CHAPTER 4

When Jim Crow Meets Uncle Sam

The Veteran Returns to Dixie

> I went to World [War] II. I helped train a thousand men to kill . . . and I didn't know what the hell I was teaching 'em for. Went in behind the Civil Rights Act, I know what the hell I was fightin'; I was fightin' for equal rights that Roosevelt promised us before he died. Didn't do a damn thing about it. . . . He didn't do a damn thing.
>
> —Charlie Sims, World War II veteran, quoted in George Lipsitz, *A Life in the Struggle: Ivory Perry and the Culture of Opposition*

In chapter 3, I showed how military experience confirmed the illegitimacy of white supremacy for the black veterans I interviewed, and how it furnished them with the confidence to confront it upon their return to the South. In this chapter I will complete the theoretical framework begun in chapter 2 by illustrating how, for black Southerners who served in the military, the experience produced a belief system that affected their attitudes and behavior on returning home. By way of example, I turn briefly to two of the leaders of the Southern freedom struggle, both of whom donned the uniform during the Second World War before returning to the South to face off with Jim Crow.

Aaron Henry was born in 1922 into a family of sharecroppers. A native of Dublin, Mississippi, Henry was educated in segregated schools before being drafted in 1943. In the army, he was assigned to a segregated quartermaster unit during the Second World War. Disturbed by the irony of fighting for democracy in a Jim Crow army, Henry returned to Mississippi, where he became the first African American to register to vote in the Democratic Party primary in the county of Coahoma. Thanks to the GI Bill, Henry obtained a degree in pharmacology from Xavier University in Louisiana. In 1950, he returned to his native Mississippi, settling in Clarksdale, where he opened his own pharmacy.

From his Fourth Street Drugstore, Henry began his assault upon segregation. In 1954, he joined the local NAACP, becoming the president of the statewide branch in 1959. In 1962, he was a key member of the

Council of Federated Organizations, the umbrella organization charged with coordinating the activities of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and the NAACP in Mississippi. Two years later, Henry became a founding member of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, an organization that challenged the dominance of Mississippi's Democratic Party at the 1964 Democratic National Convention. In 1982, Henry ran for and won a seat in Mississippi's House of Representatives, an office he held for twenty-four years. Henry's civil rights advocacy caused him to be jailed thirty-three times, his business to be firebombed, and his wife to lose her job as a teacher.

What was the source of Henry's determination to challenge domination? Perhaps the epigraph above provides a clue. Charlie Sims, also a veteran of the Second World War, was frustrated with the pace of state-sponsored change. He was under the impression—apparently mistaken—that his willingness to fight would produce equal rights for African Americans. But when he perceived that the state had reneged on the republican compact to reward his military service with rights, Sims felt that he was forced to take matters into his own hands—to supplement his critical view of the state with activism. He became a member of Deacons for Defense and Justice, the organization in which many black veterans protected CORE workers from the Ku Klux Klan in Louisiana.

At issue in this study is whether or not Sims's and Henry's critical and activist reactions to their frustrations with the refusal of Southern state and local authorities, as well as Southern society, to honor the republican compact—where the burden of military service is associated with first-class citizenship—was common among veterans. Thus, this chapter builds on the preceding chapter, in which the experiential foundations of black republicanism were revealed, by fleshing out this system of belief in full by considering the enduring meaning of military service to black veterans.

After sketching a portrait of the unforgiving South to which black veterans returned, I examine the extent to which they used the language of republicanism to organize their political and social views. Upon establishing the tenability of black republicanism as set of organizing principles, finally, I illustrate some of its practical implications. Here I will argue that veterans' postwar criticism and activism—the attitudinal and behavioral consequences of black republicanism—were motivated by the sacrifices undertaken in service to the country. As in the preceding chapter, interviews will provide the evidentiary basis for the aforementioned claims. As we shall soon see, black veterans used republican rhetoric to frame postwar claims on the state and society for equality, the basis of which was their military service. Finally, the interviews on which I draw

for evidence in the present chapter reflect the most clearly articulated views of particular points of view. If I draw on a particular veteran to illustrate a point, be assured that he isn't the only one with that general opinion.

White Domination in the 1950s

As the South emerged from the Korean War, there were at least three reasons for black Southerners to be optimistic. First, the demise of the white primary in 1944 promised to restore the relevance of black voters once again after a half-century hiatus. Second, blacks were now serving in a desegregated military in which they saw plenty of combat. And finally, the recent victory in the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* case, many believed, promised to end segregation once and for all. With the benefit of time and exceptional scholarship, we know that these events set the stage for the insurgent movement that would eventually produce lasting change in the South (Andrews 2004; Button 1989; Jenkins and Argonne 2003; McAdam 1999; Morris 1984). Of the aforementioned reforms, the order to desegregate the military enjoyed the most immediate and tangible impact. But as I have already noted, it took three years, exigent circumstances during war, and a commander committed more to moral principle than army culture to realize the spirit of President Harry S. Truman's executive order. While many of the white officer elite in the armed forces lost their battle to maintain segregation, their counterparts in civil society continued to fight desegregation and the political representation of blacks in the South.

White Southerners conjured myriad reasons to resist social change. The need to fight communism, the belief in states' rights, and the ascription of communist motives to civil rights activists, among other things, were all offered as excuses to impede—if not crush—the civil rights movement (Lee 2002).[1] "Negroes" and "Whites Only" signs haunted restrooms, water fountains, and various modes of public transportation, as public accommodations remained segregated. The better schools remained off-limits to black children, thanks to "massive resistance" in which Southern state houses "interposed" themselves between the federal government and its citizens (McMillen 1994), devising a cascade of laws

[1] For alternative explanations for white Southerners' reaction to racial reform, see Frederickson (1981) and Kruse (2005) for ideological accounts. See Cash (1941) for a psychocultural explanation, and Franklin (2002) for a more cultural explanation; for a point of view in which politics, personal ambition, and Southern elites explain Southern recalcitrance, see Bartley (1969) and Mickey (forthcoming).

to avoid desegregation. It was a smashing success for white supremacists: ten years after the *Brown* decision, 99 percent of schools in the South remained segregated (Orfield 2000). It took the educational provision of the Civil Rights Act (1964) to remove the remaining barriers to school integration. As of 1960, moreover, only 28 percent of black Southerners who were eligible to vote were actually registered (Matthews and Prothro 1966).

The continued oppression of black Southerners rested upon a foundation of terror and coercion. Black veterans returned to a South in which the murder of blacks went for the most part unpunished.[2] From 1941 through 1955, ninety-two black Southerners were murdered by whites,[3] including fourteen-year-old Emmett Till, who was killed for *whistling* at a white woman. In most of these cases that were brought to trial in the South, the accused escaped conviction. Moreover, the threat posed by *Brown* to the Southern social order stimulated a revival of the Klan in at least one state and the creation of a second white supremacist organization in another. In 1954 and 1955, the Georgia-based Klan embarked upon a membership drive that produced approximately fifteen thousand recruits (Robinson 1997). In October 1954, mainly to resist conforming to the ruling in *Brown*, white Mississippians formed the Citizens' Council (McMillen 1994). "Pursuing the agenda of the Klan, with the demeanor of the Rotary," as sociologist Charles Payne puts it (1995, 34–35), the council was constituted by "professionals, businessmen, and planters." It accumulated a membership of 80,000 by 1956 in Mississippi alone, and eventually spread to six other states. These councils, assisted by state and local authorities, often targeted members or sympathizers of the NAACP, threatening (and using) economic sanctions such as employment termination and the denial of credit to achieve the desired result: impeding school integration by weakening the organizational power of the NAACP (McMillen 1994; Payne 1995).

Beyond the terror, segregation, and discrimination to which all blacks in the South were subjected, black veterans as a group were singled out for discriminatory treatment. The GI Bill of Rights, conceived in part to reward veterans for their sacrifices, remains the most ambitious social welfare program ever offered by the government (Katznelson 2005). It ushered in unprecedented social mobility by giving veterans access to home and business loans, educational assistance, and employment services. Even though the Selective Service Readjustment Act of 1944 did

[2] For an account in which socioeconomic mobility dampened whites' desire to engage in postwar violence, see O'Brien (1999).

[3] Data compiled by the author from the Espy File, part of the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data, deposited at the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research.

not contain language restricting the benefits of the act to whites, politics affected the distribution of benefits. To guarantee the support of Southern legislators, the bill was structured to ensure that program administration would devolve to state-level bureaucrats, who in turn undermined the social mobility promised by the program by depriving black veterans of access to resources to which they were entitled, thereby maintaining the social status quo.

Only on rare occasions were black veterans in the South allowed to redeem the educational provision of the GI Bill at predominantly white colleges and universities; otherwise, they were forced to attend black colleges (Onkst 1998). These institutions were often overcrowded, making it difficult for some veterans to gain admission. Fair access to housing was also restricted, as redlining prevented all blacks, including veterans, from purchasing homes in more desirable white neighborhoods where homes accumulated equity at much faster rates (Katznelson 2005; Oliver and Shapiro 1995). Black veterans, furthermore, were often forced to accept employment in occupations for which they were overqualified. Jobs in many of the professional, skilled, and semiskilled occupations were reserved for white veterans, leaving only menial, dirty jobs for black veterans (Onkst 1998).

This is not to say that the GI Bill did not benefit black Southerners; it did. To the extent possible, black Southerners took advantage of the program, and society was the better for it because program participants were more likely than nonparticipants to undertake political activism (Metter 2005a). Nevertheless, frustration with not receiving the benefits they were due may partly explain why black veterans fled the South in greater numbers than blacks who did not serve (Modell, Goulden, and Magnussen 1989). By 1950, 50 percent of all black veterans who joined the armed forces from Southern states had relocated to a different region. By contrast, two-thirds of nonveteran black men remained in Dixie (Modell et al. 1989, 839).[4] Veteran or not, those who remained faced the same restrictions on their liberties.

Framing the Meaning of Military Service and Black Republicanism

Veterans returned to a hostile South, a place that refused to appreciate, much less honor, their sacrifices. How did they make sense of this mistreatment? How, if at all, did their experiences shape their view of the South? I gain analytical traction on these questions by turning to framing. Interpretive frames, according to David Snow and his colleagues, "ren[der] events and occurrences meaningful [by] organiz[ing] experience and guid[ing] action, whether individual or collective" (Snow et al. 1986, 464). As interpretive devices, frames guide how people think about their social and political world by "selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of actions, within one's present or past environment" (Snow and Benford 1992, 137). Frames assist collective action in manifold ways. Their ability to identify injustice, attribute blame to a group or an individual, and prescribe a means of corrective action is essential for mobilization (Gamson 1992; Snow and Benford 1992).

I am less interested in the ways in which frames were constructed by movement entrepreneurs than I am in exploring how veterans made sense of their world upon returning to the South. Accordingly, I aim to use insights from framing as an analytical tool to illustrate how veterans' ideological proclivities, derived from their military experience(s), informed their views of the postwar South. To do so, I follow Taeku Lee's (2002) example, which examines constituency mail from the period of the civil rights movement. To make sense of the ways in which individuals articulated their appeals to the president, Lee drew on interpretive frames, explaining that "citizens frame an argument when they put their *personal* 'spin' on a particular matter" (2002, 156; emphasis added). Similarly, my goal is to examine black veterans' *personal* versions of events, not the framing process per se.

I use frames to capture how veterans' military experience structured their perceptions of the postwar South. Frames use culture in creative ways to generate ideological perspectives that identify injustice and prescribe corrective action, among other things. More to the point, culture informs both frames and the ideologies in which they're embedded (Tarrow 1992; Zald 1996). Frames are also relevant to their users' life experiences (Snow et al. 1986; Snow and Benford 1988, 2000). Individuals must feel that a frame speaks to their life history before they accept it and act.

Below, I draw on frames to illuminate the process through which black republicanism animated the insurgent attitudes and behavior of black veterans during the Jim Crow era. If black republicanism has any explanatory power, we should expect veterans to have framed their discontent with social conditions in the South and their resistance to domination in terms consistent with their military experience. If I am correct, the meaning of military service functioned as a prism through which veterans viewed white domination and their reaction to it. It was by means of

[4] Veterans, through exposure to other ways of life, were a bit more mobile than nonveterans. In any case, by 1970, the number of veterans living beyond the region of their birth declined to 41 percent (Gregory 2004).

their perceived full membership in the political community, in concert with the confidence they accrued in the service, that black veterans interrogated and challenged white supremacy.

Before I examine some of the consequences of black republicanism, however, I must first consider its constitution and whether or not black veterans used it to organize their thinking. One way to assess this latter question is to ask veterans to consider their relationship with the nation-state. In doing so, I hope to shed light on two questions. First, if we know how veterans conceive of the relationship between the individual and the nation-state, we should gain at least a partial understanding of why the militant black veterans, mentioned in the introduction to this volume, acted as they did. And second, to the extent that ideologies assist individuals and groups to navigate the political world, veterans' beliefs about the relationship between the individual and the nation-state should help adjudicate differences between black republicanism and competing ideologies.

Black Republicanism and National Identification

One way in which individuals relate to the nation-state is through their attachment to it. There are at least three ways to explain blacks' attachment to the nation. One, based on radical egalitarianism, represents the black liberal position, and is the black ideology most similar, in my estimation, to black republicanism. An approach that used radical egalitarianism to explain black attachment to the nation would suggest that African Americans identify with the nation and its values as a means of securing progress—that their attachment is a strategy by which they interrogate American social practices in order to advance the race by forcing whites to observe the founding values of the nation (Dawson 2001). In other words, for radical egalitarians, national attachment is relatively instrumental. An approach that uses conventional republicanism to explain black attachment to the nation, alternatively, would suggest that national identification is not instrumental but fundamentally primordial and emotional, guided by affective attachment to the nation's institutions and conationals.

My approach is firmly planted in the middle of these two. Black republicanism, unlike radical egalitarianism, links black veterans' attachment to the nation explicitly to their military service. It departs from conventional republicanism insofar as national identification, according to black republicanism, is complicated by race and a history of domination. Thus, for those veterans who adhere to black republicanism, we expect them to allude to systemic, race-based discrimination even as they declare their allegiance to the nation. To examine these competing hypotheses, I asked the veterans I interviewed to choose whether they identify themselves as Americans or African Americans. I deliberately chose the term *African American* instead of *black* simply because the latter would pose too stark a contrast with identification as *American*.

Some veterans, as one may imagine, feel closer to the nation as a result of their service. Mr. Shaw typifies this sentiment. An awardee of the Silver Star, one of the nation's highest military honors, he feels that he has earned right to be called American because, as he puts it, "I served my country in war." The son of a farmer and a housewife, he was born on a farm in Terrell, Texas, in 1929. Initially educated at Tuskegee Institute, he eventually received a master's degree in agronomy from Rutgers University. Shaw served in World War II as an enlisted man, and as an officer who commanded white troops during the Korean War. As a result of his military service he feels that he should be afforded "any rights that any other American is exposed to." Shaw's rationale for demanding recognition as an American is understandable and straightforward. After all, he fought for the country, and did so gallantly; the citation for Shaw's medal, the Silver Star, says as much. Shaw recognizes himself as an American and feels that whites should follow suit and acknowledge him as an equal.

Veterans also tie their military service to identification with the nation by means of references to patriotism. Dr. Bashful, who was an artillery officer during the Second World War, is a good example. His is not a blind "my country right or wrong" patriotism; Bashful's patriotism reflects the tension between his commitment to America and his commitment to his race. For instance, the 351st Field Artillery Battalion, in which he served, held an annual reunion. He recalls one meeting in particular at which, he says, "it was the feeling of all of our members that the whole system in the army—and that was a segregated army by the way—was meant to crush you."

Nevertheless, Bashful maintained his allegiance to the nation—albeit a critical allegiance. When he was chancellor of a historically black university, an aide alerted him to a problem one afternoon. A group of students attempted to remove the American flag and replace it with the now familiar red, black, and green "black flag of liberation." Bashful recalls that there were approximately fifty students around the flagpole. He advised the students that continuing with this action would "invite a lot of problems." When they were slow to respond, he qualified his position to the students, explaining, "I am a veteran of World War II, and I fought for that flag, so I have some allegiance to it. But I also have allegiance to the black flag of liberation in terms of what we're [black people] trying to do. I don't think that one flag is more important than the other."

Given his experience in a segregated army, it is no surprise that the chancellor sympathized with the students.

The incident was reported in the local news. Bashful received a phone call from a school trustee, who asked him what exactly was happening at the school. The official questioned the chancellor's patriotism, something that Bashful failed to appreciate. He recalls "setting the official straight." He did so by citing his military service: "I'm a veteran of World War II." Bashful continued dressing down the man on the other line: "I was an artillery officer, so don't tell me about patriotism. I think I have at least as much patriotism as you." The chancellor indicated that despite his negative experiences in the army, he could not let the American flag be disrespected. To him, the flag "is a symbol of the nation." Like Shaw's, his respect for the flag is rooted in his military service. "As a former officer in the army," he says with a blend of amusement and pride, "I just didn't see how I could allow the flag to be disrespected." Bashful's actions are consistent with the critical attachment to nation that I argue is characteristic of black republicanism.

