



Freedom for Themselves: North Carolina's Black Soldiers in the Civil War Era (Civil War America)

Richard M. Reid

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More than 5,000 North Carolina slaves escaped from their white owners to serve in the Union army during the Civil War. In *Freedom for Themselves* Richard Reid explores the stories of black soldiers from four regiments raised in North Carolina. Constructing a multidimensional portrait of the soldiers and their families, he provides a new understanding of the spectrum of black experience during and after the war.

Reid examines the processes by which black men enlisted and were trained, the history of each regiment, the lives of the soldiers' families during the war, and the postwar experiences of the veterans and their families living in an ex-Confederate state. By considering four regiments from a single state, Reid presents a cross section of a wide range of experiences and assesses what experiences proved largely universal among black troops. The full freedom they fought for and dreamed of having when the war ended did not materialize in their lifetimes, but Reid shows that many of them found in the army a kind of equality that was denied them in civilian life. The postwar benefits afforded to white veterans seldom crossed the color line. The accolades African American soldiers received, Reid demonstrates, came not from a new southern society, but from within their own communities, where black soldiers were seen and recognized as heroes.

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