

REFLECTIONS.....

In 1881, a correspondent, writing for the "Army & Navy Journal, choose to make a decision, to go against the norm. When all the articles of the day, and most printed material, depicted the "colored" soldier as misfits, and lazy. He decided to write a factual observation about the members of the 9th Cavalry, fighting in New Mexico.

This was 5 years before the July 28th 1866, Act of Congress, authorizing the formation of 6 units of "colored" soldiers. These units, being the 9th and 10th Cavalry.....along with the, 38th, 39th, 40th, and the 41st infantry. Until this official authorization, all "colored" soldiers, fought as a separate units, without official standing.

What follows is the correspondent's description, of what was to become, The "Buffalo Soldier".....

"On the march, they are cheerful and obedient. Their horses are well cared for, And I have seen but one man lounging in his saddle, and he had more white than black blood, in his veins. No falling out of ranks, or watering at different times. If ordered on detached or dangerous service, they never shirk, and will ride without sleep, and apparently unfatigued. They do not appear to sleep, and in camp seem awake all night. If washed out, as I saw one company, they will change their camp in the middle of the night, laughing and cracking jokes. There is every evidence, that they will, and do fight well."**

This, my fellow soldiers, was an upfront, and in-your-face description, of the "colored" soldier, in 1881.....take a moment, and re-read the paragraph above. There were not many article's written then, or for many years following, that gave an honest assessment, of these "colored" fighting men. In 1881, one correspondent, choose to step away from the pack, step away from the bigotry, the discrimination, the hatred, and write a article praising the characteristic's, behavior, and attitude of the 9th Cavalry. And try as I might, I find it very hard to locate, many positive articles, written at that time about, these future.....BUFFALO SOLDIERS.

Now you may think, that these are reflections on the way that history, historian, and writer's of the era, negatively reflected on the black soldiers. But I would like to twist your mind's a totally different way. Please, reflect on the actions of these men, their proud attitudes, their behavior, their honor, and their honor to serve. To try and change attitudes, and perceptions, under the worst circumstances ever. And to consider, as I did, if in fact you could serve as proudly as they, and laugh and ride tall, and be men, while the mainstream society waited for you to fail.

Take a moment, my Buffalo Soldiers, as you ride your shiny steel steeds, unwavering in our ranks, laughing and cracking jokes.....to a time many years ago, that black men, rode proudly as we do. And wonder, as I do, if the future will bring about men and women to celebrate us, to honor us.....and wonder if we are indeed setting a standard of excellence, to be followed in the future. Where someday, some man or women will ride honoring us, for bringing the "forgotten hero" the "Buffalo Soldier" up in line with the Civil war hero's, the hero's of the World War I, and World war II. Let us not only ride with our expensive bikes, and colorful vests, but let us

also ride with the knowledge, that we are ancestors, of a truly “forgotten hero”.....the Buffalo Soldiers.

Let us not balk, in our responsibility, to teach our children, our neighbor’s, our community, about these men, and their exploits, and their attempt, to change perceptions. Soldiers, let us continue the fight to change present day perceptions, and to make this place.....our place.....and much better place.

** Ron Field & Richard Hook....Buffalo Soldiers 1866-91

“THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE”

I want to ask a question.....what’s the last sacrifice that you made? Now think real hard .

This week, I gave my children the last piece of cake, and watched them smile at that sacrifice I made to my taste buds.....a major sacrifice? I think not !!!.

Last month, I wanted to ride along with the Buffalo Soldiers, but instead, ventured into Michigan, to help my mother, and my father. I do love riding, and I love riding along, with the Buffalo Soldiers, but this sacrifice was for the greater good.....the family. So even this, was not a sacrifice, extraordinaire.....

This brings me to the phrase, “THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE”....what do you consider, is the ultimate sacrifice ??.....each of us may vary in our answers, but there were many that paid the ultimate price, and made the “Ultimate Sacrifice”.....

There are many among us, “Buffalo Soldiers”, that are Military, that are Law Enforcement Officers, and that are Firefighters.....and you may know about this “ultimate sacrifice”...and you should be proud, as we are proud of you, and your service. And I for one, stand in awe of you, having nothing but respect, for each and every one of you.

But please, for a moment, venture back in time, and measure this sacrifice with me.

180,000 blacks served in the Civil War. 33,380 black men paid the “ultimate sacrifice”. And please note, they were formed, in the beginning as “Slave Regiments”, and not as free men. In time they were called “Negro Regiments” and these slaves would be given their freedom, if they survived the war. But as time went on, black free-men flocked by the thousands, to volunteer to fight..... Fight for the freedom, of hundreds of thousands, of their brother’s and sister’s.

This “ultimate sacrifice”, was for what, exactly????? For the right to be third class citizen’s.....for the right to work 16 hours in the field, as share-croppers, and to give up, two-thirds of their yield, to the land owner.....for the right to be chased, and hung in the night, by

cowardly men, in white hoods and robes.....for the right to try an scratch out an existence, with their bare hands.....this is what the “ultimate sacrifice” would afford them. They paid the “ultimate sacrifice”, for that one little word, for that feeling, for that attitude.....and that word was FREEDOM, and I do believe, that they would do it many times over, if given the chance.

Their willingness, to make the “ultimate sacrifice”, is why on July 28th, 1866, congress passed an act creating provisions, for Negro’s to serve in the “regular peacetime army”.....and these men, were what was to soon to be called.....Buffalo Soldiers....

Because of their fighting skills, their bravery, their honor, and their willingness to pay the “ultimate price”.....they were then sought out, and recruited. And in the final analysis

****The 9th and 10th Cavalry were first-rate regiments and major forces in promoting peace and advancing civilization along America’s last continental frontier. The thriving cities and towns, the fertile fields, and the natural beauty of that once wild land, are monuments enough for any Buffalo Soldier.**

As we ride the countryside’s, and cities, snuggled tightly in our freedom’s that came at such a high cost.....let us “the modern day Buffalo Soldiers”, understand and realize, that these cities, and towns, are just monuments to a once proud people.....but they are also monuments to us, monuments to our ancestors.....”The Buffalo Soldier”.....

**** William H Leckie, The Buffalo Soldier**.....University of Oklahomo press, 1967