It is no surprise that military service affects the extent to which veterans identify with the nation and its symbols. After all, they were willing to put their lives on the line for both. There are, however, other reasons that these black veterans identify with the nation. Mr. Pete, a veteran of the Korean War, provides us with one: a desire to belong. He reported to Korea just prior to the commencement of hostilities in 1950 and was a member of the all-black Twenty-Fourth Infantry Regiment. Despite his experiences with segregation in the military, he absolutely insists that he is first and foremost an American because, he proclaims, "I was born here as an American. . . . I am American!" While Pete's identification with America is primarily tethered to his birthright, his insistence that he is American is also rooted in his fear of being singled out: "I mean, leave the 'African' off and just say I'm American. When you say 'African American,' you want to say 'Alaskan American' or 'Hispanic American'; I mean, it's really pointing you out, I mean as far as race. Just say, 'I'm American!' "

Pete's view is exceptional in that his desire to identify with the national community is driven mostly by a wish to belong. Shaw's position is that his service entitles him to call himself American. Both are firm in their declarations. Neither, though, can match Mr. Stewart's determination to identify with the nation. He resents the mere implication that he is anything but American, pure and simple. Drafted in 1945, Stewart shipped out to Korea in 1948, where he served during the occupation of South Korea prior to the war's commencement in 1950. When asked what he identifies as—African American or simply American—he comments, "I think of myself [as] an American." He completely rejects the currently

favored term used to identify Americans of African descent. "I've never been to Africa; I wasn't born in Africa. I am American," he insists. "And I resent it [being categorized as African American], myself. Now I don't know about the other fellow, but I resent it." Asked why he resents it, Stewart carefully weighs the question before offering an answer. "Well, I resent it because I was born here in the United States and in Texas, and I don't like it [being called African American]. Period. It's like on an application and they have 'African American' on it, I draw a line. I'm serious. I draw a line through 'Africa[n]' and I leave the 'American.' "

For other veterans, identification as an American has less to do with how they see themselves than how they wish whites to see them. Mr. Williams's view is illustrative in this regard. He feels that the term *African American* qualifies his membership in the national community: "I'm no Afro-American, and I don't like to be called one," he maintains. A former member of an elite Ranger unit who'd risen to the highest enlisted rank (E-9), he insists that *Afro-American* is another way for whites to avoid recognizing black Southerners as equals. In other words, he says, "it's a polite way for a white man, in an intelligent way, to still call you a nigger." Williams's membership in the political community, in his estimation, is guaranteed by the Constitution. "It states it real well," he says, "that any man that is born in the United States of America, regardless of race, creed, or color—is an American citizen. I'm an American citizen. I'm not no Afro-American!" For him it's important that blacks claim their birthright; otherwise, as he sees it, whites may decide to declare them unfit for citizenship and return them to a status of servitude. "I didn't come from Africa to stay in America for a number of years to sit under American rule to gain and prepare myself for citizenship and still might not make it if they see fit to that they didn't want me; that 'We got enough niggers in here already, why bring some more in?' "

It's one thing to refer oneself as an African American, but Williams shudders at the thought of a *white man* calling him Afro-American. Indeed, for a white man to call him anything but American is an insult. "No! Anytime a white man call[s] me Afro-American, I correct him real quick and tell him, 'You quit using that polite way of calling me a nigger,' " he emphasizes, illustrating how he would handle a situation in which a white person referred to him as anything but American. Williams's identification with the nation is tethered in chief to the Constitution. Without it, he suggests, whites would attempt to force blacks to accept second-class citizenship. Thus, his identification with America is linked to his belief of how whites perceive him. He refuses to allow whites to strip him of his claim to first-class membership in the political community. His insistence upon identifying with the nation, it seems, is a radical egalitarian one. But the fact that Williams emphasizes how

whites—if they wished—could invalidate blacks' citizenship is a direct reference to the domination referenced by republicans: the arbitrariness with which the dominant party can impinge upon a subordinate's liberty.

There is evidence that some of the veterans with whom I spoke subscribe to conventional republican thought. In short, their identity is framed to coincide with a primordial view of national identification: they were born in America, so as they see it they are American; it is an insult to suggest otherwise. However, these veterans were in the minority. Most of the veterans I interviewed were firmly rooted in the radical egalitarian or black republican camp. Williams, for instance, is a clear case in which identification is guided by the former. By framing his identification with America as a constitutional guarantee, Williams indicates that white America need only act in accordance with its most sacred document to ensure his membership in the national community. This claim, shared by other veterans, is consistent with radical egalitarianism insofar as they also reference the Constitution as the basis for their identification as an American. We also see veterans identifying themselves as American because of their service to the country—an allegiance that has more to do with their sacrifices than with any primordial or strategic identification. This approach, as we see with Shaw, is both critical and organic (i.e., as opposed to instrumental), both of which are constitutive of black republicanism. We should note that, regardless of one's ideological proclivities, each of these perspectives is complicated by race. Invoking race raises the specter of the domination to which black republicanism responds, resulting in a more critical attachment to the nation. Such an attachment is not part of mainstream republicanism, which promotes an allegiance that is unencumbered.

Black Republicanism and Citizenship

Analyzing responses to a question about identification is one way to assess attachment to the nation. But I can think of at least two reasons why it may be necessary to draw on additional evidence to make the case for black republicanism. First, it remains possible that one's identity preference may have just as much to do with one's generation as it has to do with military experience. Since age tends to breed conservatism, and the labels *Afro-American* and *African American* were militant responses to the baggage attached to the term *Negro*, it's possible that these veterans rejected the former terms because of their association with militancy. Second, as we have witnessed, black veterans' responses on this matter revealed their affiliations with a range of ideological positions. Though

black republicanism was clearly one option, more evidence is needed to confirm its conceptual validity. Thus, we must move beyond the affect associated with national attachment and toward the associated cognitions (Citrin, Wong, and Duff 2001). I choose to do so by examining veterans' beliefs about citizenship.

Citizenship functions as the institutional nexus between the individual and the political community (Conover 1995). To the extent that a political community consists of both members and formal institutions, furthermore, "citizenship shapes how individuals relate to both" (Conover 1995, 134). Ultimately, the content of these relationships is part of a larger cognitive framework in which individuals consider the proper role of the state in society as well as their rights and duties within the political community. This framework has been shown to promote at least two basic interpretations of citizenship: liberal and republican (Conover, Crewe, and Searing 1991). The former, of course, emphasizes rights over duties; republicanism represents the inverse of these priorities. For this reason, a discussion with veterans about their understanding of citizenship should therefore function as a rough litmus test of the presence or absence of black republicanism. If they conceive of citizenship in a way that consistently prioritizes rights over obligations, this would suggest that they subscribe to a black liberal ideology, most likely radical egalitarianism. If, however, veterans have a mixed view of citizenship in which rights are combined with obligations, the case for black republicanism is strengthened.

To explore the veterans' conceptions of citizenship, I asked three open-ended questions. Drawing on Mettler's (2005b) survey instrument, the first question required interviewees to discuss the meaning of citizenship. I then asked them to define good citizenship. I concluded by asking them to assess the importance of citizenship in their lives. Almost invariably, they framed their responses to the first question in liberal terms. The language of rights, in other words, dominated the discourse. Good citizenship, on the other hand, was clearly a matter of duty. In response to the third question, many of the veterans expressed their appreciation of citizenship as an institution.

Mr. Thomas, an army air corps veteran of the Second World War, is a prime example. To him, "citizenship means everything." He qualifies his affection for the institution, however, on the basis of his memories of the Jim Crow South where he was raised, explaining, "I've been in situations where American citizenship became questionable." "There were periods in . . . my lifetime," Thomas explains, "when that general type of freedom that we construe as freedom wasn't available." Ultimately, though, he is satisfied with the institution of citizenship. From his perspective, citizenship "means that you have considerable rights and freedoms." For

these reasons, he declares, "I don't think I would be willing to trade it for another country." Thomas defines citizenship in liberal terms—that is, our "rights and freedoms." Yet his view of *good* citizenship is more consistent with republicanism, emphasizing citizens' duties. Thomas believes, for instance, that good citizens "honor the flag, respect other people, respect property, obey the laws of the land, defend [their] country, and represent [their] country in a commendable way locally, nationally, and internationally." He has some doubts about American citizenship, but he ultimately believes in the institution.

Pete shares several of Thomas's views. He also associates citizenship with freedom, and argues that citizenship is commensurate with "a certain freedom that's due you," elaborating, "I mean, you can act upon and receive those things as rights, privileges, and so forth." Neither of his parents was educated beyond the seventh grade. Perhaps this is why, for Pete, good citizenship depends upon civic education, without which individuals do not know how to serve the wider political community. His conception of good citizenship requires individual citizens to be educated in the habits of service to the country. "Oh, I think a good citizen should come through training," he says; "they [citizens] should come through elementary through high school, and go to college." Pete includes the military as a source of civic education. He believes that a good citizen also "serve[s] his country . . . through the military."

Just as his life circumstances seem to have affected Pete's view of citizenship, Mr. Baines's history of growing up in poverty in a farming community shaped his perception of the institution. His family was very poor. "Except for living on a farm, we probably wouldn't have survived," he says. Reflecting on the poverty in which he was raised and his ability to rise beyond his humble beginnings, he voices his appreciation of American citizenship, which provides people "with so many different rights and privileges." While Baines, like the others, believes good citizenship should promote the common good, he interprets the mechanism by which it does so differently. Baines implies that good citizenship, among other things, means meeting "certain responsibilities" that citizens have, including "getting yourself a job and support[ing] your family." He also departs from his contemporaries in insisting that unconditional support for the nation-state is a requirement of good citizenship. He believes it essential that citizens "support the ideals of this country, support our government in time of peace or war."

