s costumes and a third in military dress.” A float carried the “queens of the Occident and Orient...preceded by a novel feature, the mounted submarine brigade.” Additionally, hundreds of school children and “enlisted men of the army and navy”

⁴²¹ “Band Masters in Conference,” *The Pacific Commercial Advertiser* (Honolulu, HI), January 17, 1915.

⁴²² “Ask Permit to Do Decorating for Carnival,” *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (Honolulu, HI), January 19, 1915.

⁴²³ “Carnival Program for Handy Reference,” *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (Honolulu, HI), February 19, 1915.

⁴²⁴ “Smile! Decorate! Buy a Lei! Carnival Week is Almost Here,” *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (Honolulu, HI), February 18, 1915.

participated.⁴²⁵ As part of the “Peace Parade”, a woman representing “Internationalism” ceremoniously placed the International Peace Flag upon a stage. The flag contained “miniature flags of all nations, surrounded by white...the flag used at the Hague peace congress in 1913.” The schoolchildren carried a variety of national flags and dressed in costume. Some children dressed in “the gay colors of the Indians. Indian war whoops and dances enlivened the feature, coming after the ceremonies of the peace pipe and burying the hatchet.”⁴²⁶ This spectacle harkens back to the Band’s performances of “redface” in the nineteenth century. Performances of the vanquished Native American continued to be an inroad for non-Indigenous people who wanted, more than anything else, to “indigenize” themselves to a colonized land. The schoolchildren’s performances continued throughout the week. Approximately 1500 children “of 20 nationalities” sang and danced “a series of folk dances” accompanied by the Royal Hawaiian Band.⁴²⁷

The 1916 Mid-Pacific Carnival merged into the Kamehameha Day Parade.⁴²⁸ The oligarchy inserted its own ideology into an event that originally celebrated a revered Hawaiian monarch. By merging the two events, the organizers were able to further regulate the spectators’ perception of their own national identity. The Carnival began with “six long, loud blasts from the fire whistle...followed immediately by the explosion of half a dozen gigantic bombs.” Simultaneous with the last explosion were “factory whistles, steamer whistles, automobile horns

⁴²⁵ “Ad Club to Be One of Those Famous Live-Wire Stunts,” *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, (Honolulu, HI), February 18, 1915.

⁴²⁶ “Peace Pageant Opening Event of the Carnival,” *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (Honolulu, HI), February 18, 1915.

⁴²⁷ “1500 Children in Festival of Song Tomorrow,” *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (Honolulu, HI), February 24, 1915.

⁴²⁸ Peter T. Young, “Mid-Pacific Carnival.” *Images of Old Hawai’i*. Ho’okuleana LLC.

<https://imagesofoldhawaii.com/mid-pacific-carnival>.

and human throats.” This cacophony lasted for an entire minute. By insinuating the sounds of industrialization and war into the opening of the Carnival, the organizers continued to ease the local populations into accepting that an eventual military occupation was simply another part of the fabric of their daily lives.

The first parade of the week began directly after this assertion of military geographies.⁴²⁹ Local newspapers declared the 1916 celebration to be the “Mad Reign of King Carnival.” King Carnival himself opened the parade by bowing to the governor before disappearing into the crowd. The newspaper proclaimed, “He is nowhere, but is everywhere. He has taken up his place in the hearts of the people and there he will stay.” King Carnival was much like the American military on the Hawaiian Islands. As the years progressed, the military’s reach grew, and yet, it was so normalized as to be virtually featureless. The second section of the parade was led by the Twenty-Fifth Band followed by

“a huge float depicting Kapiolani defying the fire, a number of Korean school boys, several hundred Chinese school girls in their quaint pantalets, a Chinese orchestra in a queer-looking bandwagon, and finally the great mass of maskers in their thousand and one different costumes. There were gypsies, dominoes, Brownies, Dutch, Hebrew and Irish comedians, pineapples, pirates, soldiers and sailors and all the other queer characters that go with a masquerade.”

The newspaper counted 10,000 people in attendance. “Marshall Islanders; Scotchmen, Russians, Irishmen and Americans gave folk dances on the platforms while Fiji and Marshall Islanders, Filipinos, Chinese mandarins, Indian rajahs and hundreds of other queer folk danced on the pavement below.” The soldiers in attendance caught the attention of onlookers by dancing with each other. The *Honolulu Star Bulletin* remarked: “One sight that caused a good many of

⁴²⁹ “Expect 10,000 Japanese Will Join in Parade,” *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (Honolulu, HI), February 16, 1916.

the residents of Honolulu to think a bit was that of soldiers dancing together. There were scores of them who apparently did not know any one of the opposite sex that they could invite on the floor but still wanted to dance.”⁴³⁰

As was traditional, 140 musicians of five different military bands participated in a massed band concert. Along with “twenty of the best singers of the city” the bands played “America” and the “Star-Spangled Banner.” The words to both songs were printed on the programs “for those few who do not know their national anthem.”⁴³¹ Unfortunately, the organizers made the mistake of placing the massed band “in a corner of the grounds where few of its notes could reach the grandstand. The consequence was that for a long time, seat holders sat watching instead of listening to a band.”⁴³² The popular early twentieth century practice of performing en masse, whether that performance was vocal or musical, also speaks to the intersection of nationalism and the sacred that can be found throughout the Mid-Pacific Carnival’s yearly celebration. Patrick Warfield contends that the mass singing movement “cultivated a common repertoire and a shared sense of national purpose.”⁴³³

The organizers of the Mid-Pacific Carnival ensured that this cultural trend was well represented in the later years of the festival. They used children as “symbols of cultural power” as a means of folding all residents of the Islands into the arms of American nationalism.⁴³⁴ I

⁴³⁰ “Mad Reign of King Carnival Begins When His Majesty Is Released; Ad Club Parade Feature of Opening Night; Thousands Dance at Capitol,” *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (Honolulu, HI), February 22, 1916.

⁴³¹ “Massed Bands at Moilili to Furnish Music,” *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (Honolulu, HI), February 19, 1916.

⁴³² “Pictures from Colonial Days Hold Big Throng Spellbound,” *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (Honolulu, HI), February 24, 1916.

⁴³³ Patrick Warfield, “Educators in Search of an Anthem: Standardizing ‘The Star-Spangled Banner’ During the First World War.” *Journal of the Society for American Music* 12, no. 3 (2018): 268.

⁴³⁴ Joy Schulz, *Hawaiian by Birth: Missionary Children, Bicultural Identity, and U.S. Colonialism in the Pacific* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), 2.

extend this argument to massed band performances, which were a popular feature not only at the Mid-Pacific Carnival, but also at military and public events in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such as the annual gathering of the Grand Army of the Republic. Massed bands personified power through spectacle and auditory bombast. They “simultaneously evoked ‘the people’ with scores of performers and displayed an awesome power through the sound and visual spectacle of hundreds of disciplined musicians.”⁴³⁵

The opening night of the 1916 Mid-Pacific Carnival featured “the Ball of all Nations.” The Royal Hawaiian Band played at one end of the Palace Grounds and the Twenty-Fifth Band performed at the other. This is yet another indication that the Band of the Twenty-Fifth was held in equal regard to the RHB. The dances took place on both sides of the grounds with the national flag of dozens of countries “displayed on a flagpole to announce the dancers.”⁴³⁶ The national dances included “American, English, Spanish, Irish, Dutch, Scottish, and the Portuguese...the Russian and the Japanese” as well as “the war dance of the Marshall Islands” that the newspaper described as “a particularly weird, fantastic dance.”⁴³⁷ Described as “pandemonium,” the opening night was attended by “tourist, resident, white man, native, laborer, [and] sugar planter.”

The big ball began late in the evening and was filled to capacity. “The armory presented a new appearance with the yellow and green of the Carnival colors in wide stripes along the balcony and hundreds of United States and Hawaiian flags of varying sizes at every vantage point.” Local newspapers equated the presence of so many different ethnicities of people as a

⁴³⁵ Reily and Brucher, *Brass Bands of the World*, 8.

⁴³⁶ “Opening Night of Carnival to Be Auspicious,” *Hawaiian Gazette*, (Honolulu, HI), February 11, 1916.

⁴³⁷ “Dances of Many Nations Will Be Shown Monday,” *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (Honolulu, HI), February 19, 1916.

symbol of a larger American ideal. One reporter noted: “The armory ball was marked by true democracy. On the floor were kamaainas and tourists, army and navy officers and their wives, enlisted men, guard officers and men of the line, and civilians from every walk of life.”⁴³⁸

The reliably “indigenizing” performance practice of “redface” once again took the spotlight in a feature of the 1916 carnival called “Colonial Days...a tableau given at Moiliili Field...by a cast composed mainly of local people who volunteered for the work.” The play began “with a forest in which Indians moved about, busily fishing, hunting or working as they did before America was discovered.” The only illumination of the tableau came from “the red glow of the Indians’ campfires” which, one by one, died out leaving everything in darkness.

After a brief moment,

“the bright rays of the morning sun began to penetrate the forest and cast a glow over the Indians’ homes. The light reflected on the ridge of the coastline hills and then out to sea on the white sails of the Mayflower. The boat landed and white men came ashore. Thus was depicted the coming of a new race to America.”

The coming of the white man was followed by “a very beautiful dance by some Puritan maidens, done by girls from the Central Grammar School.” One young girl at the front of the dance wore an American flag and the girl in the back wore a Hawaiian flag. The Colonial Tableaux moved forward in time to “The Burning of a Witch” and “The Birth of the American Flag.” The spectacular finale of the performance took place as a representation of the Revolutionary War Battle of Yorktown. “Guns thundered and flashed, and when they were quiet and the smoke had cleared away a Continental soldier stood alone with the American flag above

⁴³⁸ “Armory Ball Like Scene From Page of Wonderful Fairy Tale,” *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (Honolulu, HI), February 22, 1916.

him. Then the field was darkened and when the lights flashed up again there showed beneath them a battlefield littered with the dead.” The newspaper referred to this final scene as “The Price of Victory.” A fantastic fireworks display followed the Colonial Days fantasy amidst another tableau entitled “Battle of Manila.” Following this scene, “Aloha was written in flame, and the crowd departed.”⁴³⁹

The year 1917 was the apex of the Mid-Pacific Carnival tradition and was hailed as a “melting pot of many races.”⁴⁴⁰ It was also the most extravagant display of the marriage of corporate and civic interests, alongside blatant militarism, that the organizers would ever accomplish. Only two months before the United States (and by extension, the Territory of Hawai’i) joined WWI, this was the last year a grandiose Carnival took place and the last time the Hawai’i Promotion Committee employed an extensive advertising campaign to promote it.⁴⁴¹ Included in the annual parade was a large float known as “Battleship Hawaii.” The newspaper describes “great guns stuck out from the turrets” with an eye-catching crew of “15 or 20 young Japanese-Americans, dressed as real sailors of the United States navy.” The Twenty-Fifth Infantry Band received top billing over the other regimental bands that took part in the parade.⁴⁴²

Although coverage of previous years never seemed to hint at any kind of discord by the public, the 1917 coverage remarked that the crowd of 5,000 was

⁴³⁹ “Pictures from Colonial Days Hold Big Throng Spellbound,” *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (Honolulu, HI), February 24, 1916.

⁴⁴⁰ “Varied Features of Carnival Week Picture ‘Melting Pot’ of Many Races,” *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (Honolulu, HI), February 24, 1917.

⁴⁴¹ David Torre, “Remembering Harry Foglietta—Part Ten,” *Waterfowl Stamps and More*, HangarBay 94, September 3, 2018, <https://waterfowlstampsandmore.com/remembering-harry-foglietta-part-ten>.

⁴⁴² “Old and New Japan Do Honor to Washington in Gorgeous Pageant,” *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (Honolulu, HI), February 24, 1917.

“held in line without one single disturbance by the firm determination but smiling faces of the Boy Scouts, who formed the patrol line with their extended roles of bamboo...If the conduct of the huge crowd could stand as certain of being always the same in the future, it would not require a visionary to dream of the day when all policemen would be supplanted by Boy Scouts.”

The Boy Scouts did not simply act as a young, smiling security force. The troupe was also involved in the Pan-Pacific Pageant that opened the week of carnival. The pageant began with a scene depicting a flight of sea birds traveling from Samoa to Hawai'i and a “portrayal of an incident of legendary Hawaiian history, showing the following of the sea birds to the Hawaiian Islands from Samoa by the first human beings to inhabit this group.” An organization that the newspaper dubbed “The Hawaiian Born” acted out this first landing. The Boy Scouts followed with the skit “Making the First Fires in Hawaii,” portraying “how fire was made in primeval days...showing how the natives secured fire by rubbing two sticks together.” Other Honolulu civic organizations and businesses took part in this imagined origin story. In a detailed tableau entitled “Building Grass House,” the Guardian Trust company (real estate development) built the frame while Bishop & Co. (a banking house) enacted the thatching and C. Brewer & Co. (agriculture industry) completed the building process. Home Hotels portrayed “making fish nets of olona fiber” and cast them into the “fishponds of Ancient Hawaii.”

Nearly every prominent industry of the Hawaiian Islands took part in the grand spectacle, as well as community organizations representing every ethnic group who lived and worked on the Islands. Schoolchildren from Kindergarten through high school participated. Church groups, war veterans, fraternal organizations, and visitors from the United States all had a float festooned with scenes enacting legends of the past, industries of the present, and nationalist hope for the

future.⁴⁴³ There were over 100 floats in the 1917 parade, followed by a grand finale of a revue of “tuneful and seductive Hawaiian songs and music.”⁴⁴⁴ The Band also provided the music for the exclusive Carnival Mask Ball. This was an invitation-only event “given in honor of the commanding general of the Hawaiian Department and the commandant of the United States Naval Station at Pearl Harbor...and visiting notables to the carnival and the territory.”⁴⁴⁵ The entire event was concluded with the National Anthem. The Band received special mention for providing the “fine music” for the American society dance.⁴⁴⁶

The last Mid-Pacific Carnival was held in 1918. There were no advertising materials printed by the Hawaii Promotion Committee. It was a relatively small, local affair that bore only a passing resemblance to the previous celebrations.⁴⁴⁷ It was “a home affair for home people.”⁴⁴⁸ The Chamber of Commerce declared that “the Mid-Pacific Carnival should be devoted to patriotic and military ceremonies with the possible exception of an athletic program.” The Chamber suggested that the festivities should not extend over more than two days and “should be an entirely home celebration and not an event solely for tourists.” Ultimately, the Chamber of Commerce voted against a large, week-long celebration as had been done in former years.⁴⁴⁹ This decision was met with resistance from many of the local businesses and corporations who had thrown themselves into the spirit of the festival in the previous years’ Pan-Pacific Pageant.

⁴⁴³ “Pan-Pacific Day Made Memorable by Big Pageant,” *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (Honolulu, HI), February 24, 1917.

⁴⁴⁴ “‘Night in Hawaii’ Is Charming Revelation; Hundreds Attend,” *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (Honolulu, HI), February 24, 1917.

⁴⁴⁵ “Gay Costumes Worn at Ball,” *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (Honolulu, HI), February 24, 1917.

⁴⁴⁶ “Open-Air Ball Gaiety and Life All Personified,” *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (Honolulu, HI), February 24, 1917.

⁴⁴⁷ David Torre, “Remembering Harry Foglietta—Part Ten,” *Waterfowl Stamps and More*, HangarBay 94, September 3, 2018, <https://waterfowlstampsandmore.com/remembering-harry-foglietta-part-ten>.

⁴⁴⁸ “Annual Carnival To Be Home Affair and For Home Folk,” *Hawaiian Gazette* (Honolulu, HI), February 12, 1918.

⁴⁴⁹ “C. of C. Directors Favor Carnival Without Frills,” *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (Honolulu, HI), July 12, 1917.

