Chapter 4 War of Aggression

In their own "Declaration of Independence," delegates to the Mississippi secession convention on January 9, 1861, voted to pull out of the union, giving slavery as the chief reason…

> Our position is thoroughly identified with the institution of slavery – the greatest material interest of the world. Its labor supplies the product that constitutes by far the largest and most important portions of the commerce of the earth.
> These products are peculiar to the climate, verging on the tropical regions, and by an imperious law of nature, none but the black race can bear exposure to the tropical sun. These products have become necessities of the world, and a blow at slavery is a blow at commerce and civilization. That blow has been long aimed at the institution, and was at the point of reaching its consummation. There was no choice left us but submission to the mandates of abolition, or dissolution of the Union, whose principles had been subverted to work out our ruin…. That we do not overstate the dangers to our institution a reference to a few unquestionable facts will sufficiently prove … it [the North] advocates negro equality, socially and politically, and promotes insurrection and incendiarism in our midst … it has enlisted its press, its pulpit and its school against us, until the whole popular mind of the North is excited and inflamed with prejudice.[i]

Following Lincoln's election, Mississippi was the second Southern state to secede on an 84-15 vote. In Montgomery, Alabama on February 4, the six seceding states formed a provisional government of the Confederate States of American and five days later elected Jefferson Davis of Mississippi as its president.[ii]

John Anthony Quitman, a Delta planter and Representative in the 34th and 35th Congresses, has been called the "father of secession in Mississippi" for his early role as "an advocate of secession in 1832 at the state constitutional convention, in 1850 as governor, and finally as a congressman in the late 1850s." Quitman served in Congress from 1855 until his death in 1858 on his plantation, Monmouth, near

Natchez, "presumably from poison secretly placed in food served at a banquet in Washington, D. C."[iii]

The "Real Reason" Why the Civil War Began

Mary Winstead, a Minnesotan with Mississippi roots, experienced her own lifelong North versus South struggle she writes in *Back to Mississippi*. It was in a high school history debate over why the Civil War got started when her team "the Northerners" took "states rights" while "the Southerners" stood firm with "slavery" that Winstead's team lost – even though her Mississippian father had told her the "truth" about the war early on and "it was *not* over slavery."

> *Northerners* from "Sister St. Edmund's class," came to the debate woefully unprepared. Certain of victory, we'd assumed that since the North had won the war, we would naturally win…. Had we read Mississippi's Declaration of Secession, we would have known that Mississippi broke away from the Union precisely to preserve the institution of slavery.
>
> Had we done our homework, we would have known that Lincoln had been constrained by the Constitution: legally, a slave was a man's property; under the constitution, nobody could be deprived of his property without due process of law.
>
> We would have known that Lincoln was against slavery on moral grounds but that he had also spoken out about the inferiority of the black race.
>
> The abolition of slavery finally came about in no small measure to help Lincoln with the war: each side needed allies, but France and England would only come to the aid of whichever side would oppose slavery. Yet the rhetoric on both sides of the argument had become so sanitized that the South was convinced that the war was about states' rights and the North believed that it had a mandate from president Lincoln to abolish slavery….How do you think the mills in the North sold their goods at low prices to good Yankee ladies if the South couldn't sell its cotton cheaply?[iv]

Winstead figured if the South had been "as well prepared for battle as our opponents," the Confederacy may well have won the war: "As it was, we were not able to deal with the idea that the North had benefited from slavery too, and that Lincoln had used the issue shrewdly, as a tool to bring the Union back together."

It would be years before Winstead studied Civil War details more carefully. But on a hot summer day in 1966, "… all [I] knew was that ideologically, the South had won the class debate."

Winstead later confronted her father on his Civil War point of view and he caved: "That's right," my father said. "Don't let nobody tell you the North won cause it was bettr'n the South." He cleared his throat. "The North won because the South ran out of supplies and men. Then they won again because the carpetbaggers took everything we had and left us to fend for ourselves. There was nothin' left. Not for a long time. A hundred years."

REP. JOHN ANTHONY Quitman would never live to see his dream of Mississippi's secession come true – certainly a controversial act but considered quite legal by Southern scholars, led by Professor Franklin R. Riley of the University of Mississippi. Riley authored a history textbook in 1910 used for many years in primary schools that offered this explanation:

> The South believed that the States were older than the Union and that when they emerged from the Revolution they were separate sovereignties. After mentioning each State in the treaty acknowledging the independence of the United States, the King of England had declared them "free, sovereign, and independent States." When the Constitution was made, each State was left free to adopt it and enter the Union or to remain a separate nation. If the Constitution had forbidden the withdrawal of a State from the Union, it would never have been adopted. Moreover, the right to withdraw from the Union at pleasure had been expressly stated in the resolutions by which three States – Virginia, New York, and Rhode Island – adopted the Constitution.[v]

Riley further taught the right of a state's secession had been "repeatedly asserted by the North" as early as 1811 and through 1860: "When the admission of Louisiana was under discussion in 1811, Josiah Quincy had said: 'If this bill passes, it is my deliberate judgment that it is virtually a dissolution of the Union; that it will free the States from their moral obligations; and, as it will be the right of all, so it will be the duty of some, definitely to prepare for a separation – amicably if they can, violently if they must.'"

