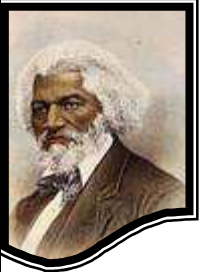


VOICES FROM THE EARTH, INC.  
CHAUTAUQUA  
SYMPOSIUM

Honoring  
The United States Colored Troops

# *With A Torch In Their Souls*



Date: September 26, 2013

Time: 9 am-1:30pm

Colebank Hall

Fairmont State University

Fairmont, WV

304-463-4561

[www.vfte.org](http://www.vfte.org)—[info@vfte.org](mailto:info@vfte.org)



# W

## elcome to the VFTE Chautauqua Symposium With A Torch in Their Souls: The United States Colored Troops in the Civil War

VFTE, a "travelling" theater, under the direction Ilene Evans, brings historical events directly you. VFTE's Chautauqua-style programs use historical portrayals, storytelling, and songs to recapture the chilling and inspiring exploits of some of the most famous men and women in America. Their unique theater presentations bring history to life by allowing the audience to step back in time and take part by interacting with the storytellers who are renowned scholars on their character's life and times. The interactive dialogue invites an ongoing inquiry into historical issues that continue to shape us today.

### Directors Notes from Ilene:

The setting for With a Torch in Their Souls is September 1864 in Port Royal, SC, two years after President Lincoln signed the emancipating proclamation into law followed by even stronger language bringing men of African descent into the federal military and arming them. The Department of the South is the staging ground for a radical rehearsal for reconstruction of the social and moral fabric of the South. The Treasury Department calls it "The Port Royal Experiment." Men of influence and conviction meet to examine the progress of this experiment. Thanks for joining me as we listen in.

Ilene Evans

Artistic Director of Voices From the Earth, Inc.

[www.vfte.org](http://www.vfte.org) 304-463-4561

***I have often thought that when the impartial historian shall sit down to write the story of the neglected heroes of the great war for freedom, that he will devote at least one page to this noble black soldier whose conduct on this occasion should give him an honored place among the world's gallant men. Then perhaps the millions of American people who read his story will hang their heads in shame when they recall.***



C. T. TROWBRIDGE  
Lieut. Col. 1st U. S. C. T.

**Lt. Col C.T. Trowbridge  
33<sup>rd</sup> USCT formerly known as  
1st South Carolina Volunteers**

## September 26, 2013 VFTE Chautauqua Symposium

### With a Torch in Their Souls: The United States

### Colored Troops of the Civil War



9:00 am -Welcome and Introduction to Chautauqua format

Historical Characters: James Armstead as Maj. Martin Delany, Charles Everett Pace as Frederick Douglass, Jamal Korum as Capt. Robert Smalls, and Joey Madia as Capt. Luis Emilio

9:30 am—Hari Jones – scholar lecture “Of Light and Liberty”

10:00 am—Questions for Scholar Hari Jones

- ◆ Who were the men of the USCT?

10:15 am—Small group discussion

- ◆ Is there a difference between freedom and equality?
- ◆ Do you think everyone’s concepts of freedom and equality were the same or different during the war? In what ways?
- ◆ Did the actions of the USCT affect the perceived success of Union?

10:30 am—Large Group discussion

- ◆ Is there a difference between freedom and equality today?
- ◆ Did wartime attitudes toward race change during peacetime? North? South?

11:00—Scholars Panel featuring all scholars

- ◆ What part did African Descent soldiers play in the overarching strategy for the conduct of the war?
- ◆ How did the perceptions of race class and gender change as a result of the actions of the USCT?

Noon Break

12:30 pm – Opening Remarks and Welcome –

12:35 - Portrayal of Captain Robert Smalls

1:00 pm - Portrayal of Captain Luis Emilio

1:25— Closing Remarks from Scholars and Evaluations



September 27. 2013 VFTE Chautauqua Symposium  
With a Torch in Their Souls: The United States  
Colored Troops of the Civil War

10:00 am -Welcome and Introduction to Chautauqua format.