One local businessman argued: “The Mid-Pacific Carnival is not an expression of frivolity but a business enterprise...The Carnival is Hawaii’s annual shop-window display. What progressive merchant is draping his windows in monotonous drab because we are at war?”⁴⁵⁰

Conclusion:

Although an event carrying the name of the Mid-Pacific Carnival was held in February of 1918, it was, to a great extent, superseded by Hawai’i’s First Territorial Fair. An editorial in the *Honolulu Star Bulletin* suggested:

“Mid-Pacific Carnival [should] confine its activities to a military parade and Hawaiian pageant...and turn the rest of its amusements and features over to the territorial fair commission which is planning extensive festivities to begin June 11...The fair promises to be the largest ever held in the territory, and farmers have promised to send stock, chickens, and farm products to Honolulu for exhibit. Industrial, mercantile and educational exhibits will also be held...”⁴⁵¹

Thus, patriotism became the keynote of the Carnival in 1918, doing away with the “carefree and perhaps frivolous features” that helped make up the carnivals of other years. A parade in honor of the 156th anniversary of the birth of George Washington featured seven military bands, including the Band of the Twenty-Fifth Infantry. The toned-down festival still included the bodily movement of children of all ethnicities in the pageantry, bodily fabricating white supremacist histories with the performance of almost 1,000 children of Honolulu’s schools singing the National Anthem.⁴⁵² Even though the new Territorial Fair Commission ensured the end of the Mid-Pacific Carnival, the Army and Navy Committee ensured that the massed band

⁴⁵⁰ “Mid-Pacific Carnival Should Continue,” *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (Honolulu, HI), July 19, 1917.

⁴⁵¹ “Carnival, Fair,” *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (Honolulu, HI), December 4, 1917.

⁴⁵² “Dull Care to Be Put to Flight as Honolulu Ushers in Annual Carnival Events Tomorrow,” *Honolulu Star Bulletin* (Honolulu, HI), February 20, 1918.

concerts would continue to thrive in a new format with “a band of 80-100 pieces, selected from the military bands of several army posts on Oahu” who would continue to perform at the Territorial Fair for years to come.⁴⁵³

The 1918 event would mark one of the last public performances for the Band while assigned to Hawai'i. The regiment's departure from Hawai'i would also become the end of the Band's extensive mobility. The soldiers of the Twenty-Fifth and the Band were next assigned to Nogales, Arizona where they would remain for the next 25 years. The Band continued to play regular public concerts and would even cross into Mexico for joint performances with the band of the Mexican Army. Throughout the decades that the Band spent in Nogales, the musicians would watch the border between the two countries go from a single concrete pillar that people freely crossed to a fenced off, walled, no-man's land constantly under military guard. The Band would continue to co-create American History in this border town just as it would continue to provide accompaniment for the United States' expanding military geographies.

⁴⁵³ “Plans As Developing For the Big Fair,” *Maui News* (Wailuku, HI), April 26, 1918.

CONCLUSION

The Band Frozen in Time at Historic Fort Snelling, 2022-?

“I remembered you was conflicted
Misusing your influence, sometimes I did the same.”
--Kendrick Lamar⁴⁵⁴

The woman walked into my station with the stride of somebody on a mission. She grabbed a chair and scooted in across the table from me immediately as her husband shuffled into the room seeming far more indecisive. He slowly lowered himself onto a bench along the wall, took off his weathered cap and settled in like a man long accustomed to patiently waiting for his wife to attend to her business. The woman smiled at me as if in great anticipation.

“I’d like you to tell me about them nigras,” she said firmly.

Of course, I hesitated. The word she used echoed in my head as I quickly tried to discern whether this woman’s sole purpose was to come into the room and bait me into an argument. I made eye contact with both, searching their body language for clues as to their intentions. The man looked relaxed, slightly bored, and seemed grateful to have a place to sit. The woman practically beamed at me as she leaned back and crossed her legs. Apparently, she was settling in for a nice long chat. I chewed over the word for another moment before deciding that this woman was not speaking out of hatred and was not looking for an argument. I’ve heard the word “nigra” before. I associate it with my grandparents who frequently used it. At least for my grandparents, there was a difference between saying “nigra” and using the n-word. They used the former when speaking about Black people in general, the latter when making off-color jokes or as an insult to

⁴⁵⁴ Kendrick Lamar, “Alright,” track # 7 on *To Pimp a Butterfly*, Top Dawg Entertainment, 2015, Hip-Hop/Rap.

a white person acting in a manner they found upsetting. Though this couple would have been a few decades younger than my last surviving grandparent—probably in their 60s—I thought perhaps the woman’s use of the word was generational and steeped in rurality. Finally, I chose not to correct her terminology because I sensed her intentions were benign. I did not want to sour a potential learning opportunity by immediately correcting her.

I launched into my usual introduction about the Twenty-Fifth Infantry and the Band. However, the day this couple came into my station happened to be Juneteenth. Because the Band had played Emancipation Day celebrations throughout the nineteenth century, in different states and for different publics, I wanted to focus on that more than anything. It seemed a prime opportunity to discuss the history of the newest national holiday and all the different dates Black Americans have used to celebrate the idea, the goal, and the process of emancipation. The woman’s eyes lit up at this topic. She placed her elbows on the table and inched her chair closer. She listened to me closely, paying more attention to my words than a lot of people do when they come into the station. Her interest was palpable. She asked clarifying questions about why there were so many different dates, why Juneteenth became a national holiday, how the Band celebrated in the Twin Cities in the 1880s.

When the woman first entered the room and pulled up a chair, I assumed that she would be argumentative in a passive-aggressive way. I assumed her husband would stare at me with hard, inscrutable eyes. No matter how many times I tell myself not to make assumptions about visitors to Fort Snelling, I am only human. When someone enters a room and uses a word that I associate with my childhood in rural Wyoming, I am going to make certain assumptions. This woman defied all of them. Her interest never wavered. She continued to lean forward out of her

seat, sometimes looking back at her husband to make sure he was listening. She was responsive, not just by asking questions but also by widening her eyes with each new fact she learned and punctuating many of my sentences with phrases like, “Isn’t that something?” or “That is so interesting!” The more she showed interest, the more interested I became in talking to her. I was glad that I had chosen not to police her language right away. As we spoke, she stopped saying “nigras” and instead said Black or African American when asking a question (presumably following my lead). When she had her fill of information, she stood up briskly and thanked me for my time.

“I’ll have to tell those folks at the bank everything you told me. When I asked ‘em what they were closing for, none of ‘em told me any of that.” She then indicated to her husband that it was time to go. He had not spoken a single word throughout our entire encounter, but as he followed his wife out of the barracks, he nodded his head and said, “Thank you. Very interesting.” I sat back in my chair happy with our interaction. The best thing a person can say to me at Fort Snelling is that they plan on telling other people what they have just learned.

In my dissertation, I have continually argued that the Twenty-Fifth Infantry Regimental Band acted as a tool of public relations for the U.S. Army and for Black citizenship in the United States in general. The Band consisted of hundreds of individual musicians throughout its decades of existence. From its beginnings in 1866 to its demise when the Army desegregated in 1946, these musicians each had their own unique perspective on Black citizenship, freedom, and belonging in the United States. No matter their personal views, each member became subsumed into this single entity that I have referred to as the Band. Their unique lives and individual

experiences are generalized to the point where they disappear and become a singular institution. And, as an institution, the Band proved again and again to be ideologically useful to the expansion of the United States. For eight decades the Band labored for acceptance while the Army took advantage of that labor for its own needs. And now, eight decades after its end, the Band is once again a useful kind of propaganda for a state entity—this time for Historic Fort Snelling and the Minnesota Historical Society. The Band is a symbol of representation, something the Historical Society can point to as proof of its inclusivity. The Band is a way to signal that the history of Historic Fort Snelling is not just for white people anymore.