During the War of 1812, and particularly at the Hartford Convention, the New England States had threatened to secede. Upon the annexation of Texas, the Legislature of Massachusetts had declared that such a step might "drive these states into a dissolution of the Union"; and John Quincy Adams had declared in Congress that New England ought to secede. At the time of the War with Mexico, William Lloyd Garrison of Massachusetts had proposed, amid great applause, that his State should "lead in a secession movement." Horace Greeley had said in the *New York Tribune* of November 9, 1860: "If the Cotton States shall decide that they can do better out of the Union than in it, we insist on letting them go in peace. The right to secede may be a revolutionary one, but it exists nevertheless." Riley's textbook also presented what he believed as the other side of the secession argument:

> Union people, North and South, argued that the Constitution of the United States had been adopted in order to form a stronger government and to take away the powers claimed by some of the States. They cited the decisions of John Marshall, in which he had repeatedly asserted that the Union was indissoluble and that the Constitution and the acts of Congress were the supreme law of the land. And a majority of the Northern States had passed through the Territorial stage in which they were under the control of Congress; they looked upon the Union as supreme. They therefore took the stand that it mattered not what might have been the ideas of the founders of the Government, it was wrong for a great nation to be broken to pieces.[vi]

It was soon after Mississippi's secession that Confederates attacked a federal garrison at Fort Sumter, South Carolina, and the Civil War commenced. The first military invasion of Mississippi came after the fierce Battle of Shiloh near the Mississippi-Tennessee state line in April of 1862.

This Union victory forced Confederates to draw back into Mississippi, and brought Union troops into the Delta. As the Union swept through, Jefferson Davis ordered that black Union soldiers and their officers captured by Confederate troops were not to be treated as Prisoners of War but would be given no quarter.

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Some male slaves accompanied their masters to war, as servants, and received Confederate pensions and laudatory words from whites in later years. But northern opinion appears to remain that blacks did not take up arms for the Confederacy, at least not by choice.

Boat Deggins of southern Mississippi, the great-grandfather of modern civil rights activists Sam Block and Margaret Block, was forced to follow his master into the Battle of Shiloh. But as soon as he could, Deggins helped Union soldiers by passing secrets that he overheard as the Confederates made their plans.

"They talked in front of him because they thought he couldn't understand what they were saying – well, he did," Margaret Block said. Those who knew her great-grandfather said he had an old sword that he would take out and wave while telling his Civil War stories. "It was kind of funny, but sad, too." Her great-grandfather was probably kidnapped from French Senegal. "The name 'Boat' is a clue and he spoke some French."[vii]

An estimated 200,000 black soldiers served in the Union Army. Black soldiers from Mississippi numbered about 18,000. (Some 500 Mississippi whites also fought for the Union.)[viii] As Union soldiers entered the South, thousands of Africans fled from their owners to Union camps. Some Union officers first returned slaves to their owners, but others kept the blacks within their lines, nicknaming them "contraband of war."

Black Confederate Soldiers?

"A large but undetermined number of slaves served as body servants to white Confederate officers and soldiers, built fortifications, and did other manual labor for the Confederate Army. The thought of a black man carrying a rifle was a horror to most white Mississippians, and the state resisted the enlistment of slaves even after the Confederate Congress authorized the policy near the end of the war in March 1865." *Mississippi Historical Society, online*

One Civil War historian who disagrees with Mississippi's historical group over black soldiers and service to the Confederacy is Ed Kennedy, a retired lieutenant colonel in the U. S. Army and a former instructor of history at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth. Kennedy said he has studied diaries, letters, private publications, the "Official Records of the War of the Rebellion" and writings of black scholars to learn that "seven percent to eight percent of the Confederate forces might have been black." [ix]

Kennedy asserts that…. A Union sanitary commission officer saw 3,000 black armed combatants in the Confederate Army moving through Fredericksburg, Va., in 1862; in an 1862 letter from Frederick Douglass to President Abraham Lincoln, Douglass wrote that many blacks serve in the Confederate Army as "real soldiers having muskets on their shoulders and bullets in their pockets, ready to shoot down and do all that soldiers may do to destroy the Federal government"; pensions were paid to black Confederate soldiers; and, photographs showed black veterans, who "wore their veterans badges as proudly as any whites."

Blacks served in the Confederate Army "for the same reason they defended the United States colonies in the Revolutionary War," Kennedy wrote. "They were patriots," who thought their homes were being invaded by the Union. They felt like this was their home, that this was their country. They weren't fighting for slavery."

Kennedy told reporter Steve Fry of the *Topeka Capital-Journal* that black Confederates were a combination of free blacks and slaves who were house servants accompanying white masters. "The topic of black Confederate soldiers is rarely talked about because it's not politically correct," Kennedy told Fry. "Some people who hear about black soldiers fighting in the Confederate Army "just go ballistic."