Citizenship, Baines says, has played an important role in his life. Had he not been a U.S. citizen, his opportunities for personal development would have suffered. Like Thomas, Baines associates the military with the performance of citizenship. In particular, he mentions that his citizenship furnished him with the opportunity to serve in the military, for

which he is grateful. "Had I not been a citizen, they [the armed forces] wouldn't have accepted me," he explains, "and that was one of my greatest experiences [serving in the military]." Given Baines's affinity for the military, it is not surprising that his definition of citizenship requires the citizen to support the nation and its government, regardless of the citizen's feelings about particular policies.

While there is some disagreement among the veterans I interviewed about the precise meaning and nature of citizenship, each of the men mentioned thus far recognizes its importance and seems grateful for the opportunities his own citizenship has provided. Generally, these men, and the many for whom their opinions are representative, stress the rights *and* duties associated with citizenship. This was not, however, the consensus among all the veterans. Upon witnessing the conditions of blacks in the South after returning from war, some were disappointed and frustrated with American society. We should not be surprised, then, that some of the black veterans I interviewed were skeptical about the ability of citizenship to have a meaningful impact on their lives.

Mr. Womack is one such individual. Womack, a decorated veteran of Korea and Vietnam who retired as a sergeant major (E-9) after thirty-four years in the army, joined the armed forces in 1946, volunteering in order to escape a bad relationship. Despite all that he has done for America and accomplished in his life, he bitterly refers to himself as "retired sergeant major, second-class citizen." Unlike his contemporaries who define citizenship in terms of rights and privileges, the sergeant major believes that citizenship represents opportunity. But his race, he says, cuts him off from this opportunity. "I don't have an opportunity to do a damn thing first class," Womack sighs, referring particularly to his lack of employment opportunities. "I don't have the opportunity to walk in an office and be hired based on my credentials," he explains. Instead, "you are judged on your complexion," and this limits black Americans' life chances.

Womack also questions the presumption of equality associated with citizenship. He believes that people of color have always been the dupes of whites. To illustrate, he mentions a chapter in history in which blacks were pitted against Native Americans: "You had Buffalo Soldiers fighting . . . Native Americans. So you had two minorities fighting for the benefit of whom? Whites. It [the whites pitting minorities against one another] hasn't changed." Womack then cut to the heart of the matter: his contempt for the phrase "level playing field." It is often used by those on the right who seek to thwart a fair distribution of opportunity, he says. "Don't tell me 'level playing field,'" Womack fumes. Speaking from whites' perspective, he points out, "If I own the playing field, can I determine who goes on it? You're damn right [I can]." He suggests that whites

have reduced the equality of opportunity to an illusion, and the futility of it all frustrates Womack. "Don't give me a level playing field," he repeats, "it doesn't mean shit!"

To the extent that American citizenship is defined in terms of opportunity, Womack is not terribly impressed with it. That said, it is not altogether clear that he disapproves of the ideal of citizenship either. Indeed, Womack sees himself as a good, if frustrated, citizen. He remains angry that American society fails to see him the same way. From his perspective as a career military man, "a good citizen does what he is told." Military service is clearly part of his definition of good citizenship when he says, "I'm a good citizen. I put thirty-something years in the military." In the end, Womack seems torn about American citizenship. On the one hand, he sees a problem with the lack of opportunity and the treatment that black Southerners have been forced to tolerate. On the other hand, he believes that he is a good citizen, largely because of his many years of military service. The problem, as far as he is concerned, is that whites fail to see him as an equal.

If possible, other veterans were even more pessimistic about citizenship. Veterans like Dr. Carey see little value in the institution. He agrees with Womack's definition of citizenship as opportunity, though his pessimism about the institution exceeds the sergeant major's. "I won't say [that citizenship means] *complete* opportunity," Carey states matter-of-factly, "because I'm a black male living in the South, [and] I have been relegated to a second-class citizenship." *Second-class citizenship* is a term often bandied about in academic discourse, but Carey defines what it means to him in concrete terms: "I was not accorded all of the rights and privileges and opportunities that my fellow white people had. I was mistreated. I was brutalized. I lived in the segregated South . . . that sort of tells the story by itself. You go in the back door. You [sit] in the back of the bus. You use worn-out books that had been used by white children."

Carey is nevertheless cognizant of what constitutes a good citizen, though his cynicism is difficult to miss. For him, good citizenship is defined by the "proverbial things such as obeying the laws, paying your taxes, and serving in the military if you're called or want to. Just generally being civic-minded, work[ing] with your community." He certainly knows what is expected of citizens. I suspect, however, that this is more a matter of his education and occupation than a reflection of his own beliefs and values: as a retired professor of political science, he is well aware of the normative duties of citizens. His childhood experiences with segregation, coupled with his use of the word *proverbial* to describe a good citizen, indicate his skepticism about the institution—at least as it pertains to black Southerners.

With the notable exceptions of Womack and Carey, citizenship as an institution is held in high regard by the veterans I interviewed. But even Womack and Carey do not so much reject the ideal of republican citizenship as much as they question the extent to which the benefits of such citizenship have applied to them. Consistent with my understanding of black republicanism, nearly all of the veterans with whom I spoke framed citizenship as a mixture of rights and duties. In addition to military service and compliance with the law, the veterans also cited several types of civic-minded behavior that are identified with republicanism. They also often invoked the values commensurate with liberal democratic citizenship. Each man in his own way mentioned freedom and equality, both of which are central to republican thought. Americans commonly conceive of citizenship as combining rights with duties in some manner (Conover et al. 1991; Conover, Searing, and Crewe 2004). What makes the veterans' vision of citizenship commensurate with black republicanism is the way in which it reflects the history of internal domination—by an enemy at home, rather than an enemy abroad—that impeded their ability to enjoy the freedom for which they fought. Almost without fail, each of the veterans qualified his appraisal of the institution of citizenship by noting the ways in which racial prejudice affected his ability to reap the benefits of full membership in the political community.

Expectations of Racial Progress: Service and Sacrifice

The black veterans I interviewed were committed to the idea that they had earned full membership in the political community through their military service. In this section we gain a sense of why black veterans felt that they and other black Americans would be treated as equal citizens following World War II or the Korean War. My understanding of black republicanism predicts that veterans would have cited their sacrifices in the military to justify their expectations of change in the South and thus that they would have framed their postwar expectations in the context of the understanding that they went to war to ameliorate the oppressive conditions under which black Southerners lived. (See appendix B for an example of the public discourse on this issue.) Alternatively, a radical egalitarian account predicts that veterans would have tied their postwar expectations to their belief (or hope) that America would act in accordance with its founding values. Military service during wartime, to be sure, is *part* of the radical egalitarian account of racial reform. But it remains only part of the recipe for radical egalitarians. For those who use the language of republicanism, military service was the *centerpiece* of postwar reform. To assess which was in fact the case, I asked the veterans I interviewed about

their postwar expectations, after which I asked them to explain why they harbored such expectations.

Notwithstanding minor differences in the way in which they expressed themselves, the veterans framed responses to my questions in similar ways. To the extent that each thought his military service would help spur change, moreover, their responses are consistent with my understanding of black republicanism. Pete's conception of the relationship between participation in war and racial progress is a fine illustration. He is quick to equate military service with first-class citizenship. In his estimation, African Americans "had this expectation . . . if you were good enough, and your skin was dark and you were good enough to go to the military, I mean you should be treated, you know, as a first-class citizen when you got back here." For him, "things should [have] be[en] changed on that basis." That is, the postwar condition of black Southerners should have improved based upon their fitness to serve as first-class citizens. Pete's is a roundly republican view of citizenship, in which service to the state and equality march in lockstep.

Other veterans with whom I spoke shared Pete's view, including Mr. Carter, a veteran of World War II and the Korean War. Carter served from 1940 through 1965, retiring from the army as a lieutenant colonel. Raised by his physician father in rural North Carolina, Carter settled in New Orleans after retiring from the army. Referring to what he thought would be the result of the wars in which he fought, Carter asserts, "I expected them [black citizens] to obtain better treatment in many respects than they had and to be respected much more than they had been." This expectation rested upon a republican understanding of citizenship. "If you didn't hesitate to serve your country," he observes, "your country had no right to hesitate to serve you or give you what you were due." Carter continues, emphasizing reciprocity: "For me, it's always been a matter of I've tried to do that which is right or which I'm supposed to do. But if I'm going to do that, then I expect you to do the same damn thing." He also subscribed to the belief that, as citizen-soldiers, black veterans were entitled to just treatment; they had earned it. Elaborating on this point, he flatly asserts, "We have to look at it from the point of view that we are serving as citizens, and as citizens, you expect to be treated accordingly. Don't give me a damn thing. If I don't deserve it, don't give it to me. But if I deserve it, don't take it away from me."

