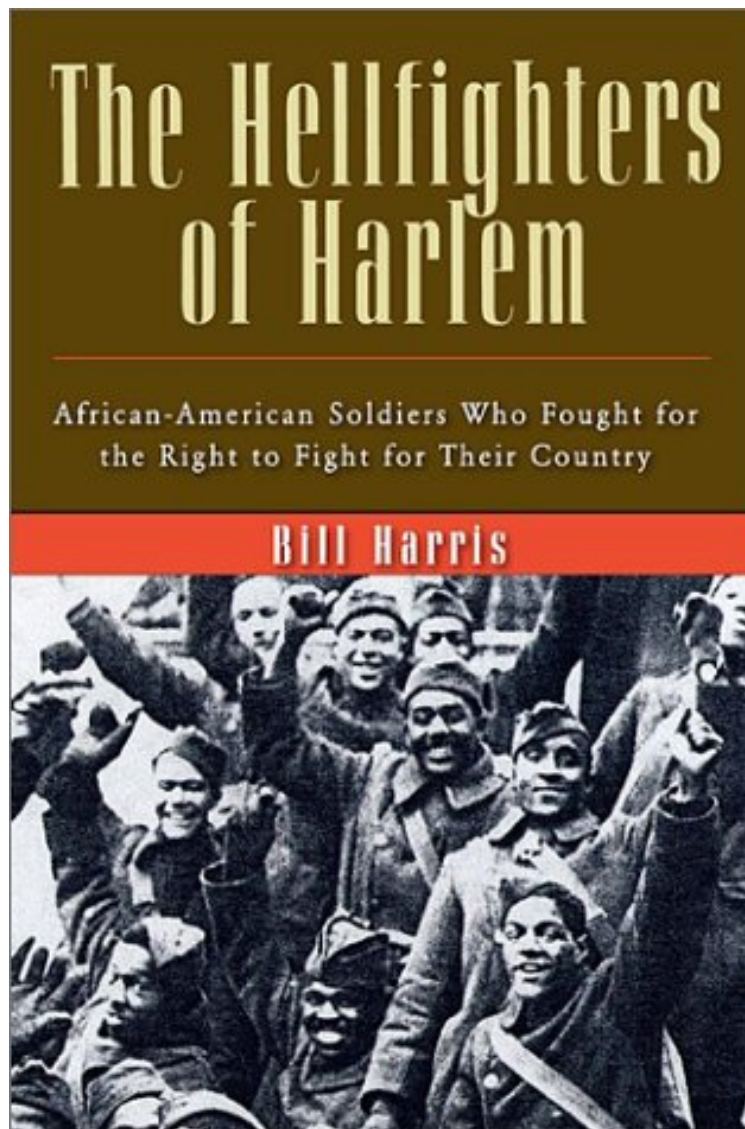


[PDF] The Hellfighters of Harlem: African-American Soldiers Who Fought for the Right to Fight for Their Country

The Hellfighters of Harlem: African-American Soldiers Who Fought for the Right to Fight for Their Country