ALFRED R. WAUD, who photographed the black soldiers going over to the Union, often called "contrabands," prepared a drawing for his newspaper, observing: "There is something very touching in seeing these poor people coming

into camp--giving up all the little ties that cluster about home, such as it is in slavery, and trustfully throwing themselves on the mercy of the Yankees, in the hope of getting permission to own themselves and keep their children from the auction-block."[x]

Blacks who remained on Delta plantations often suffered major hardships, as Union soldiers frequently raided plantations of all food, leaving little or nothing to eat. But the "greatest blow" to Delta planters came as they lost their slaves.

Records show that on January 29, 1862, sixteen slaves rebelled against the overseer and quit Charles Clark's Doro Plantation in Coahoma County.[xi] When Union troops raided the R. H. Howard plantation, slaves helped by running off the livestock. On the Burrus Plantation in Bolivar County, slaves rounded up the cattle for the Union soldiers, and powerful planter and state legislator Walter Sillers "had to admit that all but twenty of his father's slaves fled to freedom" before the war ended.[xii]

But this is not the same story of "slaves left behind," often told by early southern historians such as Professor Riley of the University of Mississippi. Part of the general belief system among Southerners was that blacks were "happy as things were," and had no desire for anything else and were thus loyal to their masters, even during the war:

> History has no parallel to the faith kept by the Negro in the South during the war. There were often five hundred Negroes to a single white man, and yet, through these dusky throngs the women and children walked in safety, and the unprotected homes rested in peace … the black battalions moved patiently to the fields in the morning to feed the armies their idleness would have starved, and at night gathered anxiously at the big house to 'hear the news from marster,' though conscious that his victory made their chains enduring. A thousand torches would have disbanded every Southern army, but no one was lighted.[xiii]

Famous black spy from Mississippi

"The true history of this war will show that the [Union] found no friends at the South so faithful, active, and daring in their efforts to sustain the government as the Negroes. Negroes have repeatedly threaded their way through the lines of the rebels

exposing themselves to bullets to convey important information to the loyal army of the Potomac." – Frederick Douglass, 1862

Mississippi was birth place to one of the most famous Civil War black spies for the North, John Scobell.[xiv] Union armies quickly found that both free and enslaved blacks could provide them with valuable information. Runaway slaves often told Union commanders the location and strength of Confederate fortifications and the disposition and number of Rebel troops.

Blacks like Scobell and his wife (her name is unknown) who knew the roads, rivers, and terrain of their area worked as couriers between Union units, acted as guides on Union raids behind Rebel lines, and led escaped Union prisoners through Confederate lines.[xv]

"Black Dispatches" was a common term used among Union military men for intelligence on Confederate forces provided by slaves. This source of information has been represented as the single most prolific and productive category of intelligence obtained and acted on by Union forces throughout the Civil War, leading Don Markle, author of *Spies and Spymasters of the Civil War*, to observe, "By their own blindness to the innate abilities of some Negroes, the Confederacy provided the Union with a unique spy system that continued to operate in the South until the final surrender."[xvi]

Gen. Robert E. Lee, commander of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia, understood this well. Because of the culture of slavery in the South, blacks involved in menial activities could move about without suspicion while most officials and officers ignored their presence as personal servants when discussing war-related matters.

Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan, commander of the Army of the Potomac defending Washington, brought with him as his chief of intelligence Allan Pinkerton, who was well known for running a Chicago detective agency. Pinkerton observed how runaway slaves were the most willing to cooperate and often had the best knowledge of Confederate fortifications, camps, and supply points.

As early as 1861, Pinkerton's agents were sent to the front lines to interrogate the slaves as they entered Union lines to see what information they had that would be of use to the Union Army. On the lookout for escaped slaves who had some education or seemed particularly skilled in observing and remembering military details, Pinkerton recruited John Scobell in the fall of 1861.

Scobell's former owner, a Scotsman, had educated and then freed him. Pinkerton recounted Scobell as "quick-witted and an accomplished role player." Scobell was able to function in several different identities on various missions, "as a vender of delicacies in the camps, a laborer on the earthworks, possibly as a cook in the camps or as a deck hand on Confederate steamers."[xvii] Sometimes he worked with other Pinkerton agents, playing the role of their servant. He frequently worked with Timothy Webster (said to be Pinkerton's best agent) on missions into Virginia and also with Mrs. Carrie Lawton (Pinkerton's best female operative).[xviii]

Scobell provided valuable intelligence on Confederate order of battle, status of supplies, and troop morale and movements. Frequently, while the white Pinkerton agents elicited information from Confederate officials and officers, Scobell sought out leaders in the black community and collected their information on local conditions, fortifications and troop dispositions.

Scobell was an excellent musician who had learned all the Scottish songs that his master sang – and could sing with an Irish brogue. While he wandered around Virginia gathering information, his wife[xix] worked in Richmond as a cook, gathering information on troop movements through the Confederate capital. Scobell often used his membership in the "Legal League," a clandestine Negro organization in the South supporting freedom for slaves, to acquire local information.[xx] After the war ended, Scobell and his wife, like so many others of his compatriots in the Union intelligence service, seem to have disappeared into history and little else was written about them.