On the subject of war and the desire for change, the colonel indicates that his own desire for better treatment was always present. However, as groups go, he recalls distinct differences between veterans and nonveterans. Black nonveterans, in his estimation, simply failed to insist upon full equality; but veterans, having gone to war, became more resolute in their

demands for change, Carter says, "because people felt as though 'I went to war for my country; now it's time for my country to do for me.'" Carter's expectations, as I read them, were tied more to the relationship between the individual and the state than to that between the individual and American society writ large.

Carter and Pete are joined in their view that military sacrifice should be rewarded with postwar rights and privileges commensurate with full citizenship by another Korean War veteran. Dr. Carey, mustering out of the army in March of 1953 after serving with the Fifteenth Regiment of the 3rd Infantry Division, returned to the Jim Crow South. Like the other veterans, Carey voiced his disappointment at the stubbornness of Jim Crow. With palpable anger, he says that, "I expected the barriers of segregation to come tumbling down. When I came back, they were not down. And I had some problems because of it."

Carey's displeasure with Jim Crow differed from that of the other veterans, however, in at least one way: he was prepared to take by force the respect he felt he had earned by fighting for the country. He was ready to do harm to whites who denied him the dignity to which he perceived himself entitled. "It was just by the grace of God that I didn't kill somebody and end up in the penitentiary, because I made an attempt a couple of times," he recalls. Elaborating on the source of his anger, he cites a now familiar formula—military service merits a measure of respect: "I sort of felt like that if a young person puts his life on the line for his country, there ought to be some kind of respect for that, and some allowances made for it." Although Carey was the first veteran I spoke to who openly mentioned killing whites who did not recognize the sacrifice he had made, his rage was driven by the same thing mentioned by other veterans: America's refusal to recognize their sacrifices.

Another group of veterans referred to tangible instances of discrimination to make the connection between their military service and postwar expectations more concrete. In this regard, Stewart's experience after the Korean War is illustrative. Upon returning to Texas in 1953, he was disappointed at the conditions under which African Americans lived in the South. "I was hoping it [change] would've occurred," he recalls. "I was disappointed that it really hadn't to an extent, and of course that little remark I heard about niggers at the bus station sure didn't help me none, you know? That let me know that at least down there, they hadn't changed." Stewart illustrates his point: "For instance, they still had the sign 'colored' up; I guess that was probably one of my biggest disappointments, especially at the bus stations and at the train stations."

Black veterans' postwar expectations need not have been great to result in anger when they were not met. Some of the veterans with whom I spoke were pragmatic, even pessimistic, about change. They had no faith

that war or military service would change the ways in which whites viewed them. Mr. Fuller's feeling about race, war, and change illustrates this line of thought. Born and raised in Camden, Alabama, to parents who both had a sixth grade education, he was drafted in 1951, served in the army air corps during the Korean War, and eventually earned a master's degree. Because of his experiences with white domination, he had no expectation when he returned from overseas that war would change anything. With a hint of resignation, he recalls, "I did not expect [social conditions] to be different. I knew I was going back to where I was going before, and I knew that the laws of the land had not changed. I knew I was going back to . . . the same house I was living in, right? . . . so I didn't expect a difference." Nevertheless, Fuller felt entitled to better treatment than he received. He recalls "a couple incidents" that "irritated" him when he returned: "One was having to go before a voter registration poll, or whatever, to take a test in order to get the right to vote. . . . A guy asked me three or four questions to determine whether or not I would be given the right to vote. I remember that very distinctly, and I felt really angry about that particular thing, especially after having served in the military." Fuller was angered by the indignity of sitting in the room with someone who was "Caucasian" who had the power to determine whether or not he would be able to vote. In a rather dejected tone, Fuller asked, "He didn't have to ask me questions, right?"

Another incident occurred during a trip to the Department of Motor Vehicles to apply for a driver's license. "I remember this so well," Fuller says. "I think it was around one o' clock or something like that, and the policy at that point in time was they took Caucasians before they took adjunct [i.e., black] Americans." He waited patiently until approximately three fifteen. At that moment, he recalls, "several Caucasian high school students came in to take their tests, after which someone came over and told me that they wouldn't be able to take me that day." Such incidents "stick out in your mind," he says. To have endured these racial slights "after serving in the military" made them particularly difficult to bear: "So then you get a flashback to having been in the military, and then you have to live with that [discrimination]!" While he did not expect much improvement in race relations upon his return, Fuller nonetheless viewed his military service in terms commensurate with republicanism. In his estimation, military service entitled him to the right to vote and to obtain a driver's license without a hassle. He concluded from these experiences, "I thought at that point, after serving in the military, I was more of an American than, apparently, the system thought I was."

Some of the veterans who believed that their demonstration of national loyalty through military service entitled them to better treatment upon their return to America were sorely disappointed; others were downright angry. Shaw felt rather differently. Unlike his contemporaries, who observed no progress in the wake of war, Shaw declares that "things had changed" when he returned home. He explains, "African Americans were being assimilated into more respectful positions rather than just shining shoes or being hose boys or carrying out typical old-school slavery kinds of behavior. They were being integrated into vocational skills and things of that type."

Change, however, was not confined to how whites viewed blacks and their contribution to war. In Shaw's estimation, black Southerners began to exercise more agency, becoming more assertive in the wake of both wars. According to Shaw, something changed within the black community in the South: "They realized that they could change things—the black man should not and would not accept what we had accepted before the war." Black Southerners became more "conscious," he says, in the 1940s and early '50s. Shaw suggests that progress was gradual and difficult: "I think it got continuously better . . . but having to push it . . . it didn't happen naturally. I think every progress we've made, we had to pay a fee for it. You know what I'm talking about; nothing is just a given."

In this regard, Shaw's sentiments are similar to Carter's: both men saw the need for black Southerners to actively seek change. Also like Carter, Shaw believes the return of veterans to the South had a catalytic effect. He recalls that "when . . . veterans demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt that we had the same respect for the flag, and ability, you know, they decided, 'Well, these folk are no different than anyone else.' " At this point, he suggests, whites began to treat blacks with a little more humanity—especially black men who were known to have served in the military.

With the notable exception of Shaw, then, the veterans I interviewed were less than satisfied with the speed of change. Even Shaw, however, mentioned that change did not come without activism. They anticipated that the country would recognize these sacrifices and reward them. When this did not happen, the veterans were disappointed. Some placed part of the blame on black Southerners for not demanding change. Others were more angry than disappointed. While the veterans' reactions to the postwar status of black Southerners differed, they shared the same source: a moral claim to equality based upon their service. In other words, they felt entitled to more equal treatment. In this sense, the sentiments of the veterans are in keeping with the republican narrative. Their disappointment and experiences of ongoing domination, though, transformed these sentiments into black republicanism.

A Source of Republican Criticism: Military Service and Entitlement

Strictly speaking, being entitled to something means having a right to it because of one's acts or qualities. The republican social contract, which is emphasized during and shortly after war (Krebs 2006), is the contract that black veterans used to determine their entitlements. Every society rests on a set of ideological norms that serve as a benchmark against which entitlement is assessed (Deutsch 1985). In American society, in which merit-based individualism is indigenous to national politicocultural beliefs, one's entitlements are proportionate to one's investment in society (Deutsch 1985; Hochschild 1981; Sampson 1975). Thus, it is easy to see why entitlement is invested with moral force (Major 1994), and why it is therefore affectively experienced and motivationally important. For justice to obtain, the actor's outcomes must be commensurate with the act (Lerner 1975).

Veterans, as we have seen, believe that military service reflects good citizenship and conclude that they are full members of the political community because of their service.[5] If veterans subscribe to a black republican worldview, we ought to expect their critiques of the postwar South to be motivated by their sense of entitlement borne of their military service. A radical egalitarian critique, by contrast, should be tethered to the feeling that America was failing to live up to its founding values absent references to military service.[6]

In some cases, the veterans I spoke to drew on history to illustrate their anger and to generate criticism. Mr. Williams, for instance, suggests that America has never paid its debt in full to its black veterans. He laments that "this country refused to know that black units such as the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry . . . was taking care of the police force of the Western Frontier and what troops have done throughout the history of this United States . . . that blacks have [been] charged [with] the hardest fighting position out there and never got the recognition for it." For Williams, the failure of America, and particularly the American South, to recognize the contributions of black soldiers during war is a symptom of a larger

[5] Of course, this view may seem a bit self-serving—perhaps a means of elevating their contributions to society. But it is not only veterans who feel this way; members of the wider political community also see military service as indicative of good citizenship (Conover et al. 1991).

[6] Criticism enjoys a long and venerable tradition in black political thought. But what separates criticism generated by black republicanism from, say, the Jeremiadic tradition, identified by Howard-Pitney (2005), is that the fact that black republican criticism is based upon the need for America to realize its values based upon black military service. Criticism in the Jeremiadic tradition, by contrast, is rooted in religion.

trend. Black Southerners, he believes, will never receive their just due because of the inability of whites to see them as equals. "What is wrong with this country," he protests, "is that they cannot recognize what the black man do for this country, period. Job-wise, teaching-wise, military-wise, because they still look at him like he's still a slave."