Historical Characters: James Armstead as Maj. Martin Delany, Charles Everett Pace as Frederick Douglass, Jamal Koram as Capt. Robert Smalls, and Joey Madia as Capt. Luis Emilio

10: 30 am—Maj. Martin Delany Portrayal by Dr. James Armstead

11:00 am—Questions for Maj. Delany and Questions of the Scholars

11:15 am—Small group discussion

- ◆ What was the purpose of the Port Royal Experiment?
- ◆ What did people expect freedom to be like?
- ◆ Discuss the kinds of restraints newly freed people faced.
- ◆ Why were men of African decent so determined to fight?

11:30 am—Large Group discussion

- ◆ What constitutes freedom today?
- ◆ What were the lessons learned from the Port Royal Experiment? by the Black community by the White community? North? South?

Lunch Break

1:00 pm – Opening Remarks and Welcome

Hari Jones – scholar lecture “For Light and Liberty”

1:30 pm—Questions for Scholar Hari Jones

2:00 pm—Scholars Panel featuring all scholars

- ◆ What part did African Descent soldiers play in the overarching strategy for the conduct of the war?
- ◆ How did the perceptions of race class and gender change as a result of the actions of the USCT?

2:55 pm - Closing Remarks from Scholars

September 28, 2013 VFTE Chautauqua Symposium

With a Torch in Their Souls: The United States

Colored Troops of the Civil War



10:00 am -Welcome and Introduction to Chautauqua format

Historical Characters: James Armstead as Maj. Martin Delany, Charles Everett Pace as Frederick Douglass, Jamal Koram as Capt. Robert Smalls, and Joey Madia as Capt. Luis Emilio

10:30 am Lecture Capt. Hari Jones

11:00 am—Questions for Hari Jones and Chautauqua Scholars

11:15 am—Small group discussion

- ◆ What was the purpose of the Port Royal Experiment?
- ◆ Who supported Lincoln in this experiment?
- ◆ What was the place of the African American military troops in the Port Royal Experiment? Were there strategic objectives?
- ◆ Under what conditions did the men serve?
- ◆ How were they recruited?

11:30 am—Large Group discussion

- ◆ Read Trowbridge quote. Discuss
- ◆ Was the Port Royal Experiment a success?

Lunch Break

1:00 pm – Opening Remarks and Welcome

Portrayal of Frederick Douglass by Charles Pace

1:30 pm—Questions for Scholar Charles Pace

2:00 pm—Scholars Panel featuring all scholars

- ◆ How were the troops of the USCT assessed?
- ◆ How did the USCT affect the Armed forces in later years?

2:55 pm - Closing Remarks from Scholars

# **About the Scholars**



## **Captain Hari Jones USMC**



Hari Jones is the assistant director and curator of the Washington, D.C.-based African American Civil War Freedom Foundation and Museum. He is one of the foremost authorities on the role of African Americans in the Civil War. He served in the United States Marine Corps for over twenty years. He retired as a captain in 1997. Since then he has been conducting extensive research on African American military service throughout American history. Hari is convinced that one of the best ways to dispel the myths that marginalize the military contributions of African Americans is through museum exhibits. He was a content developer for the National Park Service (NPS) museum at the Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site at Tuskegee, Alabama, a content adviser for the American Civil War Center exhibit "Take Our Stand," and a content adviser for the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) exhibit "Discovering the Civil War."

## **Col. James Holmes Armstead**



Dr. J. Holmes Armstead is a retired professor of Strategy and International law from the US Naval War College. He has taught international law, strategy and national security policy for nearly 40 years. Professor Armstead has served on faculties at Stanford University, Pepperdine University, the University of California, The University of Nevada, Southern University, the US Naval Postgraduate School, Lewis University, the Virginia Military Institute and Washington and Lee University. He has also lectured at the British Joint Services Staff College and taught as a visiting professor at the Universite d'Pau in France and as an exchange professor at Richmond College in the University of London. He has lectured at senior staff colleges in Poland, Austria, Germany, Slovenia, and Malawi, as well as the US Army War College, at the United States Military Academy and the South African Military Academy. Counsel to the American Bar Association Office of Human Rights, Dr. Armstead lectures on International law at the Austrian Academy of Higher Military Studies in Vienna.

**Charles Everett Pace** has graduate degrees from the University of Texas at Austin (B.A., biology) and Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana (M.A. American studies: history and anthropology). As well as being a Program Advisor at the Texas Union, University of Texas at Austin, Charles has taught at The University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Purdue University, and most recently at Centre College in Kentucky. His research area is



the anthropology of performance, experience and visual communications. He has performed and conducted workshops in hundreds of cities across the United States. Pace has also conducted performance-based public diplomacy work for the United States Information Agency (USIA) and across Africa. Pace's body of work explores over 200 years of African American thought; and, shows how Black leaders such as York, Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. Du Bois, Langston Hughes, Gordon Parks, and Malcolm X, have helped to advance democracy in America.

**Baba Jamal Koram, B.A., M.S., and Ed.S.,** is an African American storyteller of great distinction. He has travelled the world sharing his

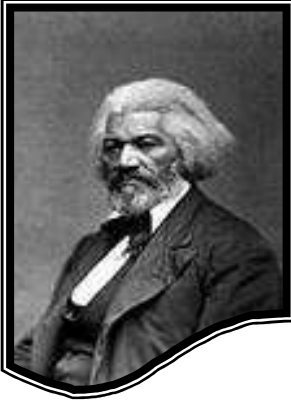


stories of resilience and the creative excellence of Africans in America. He has earned the title of Griot by his example of leadership and guardianship of African American culture. He is the recipient of several storytelling and academic awards. Baba Jamal has received a Charles Stewart Mott Fellowship, The Zora Neal Hurston Award, and Phi Delta Kappa recognition. He has served as the president of the National Association of Black Storytellers. He created a cultural workshop at historic Franklinton Center at Bricks for storytellers of African descent to continue timeless oral tradition and African American Heritage. Publications include a original version of Aesop's Fables.

**Joey Madia** is a playwright, teaching artist, director, and actor. He is the Artistic



Director/Resident Playwright of Seven Stories Theatre Company, Inc. and Resident Playwright at Youth Stages, LLC. He has appeared in or directed over 80 plays. He specializes in social justice theatre and participatory plays for youth. He has written and performed pieces about Civil War captains Louis Emilio and Thomas Maulsby. He has worked with The Epilepsy Foundation of NJ and Camp NOVA to bring theatre to students with disabilities and has won three writing awards from VSA of NJ. His first novel, *Jester-Knight*, was published in 2009. His second novel, *Minor Confessions of an Angel Falling Upward* was published in 2012.



## **Frederick Douglass, Abraham Lincoln: In Service of a Reconstructed Humanity** by Charles Everett Pace

...In 1848, following his move from Lynn, Massachusetts, to Rochester, New York, Douglass, in becoming his “own man,” joined the political abolitionist in a transition that placed him at odds with the “moral persuasion’s” position of the Garrisonians. Garrison championed three main points which Douglass based on his conversations with Gerrit Smith, which he came to doubt and, eventually, to oppose. The Garrison position was: 1. The U. S. Constitution is a pro-slavery document; therefore, they did not engage in party politics, politics that derived its validity from said Constitution; 2. the church was a proslavery institution; and 3. moral “suasion” should be the strongest action employed to overthrow the institution of slavery.

Douglass aligned himself with Smith, arguing that the Constitution was actually anti-slavery, and thus it was not only proper but a wise choice to leverage the power of the political mainstream in his opposition to slavery. He eventually concluded that while Southern churches were proslavery and thus, there should be no union with them, this restriction did not apply to Northern churches that broke their affiliation with their Southern counterparts. Influenced by the ideas of John Brown and outraged by the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the Fugitive Slave Bill, and the Dred Scott Decision in 1850, Douglass concluded that armed resistance might be necessary to oppose the growing power of the Southern planters.