Black soldiers prove courageous

At the start of the Civil War there was a rush of black men who wanted to sign up to fight for the North. Mary Lynn Bushong in "Black Americans in the Civil War" told how they were at first turned away: "Lincoln did not want to alienate the Confederates more than necessary. Many white soldiers did not think blacks could fight well. Once they were finally allowed to participate, they were led by white officers."[xxi]

It was not until September 1862, after the Emancipation Proclamation, that black soldiers were finally able to prove their critics wrong. "Once they were deployed on the battlefield, black soldiers proved their courage over and over again.

"General James Blunt wrote after a battle, 'I never saw such fighting as was done by the Negro regiment…. The question that Negroes will fight is settled;

besides they make better soldiers in every respect than any troops I have ever had under my command.'"[xxii]

Black soldiers win at Milliken's Bend

The late southern historian Shelby Foote, often deemed a Civil War *expert*[xxiii], had nothing good to say of black soldiers fighting for the Union; he appeared to ignore the many reported contributions made by black soldiers and civilians while openly admiring Confederate Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest, a slave owner and slave buyer whose forces massacred black soldiers and civilians, including women and children, at Fort Pillow and who later helped found the Ku Klux Klan.[xxiv]

Yet once President Lincoln issued the final Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, still a weak document,[xxv] both free African-Americans and runaway slaves joined the Union fight. By that late summer, 14 black regiments were in the field and ready for service. Black soldiers participated in every major Union campaign of 1864 to 1865 except for Sherman's invasion of Georgia, wrote Earnest McBride, a Mississippi journalist:

> One of the most egregious misrepresentations of wartime activities stems from the Old Courthouse Museum in Vicksburg, where museum curator Gordon Cotton claims that the only "black men in uniform during the Siege were on the Confederate side." The Mississippi Department of Archives and History, however, has emphatically stated it can only verify one black man who actually fought as a soldier in the Confederate Army. That was Holt Collier, the black man whose later friendship with President Teddy Roosevelt led to the creation of the Teddy Bear. No other black men fought for the South, period.[xxvi]

One battle, forgotten in most history books but cited by McBride and other black historians, took place on June 7, 1863, when black soldiers fought at Milliken's Bend, a small garrison across the Mississippi River on the Louisiana side, about twenty miles upstream from Vicksburg, in one of the fiercest battles of the Civil War.[xxvii]

Most of the black infantry to the garrison had minimal training, were outnumbered and ill equipped; this was often true for black soldiers and led to higher death counts for blacks in various battles. Confederate troops launched a surprise attack on the fort after General Grant left it to be guarded by three black

regiments and a small white cavalry. During the fight, rebels captured and murdered some black troops. This so enraged black troops that "they rallied and charged more heroically and desperately than has ever been recorded in the War."[xxviii]

Milliken's Bend proved that blacks were tough soldiers. Black Union troops held their fire until the Rebels were in close musket range and repulsed the first Rebel charge. As Rebels closed in, hand-to-hand fighting continued throughout the morning in the longest bayonet charge engagement of the war.

At noon of the second day, when the Union ship Choctaw entered into battle, some of the Union forces were sacrificed under the raging assault of the gunboat, "but it took only a half-dozen shells and the 95-degree heat to persuade the Rebels to beat a hasty retreat."

Union soldiers took out across the open field after their enemy until the Rebels crossed the outer confines of the fort. Before the retreat was completed, "one Negro took his former master a prisoner and brought him into camp with great gusto."[xxix]

"The bravery of the Blacks at Milliken's Bend completely revolutionized the sentiment of the army with regard to the employment of Negro troops," Charles A. Dana, assistant secretary of war, later declared. Nevertheless, commemorative plaques in the Vicksburg National Military Park were removed and melted down for lead during World War Two, and while other memorial items which faced the same treatment were eventually re-created, the plaques for valor for the Black men at Milliken's Bend and another battle at Port Hudson (near Baton Rouge) were not.[xxx]

According to McBride, the Milliken's Bend battle proved that black soldiers were battle-ready, and was also one of the costliest with over half of one regiment wiped out:

> Another [regiment] lost about a third of its men and the third fared almost as bad. But when the battle of Milliken's Bend came to a close on June 8, 1863, the Black fighting men had sealed a Union victory and reassured Grant that his – till-then—15 days of Siege could continue without fear of enemy encroachments from across the Mississippi.
>
> Since now-retired Chief Park historian Edwin C. Bearss first set up camp in Vicksburg in 1955, the Park service there has steadfastly denied that any black fighting troops took part in the Vicksburg Campaign, the strategic set of battles lasting from April till August of 1863 that both … Lincoln and …

> Grant viewed as "the key" to victory over the rebellious South. Only 13 years before Bearss launched his anti-black campaign in Vicksburg, two memorial plaques for black Civil War troops existed in the Park at Grant's Circle. But both were melted down in 1942 for the metal the War Department needed for use in World War II.
>
> In recent years, a small group of Civil War historians and some black interest groups have come to the defense of the long-dead but unrecognized black fighting men and are demanding that they be given praise and recognition equal to their white comrades.[xxxi]