Lack of recognition was a recurring theme in my conversations with veterans. Mr. Baines also feels as though black soldiers deserved more recognition than they received after the war. His view, however, is based upon his personal experiences rather than on American history. "Well," he says, "when I came back in 1953, after I'd been there [in Korea] for three years, I was thinking that things would have been better after I'd fought that war." He thought that when he and other black soldiers returned that their service would be appreciated by all. He recalls, "I felt like while I was looking at some movies before I went in the army, I used to see the whites coming in here with the stripes [on uniforms] and with the bands playing, the awards they were given. They just gave them more recognition. And I thought that maybe we should get the same thing. We were a part of the war; we'd given our best. We lost a lot of people, and we didn't get the recognition that we should have gotten."

Beyond his disappointment with the reception he and other black servicemen received on their return to the South from Korea, Baines was concerned that his efforts in Korea failed to benefit the black community at large. His dismay is apparent upon recalling his return to the postwar South, and the disparity he observed. "It gave me a bitter taste in my mouth because here I am, way overseas fighting, and my people, African American and black, they are not even free, they can't even vote." Indeed, Baines becomes visibly agitated when he considers the educational and economic disparities black Southerners faced in the aftermath of the Korean War, especially given the sacrifices made by black veterans, himself included. He remembers, "They still had all the segregated schools, and we had poor, menial paying jobs . . . so it kind of makes you a little angry when you're over there dodging those bullets and things just trying to keep your life, and you think about what you're going back to, you know?" Some soldiers were more than discouraged with the news from home—they were devastated, so much so that Baines notes, "A lot of those guys stayed over there, overseas, they wouldn't come back."

Baines's criticism focuses upon the immediate aftermath of the Korean War, a time during which he and other veterans were in a state of disbelief at the relentless oppression to which black Southerners were subjected. His criticism was motivated by the juxtaposition between the notions of equality for which he fought and the conditions to which he returned. Likewise, Mr. Womack's criticism is anchored to his normative expectations about America, but his angst is tethered to more recent

events; these drive his pessimism concerning equality. "Equality means I don't have a flag. This [the American flag] ain't my flag." "It ain't yours either," he says, nodding in my direction. He continues, "If you go somewhere to this day, you'd be better treated in a foreign country than you would be here. I'm not a racist, and I'm not upset. This is the best country that I could say I had the opportunity of thirty-four years in the military that I have been in. But I'm in Texas right now. This is one of the [most] racist states there is." As proof, he cites the murder of James Byrd, observing, "If a man gets drug behind an automobile, a truck, and people say it's not racist, there's something wrong."

Eventually Womack focuses upon his personal torment. He is angry that whites fail to see him as a civic equal. He is even more troubled, though, when he contemplates how his military service failed to afford him better treatment:

> I've been to almost every country in the world, so I have to say if I had to pick a place to live, this is the place to live. And I'm still living as a second-class citizen, because there are places I can't go. I was a citizen in the United States Army in uniform, [and] we got put off the bus in St. Petersburg, Virginia, and I had already been in combat. So you're telling me what it takes to be equal? I got on a uniform! I fought for my country! Yet I can't sit on the bus? That's some bullshit!"

Mr. McWilliams sees things slightly differently. Unlike Womack, whose criticism was laced with international comparisons and passion, McWilliams is initially more measured, due in part, I believe, to his modest expectations for postwar change: "I couldn't say that I was fighting for freedom, because at the same time I was in Korea, they was lynching blacks, killing blacks . . . blacks was having a helluva time here in the United States. So it was not for freedom, because we were not free over here." On further reflection, he recalls, "Segregation was very . . . Jim Crow was very embedded in the United States. It wasn't freedom. You know, once you came from Korea, it was 'Black go this way, white go that way'—as soon as you got back to the United States."

In McWilliams's mind, black people in America were having a rough time of it even as black men were fighting and dying overseas. When he and other black servicemen returned, they returned to the status quo; nothing had changed. Eventually, however, this arrangement proved insufficient. "Soldiers," he recalls, "expected to go back and be treated fairly, be able to equally apply for jobs, or the same thing, that they'd be able to travel or go places or buy a home where they wanted to." His military service—especially his experience serving in integrated units in Korea—had a lot to do with his insistence that he be treated equally:

"You seen what was happening on the other side of the fence, how green those other people's pastures or backyards were, and you wanted yours to be green, too. In essence, you wanted to be treated the same as your neighbor who was white. You cut his grass, cut mine, too. You know, pick up his garbage, pick mine up, too." Why did he insist on this? "Sacrifice," he maintains, "has quite a bit to do with the equation. Quite a bit. You figure that, shit, I done this here for you, at least you could pick up my garbage—just using these terms like that—pick up my garbage same as you pick up theirs."

Mr. Williams's story is similar. A veteran of the Korean War, he was born in Louisiana but raised in Houston, Texas. His mother had a fourth-grade education; he never knew his father. Williams served for ten years, mostly with the 101st Airborne division as a Ranger. He recalls very clearly an encounter that occurred in 1957 upon his return home. In fact, according to him, it was "the worst thing that ever hurt me in my life." Williams was ordered to report to Fort Chaffey, Arkansas, for a short time, after which he would be honorably discharged. He and a white buddy with whom he had served departed Arkansas, taking a flight to Dallas. Williams had been gone so long from the South that he had become unfamiliar with its ways. He recalls "forgetting about the signs that said 'Colored go in here, white go there.'" Williams and his buddy had to make a pit stop. Thinking nothing of it, he remembers "walk[ing] into the white restroom with a uniform on and ribbons on my chest." "A white man walked in with short sleeves and necktie and a white shirt," he recalls with increasing anger. After the white man relieved himself, Williams reports, "he turned and zipped up his pants . . . and he looked at me, and he said, 'Huh! Because a nigger gets his uniform on and a couple of ribbons on his chest, he still think he could do what a white man can do.'"

After a short pause he continued, saying that "it took me five years to get over what that man done said to me." Stunned, his initial reaction was to want to "hurt that man." After all, "he going to call me a nigger while [during the war] he had heat while I was freezing [in Korea]?" Williams, however, realizes the larger commitment he and other veterans made to democracy: "As much as I got shot up for him. . . . But I realized that he had the right to call me anything or say anything he wanted to say to me, because when I fought for this country, I fought for the right of freedom and free speech." Putting it all into perspective, Williams discusses why he was able to put such personal insults behind him: "So, from that day to this day, nothing bothered me, because whatever happened in this country, whether I disliked it or not, I fought for the right for people to do as they please."

Mr. Stewart's view is very similar. A native of Beaumont, Texas, Stewart grew up in a single-parent home where his mother, a cook, raised four children. After separating from the service, Stewart went on to earn a general equivalency diploma and eventually became a chef, retiring after thirty years in that occupation. Stewart recalls that he "was expecting big change" after the war. "When I went over and served the country and a lot of blacks died, and it looked like things should've got loose, been more prestigious for us back home," he muses. "But things didn't really change until I'm gonna say after 1966 or '65, because I got out in '62, you see, and they hadn't changed by then."

Stewart believed that his service and the sacrifices of other black veterans should have resulted in better postwar treatment for black Southerners. He was particularly alarmed by the manner in which whites continued to observe racial conventions after the war. He became frustrated upon his return to the South "because they were still calling you those words and you still had to go to the back door." Stewart explained, "You were looking for all that to be changed after you'd been over there and come back." He compared the plight of African Americans to immigrants: "People come from a foreign country and get a better break. They do," he stresses in continuing disbelief.

Other veterans tied their expectations of better treatment more directly to sacrifices they made on the battlefield. Mr. Baines, a Korean War veteran, locates his frustration with the postwar treatment of black Southerners in what he perceives as breach of the compact made between the nation-state and the individual: "I put my life on the line; I'm talking about when you're over there in that foxhole and you see your buddies and everybody get shot and [there is] blood everywhere and you realize that man, these peoples [the enemy] here are real. I mean I may not make it back, and in hindsight, I didn't think I was going to make it many a day." After surviving one battle after another, Baines says that he thought, "When I get back to America, things ought to be better for us." When he returned and found the South "still the same," his reaction was, "Man, that hurts."

One interpretation of the veterans' perception that whites failed to acknowledge their contributions to the nation's security is that black veterans simply desired recognition, but a second and probably more likely interpretation is that they hoped that recognition would set the stage for racial reform. This better explains the anger the veterans expressed in their criticism of the postwar South. These criticisms were based on the veterans' perception of injustice—the unjust ignoring of their wartime sacrifice and suffering, as well as the injustice of the dismal social conditions to which they returned.