Thus, by the time that he published his second book, *MY BONDAGE AND MY FREEDOM*, in 1855, Douglass was indeed free not only from the physical power of slave holders to control his body and labor, but free from Garrison to control his mind. Frederick Douglass, being his own man, assumed the mantle of national leadership in his own right. In restructuring and ‘reconstructing’ his position relative to the Garrisonians, Douglass succeeds in ‘reconstructing’ himself.

Thus Douglass was now in a position to be both a moral reformer and a radical politician. He had positioned himself to alternate his stance in accordance with the changes in the world. And, like Lincoln, Douglass understood the persuasive power of words to influence and sometimes even to control public opinion, as well as to advance one’s moral and political agenda. Therefore, when it became clear that the “war of the rebellion” was not a “skirmish,” a fight

that would be easily and effectively put down by Northern troops, both Douglass and Lincoln escalated their efforts in personal and political reconstruction.

Douglass called for a war to "free the slaves," as well as, a war to "save the Union." He also called for the even more radical position of arming black men to fight in the Union army. Douglass felt that this position would have the multiplier effect of joining slavery's moral opposition with the political agenda of saving the Union.

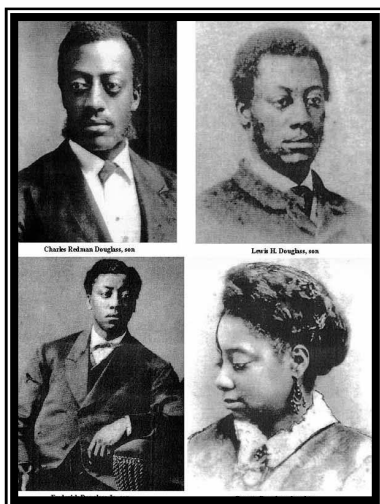
This was, of course, precisely the position that Lincoln himself had reached by late 1862. He declared in his Emancipation Proclamation that as of January 1, 1863, all slave in the rebellious states were now and "forever free." Lincoln also adopted the radical position, long advocated by Douglass, that black military might was a resource that must be tapped, and thus Lincoln, too, became a radical abolitionist.

When Lincoln gave the order, Douglass himself became a recruiter for the Union army. He was a major recruiter for the Massachusetts 54<sup>th</sup> and 55<sup>th</sup> Regiments. His oldest sons were his first two recruits. Also, in a meeting with Secretary of War Stanton, Douglass agreed that upon receipt of his promised commission in the officer corps, he would join General Lorenzo Thomas in the Mississippi Valley. However when his commission was not issued, Douglass refused to join the army but continued in his recruitment work.

In the end, it was this juxtaposition of the abolitionist "War to Save the Union" that set Douglas up to become not only a challenger, but also a champion of Lincoln as a symbol of reconstructionist ideals. It set Douglass on the road to becoming a staunch and life-long Republican operative.

After the war, Douglass worked to aid Lincoln's Reconstruction aims. After five years of combat with more that 600,000 dead, northern and southern

whites were much more willing to unify with each other than either side was willing to unify with blacks, whom they regarded as the primary beneficiaries of the war. Many, if not most, whites questioned not only the desirability but also the very possibility of union, in terms of human equality, between whites and blacks.



*Frederick and Anna Douglass' four living children, Charles, Lewis, Fred Jr. and Rosetta.*

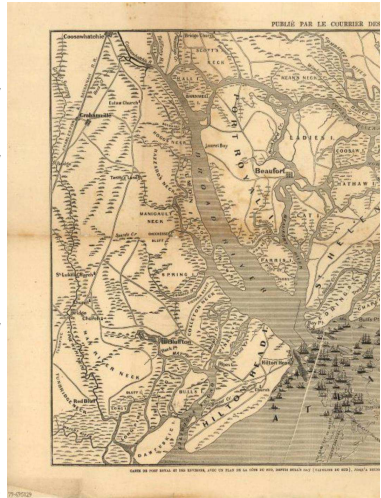


# The Port Royal Experiment

## VFTE Companion Reader by Ilene

On November 7, 1861, Union forces consisting of approximately 60 ships and 20,000 men under the command of Union Navy Admiral Samuel F. DuPont and Army General Thomas W. Sherman attacked Confederate forces commanded by Brig. Gen. Thomas F. Drayton (a local plantation owner) who was defending Hilton Head Island at Fort Walker and Fort Beauregard. By 3:00 p.m., the Confederate forces had retreated from the forts. When Union troops landed on Hilton Head Island, they encountered no resistance and discovered that the island's white inhabitants had already fled to the mainland, leaving behind the people who had been held in bondage for generations. Over 10,000 blacks remained, eager for the refuge and protection the Federal military flag offered. The Port Royal Experiment began in November 1862 on Saint Helena Island, South Carolina, in Beaufort County.