An important lesson lost was how black troops made the Vicksburg victory possible for Grant and Sherman, according to historian Benjamin Quarles who has also written about this battle: "Without them at Milliken's Bend and without their likewise hardy fighters at Port Hudson near Baton Rouge, the South might have been able to negotiate a peace favorable to itself and the preservation of slavery."[xxxii]

Black Mississippi soldier honored

Landsman Wilson Brown was the only Mississippian, black or white, to be awarded the Medal of Honor during the Civil War. Brown, born in Natchez, Mississippi, was enslaved on the Carthage Plantation, and one day escaped, jumped into the Mississippi River and swam out to a Union Navy gunboat; he was enlisted and assigned to the USS Hartford. His citation reads: On board the flagship USS Hartford during the successful attacks against Fort Morgan, Rebel gunboats… [on] 5 August 1864. Knocked unconscious into the hold of the ship when an enemy shell burst [and] fatally wounded a man on the ladder above him, Brown, upon regaining consciousness, promptly returned to the shell whip on the berth deck and zealously continued to perform his duties although 4 of the 6 men at this station had been either killed or wounded by the enemy's terrific fire."[xxxiii]

In 1864, General Patrick Cleburne and several other Confederate officers in the Army of Tennessee suggested using slaves as soldiers, offering freedom if they fought and survived, but Confederate President Davis refused to consider Cleburne's proposal and halted further discussion. By fall, the South was losing more ground and again it was suggested that slaves be armed to avert defeat. A few African-American companies were built, but the war ended before they could be used in battle.[xxxiv]

Black prisoners-of-war lynched at Fort Pillow

Black Union soldiers could not escape lynching by white Southerners including times of battle. Work slowdowns and plantation desertion (destroying the South's ability to supply its army) meant that when caught by Rebels, black soldiers faced a Confederate policy of "no quarter" (no mercy) or taking no blacks as prisoners.

Mississippi General Nathan Bedford Forrest, a planter, slave trader, and controversial Confederate war hero, led a very un-heroic massacre of black and white soldiers, and women and children at Fort Pillow, Tennessee near the end of the war.[xxxv]

The idea of African American soldiers in battle had infuriated many Confederate military leaders, including Forrest, and historic combat reports show black prisoners were savagely murdered by his troops following the Battle of Fort Pillow and also during battles at Poison Spring, Arkansas, and Crater (Petersburg), Virginia.

The Fort Pillow massacre on April 12, 1864 was deemed the worst when Forrest decided it was there he could make an example of the lynch law, choosing the "no quarter" (no mercy) policy. Black soldiers, in other words, were involved in a rebellion, and should be executed on the battlefield, while the white soldiers from Tennessee should be killed as traitors to the white race and their region."[xxxvi]

Following the Fort Pillow massacre, the U. S. Congress impaneled a Joint Select Committee that found "…soldiers were transformed into a lynch mob that resulted in the worst possible brutalities and atrocities against Negro soldiers, and in the Fort Pillow attack…Yankees, women, and children [were killed in] a massacre that ranks with the worst in the history of warfare."[xxxvii] A report appeared in the *New York Herald Tribune*:

> The Sub-committee on the Conduct of the War (Senator Wade and Representative Gooch) has returned from Ft. Pillow. They took fifty-seven depositions, all of which more than confirm the newspaper accounts of the massacre. They say it would be impossible to exaggerate the cruelties committed. Among the witnesses who were examined is the Negro who was buried alive, and who dug himself out of his own grave. There is no doubt of the fact that one or more persons were nailed through their flesh to pieces of wood, and then burnt alive. Not only on the day of surrender were such fiendish acts perpetrated, but on the next day, in cold blood. The

victims seen by the Committee were some of them pierced and cut in the face and eyes with bayonets and swords, while other parts of their bodies were smashed and disfigured either by steel or lead.[xxxviii]

Letters home …

Mississippi planter William Nugent, riding off to war with a regiment from Vicksburg, did not expect a very long fight, viewing a Southern victory as inevitable. Nugent was more worried about his own mortality – about dying on a faraway battlefield without "leaving an heir behind." Writing home, his early letters were filled with pride: "I feel that I would like to shoot a Yankee," he told his wife.[xxxix]

But at the end of the war, Nugent's letter home described the damage he saw near Jackson, which had just been "put to the torch" by Sherman: "The largest plantations are … grown up to weeds …; fences are pulled down & destroyed; houses burned; negroes run off …. The prospects are gloomy enough and may be worse. I think the present year will wind it up and … see me at home again.[xl]

As it turned out, not just Union soldiers, but Southern blacks were responsible for much of the South's defeat. In his essay "Black Reconstruction" W. E. B. Du Bois wrote of the enormity of power that slaves held in their hands.