Bill Harris

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Bill Harris : The Hellfighters of Harlem: African-American Soldiers Who Fought for the Right to Fight for Their Country before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Hellfighters of Harlem: African-American Soldiers Who Fought for the Right to Fight for Their Country:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Spectacular BookBy Nancy WilliamsonI had never heard of the Harlem Hellfighters. This is a book I could not put down. I have read a lot of books about slavery, racism and the plight of black people in America going back to their first arrival here, but I've never read one from the perspective of this book. I will definitely read it again and I am giving it to friends and family members for Christmas. I can't stop thinking and talking about it. It's about the achievements of a small group of African American musicians overcoming discrimination in the United States and in the military. It is a record of things the average American doesn't know and/or doesn't want to think about. If I were teaching American history, this would be at the top of my reading list. I cannot praise it highly enough. It's a jewel of historical reporting of a romanticized period in America. It brings to life a time in our history that was simultaneously exciting, tragic, uplifting, creative, frightening and amazing. It is set during the jazz age in New York and World War I. New York was as exciting as the same period in Paris. Despite war people danced all night, filled the clubs until dawn and The Hellfighters marched down 5th Avenue on the way to joining the boys overseas. I've always wished I had lived during those heady days in Paris. This book is not fiction but it reads like the very best fiction. It is history, fiction and romance all between two covers. Anyone who loves these three genres should run to the closest library and grab this book. You won't get much sleep until you turn the last page but it will be worth it.17 of 18 people found the following review helpful. Slapdash treatment of an important subjectBy Amy KnappWhile Bill Harris should be thanked for writing about this topic, the treatment he affords it is weak at best. The whole story of the 15th NYNG (later 369th Infantry) as told here is riddled with factual errors, ranging from the date of the creation of the regiment confused with its actual implementation, to having Colonel Hayward associated with it 3 years before he actually assumed command. References to other events are also wrong, most noticeably, the Houston Riot of 1917 which happened in the 24th Infantry, not the 8th Illinois. Harris wrongly refers to the 69th New York as a division named the "Rainbow Division" (the 69th was a regiment in the 42nd Division which was, and still is the "Rainbow Division")and also states that the 15th NY (369th) was not allowed to participate in the parade with the 69th. Many other white New York regiments (7th, 12th etc.) did not parade with the 69 as they were not chosen to represent New York in the 42nd Division, andHarris is wrong when he refers to the 369th as being formerly the 15th New York. The 369th was not designated as such until after they were in France, at the time of the parade they were still the 15th New York. They were never a part of the 42nd division, although they had hoped to be included in it. Perhaps one of the most egregious errors is the continuation of the myth that Henry Johnson was buried in an unmarked potters field in Albany when in fact he is buried in Arlington National Cemetery. Conspicuous by their absence are any reference to primary source documents which exist both in this country and France, nor are any of the standard published works on African Americans in The First World War cited. Little's "From Harlem to the Rhine" is used, as is Scott's "History of the Negro in the World War", but no other works on this period appear in the bibliography, and the former was written over 30 years ago and the latter at the conclusion of the war. There has been much scholarly work done since then. His overview of the African American experience in the US military is equally thin and again his bibliography omits many scholarly studies of this subject, focusing instead on unit histories or personal narratives.This book takes an important theme and does a poorly researched rush job to make it to press in time for the holidays. For a factual book on this subject one should still refer to Arthur Barbeau's "The Unknown Soldiers" or Bernard Nalty's "Strength for the Fight". The experience of African Americans in World War 1 and in the US Military is a crucial theme in American history, to which this book does not do justice. We can only hope that someone else produces a better work on it in the near future than Bill Harris has done with this.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great birthday giftBy Keith WinesBought this as a gift for my dad for his birthday.He tore through it in one day and recommended it to me. Buying this one as soon as I am done reading the book I am reading now.

Their distinguished World War I record featured the longest front line service of any American regiment, with not a soldier captured or a foot of ground lost. They were the first Allied unit to reach the Rhine River. Their distinguished Private Henry Johnson was awarded France's prestigious Croix de Guerre, for singlehandedly knocking out a platoon of twenty-eight German troops—yet Johnson is today still denied America's Medal of Honor. While the French government honored the 369th's battlefield exploits, the French people fell in love with its regimental band's hot jazz. This saga of soldiers whose struggle to reach the front lines was shadowed by racism begins with debates among black leaders over whether African-Americans should withhold support for the war until steps toward equality were made, then follows the harrowing path of the 15th Regiment of Colored Infantry's formation which, lacking a proper armory, drilled in the streets of Harlem and a local dance hall. The 15th was ready to fight by 1917, but was forbidden from serving under U.S. command by General John J. Pershing, who handed over the re-named 369th to the French Army. This rousing story of arms and a band—led by jazz pioneer Lieutenant James Reese Europe—that toured Europe's hospitals, villages, and cities, is a thrilling portrait of the soldiers whose return to U.S. soil, complete with a spectacular parade up Fifth Avenue, helped fuel the Harlem Renaissance. It is also the story of the 369th's contributions in the Pacific during World War II, and in Iraq during the Gulf War. It is a story of pride and accomplishment, not only of the Harlem Hellfighters, but of other black military heroes who have followed in their

footsteps. 8 pages of black-and-white photographs are also featured, celebrating the military valor and musical splendor of the U.S. Army's most famous all-black regiment.

From BooklistThe prevailing view that blacks were cowards excluded any consideration of enlisting them for military fighting duty in World War I. But because the nation was ill-equipped and low on manpower at the war's start, black troops were called into active duty, including the 369th regiment rooted in a New York National Guard unit centered in Harlem. General John J. Pershing, who'd had good experiences with black troops, was a strong supporter of blacks as fighters. Still, black infantry was banned from serving under U.S. command and were assigned to the French army. Harris recounts the numerous black troops' heroics and exploits, on and off the battlefield. He includes as a subtext the career of Lt. James Reese Europe, the black jazz pioneer whose band dazzled Europe and presented an American face often more appreciated in Europe than at home. Harris also provides an overview of black military involvement from the Revolutionary War through the Gulf War, highlighting history unknown by many. Vernon FordCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved