

Fighting for Hope: African American Troops of the 93rd Infantry Division in World War II and Postwar America. By Robert F. Jefferson. (Baltimore, Md., Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008. xx + 321 pp. \$55)

It is simply astounding that it has taken six decades for a book on the 93rd Infantry Division to appear. Robert F. Jefferson is to be congratulated for seeing the enormous potential of his subject and conveying it to a wider audience in an engaging and thought-provoking study.

The 93rd was one of only two African American infantry divisions in World War II. The unit's history, however, dated back to the Great War. The 93rd did not return to Europe in World War II but was sent to the Pacific where, despite its infantry status, it saw little combat duty; instead it was assigned to logistical, construction, and defensive roles. This utilization of the unit had a major impact on its members' outlook on the U.S. Army and the world.

Jefferson's book is not an operational history of the 93rd but a social history of its members. He draws on a broad range of public and private sources to explore his central themes of race, citizenship, and political culture within the U.S. military during World War II. Jefferson makes the very valid point that, to understand these themes, the historian must mine down to the unit level to examine how these issues were affected by specific local issues. The Pacific Theater's impact on these themes in the story of the 93rd differed in comparison to the experiences of the 92nd African American Infantry Division that served in Europe.

The private sources that Jefferson was able to secure during the writing of the book are a revelation. They highlight how much untapped material still resides with families of World War II veterans and the need to ensure that these important records of war service are preserved as more and more veterans of that generation pass away.

The book's title is somewhat and disappointingly misleading. The discussion of "Postwar America" is mostly confined to a twenty-five-page epilogue; indeed, more space is spent on an excellent contextualization of prewar America and the days before the reactivation of the division. Jefferson should have done more to show how the hopes of the men of the 93rd and their families "provided a blue print for the civil rights struggles of the 1960s" (front matter). It is to be hoped that Jefferson or another scholar will build on this work to produce that most important study, which will examine in greater detail the consequences of this wartime service on postwar American society and, most notably, the Civil Rights Movement.

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