> Simply by stopping work, they could threaten the confederacy with starvation. By walking into the federal camps, they showed to doubting Northerners the easy possibility of using them thus, but by the same gesture, depriving their enemies of their use in just these fields. [It was this] plain alternative that brought Lee's sudden surrender. The South must make terms with its slaves, free them and use them to fight the North, and thereafter no longer treat them as bondsmen; or they could surrender to the North with the assumption that the North, after the War, must help them to defend slavery, as it had before.[xli]

Once the Civil War ended, blacks throughout the South began seeing some of the benefits from this enormous turn-around and most wanted to "abolish and dismantle the plantation regime, to establish self-governing communities, and to

become landowners, both individually and collectively," observed historian Clyde Woods. Thus during the Civil War, African Americans attacked plantation monopolists in a number of ways:

> They fought gloriously in the Union army and established freedom villages and freedom towns on abandoned and confiscated plantations. After the Civil War, African American soldiers, who were known as the blues, served as the backbone of the Union Leagues movement [forerunners of the NAACP movement][xlii] in Mississippi that emerged to defend the land, labor, social and political reform agenda. As the Reconstruction governments were overthrown, the leaders of the Union Leagues and similar organizations were assassinated throughout the South.[xliii]

The South took a horrible beating in the Civil War, a verity almost impossible for white Mississippians to accept. The War ended April 9, 1865, and after four years of fighting, it was considered the bloodiest conflict in American history and still dramatically affects North-South relationships.

The North had placed 2.2 to 2.8 million men in uniform, half of its entire draft age population; the South sent approximately 1 million men, 75 percent of its white draft-age population.

More soldiers died, about 625,000, than in all of America's 20th-century wars.[xliv] Wounded Union soldiers numbered 275,175 and wounded Confederate soldiers were counted at 137,000. Some states took decades to recover.

Mississippi suffered the largest percentage dead of any Confederate State in the Civil War; 78,000 Mississippians entered the Confederate military and by the end of the war, 59,000 of the 78,000 were either dead or wounded. Mississippi became a land of missing arms and legs as the injured soldiers came home.

In 1866, one-fifth of Mississippi's state budget went for the purchase of artificial limbs. An un-mechanized agricultural area, Mississippi could not afford to lose such a large percentage of its men. Many of the soldiers, more than half, who did return were diseased or crippled and unable to restore fields to productivity.[xlv]

No state – north or south – suffered more than Mississippi. Its fields were "desolated" by fire, flood, and simple neglect. The cities were "flattened by Grant's artillery and pillaged by Sherman's roaming troops. Following the seven-month siege

of Vicksburg in 1863, Union soldiers had marched through the heart of Mississippi, burning houses, killing livestock, and trampling crops."[xlvi]

DURING A PERFORMANCE at the Ford Theatre on April 14, 1865, and less than one week after the end of the Civil War, President Lincoln was assassinated by John Wilkes Booth, quite possibly with the aid of a Mississippi planter.

Booth had strongly supported slavery and in 1859 joined a Virginia company that aided in the capture of John Brown after his raid at Harper's Ferry. Booth was an eyewitness to Brown's execution.

During the war, Booth worked as a Confederate secret agent and met frequently with the head of the Secret Service in Canada, Jacob Thompson, a Mississippi Delta lawyer and planter from Oxford.

A group of Southern Maryland cotton planters met and plotted to kidnap the president, arranging a meeting in Montréal in 1864 (Confederate-friendly territory) between Thompson and Booth.

Booth had been closely involved in early plots to kidnap President Lincoln, if not in Lincoln's actual assassination, David Balsigner and Charles E. Sellier, Jr. wrote in their 2004 book that sheds new light on Lincoln's murder.[xlvii]

After this meeting of planters, "…. Booth returned to Washington [where] $12,499.28 had been transferred from the Bank of Montreal to Booth's account at the Chaffey Company in New York [after meeting with Thompson]. This was, to the penny, what Daniel Watson, a Tennessee cotton speculator, deposited in the Bank of Montréal on July 4 for some unknown reason."[xlviii]

Booth had allegedly tried to kidnap Lincoln several times after meeting with Thompson, but ultimately killed Lincoln, instead. Officially, a New York cavalry officer killed Booth days later during the assassin's escape. Booth's alleged co-conspirators were rounded up quickly and tried by a military court: Mary Ann Surratt, George Atzerodt, David Herold and Lewis Paine were hanged.[xlix]

But a different story was told by police officers in Montréal who claimed they saw Booth in their city fifteen days after the assassination.[l] Regardless, Thompson remained out of United States enough years to avoid being targeted in the outrage that swept the Union in the wake of Lincoln's murder; like Jefferson Davis, Jacob Thompson once had a price on his head, too.

When Thompson eventually returned to the US, he was not prosecuted. Thompson and his wife moved to Memphis where he died in 1885 at age 75 and was buried. The U. S. Interior Department closed for a day and lowered its flags, both moves that were criticized in Northern newspapers since only 21 years earlier Thompson had plotted to burn down major Northern cities.

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[i] Bond, 94. Cites "An Address Setting forth the Declaration of the Immediate Causes Which Induce and Justify the Secession of Mississippi From the Federal Union and the Ordinance of Secession" and "An Ordinance to Dissolve the Union Between the State of Mississippi and Other States United with her Under the Compact Entitled 'The Constitution of the United States of America'" appear as separately numbered appendices at the end of "Journal of the State Convention and Ordinances and Resolutions," adopted in January, 1861, with an Appendix (Jackson: E. Barksdale), 3-7.