Historic Fort Snelling is a historically white institution that is currently attempting to subdue and reframe its own whiteness. It is a site where “histories, traditions, symbols, stories, icons, curriculum, and processes were all designed by whites, for whites, to reproduce whiteness via a white experience at the exclusion of others.”⁴⁵⁵ The primarily white staff of Fort Snelling truly seem to care about making the Fort inclusive of all the communities who have lived and worked inside its walls for the past 200 years. Many seem genuinely reflective of their own positionality as a white person attempting to interpret Dakota, Black, and Japanese American histories to a primarily white audience. I see this care every day that I work at the Fort. But I also see (and have experienced) the moments when that vigilance lapses, and how that lapse can have a negative impact on the marginalized communities that the Fort wants to include. These new initiatives are a tall order for a site that seems to be most remembered as a place where visitors

⁴⁵⁵ Kim Wale, “Towards Critical Cultural Openness: (in)vulnerability in White Student Narratives of Transformation in South Africa.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 43, no. 7 (2020): 1190.

can buy rock candy and interpreters in costume shoot off muskets and cannons. Or, as stated in a 1988 edition of the *Chicago Star Tribune*, “Fort Snelling [is] a surprisingly pleasant slice of military history. You don’t have to wrestle with your conscience when you tour it.”⁴⁵⁶

Historic Fort Snelling is one of twenty-six historical sites owned and operated by the Minnesota Historical Society. It became a historic site in 1960 and opened fully to the public after extensive renovations in 1980. For approximately fifty years, the primary mode of historic interpretation at Fort Snelling was “living history:” first-person, in costume characterization of the daily life of a United States Army Regular in 1827. Fort Snelling was a historic site frozen in a single time, telling only a single narrative, despite extensive evidence showing the variety of people and events that have occurred at the Fort since its original construction in 1820. Due to this interpretive choice, Fort Snelling has long been seen as a historic site that is entertaining and nostalgic, about white people for white people. It has long had a reputation as a site that glorifies Indigenous genocide, military expansion, and settler colonialism. This reputation is well-earned. As one of the most remote Army posts in the early-to-mid nineteenth century, Fort Snelling played a major role in Dakota dispossession of traditional homelands, as well as a site of Dakota imprisonment in a concentration camp following the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862. Groups who represent and/or support the local Dakota communities continue to engage in semi-annual protests at the site. More recently, Fort Snelling strives to be a historic site that is welcoming and relevant to all Minnesota communities. In doing so, the site has not lost its potential for confrontation, but instead spreads the confrontational possibilities across various identity groups.

⁴⁵⁶ Catherine Watson, “Ft. Snelling Is Still Standing Guard Over the Northwest Territory,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 21, 1988.

It is no longer a site that only one group of people hates. It is now a place that earns the ire of several coalitions of people. Yet the changes also seem to have a positive impact on many individuals for whom the site had heretofore been seen as inaccessible or unwelcoming.

Beginning around 2007, interpretation at the Fort began a slow narrative shift to include the history of slavery that was endemic in the nineteenth century Army. Commissioned officers, both Northern and Southern, consistently upheld the institution of slavery in “free territory” throughout the century all the way through the 1850s. At first, site management insisted that the interpreters must stay in character when talking about slavery. That is, until 2006, when, on three separate occasions, a white interpreter speaking to visitors referred to one of the Snelling’s enslaved domestic servants as being “niggers, negroes, or negroids.”⁴⁵⁷ The site supervisors scrambled to think of a different way to engage. Interpretation changed to a “modified-third person.”⁴⁵⁸ Those who portrayed their historic characters would “break the fourth wall” if a visitor asked a question about slavery. For example, an interpreter playing the role of Mrs. Snelling would state, “I am stepping out of character in order to discuss this important topic.”⁴⁵⁹ The consensus was that it would be impossible to portray the reality of slavery at the Fort using the conventions of first-person interpretation, but the public expected a certain type of performance, so in-character personification remained stubbornly in place in the form of “History Players” who portrayed Colonel or Mrs. Snelling at specified times during the day.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁷ Amy M. Tyson, *The Wages of History: Emotional Labor on Public History’s Front Lines* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013), 161.

⁴⁵⁸ Amy Tyson, *Wages of History*, 161.

⁴⁵⁹ Historic Fort Snelling, “Interpretive & Museum Shop Staff, Administrative Handbook,” revised February 2007, 8-9.

⁴⁶⁰ Amy Tyson, *The Wages of History: Emotional Labor on Public History’s Front Lines* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013), 161.

As of 2023, interpreters working at Fort Snelling still wear costumes in certain stations, however, they are not in character and they do not worry about ruining the aesthetic by using modern language. The costumed interpreters do not pretend to be somebody they are not. The remaining staff stationed around the Fort sport blue polo shirts and khakis. Additionally, time is no longer frozen. Instead, space and time are more fluid, not necessarily following a chronological order and not always focused on the original fort located within the stone walls. The narratives at Fort Snelling are intended to encompass the entirety of the Fort's 200-year history, as well as the history of the area before the Fort was even built. By doing this, the staff of Fort Snelling can discuss a variety of narratives with visitors. Yet, even the revised narratives at Fort Snelling garner protest, evidenced by the public uproar when Historic Fort Snelling attempted to insert "at Bdote" in its signage, as well as a single woman known to occupy the site's parking lot, confrontationally handing out flyers accusing Fort Snelling of condoning "white genocide". Her protests began once Fort Snelling started to include an Indigenous perspective on the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862.

For many of the Fort's visitors, these changes can be jarring. Throughout the summers of 2022-2023, I made it a habit to ask visitors if they had been to the Fort before. Most had only vague memories of going as a child or remember taking their own children decades ago. The change in interpretive narratives and technique proved to be a surprise for most local visitors. Many welcomed the expanded narratives, however, several visitors either openly displayed their hostility to the changes or found ways to express their anger and discomfort with more (classically Minnesotan) passive-aggressiveness. No longer a space where history is solely presented as "fun," visitors expressed a variety of emotions ranging from anger and

defensiveness, to disoriented shock, to surprised joy. Rarely did I have an encounter with a visitor that was not laden with some degree of emotion. Fort Snelling is no longer a place that only tells the history of white settlement and militarism; however, it still has a long way to go to gain the trust and cooperation of groups for whom the Fort is a symbol of aggressive and sustained oppression.

There are twelve interpretive stations open to the public five days per week from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Of the twelve interpretive stations, six contain content where a visitor can specifically learn about the lives and experiences of communities of color throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They are: the reconstructed hospital kitchen where Dred and Harriet Scott lived and worked from 1836-1840, the Commanding Officer's House where enslaved Black people from the South lived and worked from 1820 through the 1850s, a room in the reconstructed stone barracks dedicated to the Twenty-Fifth Infantry Regiment who were stationed at the Fort from 1882-1888, a space in the restored cavalry barracks/visitor's center about the Japanese American students of the Military Intelligence Service Language School during WWII, and a mobile station out on the prairie dedicated to understanding the many treaties signed between the sovereign Dakota and Ojibwe nations with the United States as well as the US-Dakota War of 1862. Staff can also discuss Dakota language, pre-contact history and culture and attempt to teach words and phrases to the public. The remaining six stations represent the "old guard" of historical interpretation: married quarters, soldier's quarters, the sutler store, the hospital, the schoolhouse, and the blacksmith shop. Four of these six stations are staffed by interpreters in costume. These stations are not racially coded, and in the perception of both the Fort's visitors and detractors, default to being seen as the "white" spaces of the Fort.