The Port Royal Experiment was an effort to prepare newly freed people for full participation in post-Civil War society with educational and land ownership opportunities. The program was created during the American Civil War to establish freedmen and women in a successful community to work the land abandoned by plantation owners. A second component of the experiment was to recruit and train men of African descent for soldiers in the military campaigns and have them fight next to white soldiers on equal footing of pay and promotions. Northern abolitionists and their Anti-slavery organizations supported the the freedmen and women in becoming self-sufficient. It was their declaration of war against slavery; and a dream of an integrated social and political Union comprised of people from both races and cultures. Their intent was to prove the superiority of free labor and to transplant Northern values and remodel southern civil and social society.



At the same time, anti-Catholic bigotry inspired Republicans to promote public education throughout the South during the 1870s. As a result, Port Royal became a model of what Reconstruction could have been. African Americans quickly demonstrated their ability to work the land efficiently and live

# In the American Civil War

## Evans and Dr. Connie Park Rice

independent of white control. With assigned daily tasks for growing cotton, the residents of Port Royal had extra time to cultivate their own crops, fish, and hunt. The sale of surplus crops provided the funds to acquire small amounts of property. Schools, open to all ages, for reading and writing lessons, provided residents with the education they needed to make their community successful. Their achievements made at Port Royal between 1861 and 1865 proved that social, economic, and political equality were possible.



In 1863, General Ormsby M. Mitchel permitted African Americans to establish the town of Mitchelville on Hilton Head Island, South Carolina. Built on the former Drayton Plantation, the town was close in proximity to the military camps. Mitchelville became the heart of a program known as **“The Port Royal Experiment.”**

Mitchelville had neatly-arranged streets, one-quarter-acre lots, elected officials, a church, and laws addressing such issues as community behavior and sanitation, tax collections, and compulsory education law for children between the ages of six and fifteen, most likely the first such laws in the South.

This experiment was a major media event. Black family life and loyalty were on trial, as were Black soldiers and their manhood.

There were two questions to be determined in the mind of the American Government: Will the people of African Descent work for a living? Will they fight for their freedom? The entire country continually scrutinized and assessed the “experiment.” Newspaper journalists embedded with the quartermasters in charge of daily life and with troops during military action published reports in the weekly papers that altered public opinion and political policy throughout the war. Those who doubted the military success of Black troops in the field fighting alongside White troops were both surprised and impressed at the valor of the sable warriors. United in a common cause bigotry began to ease between the races – at least on the battlefield.

When the war ended in 1865, President Andrew Johnson ended the experiment and returned the land to its previous white owners, thereby ending the dream of a unified and egalitarian society.





## Martin Robinson Delany (1812-1885)

By James Armstead

Martin Delany was a Renaissance man and pioneer. He trained and served as a physician, judge, political activist, lecturer, journalist author, explorer and soldier. Delany was born of a free mother in Charlestown, Virginia (later West Virginia), on May 6, 1812. And following the legal norms of the age he was considered free, based primarily on the legal status of his mother. In 1822 at the age of 10 he moved with his family to Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, so that they might better

themselves in a somewhat more moderate racial climate. Martin's mother, in violation of Virginia law, began to teach her son to read. Unfortunately, that activity was soon discovered. Worrying that severe punishment might follow, the family decided to move before criminal legal action could be initiated. They immediately headed north where it was not illegal for his family to provide an education for young Martin. He was enrolled in a school for African Americans in the city of Pittsburgh, where he later met his future wife, Katherine Richards. They married and the union was eventually blessed with eleven children, seven of whom surviving into adulthood.