From Criticism to Activism

Naturally, the depth and conviction of the criticism leveled by black veterans against America begs the question whether they moved beyond voicing their grievances to act. We already know that famous veterans such as Medgar Evers and Hosea Williams contested domination. We know less, though, about the willingness of so-called ordinary veterans to challenge racial conventions. As it turns out, the veterans I interviewed were eager to challenge white authority. The interviews reveal two modes of resistance: one personal, the other collective. To the extent that entitlement provides an impetus for action (Major 1994; Shaver et al. 1987), I argue that black veterans drew on republican rhetoric as motivation for resistance against internal domination. Thus, their resistance was tied to their military service. To investigate these claims, I asked veterans how, if at all, military service changed them and whether or not they acted on this perceived change.

Although interracial contact was limited, taking place mainly during garrison duty and in transit during the Second World War, it was sometimes an occasion on which black servicemen realized the illegitimacy of Jim Crow policies. This situation triggered Mr. Shaw's racial awareness. In 1945, he was in transit to the Philippines on a ship in which he "was in the very hole of that ship, you know, about four [people] deep," he says referring to the crowded conditions aboard ship. Upon earning the rank of E-5 in the Philippines, he was allowed to roam the top deck of the ship in transit back to America. There, he says, "we [black and white noncommissioned officers] were also intermixed as opposed to all being separate." Once he reached the United States and had to travel from California to Colorado, the black and white officers were again segregated. At that time, he says, he "became aware of the difference" he had experienced while overseas. Shaw says: "It was . . . an indescribable thing. . . . I was not happy to continue anymore with the status quo."

Apparently, facing racism overseas and in transit was difficult, if barely tolerable, but Shaw's experience on a bus in Dallas cemented, for him, the militant disposition that he carries to this day. "When I came back to Dallas where I was spending quite a bit of time," he says, "I got on the front of the bus with my three stripes on my flight jacket, and I was indirectly told to get off of the bus." Elaborating on this, he recalls that "some maids got on the same bus going across town to work and he [the driver] directed his comments to them, but he implied it to me, you know, 'You have to sit in the back.'" The bus driver told the maids to "get in the back of the bus, and they did." Shaw refused to comply with the driver. He concludes, "I don't think I've been on a bus since. I knew

that I had changed [during his service] . . . and I'm sure I was not alone." Shaw searches to summarize what he took away from experiencing discrimination in post–World War II America: "We just kept looking for an opportunity that would not associate with being discriminated against." Enduring discrimination in the postwar South, in other words, ceased to be an option for Shaw and many other black veterans.

A bus also served as a locus of confrontation for Mr. Thornton. After the war, he split his time between Texas and Louisiana. Though Thornton says that whites chose not to openly challenge black GIs in uniform who rode the bus, he remembers that they were uncomfortable with the manner in which black soldiers ignored Southern convention. "It wasn't hostility," he says, "but, 'Should we ask him to move?' is what was on their minds." He remembers one incident while traveling in Louisiana. He sensed the displeasure of the bus driver when he decided to ignore social custom and remained seated in the "white" section of the bus, something the white driver failed to appreciate. "I guess I was about the third seat back, and I was sitting next to the window, and I didn't get off, and some people got on. This white boy got on and sat next to me and he spoke. . . . I could see the bus driver looking at us through the mirror. The bus driver looked like he wanted to come and ask me to move. That's the impression I got, but I had something for him, and I was not going to move!"

Thornton indicated that prior to spending time in the military he would have simply moved or not sat in the restricted section in the first place. Like Shaw, however, something about him had changed: "I guess the fact that I had gone and served, I felt that I was entitled to sit where I wanted to. I felt that I had the right to do it, and this is one of the things that we went to the military for." He was inspired in part by the man who was his drill sergeant during basic training, a black Alabamian who, as he recalls, "was mean as hell." The sergeant instilled within his charges the feeling that their service counted for something. Thornton then repeats what his drill instructor told them: "The sergeant used to tell us all the time, 'Remember that you will really have changed your country to make it better for those that are at home. So when you get out, you go home and you help make it better, 'cause it's not going to get better unless you help to make it better.' "

Shaw's and Thornton's recollections describe militancy at the individual level; in the absence of group-based support, they resisted white supremacy. There were others, however, who participated in more collective efforts, including Dr. Bashful. When he returned to Louisiana in 1946, Bashful says, he "expected at least . . . there would be change . . . [and] the veterans and other people would be given the rights of citizenship. Voting and maybe jobs would be given to people who qualified. I

expected better to take place. . . . In other words, I expected people to be treated properly and fairly." Because Bashful "was not satisfied with what happened in the South," he went to graduate school in order to "get equal rights" for himself and others. A math major as an undergraduate, Bashful switched to political science because he wanted to both learn about and teach a subject that would help him better understand the political reasons for the continued oppression of black Southerners. Military service increased his desire for equal rights, as he says, "beyond doubt." Bashful remembers being "dead set on getting the rights that I should have, by whatever means within the law." While he disapproved of the idea of using firearms for anything but self-defense, he was so frustrated with the condition of black Southerners that he "sometimes felt like putting [his] shotgun on the corner and blowing down people."

As a graduate student at the University of Illinois, Bashful encountered some of the same social practices that caused him to leave the South for a short time. He involved himself in the campus movement to resist segregation: "When I came back in 1948, I went to Champaign, Illinois. That's almost the South; it has many ways of the South." The restaurants across the street from the university, for instance, refused to serve African Americans. In response, Bashful remembers, he and other black students "drew a picket line around one of 'em" in 1946." After the students protested for a few days, he reports, the local owners of segregated restaurants and movie theaters "all capitulated." Bashful was the leader of the protest, involving other students and members of the track team. His experience at leadership in the military as an officer and his determination to achieve equality convinced him to take the initiative. "I'll put it this way," Bashful said. "Somebody had to do it, and I just said, 'I'm going to have to.' "

Carey, a veteran of the Korean War, had a similar reaction upon returning to the South on medical leave. He had sustained an injury to his leg during combat after he was shot four times. Carey often frequented a service station not far from his home, where he fueled his car and spoke with the relatively young manager. Though the fellow was white, he and Carey had something in common: both had served in Korea. Carey recalls hobbling up to the water fountain and taking a sip from it. "That was a no-no," he sighs, "but I drank anyway." One day when he did this, an old white man was present who had just concluded filling up his truck and was preparing to leave. He said something to Carey, but Carey did not hear what it was because they were too far away from each other. So Carey hobbled over to him and asked him to repeat what he said. At that point, Carey recalls, "he called me a nig—the magic name—and said I shouldn't be drinking from the white folks' fountain." The white man

then began to drive away. "I was on crutches," Carey remembers, "and I tried to get him as he pulled away from me. My full intention was to kill him." After mulling the confrontation over, Carey concluded, "The Good Lord was looking out for me, because I was angry enough several times to just kill somebody."

The military had a significant impact on his bearing after the war. "Having been exposed to other . . . cultures, having had the military training," Carey explains, "I would not have had that reaction had I not left home to go into the military. I probably would have submitted to the culture. . . . I probably would not have drunk from the fountain." He explained how his military service allowed him to resist Southern racial expectations: "The culture was [that] blacks were secondhand citizens. But having been in the military, I wasn't taking any of that. In the military," he says with pride, "you're trained to fight, and you're trained to die if you have to. That's the best I can explain it."

Carey's feelings about equality and respect motivated him to become a movement activist. Like Bashful, he, too, attended graduate school, enrolling at Florida A&M University. He was an active participant in the civil rights movement on and around campus. At the time, he saw participation in movement-based protest as a "duty to [himself] and to [his] race." Carey made it clear that, in his opinion, "Every person has a duty to make the situation better for his race." Apparently, the atmosphere around the university was conducive to protest activity, and as the sit-ins got underway in the late 1950s, Florida A&M served as one of the training centers for potential protesters. Carey remembers the training in nonviolent protest: "They sit you in a stool and then they come a-yelling at you, yelling in your face and spit on you." Carey had a difficult time adjusting to such treatment: "So when the guy spit on me, I drew back [to hit him]. They said, 'No, you won't. We can't use you for this.' So they put me on the strategy team." While a graduate student, Carey helped to organize the NAACP at Florida A&M and drove his car in the motor pool during the Tallahassee bus boycott in 1956. He channeled his frustration with the postwar social order into positive political action.

Finally, Thornton's activism was not confined to the episode on the bus. Apparently he accepted the challenge issued by above-mentioned drill instructor, because he also participated in some of the collective action associated with the movement. He did so because, he says, "Number one, I believe in it." Beset with familial and financial responsibilities, however, his participation was limited. As he tells it, "I felt it was the right thing to do, and yet I was cautious in that I didn't have the finances. I wanted to go to Selma . . . and join Dr. King's march, but I also had a family. I had small kids and my priority was with my family." However,

when blacks undertook protest in Houston, where he lived, he joined in. So often were he and other protesters harassed that his wife got into the habit of asking whether or not he had been beaten that day. One such protest, during which they boycotted a Kress department store downtown for not allowing blacks to eat at the lunch counter, forced the store to change its policy. The next week, his son was able to have a hotdog at an integrated counter. Beyond his belief in the cause, Thornton was able to act on his convictions because of his military experience, reasoning that, "I didn't have any fear because I felt like I had already been through hell in Korea. It doesn't get any worse."

If this small sample of veterans is representative of larger patterns, then we can conclude that military service was a catalyst for change among black Americans in the 1940s and '50s. In addition to providing the normative impetus for change, it is clear that something about these veterans' military service braced them to challenge the racial order. From refusing to move to the back of the bus, to organizing insurgent activities, roughly two-thirds of the veterans I interviewed reported resisting white supremacy. What's more, all of the veterans interviewed who participated in activism of any kind cited their military service as a motivation for interrogating the status quo, a finding consistent with black republicanism. What they had seen overseas, the values for which they fought, and the confidence they gathered through arms bearing made it difficult for them to accede to white supremacy as they once had. Indeed, the conditions of life in the segregated South at times posed a challenge to their manhood. But the military had trained them to not to run from a fight.

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The interviews I conducted illustrate veterans' critical commitment to America and their subscription to black republicanism. Using the language of republicanism, these black veterans identified with the nation and at least one of its political institutions, citizenship. Race, however, repeatedly came up in our discussions, making it clear that experiences with domination affected the veterans' thinking. Time and again these men drew on republican rhetoric, modified to fit their experience with white domination, and used it to frame their claims upon America for social justice. The normative meaning of military service guided their postwar expectations. By virtue of their sacrifice they believed that social conditions should have improved for the black community on their return. Criticism also highlighted their military service; the veterans expressed disappointment in the lack of appreciation for their sacrifices. Military experience served a practical purpose in these veterans' responses

to the postwar situation, however; it prepared and motivated them to actively challenge domination. Furthermore, these sentiments may not be reduced to whether or not one volunteered or was drafted. Of the seventeen interviewees tapped for this book, eight had been drafted; the balance, for various reasons, had volunteered to serve. Generally, conscripts and volunteers differ in their views on the military and the meaning of military service with the latter taking a relatively dim view of both (Moskos 1970). Almost without exception, this was not the case among my respondents.

Veterans' attitudes about national identification shed new light upon how black Americans view their attachments. Consider identification with the nation. Relatively speaking, blacks are less likely than whites to identify with America (Citrin et al. 2001; Sidanius et al. 1997). But the veterans I interviewed insist upon identifying with the nation, even if their identification is somewhat critical. We may speculate that their attachment reflects a generational difference—that older blacks may feel more attached to the nation because they have grown more conservative with age. But we must also consider that these men were born and reared in the Jim Crow South. Why should they feel attached to a nation in which they were second-class citizens? The black veterans I interviewed identify with the nation because being American, for them, means being a first-class citizen of the nation—it is a right that they have earned. Their insistence upon identifying as American also appears to be tied to a sense of recognition, of membership in the wider political community.

Likewise, perceptions of the institution of citizenship are structured by race. For the most part, the men I interviewed recognized and appreciated the import of American citizenship. But none of this appreciation came without criticism. With few exceptions, each veteran qualified the importance of American citizenship, lamenting that America has far to go before it fulfills the promise of democracy. Several of the veterans felt that racism had affected their ability to take advantage of the rights and privileges associated with citizenship. Their critical attitudes toward citizenship were stimulated, at least in part, by the disappointment of their postwar expectations of a more racially equitable South.

Black republicanism appears to have structured the opinions and actions of these veterans once they returned to the South. Judging by the tone of their comments, military service symbolized their commitment to the common good, for which they expected to be rewarded. In the classical republican account, rewards are not necessary: citizens are willing to go to war to *preserve* freedom, among other things. Black Southerners, by contrast, agreed to fight because they expected to *gain* freedom—hence, *black* republicanism. Criticism, also central to classical republican thought, was similarly "raced" to the extent that it was fueled by references to military service. The veterans I interviewed criticized the state

and society for failing to at least recognize their contributions to the war effort.

Traces of black republicanism were perhaps most visible when the veterans discussed various forms of activism, for it was in these situations that they drew upon both the normative meaning of their military service and what it symbolized as an experience. In general, they justified their activism by referring to the purpose for which they served: the *achievement* of equality. And if Carey is any indication, veterans drew on the military experience to sustain their efforts to do battle with Jim Crow. Trained to be fearless and in many cases accustomed to confronting racism overseas, these veterans saw no obstacle to confronting racism at home.

This chapter and the preceding chapter, then, have provided support for my theory of black republicanism. To a greater or lesser extent, black veterans feel an attachment to America, and they use their military service as a basis for criticism and activism. Still, a skeptic may pose at least three issues with which I must contend. First, I make much of the claim that military experience affected how black veterans viewed the South to which they returned, and ultimately guided the resistance of those who chose to do so. Since a principal purpose of the conversations we had was designed to assess the import of military service on their postwar views, it's natural that they'd emphasize how it affected their perception of the postwar South. Yet, as we have seen, the extent to which the military affected postwar attitudes and behavior isn't without some variation. For some, in other words, the military had no impact; for one or two, it may have even made things worse.

Second, one may credibly argue that it's not altogether clear for whom the veterans fought on their return. In other words, did the veterans who sought to resist Jim Crow on returning to the South do so on behalf of their fellow Southerners, the black community? Or, did their resistance amount to correcting a perceived *personal* wrong, slights and injustices that, in view of their sacrifice to the country, they felt they didn't deserve? For many of these veterans it's clear that they were upset their sacrifices failed to earn for the race the equality for which they were willing to pay the ultimate price. It's also true that some veterans used the first person to describe particular instance of discrimination or racism. On this basis, one might question whether or not activism was undertaken to correct a personal indignity in light of one's service, or whether resistance was undertaken on behalf of the community. I think it's both; they're not mutually exclusive.

It's certainly the case that some veterans drew on instances of personal discrimination and individual instances of resistance during the interviews. But this doesn't mean that the community wasn't also important

to them. To me, as the person who conducted the interviews, it's clear that they used first-person narrative for merely illustrative purposes, an example of how they had *personally* experienced discrimination and racism. These experiences often triggered subsequent resistance and activism for themselves *and* for the community. But even if we take the extreme as truth, where some veterans may have resisted for purely personal reasons, I believe black republicanism remains largely intact, for regardless of whether or not veterans resisted on behalf of the community, or they did so because they felt personally offended, in the end it was their perception of the relationship between military service and citizenship that ultimately served as a motive to resist white supremacy. At least this much is clear from the interviews. What's most important, and what the following chapters will illustrate, is that, more often than not, veterans contested Jim Crow.

A final charge to which I must respond rests upon my ability to apply these findings to veterans as a group. In short, I have so far produced relatively few observations on which to base my findings, which hinders generalizing about black republicanism among veterans in the mass public. It is possible that the veterans with whom I came into contact were exceptional in some regard. Furthermore, it is not clear whether the use of republican rhetoric among black veterans enjoys any explanatory power. That is, when other sources of activism in the black community are taken into account, such as black civic organizations, black republicanism may turn out to be a red herring. Such a finding would strengthen the assertion that military service, on its own terms, fails to activate insurgency. Drawing on survey data, the next two chapters are dedicated to confirming and generalizing the explanatory power of black republicanism.

CHAPTER 5

Exploring the Attitudinal Consequences of African American Military Experience

Black Southerners entered the turbulent 1960s with tremendous momentum. Only a few years removed from the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* decision, their hopes were further buoyed by the passage of the first civil rights legislation in over eighty years. The Civil Rights Acts of 1957 and 1960 sought to ease blacks' access to the polls in the South. While neither these acts nor the *Brown* decision had the immediate impact they were intended to have (Rosenberg 1991), one should not underestimate their symbolic value to black Southerners. Taken together, the *Brown* victory and the legislative enactments contributed to the perceived expansion of political opportunities (McAdam 1999).

Even so, many black Southerners failed to completely embrace change. In 1964, for instance, almost two-thirds of African Americans surveyed in Atlanta agreed with the proposition that blacks should first demonstrate their fitness for equal rights before they received them (Marx 1967). Black Southerners, moreover, were twice as likely as non-Southern blacks to believe that social change was happening too fast; and to the extent that they wished for change, they frowned on protest as a means of achieving it. Moreover, 58 percent of black Southerners versus 32 percent of blacks residing in cities beyond the South believed the "Negroes should spend more time praying and less time demonstrating." Black Southerners, in short, were more conservative and patient than blacks elsewhere in the country (Marx 1967, 44).[1] To be sure, the core of the civil rights movement was firmly established, with cadres of activists within churches, among university students, and in civil rights organizations (McAdam 1999; Morris 1984). Nevertheless, as late as 1964,

[1] According to Marx, a "conservative seems happy in his place or, rather, the place relegated to him by racism; he is not opposed to discrimination . . . is content with the speed of social change, feels that negroes must show they deserve rights before they are given them, desires fewer civil rights demonstrations and would not participate in such demonstrations, and thinks negroes should spend more time praying and less time demonstrating" (1967, 44). His survey included 1,119 interviews, 492 of which were samples in cities beyond the South. The balance of the cases were collected from Chicago, New York City, Birmingham, and Atlanta. For more details, see Marx (1967).