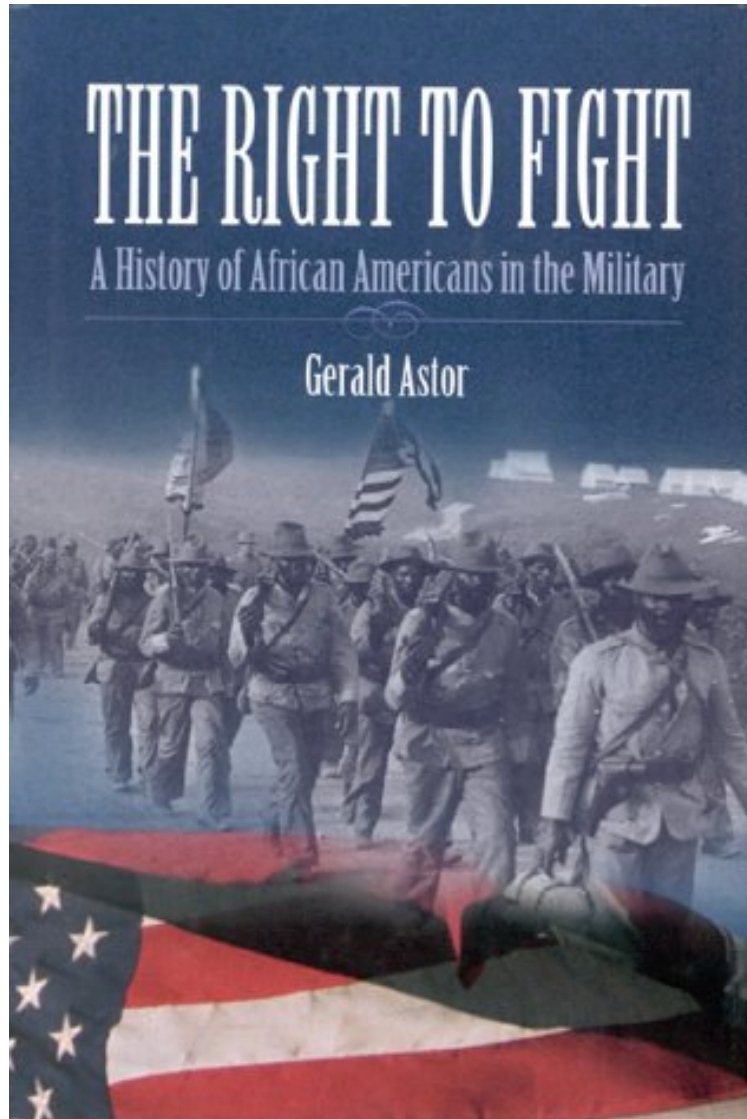


[Library ebook] The Right to Fight: A History of African Americans in the Military

# The Right to Fight: A History of African Americans in the Military

Gerald Astor

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**Gerald Astor : The Right to Fight: A History of African Americans in the Military** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Right to Fight: A History of African Americans in the Military:

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From Bunker Hill to Hamburger Hill, the valorous service of African Americans in the armed forces of the United States is even more noble considering the historical hostility of other Americans to their serving at all.

From Publishers Weekly  
Astor (*A Blood-Dimmed Tide*) complements Bernard Nalty's long-standard *Strength for the Fight* in this evocative account of the vicissitudes and achievements of African Americans in the U.S. armed forces. Making extensive use of personal narratives, Astor concentrates on the changes in the period from the Spanish-American War through Korea. Beginning with the institutionalized racism prior to WWI, he outlines the conflict between a military that regarded blacks as unfit for effective combat and an African American community insistent on their right to serve as American citizens rather than accept segregated regiments. In both world wars, African American combat formations had mixed records. Usually poorly trained and commanded by black officers who received little respect and often racist white officers, black units were expected to fail. The legal desegregation of the armed forces after 1948 did little to modify this mind-set. Real change began only in Korea, when the black 24th Infantry Regiment became a scapegoat for a series of American disasters. Expanding on the 1996 Clay Blair/Army publication *Black Soldier, White Army*, Astor argues that the 24th's performance was systematically maligned, but it ironically caused the army to decide that integration was preferable to maintaining one large, unreliable formation. The balance of Astor's work is a coda that presents a success story in diminishing white-black tension. Racism, Astor demonstrates, has by no means disappeared from America's military. But race now matters less in uniform than it does elsewhere in America, and this achievement merits recognition. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.  
From Kirkus  
An all-encompassing chronicle of African-Americans' struggles to serve in the armed forces of the US, by popular military historian Astor (*The Mighty Eighth*, 1997, etc). Beginning with the story of Crispus Attucks, who was killed in the Boston Massacre (and without whom no multicultural textbook is complete), Astor covers the full sweep of the American armed forces in peace and in war, with remarkable clarity and vigor and a degree of research that shows a mastery of military, social, and political history. Although the experiences of blacks in the Civil War has been well documented (and even popularized by Hollywood), the author's account covers the essential details of those who fought for both North and South, and then moves on to look at their situation in the postwar Indian campaigns, the war with Spain, and the famous "Brownsville riot," in which an entire battalion was expelled from the army after a racial disturbance in a Texas town. Astor's work is aptly titled, considering, as it does, the struggle that African-Americans have had to wage to fight for a society that mistrusted their courage under fire. Surprisingly, the wars themselves don't serve as the high points of the narrative; rather, they punctuate the story of grievous wrongs with moments of astonishing bravery and sacrifice - followed by only small gains as peace returned. Of particular poignance are the stories of the men who went to sea, only to be offered positions as "seagoing bellhops, chambermaids, and dishwashers," and were then expelled from the navy when they publicized their plight in a major newspaper. Astor's work is so broad, and his arguments so vital, that it's a shame to give it a label as narrow as "military history." This is a work of major importance in African-American history. (photos, not seen) -- Copyright ©1998, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.  
About the Author  
Gerald Astor is the author of two works of military history: *The Mighty Eighth* and *A Blood Dimmed Tide*.