In 1843 Delany founded one of the earliest African American newspapers, the *Mystery*, devoted particularly to the abolition of slavery. Proud of his African ancestry, Delany advocated unrestricted equality for African Americans, and he participated in conventions to protest slavery. He worked closely during these years with Frederick Douglass and William Lloyd Garrison. In 1847 became co-editor with Douglass of the *North Star*, the leading African American abolitionist publication in the United States. But theirs would be a tempestuous relationship.

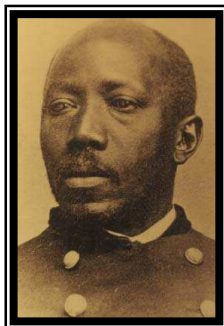
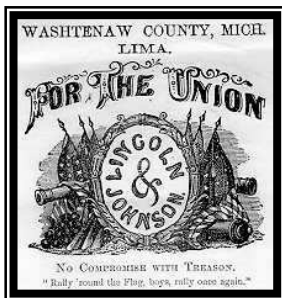
He published his first book in 1852: *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States, Politically Considered*. He soon began to agitate on the lecture circuit for a separate nation, attempting to persuade African Americans to migrate from America and settle elsewhere, suggesting at various times Canada, Africa and locations in Latin America. In 1854 he helped organize a National Emigration Convention and was considered a rather controversial figure.

In May of 1859 Delany sailed from New York for the African continent: He embarked on an exploration of various central African territories that

would last nearly two years. His 1859-1860 visit to the country of the Yorubas (part of modern-day Nigeria) to negotiate with local kings the settling African Americans there is summarized in The Official Report of the Niger Valley Exploring Party (1861; reprinted, 1969). He lectured in England after leaving Africa and was even made a Fellow of the Royal Society for his exploration of several unknown African territories but his political gaze would soon turn westwards given the events of 1860. While he was living and working in England, basking in some well earned, but newfound adulation the War Between the States began across the Atlantic Ocean.

With the Civil War raging, Delany returned to the United States and he immediately realized that the prospects for freedom of African Americans had reached a new height. Delany dropped his work concerning migration; instead he concentrated on Black men joining the struggle for freedom, as the manpower needs of the Federal Army indicated that considerably more troops would be required to suppress the Southern rebellion. Many began to argue for the induction of Black troops and Delany was involved in that agitation. He received an audience with the newly elected President Abraham Lincoln and cajoled the beleaguered President with the vision of a “grand army of Black liberators” swarming the rebellious south and bringing freedom and relief to the States presently in rebellion and supporting the overwhelmed and frustrated Union forces then fighting.

Lincoln affirmed that conversation, relating that that too was his vision and he had been waiting for someone to help him put this into effect. He immediately commended Dr. Delaney to Secretary of War William Stanton as a most intelligent man, not an unusual position for a politician to take when finding agreement with their any or their notions of questionable popularity. Lincoln appointed Delany to recruit African Americans into Union Army. He was commissioned in the grade of Major and oversaw the recruitment of more than 180,000 Black soldiers, which amounted to nearly 10% of the Union Army before the war ended. Delany worked tirelessly during the war to recruit African American soldiers, see them gainfully employed in meaningful operations and treated as equal partners to their fellows in uniform.





## **Capt. Luis Emilio (1844–1918)** **54th Massachusetts**

By Joey Madia

Emilio was born on December 22, 1844 in Salem, Massachusetts, the son of a Spanish immigrant who made his living as a music instructor. Although the minimum age for service in the Union army was 18, in 1861 — at age 16 — Emilio gave his age as 18 and enlisted in Company F of the 23rd Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, a regiment formed from the Union Drill Club, which he and his friends had started with 100 old muskets donated by a wealthy pa-

tron. On February 8, 1862 he had his first experience of combat at Roanoke Island. Seemingly fearless and eager to fight, in September 1862 he was promoted to the rank of Sergeant.

