



Soldiering for Freedom: How the Union Army Recruited, Trained, and Deployed the U.S. Colored Troops (How Things Worked)

Bob Luke, John David Smith

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After President Lincoln issued the final Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863, Confederate slaves who could reach Union lines often made that perilous journey. A great many of the young and middle-aged among them, along with other black men in the free and border slave states, joined the Union army. These U.S. Colored Troops (USCT), as the War Department designated most black units, materially helped to win the Civil War—performing a variety of duties, fighting in some significant engagements, and proving to the Confederates that Northern manpower had practically no limits.

Soldiering for Freedom explains how Lincoln's administration came to recognize the advantages of arming free blacks and former slaves and how doing so changed the purpose of the war. Bob Luke and John David Smith narrate and analyze how former slaves and free blacks found their way to recruiting centers and made the decision to muster in. As Union military forces recruited, trained, and equipped ex-slave and free black soldiers in the last two years of the Civil War, white civilian and military authorities often regarded the African American soldiers with contempt. They relegated the men of the USCT to second-class treatment compared to white volunteers. The authors show how the white commanders deployed the black troops, and how the courage of the African American soldiers gave hope for their full citizenship after the war.

Including twelve evocative historical engravings and photographs, this engaging and meticulously researched book provides a fresh perspective on a fascinating topic. Appropriate for history students, scholars of African American history, or military history buffs, this compelling and informative account will provide answers to many intriguing questions about the U.S. Colored Troops, Union military strategy, and race relations during and after the tumultuous Civil War.

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