[ii] Ibid., 95, and politicalgraveyard.com. On January 7, 1861, the Mississippi Convention opened, electing W. S. Barry president and setting a time limit of 20 days to complete whatever actions they intended to take. The delegates to the convention included: William T. S. Barry, Walker Brooke, J. A. P. Campbell, Jeremiah Watkins Clapp, Alexander Mosby Clayton, James Zacharia George, Wiley Pope Harris, Jehu Amaziah Orr, L. Q. C. Lamar, and Israel Victor Welch. Jehu Amaziah Orr was perhaps an ancestor to my father, John R. Orr, whose family had relatives fighting on both sides of the Civil War.

[iii] "Biographical Directory of the U. S. Congress, 1774-1971," 11th edition. Compiled under the Direction of the *Joint Committee on Printing*. Congress of the United States. Government Printing Office. 1971; "Mississippians in the U. S. Senate," Internet home page of U. S. Senator Thad Cochran, 1998.

[iv] Mary Winstead, "Back to Mississippi," (New York: Hyperion Books, 2002), 106-107.

[v] Prof. Franklin L. Riley (University of Mississippi), "Our Republic: A History of the United States for Grammar Grades," (Riley & Chandler, 1910), p. 336.

[vi] Ibid., 337.

[vii] Conversation with Margaret Block on March 25, 2005.

[viii] John F. Marszalek and Clay Williams, "Mississippi Soldiers in the Civil War," *Mississippi History Now*, online publication of the Mississippi Historical Society.

[ix] Kennedy was interviewed by Steve Fry of the Topeka Capital-Journal on September 27, 2001.

[x] The U. S. Library of Congress, "The African American Odyssey: a Quest for Full Citizenship," exhibition (online).

[xi] Cobb, 40.

[xii] Ibid.

[xiii] Riley, p. 377. Cites Henry W. Grady.

[xiv] P. K. Rose, "The Civil War: Black American Contributions to Union Intelligence," *The CIA Fact book* (online).

[xv] Ibid.

[xvi] Donald E. Markle, "Spies and Spymasters of the Civil War," (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1995), 64-65.

[xvii] Markle, 57.

[xviii] Allan Pinkerton,"The Spy of the Rebellion," (Chicago: A. G. Nettleton, 1883), 389.

[xix] Unfortunately, none of the authors referenced give the name of Scobell's wife.

[xx] Rose.

[xxi] According to an undated interview with an "Old Citizen" circa 1939 for the Coahoma County Historical Research Project (Project No. 2984, Assignment # 14, titled "Outlaw Days"), there was such

a "negro regiment officered by white men who fought at Miller's Point and then returned to Fort Royal at Westover, Arkansas … just across the river from Friars Point," a town in Coahoma County.

[xxii] Bushong's book is cited on the edhelper.com newsletter site, http://www.edhelper.com/.

[xxiii] Foote authored a three-volume set, *The Civil War: A Narrative*, for which he has been praised by some critics. But the series gives "no quarter" to black soldiers fighting for the Union.

[xxiv] Wrote Paul Ashdown and Edward Cudill ("The Myth of Nathan Bedford Forrest," Oxford, UK: Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005, xiii): "No one ever doubted Nathan Bedford Forrest's courage. To have done so would have led to trouble. By the end of the Civil War, the Confederate General claimed to have killed thirty men, a few of whom were on his side… A variety of witnesses – including Confederates – described atrocities: men, some of whom had surrendered or were wounded, nailed to a floor, burned alive, buried alive, bayoneted through the eyes, hacked apart with swords, bludgeoned to death or shot at close range."

[xxv] This Proclamation served to declare that "All persons held as slaves within said designated States, and parts of States, are, and henceforward shall be free; and that the Executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons." This freedom was provided in "the States and parts of States wherein the people thereof respectively, are this day in rebellion against the United States" and, for the areas not in rebellion "are for the present, left precisely as if this proclamation were not issued." Since President Lincoln had, by defintion, no control over the states "in rebellion" and excluded the others, he did not free any slaves except as Union troops would come to occupy all or portions of Confederate states. The former slaves were to abstain from all violence, except for self-defense, but could join the armed services. The preliminary version of the Proclamaiton was issued after the Union victory at Antietam, and released in its final form on January 1, 1863

[xxvi] Earnest McBride, "The Battle of Milliken's Bend" (online). According to McBride, a freelance journalist, the acceptance by President Lincoln of Black soldiers into the Union Army can be credited to General Loranzo Thomas, Adjutant General of the Army. General Thomas set up the model for what later became the Freedmen's Bureau. (Mr. McBride holds a BA from California State University at Los Angeles, and MA in Language Studies from San Francisco State University. He has completed pre-doctoral work in Higher Education at the University of Southern California.)

[xxvii] Ibid.

[xxviii] Leon Dixon, Gerald Hynes, and Carolyn Gaines Nelson, "A Black Perspective of American," (online) July 2001.

[xxix] Ibid.

[xxx] McBride.

[xxxi] Ibid.

[xxxii] Benjamin Quarles, "The Negro in the Civil War," (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1953).