Although I saw hundreds of visitors over the summers of 2022 and 2023, each with their own individual response to the revised interpretation, I can generalize visitor response into three categories: ambivalence, excitement, and irritation. Several visitors enter a room to look at the photos, maps and newsprints on the walls and perhaps ask a question but show no interest in further engagement. These people typically spend less than three minutes in the room. Those who express excitement seem to be among the contingent of visitors who are both surprised and impressed that the interpretive stations at Fort Snelling are either different from what they remembered as a child or defied their expectations of what they thought they would see. Those who express irritation, either through facial expression and body language or through stating their opinion forthrightly, most often seem to be put off by the interpretive approach and content. Many (but by no means all) of these types of visitors are older veterans (as indicated by the hat or shirt they wear to indicate their status) or middle-aged white men who sport “thin blue line” t-shirts or some other type of garment that indicates a far-right political affiliation.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the Fourth of July proved to be among the most difficult days of the summer. Most visitors did not want to engage with me directly, or when they did engage, they did so with the most overt racism. When I mentioned this to a supervisor, she was not surprised. She simply stated, “Yeah, the Fourth of July always brings a certain type of visitor.” The uncomfortable mix of nationalism and racism that is specific to the Fourth of July has long been observed by Black and Indigenous Americans. Throughout the nineteenth century, it was known as a day when Black people should avoid going out in public for their own safety.⁴⁶¹ This

⁴⁶¹ Johnson and Smith, *Africans in America*, 106.

reputation led to Frederick Douglass' famous 1852 speech, "What to the Slave, is the Fourth of July?"⁴⁶² That the public visiting Fort Snelling in the twenty-first century on the Fourth continues to propagate this dynamic indicates the extent to which the Fort is still a symbol for the ideology of white supremacy, and likely always will be for some of the public audience.

Historic Fort Snelling's website proudly states: "Many voices, many stories, one place." The front page of the website tells any potential visitors: "This National Historic Landmark resides on Dakota homeland, known as Bdote, with history spanning 10,000 years. Learn stories of the military fort and its surrounding area, home to a wide history that includes Native peoples, trade, soldiers and veterans, enslaved people, immigrants, and the changing landscape."⁴⁶³

Historic Fort Snelling is now also a member of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience—a worldwide network with over 350 members in more than 65 countries. This organization states: "A Site of Conscience is a place of memory...that prevents...erasure from happening in order to foster more just and humane societies today. [They] provide safe spaces to remember and preserve even the most traumatic memories, but they enable their visitors to make connections between the past and related contemporary human rights issues."⁴⁶⁴

As a Site of Conscience, the operating principles at Fort Snelling are committed to "engage the public in programs that stimulate dialogue on pressing social issues" and to "promote justice and universal cultures of human rights." Sites of Conscience are also committed to processes of transitional justice of which memorialization is an integral part in "establishing

⁴⁶² Johnson and Smith, *Africans in America*, 110.

⁴⁶³ "Historic Fort Snelling," *Historic Fort Snelling*, Minnesota Historical Society, mnhs.org/fortsnelling.

⁴⁶⁴ "About Us," *International Coalition of Sites of Conscience*, International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, sitesofconscience.org/about-us/about-us-2/.

the truth about historical events, providing symbolic reparation to victims, and assisting in long-term building of democracy.” Memorialization is “a way to recognize truths about what happened, to honor victims and to provide spaces and ways for people to build a shared understanding of the past and a vision for moving forward.” Ultimately, “memory initiatives can unite people across vastly different experiences and perspectives to forge ways to work together in rebuilding the social fabric and commit to lasting peace.”⁴⁶⁵

The Band continues its ambassadorial work within the confines of site management’s sometimes narrow vision. The inclusion of the Band can, indeed, stimulate dialogue about the social inequalities still faced by Black Americans, but very few interpreters are able to fully speak about the Band’s history and its work as both a tool of white settler ideology and a network for Black creativity and futurity. This is not the fault of the interpreters who are given a set of bullet points to work with. Any further research must be done on the interpreters’ own unpaid time. The Band continues to fulfill its duties within the circumscribed role it is placed in by white authorities. Yet, the Band’s experiences at Fort Snelling and in Minnesota are almost completely detached from the site of the Fort itself. The musicians are mostly spoken of in the abstract. Far more research and commitment is required on the part of the Fort to bring their lived experiences back into the present moment.

I have tried to offer my own research to site management and have continually been rebuffed. The Band is featured in the new permanent exhibit that has been over two years in the making. The day the exhibit opened, the lead researcher and historian of the Historical Society

⁴⁶⁵ Johnson and Smith, *Africans in America*, 76.

approached me after speaking to a former site supervisor. With an expression of surprise he said, “I wish I had known about your research sooner. We could have included it in the exhibit.” I had no idea how to respond. In the two years that the Fort’s site management worked with this historian, the manager had never once mentioned that one of her staff researched and wrote an entire dissertation about the Band. This added context illuminates the enduring institutional affects, reflexes, and dispositions that continue to hold white supremacy in place at the Fort, and within the Minnesota Historical Society itself, a century and a half since the Band was formed.

“It is what it is.” I hear this refrain frequently at the Fort. Thus far, it has unanimously been uttered by white men over the age of 40. It comes out in a sputter, mixed with a sigh of exasperation or irritation. Or it is uttered with a tone of total finality—it is meant to end all further discussion. The phrase is usually accompanied by a physical gesture—a hand coming down in a chopping motion, a shrugging of the shoulders, narrowing of the eyes, lips sucked in as if to stop any more words from spilling out. The words are often repeated: “Look, it is what it is. It just is what it is.” This is an example of “white talk...the discursive attempt to maintain and restore white supremacy in spaces...where systemic racism is no longer politically sanctioned.”⁴⁶⁶ It is the phrase I hear the most often when the white man in question has reached his limit of learning about topics for which he was not prepared.

What is whiteness? How to capture the material impacts of such an abstract idea? Esther O. Ohito contends that whiteness is a “constellation of knowledge, ideologies, norms, values,

⁴⁶⁶ Wale, “White Student Narratives of Transformation,” 1191.

identities, and behaviors that maintains a race and class hierarchy.”⁴⁶⁷ To make this abstraction visible requires persistent analysis and critique of the taken-for-granted norms of the Fort. Karl Weaver defines whiteness as “a willful form of ignorance, one that keeps white supremacy in place by ignoring its effects and consequences in broader society.”⁴⁶⁸ It is weaponized ignorance deployed to maintain a sense of innocence. It allows a white person at a historic site like Fort Snelling to disengage from any content that threatens the stability of whiteness so that person does not have to contemplate how their own present is predicated on historical actions which they so vigilantly attempt to ignore. Gardner Seawright argues that “whiteness is a social system...[that] serves as an organizing principle that conditions normative ways of being and understanding society that are fundamentally predicated upon the raced body as a social signifier.”⁴⁶⁹ Fort Snelling labors under the organizing principle of inevitability. Visitors and staff alike take for granted that the Fort is important enough to remain a historic site with millions of dollars in state funds supporting its infrastructure. The dispossession of Indigenous land is presented as a *fait accompli*—visitors to the Fort have no alternative but to accept its physical presence and its reason for being there. Perhaps it does not even occur to most visitors to question the permanence of this reconstructed Fort.

Activist scholars like Waziyatawin, however, understand that the Fort, as a venerated Minnesota historic site, still stands as a monument to genocide, theft, enslavement, and

⁴⁶⁷ Esther O. Ohito, “Fleshing Out Enactments of Whiteness in Antiracist Pedagogy: Snapshot of a White Teacher Educator’s Practice,” *Pedagogy, Culture, and Society* 28, no. 1 (2019): 20.

⁴⁶⁸ Kari E. Weaver, Alex C. Lange, and Jodi L. Linley, “White Student Leaders’ Deflections of Diversity Conversations.” *International journal of qualitative studies in education* 36, no. 6 (2023): 5.

⁴⁶⁹ Gardner Seawright, “Questioning the White Body: On Applying a Phenomenological Mode of Inquiry to Whiteness Studies in Education,” *International journal of qualitative studies in education* 31, no. 10 (2018): 911.

exploitation because the public allows it—needs it—to remain. In her book, *What Does Justice Look Like?*, Waziyatawin states: “Built of stone and mortar, Americans intended for this structure to last, a seemingly permanent and gigantic reminder that Dakota homeland was in the predatory sights of U.S. government.”⁴⁷⁰ She argues that Fort Snelling has been a feature of the landscape between the Twin Cities for so long that “many of us have come to accept it as a permanent fixture.”⁴⁷¹ It is seemingly a natural part of the environment, indestructible, fixed in the average Minnesotans imagination who then share this imaginary stability with their children and grandchildren. Most visitors don’t even realize that what they are looking at when they come to Fort Snelling is almost entirely a replica—a simulacrum of pride and citizenship that must be carefully maintained (and funded) lest “human activities, fires, gravity, and Minnesota weather” threaten its existence.⁴⁷² In 2008, when Waziyatawin published her book, she correctly pointed out that leadership at the Minnesota Historical Society still stubbornly refused to see Fort Snelling as anything but a monument to U.S. expansion and enterprise. Even in the twenty-first century, the institutional leadership refused to cast a critical eye on itself and admit the Fort’s dichotomous encroachment in a place of Dakota genesis and Dakota genocide.

