



African Americans in the Revolutionary War

Michael Lee Lanning Lt. Col

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In this fascinating and enlightening work, military historian Michael Lee Lanning reveals the little-known, critical, and heroic role African Americans played in the American Revolution, serving in integrated units—a situation that wouldn't exist again until the Korean War, more than 150 years later.

At first, neither George Washington nor the Continental Congress approved of enlisting African Americans in the new army. Nevertheless, blacks—both slave and free—filled the ranks and served in all of the early battles. Black sailors also saw action in every major naval battle of the Revolution, including members of John Paul Jones's crew aboard the *Bonhomme Richard*. At least thirteen blacks served in the newly formed U.S. Marine Corps during the war.

Bravery among African Americans was commonplace, as recognized by their commanders and state governments, and is recorded here in the stories of citizen Crispus Attucks at the Boston Massacre; militiaman Price Esterbrook at Lexington Green; soldier Salem Poor at Bunker Hill; and marine John Martin aboard the brig *Reprisal*.

In the words of the author, "The daily life of black soldiers, sailors, and marines in the Revolution differed little from that of their white comrades. Though prejudice and discrimination did not evaporate with the first shots at Lexington, black servicemen in the Revolution certainly experienced a marked increase in equality throughout the war. Ultimately, as in every armed conflict, soldiers in trenches and sailors and marines in the forecastle judged men by their performance rather than by the color of their skin as they fought for their country's liberty, their unit's pride, and their mutual survival."

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