[xxxiii] William Gladstone, "Men of Color," (Gettysburg: Thomas Publications, 1993), 189 (also pages 148 and 185).

[xxxiv] U. S. National Park Service and U. S. Library of Congress, "Colored Troops in the Civil War," Internet: http://americancivilwar.com/colored/histofcoloredtroops.html.

[xxxv] Forrest may have carried his predispositions on after the war as well. *The Daily Coahomian*, dated April 20, 1866, reported "Gen. Forrest was arraigned for the homicide of a colored freedman on his plantation a few weeks ago, and was admitted to bail in the sum of $10,000 for his appearance at the next term of Circuit Court."

[xxxvi] James D. Lockett, "The Lynching Massacre of Black and White Soldiers at Fort Pillow, Tennessee April 12, 1864," *The Western Journal of Black Studies*, Volume: 22, Issue: 2, 1998, 84. One of the private academies in the Delta is named Pillow Academy.

[xxxvii] Ibid.

[xxxviii] "The Fort Pillow Massacre," The *New York Herald Tribune*, Washington, May 2, 1864.

[xxxix] Oshinsky, 11.

[xl] Ibid., 12.

[xli] Zinn, 188, citing W. E. B. Du Bois, "Black Reconstruction: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880," (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, Feb. 28, 2005). First edition published January of 1935.

[xlii] "Led by a coalition of blacks and whites with funding from congressional radicals, the Union League was a secret society whose express purpose was to bring freedmen into the political arena after the Civil War. Angry and resentful of the lingering vestiges of the plantation system, hundreds of thousands of freedmen joined local chapters, speaking and acting collectively to undermine the residual trappings of slavery in plantation society." From the introduction to "The Union League Movement in the Deep South Politics and Agricultural Change During Reconstruction," by Michael W. Fitzgerald, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000).

[xliii] Woods, 7.

[xliv] Ibid., 187. Figures also come from the official Milliken's Bend website.

[xlv] Ibid.

[xlvi] Oshinsky, 11.

[xlvii] David Balsiger and Charles E. Sellier, Jr., "The Lincoln Conspiracy," (online, pre-publication). Primary sources include Dr. Ray A. Neff, a professor at Indiana State University [c. 1977] and author of a scholarly book on Lincoln entitled, *Wounded in the House of Friends*; Theodore Roscoe, author of *Web of Conspiracy*, that suggests that the Secret Service may have been indirectly involved in the assassination; Michael Les Benedict , *A Compromise of Principle: The Politics of Radicalism*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co); Ward Hill Lamon, *Recollections of Abraham Lincoln*, (Cambridge MA: University Press, 1895); Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *History of American Presidential Elections Vol. II, 1848-1896*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971).

[xlviii] Ibid. Many in Montréal sympathized with the Confederate States of America, which in turn used Montréal as a base for covert operations in the Northern border states, as well as a conduit to Britain in its effort to get official recognition.

[xlix] A historical marker in Oxford defends Thompson, asserting he was later found innocent of any wrongdoing related to the assassination. Also, one recurring theory is that higher-ups in Lincoln's cabinet, including the Secretary of War, were involved in the assassination plot, and that the Union was close to becoming a dictatorship.

[1] "For several months in 1864 and 1865, a certain young aspiring actor named John Wilkes Booth was living - apparently well funded - in Montréal's most fashionable hotel, The St. Lawrence Hall. One night in October, Booth was playing billiards in the hotel saloon. Carried away by drink or his own voice, he treated his companions to some pretty wild talk. "Do you know," he crowed "I have got the sharpest play laid out ever done in America? I can bag the biggest game this side of hell. Just remember my address - you'll hear of a double carom one of these days… Abe's contract is near up and whether re-elected or not, he'll get his goose cooked!" On April 14, 1865, the same Booth stole into the presidential box at Ford's Theater in Washington and fatally shot Abraham Lincoln in the back of the head. Officially, the assassin was tracked to a barn in Virginia, gunned down and buried under the floor of a federal prison on April 26. But on the night of April 29, three Montréal police officers set out to arrest none other than John Wilkes Booth! He had been recognized at the Garneau Hotel! Armed with photographs of the assassin, they went to the hotel and confronted a man who matched the pictures perfectly. The suspect denied everything but finally consented to go to the police station. Everyone was sure they had made the most sensational arrest in history!" Except Charles-Joseph Coursol, Montréal's chief of police, that is. To the horror of his officers, Coursol declared a misidentification and released the man outright (this was behaviour typical of a vehement supporter of the Confederacy: the year before, Coursol had also released the "St. Albans Raiders", a group of southern officers who had attacked a Vermont town, then fled back to Montréal). So - did John Wilkes Booth ever make it back to Montréal? The firm verdict of history is: No, he was apprehended and killed in Virginia. But to some long-dead policemen, the answer would be: Yes, we arrested him that night in Montréal." Source: "Toursime Montréal," (http://www.tourisme-montreal.org.) Sources listed: Edgar Andrew Collard, "Montréal: 350 Years in Vignettes," Montréal, 1991; "Montréal: The Days That Are No More," Montréal, 1976; "Montréal Yesterdays," Montréal, 1963.