She points out that in 2006 the sanctioned narratives surrounding the Fort “did not even mention the concentration camp of 1862-63 or the hanging of Sakpe and Medicine Bottle.” She further pointed out that Fort Snelling continued to use inaccurate terminology to describe the events surrounding the 1862 war and persisted in presenting “a benign narrative of Euro-

⁴⁷⁰ Waziyatawin, *What Does Justice Look Like?*, 97.

⁴⁷¹ Waziyatawin, *What Does Justice Look Like?*, 98.

⁴⁷² Waziyatawin, *What Does Justice Look Like?*, 98.

American invasion and settlement.” She concludes that it would be unlikely that the Historical Society would ever choose to openly discuss the atrocities surrounding the Fort’s existence. As of 2023, however, the leadership of the Historical Society and Fort Snelling had put these issues front and center, even going so far as to coach interpreters on how to respond to visitors who object to the use of the term “concentration camp.” Including the Dakota history, language, and culture is now a central part of the interpretation at Fort Snelling. A colleague at Fort Snelling insists that it is the actions of scholars like Waziyatawin, as well as the supporters of the “Tear Down the Fort” movement, and political groups like the NAACP that drives these changes.

Executive leadership within the Historical Society is resistant to change and greatly concerned with alienating the wider (white) public. However, when concerned citizens agitate for change at the Fort, when they get the media involved, when they get the public invested, the desired changes are implemented. My colleague also credits the front-line staff—the interpreters—at Fort Snelling as being drivers of incremental change in public perception. He pointed out that, unlike many historic sites, the Fort deliberately hires interpreters who are already steeped in the knowledge the site wishes to convey. For example, I was hired largely based on my background in nineteenth century Black history and my comfort in facilitating discussions about race with members of the public who are not accustomed to having such straightforward conversations. Even as the Historical Society forbade the inclusion of “at Bdote” on signs around the area, the front-line staff continue to verbalize the phrase. Even as certain members of the public decry the Fort’s expanded narratives as “white erasure,” the interpreters become more passionate about including the material. My colleague states that some people will always hate Fort Snelling—and for good reasons. Some people will never accept the Fort as it

still stands; nevertheless, he says, the continued attention brought to the Fort by activist groups, and the defiance and dedication of the interpretive staff, ensures that Historic Fort Snelling will continue to evolve its narratives and center itself as a place that welcomes the public, challenges the public, offends the public, and perhaps someday, changes the perceptions of the multiple publics that make up the land that we now call Minnesota.

The insertion of the Band into the Fort's new, more inclusive narratives illuminates the problem of how to commemorate a history and a population that has consistently been a part of Fort Snelling's and Minnesota's history, but too often are made invisible in historical records produced by primarily white institutions. This invisibilization still occurs at the Fort, even with the Band being placed front and center as the Black face of the Fort's new approach to public history. Much of the erasure has to do with the problems that site management has with forming real working relationships with Black community members and stakeholders.

I should not have been as surprised as I was. I asked a long-time employee of Fort Snelling whether the Fort had an African American advisory council. I knew that all our content about Dakota history and culture is vetted through the Dakota Community Council, a group that was established after the Historical Society created a Native American Initiatives department to establish a better relationship with Dakota communities. This was an obvious necessity, especially after the "Tear Down the Fort" movement forced the issue with bi-annual protests which consisted of storming the front gate of the Fort and streaming inside during open hours so that all visitors to the Fort that day would see and hear the protests. I also knew that the Fort's content about the Japanese American history at the Fort, through the Military Intelligence

Service Language School of World War II, was largely established by members of the Japanese American Citizens League of the Twin Cities approaching the Fort to ensure that the history of more than 6,000 Japanese Americans who were connected to Fort Snelling would be told.

However, in the time I had worked at the Fort, I had never heard of the group that must surely be involved in the vast amount of Black history that the Fort now seemingly embraces.

When I first asked an employee who has worked at the Fort for over twenty years, I was given a rather vague answer and told to ask this other employee who would be able to give me further details. (The following will be told using a lot of passive voice and vague descriptions to protect the identities of Fort Snelling workers and members of the various Black communities of the Twin Cities). I approached this employee and asked who they work with to vet all the information that we present to the public. He hesitated for a moment, looked around to see if anybody else was in earshot, and then replied, “Fucking nobody.” I laughed at his bluntness and asked, “Is there a reason for that?” What followed was nearly an hour’s worth of this employee describing the ways in which various departments in the Historical Society, though not necessarily the staff of Fort Snelling itself, had completely napped bridge after bridge after bridge with various Black representatives of the Twin Cities over the past fifteen years. Every time I thought this employee had reached the end of the saga, he remembered yet another instance in which the primarily white management of the Historical Society acted in defensive, patronizing, belligerent, condescending or completely clueless ways.

He located the beginning of this display of white rage and arrogance in 2007—the 150th anniversary of the infamous Supreme Court Dred Scott decision of 1857. The Supreme Court’s ruling in this case, the reasoning behind it, and the consequences of its decisions was one of the

final catalysts that launched the United States into Civil War. It is a historical moment with the gravest of consequences, and the bulk of the case rested on the fact that Dred and Harriet Scott had been held as enslaved people for years at Fort Snelling, an ostensibly free territory. The supervisory staff at the Fort, all white, recalled a bit too late that the anniversary of this event was coming, but were determined to have some kind of acknowledgement and exhibit prepared that would at least take place within the same year of the anniversary. They prepared the research and began to organize it into an exhibit, however, approval from the higher ranks of the Historical Society was difficult to gain. It seemed that the exhibit was destined to be put into the deep freeze of bureaucratic ambivalence.

Independently of this, a group of representatives from the NAACP showed up at the Fort on the exact date of the anniversary and inquired what the Fort had prepared to show the public. The Fort, obviously, had nothing prepared. The group was welcomed into the site. They were shown the space in the reconstructed hospital where Dred and Harriet Scott, with their infant daughter Eliza, most likely lived and worked from 1836-1840. They showed the group the research and materials that were prepared but still awaiting approval. A few days later, one representative of the NAACP called the executive management of the Historical Society with two requests: that a permanent exhibit for Dred and Harriet Scott be established at the Fort, and that the Historical Society hire a person who would specifically work within the various Twin Cities African American communities to work toward making public the considerable history of Black Americans throughout the history of Fort Snelling. In response, the person from the NAACP received, in the mail, copies of all research and writing that had previously been done by researchers and historians at the Historical Society. This person was advised that the Fort

would indeed make a permanent exhibit for the Scotts, however, there was obviously no need to consult with Black community members, as the Historical Society already had tried (and ostensibly succeeded) to represent Black history at the Fort. The representative of the NAACP remained dogged in her commitment to get the Historical Society to organize an advisory council for African American content. She was continuously rebuffed until she finally washed her hands of the entire organization.

A few years later, management of Fort Snelling had established a working relationship with a group of interested Black students from Augsburg University. However, their working relationship was severed when the Augsburg students decided that, in solidarity with their Indigenous relatives of the Twin Cities who continued to protest the Fort's very existence, they could not in good conscience continue to work with Fort Snelling in any capacity. Since the establishment of the Dakota Community Council, the protests at the Fort generally ceased around 2016. Since then, the Historical Society and Fort Snelling have made other attempts at establishing working relationships with Black citizens of the Twin Cities to form an advisory council but have managed to alienate individuals and groups at every turn. The employee I spoke to named some examples: the notion that Black History in the Twin Cities really only encompasses Prince and the Rondo neighborhood, hesitating to establish any African American content at Fort Snelling beyond slavery, exhibit designers expressing anger at the idea that the exhibits they designed were culturally insensitive, and one particularly egregious instance in which a Historical Society employee indicated to a group of Black activists that the only African American community in the Twin Cities was the Somali community living in Cedar-Riverside. Other examples include hiring an outside consultant from the Colonial Williamsburg historic site

in Virginia to train interpreters in content about slavery, passing over qualified applicants from Minnesota under the assumption that all Black experience, whether in the North or the South, would be the same, as well as passing over a supremely qualified Black candidate, born and raised in the Twin Cities, as the new CEO of the Historical Society in favor of a white man from Kentucky with no ties to any of the communities that the Historical Society wishes to represent. In summation, the employee I spoke to said, “We have had some luck with individuals who will consult or give feedback on our content, but as far as organizing an advisory council...nobody wants anything to do with us. They hate us.” Our conversation ended there as this employee was then called away to attend to something else.

After he left, I sat at my station—the current exhibit in the Fort Snelling Visitors’ Center dedicated to the Twenty-Fifth Infantry—speechless and filled with an ache that I could not describe. I want so badly to believe that I am working in a place that is actively working to shed its long history of white ignorance toward any history other than that which glorifies the military and the white settlers of Minnesota. I know that I work with people who feel as strongly about this as I do, and who, on an individual level, present the content in ways that challenge the assumptions of white visitors and show respect to the marginalized communities represented in our space. As individuals, we try not to speak for or about these communities, but instead try to present the material as important, essential elements not only to the history of Fort Snelling, but to the Twin Cities and the entire state of Minnesota. We try to help our primarily white visitors see a perspective on Fort Snelling’s history that they had never heard before and would have never even considered. But knowing that, as of this moment, there is not a single, organized

group of Black Minnesotans willing to work with the Fort takes the hope that I have for the site and turns it into anxiety.

In the twenty-first century, when public pressure for a more diverse set of stories demanded narrative change at the historic site, the Band emerged to assuage these demands. Simply focusing on the Twenty-Fifth Infantry was not enough. Military historians universally dismiss the regiment's time at Fort Snelling as "the most uneventful time in the regiment's history."⁴⁷³ The program treatments that the Fort's interpreters use as a guide for talking to the public states that while the regiment was assigned to Fort Snelling "nothing much happened."⁴⁷⁴ Ignoring the fact that there are social and cultural reasons that explain why several of the soldiers and bandsmen who lived at Fort Snelling in the 1880s chose to return to the Twin Cities to live out their lives and raise their families at the end of their enlistments, the official narrative at Fort Snelling upholds the narrow perspective of military history. Nothing happened...except for the Band. The program treatment highlights the Band's performances in Minnesota but does not delve into specifics. The program treatment for the Twenty-Fifth Infantry and the Band serves as an appeasement. It provides a token treatment of an example of Black people living at Fort Snelling beyond the topic of slavery, but it does not put any emphasis on the social and cultural bonds of Black life that compelled some soldiers to call Minnesota their home. The Band and the Regiment are included, primarily, as part of the Fort's own performance of public relations.

⁴⁷³ Nankivell, *Buffalo Soldier Regiment*, 35.

⁴⁷⁴ Missy McDonald, "Twenty-fifth Infantry Interpretive Station Treatment," Minnesota Historical Society, 2019, 1.

The stories of the Band and soldiers are expendable at Historic Fort Snelling. When understaffed during the busy summer season, the station where the public can go to learn about the Black soldiers and musicians is always the first to be closed. This is troubling, particularly in the context of the evolving placement of these stations from one summer to the next. When I first began at Fort Snelling in the summer of 2022, the main attraction of the site, the historic fort itself, the place that the public makes a beeline for as soon as they purchase admission, made space for the stories of its Black residents in the context of slavery and the Twenty-Fifth Infantry. Inside the walls of the historic fort itself, the public could also learn about Dakota history and culture, including in-depth discussion of the U.S. Dakota War of 1862, as well as the work of thousands of Japanese Americans who lived and worked at the Fort during World War II as part of the Military Intelligence Service Language School.

In the summer of 2023 however, the Dakota station had been moved outside the walls of the Fort, at the request of the Dakota Community Council. It is now a station in search of a permanent home. A hodge podge of laminated maps, treaties, paintings, and photos are piled into a wooden cart and pushed out onto the prairie landscape where the public rarely goes. Throughout the summer, the wooden cart moved to four different spots on the prairie in an attempt to make it more noticeable to the public—not just those who had paid for admission, but anybody who happens to walk through the restored prairie on their way to the state park located just down the hill from the historic site. Those who do approach the cart are often disappointed that the interpreter standing there is not selling something. The cart, with its shiny silver umbrellas that are meant to protect the interpreter from the summer sun, looks like something a lemonade vendor might use. Or a snake oil salesman. People rarely stop to talk once they realize

there is nothing to buy. Whereas in the summer of 2022, the interpretive staff had frequent conversations with the public about the significance of the site to the Dakota people and the outcome of the U.S. Dakota War, the summer of 2023 saw a precipitous drop in engagement. The “Bdote Station” (as it is commonly called among staff) is now the station where you bring a book because you are going to spend most of the day by yourself, waiting for a public that usually only stops long enough to ask for directions to the bathrooms or the state park.

The Language School station is also no longer located within the walls of the Fort. It is now on the second floor of the visitor’s center. The visitor’s center is a restored cavalry barracks, originally built in 1904, located well outside the walls of the original site of Fort Snelling. While it was the barracks that housed many of the Japanese American students of the Language School during World War II, paying visitors to the Fort rarely make it to the second floor. The historic fort itself is the main attraction, and visitors rarely spend more than a few minutes in the visitor’s center itself. The “MISLS Station” (as it is called among staff) is now also a station where you know to bring a book, because you will not be talking to many people on a day you are assigned there.⁴⁷⁵ The rooms within the two barracks buildings inside the walls of the fort that used to house the Dakota and Language School content are now locked—empty and unused. The Twenty-Fifth station survived this purge, but it is always the first to be closed when understaffed. This, of course, bothered me tremendously.

⁴⁷⁵ At the time of making final edits to this conclusion, October 23, 2023, site management at Fort Snelling has prohibited interpretive staff from reading any books while on the clock, including books that pertain to the history and context of Fort Snelling and Minnesota. This decision eliminated the only real option for professional development that interpreters had. Instead, the interpreters have been informed that the only reading materials allowed are the station treatments, which provide only brief bullet points and minimal historical context. The interpreters have been told that if they want something to do beyond repeatedly reading the treatments, they can “always push a broom.”

At first, I passive-aggressively voiced my discontent by making a thumbs-down gesture while emitting a farting noise from my lips when its closure would be announced during the morning meeting. Eventually, I asked a supervisor why it was always the first station to be eliminated. My supervisor's reply was the phrase that I had come to hate: "Well, it is what it is," said with a shrug and an inscrutable curling of one side of the supervisor's mouth. I suggested that the schoolhouse or the sutler store could be closed instead. With a shake of the head my supervisor replied, "We gotta keep those open for the kids." However, after I voiced my concerns, rather than having the room shut down entirely, the barracks door remained open with a baby gate placed in front of it. Visitors would now be able to look inside the room to see the various photos of Black soldiers and the dress uniform of the Army in the 1880s, but there was no interpretive signage beyond a small sign that read "25th Infantry" to explain to the visitor what the content of the room entailed. My concerns were summarily dismissed...until the end of July 2023. I was working the front gate that day, greeting people as they arrived, wishing them a nice day as they departed. Late one afternoon, a couple—a middle-aged white man and a middle-aged Black woman—walked past me. "How was your visit today?" I called out as they passed. The man gave a brief nod and said it was fine. The woman stopped just outside the gate, turned around, looked at me for several seconds, and then asked, "Why is that room about the Black soldiers blocked off?"

I explained that due to a lack of staff that day the room had to remain closed. She looked at me and said, "Ok, but why that room?"

I nodded my head profusely to show that I understood her frustration. Before I could answer the man asked, "Is all that stuff in there being moved?"

I replied, “No, we usually have that room open, it’s just today it’s closed because of staffing, but I can talk to you about the Twenty-Fifth right now if you want.”

She shook her head and said, “No, that’s ok. It’s just...” she trailed off.

Her partner looked at her sympathetically when she turned to look at him. She turned back to me.

“It’s just, you know, they’re rewriting history in Florida.”

I felt embarrassed that she was associating the absurd policies of Ron DeSantis and the Florida legislature with the Fort’s managerial decision to consider knowledge of the Twenty-Fifth Infantry to be expendable.

“It’s just for today,” I said weakly. The woman seemed unsatisfied.

“Would you like to speak to my supervisor?” I asked.

“No,” she replied, “it’s just, you can’t be rewriting history here.”

The shame I felt deepened. “We’re not, ma’am. It’s just closed for today.”

Her partner put his arm around her and waved his hand at me. “It’s ok, it’s ok.”

As they walked away from me, the embarrassment I felt was replaced by a kind of smug satisfaction as I took out my walkie-talkie and asked a supervisor to come to the front gate. By the time a supervisor arrived, the couple was already long gone. I relayed the conversation. I emphasized that the woman was Black and under the impression that we were silencing Black history. The supervisor asked, “Why didn’t you call a supervisor?”

I replied that she was not interested in that. The supervisor shrugged and began to walk away. Before he could even take a step, I said, “You can see why she would think that though, right?”

The supervisor nodded and said, “Yeah, ok, we’ll figure it out.”

The next day at the morning meeting, the supervisor announced that, once again, the Twenty-Fifth station would be closed, but that the interpreters working in costume in the squad room (a space that defaults to “white”) that day should include the regiment’s story when talking to visitors. And in the last hour of the Fort being open, the interpretive staff that would normally spend that time sweeping the porches of the barracks would instead work inside the station.

Recently, I learned that the Twenty-Fifth Infantry has now been eliminated from the school tours programming. School tours are the bread and butter of the Historic Fort. One supervisor constantly reminds the interpretive staff that these raucous droves of children “pay our salaries.” In the Minnesota public education curriculum, sixth grade is the year designated for teaching and learning Minnesota history. As such, many of these students, as well as other groups of students ranging from kindergarten to Grade 12, take a field trip to Historic Fort Snelling. They do not get the same kind of experience as those who visit during the summer season. The school tours are far more regimented with only 90 minutes of time allotted for each group. To make this possible, and to ensure that the students get to experience all 22 acres of the historic site, the groups are kept to a strict schedule. They are only allowed a limited amount of time per station, and the content of the stations is decided by site management as well as the Interpretive Programs department of the Historical Society, based on survey and focus group feedback from teachers. The Twenty-Fifth was part of the school tour programming in my first year of employment. In the fall of 2022, a table with content about the regiment was placed in a “flex space.” The regiment was not given its own station, but rather was placed in a part of the Visitor Center where students go on their way to the restrooms or the water fountains. It was not

part of their regular rotation. Along with MISLS, students, teachers, and chaperones could stop on their way to somewhere else if they wanted but were not required to do so. This, of course, meant that the Twenty-Fifth received scant attention that season.

In the spring of 2023, the regiment was promoted to an official station in the exhibit space. The students had only six minutes to spend in the space so the topic had to be something that could grab and hold their attention, however briefly. The content chosen was the Bicycle Corps with the reasoning that kids love bicycles, and this is something fun that they could all relate to no matter their culture or socio-economic background. The school children, in general, seemed to enjoy their brief time in the space. After a series of post-season surveys and focus groups, the programming team decided to eliminate the Twenty-Fifth from the school tour locations. When I asked why, a site supervisor informed me that the teachers did not understand why we were teaching their students about an event that had nothing to do with Fort Snelling. That is a fair assessment and matches with the response I often receive from visitors during the regular summer season. They want to know what the story of the Bicycle Corps or Brownsville has to do with Fort Snelling.

The interpretive team long ago decided that Fort Snelling is a place where “nothing much happened” for the regiment and so puts little effort into offering the interpreters guidance on how to speak to the regiment’s time in Minnesota. This has bothered me since the first week I started working at the Fort. I began to form my own narratives based on my research so that I could engage with the public about how the soldiers spent their time and why some chose to return to the Twin Cities to put down roots once their enlistments ended. I began incorporating discussion of the historiography of the regiment into my interactions. I carefully explain how scholars can

come up with different conclusions based on the kinds of questions they are asking of their body of evidence. A military historian asks what happened militarily, however, a scholar of performance or cultural studies asks questions about daily life and the significance of personal and professional relationships. For a military historian, there was no significant military action in Minnesota throughout the 1880s, therefore, nothing happened. For me, the regiment's time at Fort Snelling was influential both socially and culturally, therefore, many things happened that are still important to Minnesota history. Depending on the questions being asked, the history of the Twenty-Fifth Infantry at Fort Snelling can quickly turn from an impression of idleness to a story of influence.

These are also some of the points I raised with a member of Interpretive Programs who worked on the school tours content. In the Fall of 2023, the tours were amended to focus on an overarching theme of "Place." I suggested that the fact that young Black soldiers, born and raised in the South, who had faced ill treatment at so many forts to which they were assigned, chose to return to the Twin Cities indicates a depth of culture and belonging that is the very definition of "placemaking." She took my ideas seriously and said she would discuss this with other members of interpretive programming to see if they could rethink the place of the Twenty-Fifth for the school tours of Spring 2024. While I remain troubled by the ease with which the stories of Black and Japanese Americans are cast aside in the programming of Fort Snelling, I mostly think that it is often a matter of unexamined assumptions on the part of the all-white team of site management, supervisors, and interpretive programmers. The staff and supervisors of the Fort are a primarily white team that is hesitant, but usually not afraid to confront the extent to which whiteness influences the historical consciousness enabled by our interpretation practices. This

does not always translate into meaningful introspection or immediate changes to remedy the continued marginalization of already marginalized stories, but it is rarely met with defensiveness or hostility either. More often, there is a sense of hopelessness, as if faced with an incomprehensibly large mountain that they are unequipped to climb.

In this dissertation, I have built upon an archive that differs from the one sanctioned and perpetuated by institutions like the Minnesota Historical Society. For an organization like MNHS, the Band is a “feel good” story that decorates the margins of a narrative about military advancement and settler progress. The previous chapters, however, indicate that a more nuanced and detailed interpretation of the Band’s performances could help the public that visits Historic Fort Snelling understand that “settlement” is a far more ambivalent, contested, negotiated, and multi-racial process than what is currently presented. The Band’s performances of “redface” in Minnesota encapsulate the complicated emotional politics of place-making, race-making, Indigeneity, and belonging that is sorely lacking in the Fort’s historical interpretation. The Band’s annual Emancipation Day performances in Minnesota and throughout the West reveal an account of Black freedom and futurity that does not exist within the confines of the Fort’s emphasis on slavery. The Band’s continued patriotism even amid violence and lynching directed at the Black regiments opens a discussion about how the Band was forced to work within the confines of various location-based racial hierarchies that can possibly lead a visitor of the Fort to think critically about the racial politics of Minnesota, both historically and today, and perhaps question the limits of the Fort’s narrative attempts at uplift suasion. The Band’s audibly spectacular showings at the Mid-Pacific Carnival can provide context for discussing how Fort Snelling, as a national historic site, authorizes a particular narrative of history that makes the

glorification of American military power seem entertaining and inevitable. In only using a carefully curated image of the Band to mark off a box on a diversity checklist, a more complete and complicated co-creation of history between the institution and the public is impossible. As it stands right now, at Historic Fort Snelling, members of the Band and the Regiment are limited to fulfilling a job with which they have been tasked since 1866: they call attention to the hypocrisies of white Americans and the paradox of supporting the institutions that crystallize our duplicity.

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