Emilio was among the group of original officers of the 54th selected by Massachusetts War Governor John Albion Andrew. He mustered in as a 2nd Lieutenant on March 30, 1863. Two weeks later, he was promoted to 1st Lieutenant, and on May 27, he was made Captain of Company E. In May of 1863, General Benjamin F. Butler, commander of the Department of the South, requested the presence of the 54th in South Carolina. The Confederate Congress had just let it be known that white officers involved with colored troops would be deemed as inciting servile insurrection and if captured would be put to death or otherwise punished. Some months previous, Jefferson Davis had declared General Butler an outlaw, further stating that any slaves captured with arms were to be returned to their states of origin. On June 3 the regiment arrived at Port Royal and several companies were assigned to Colonel James Montgomery's command, where they were forced to take part in raiding, plundering, and burning the town of Darien.

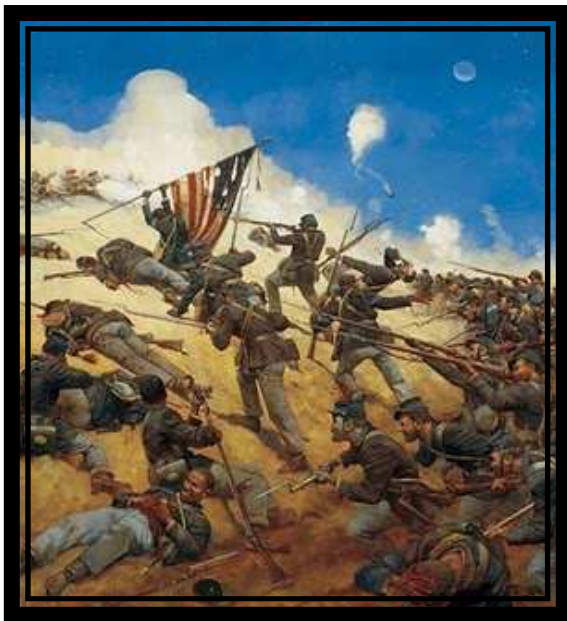
After fierce protest by the officers, it was the last of such raids in which the 54th would take part. Later that month, when the regiment was mustered for pay, the enlisted men were offered \$10 (laborer wages) instead of the promised \$13 paid to soldiers, a situation they refused to accept. Emilio stood by his men for many months as the commanding officers and governor sought rectification of this egregious error.

Captain Emilio emerged from the ferocious second assault on Fort Wagner on July 18, 1863 as the regiment's acting commander, since all of the other ranking officers, including their commander, Col. Robert Gould Shaw, had been killed or wounded. More than a third of the 54th were killed, wounded, or missing

in that engagement. The regiment was key to the success of the siege that finally made Fort Wagner fall. At the start of 1864, Emilio and his men performed guard and labor duty further south, culminating in the Battle of Olustee, Florida on the 20th of February, where they protected the left flank and saved the day at great cost of lives.

Although the men of the 54th were gaining respect from other regiments, the government was still refusing to pay their full wages and requests to promote colored soldiers to officer rank were continually denied. Emilio remained steadfast in his belief that his men had earned these rights.

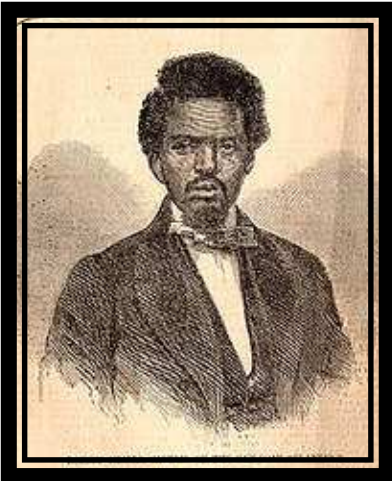
He fought with the 54th in many more engagements, including James Island and Honey Hill, and oversaw their duties as part of a 5,000-man "Coast Division" out of Port Royal formed in support of General William T. Sherman's "March to the Sea." Captain Emilio mustered out of the Union army on March 29, 1865, still not yet 21 years old, having never missed a single day of action with his men other than a 30-day leave at the end of 1864 to attend to family business. After a successful career in real estate, and despite the heartbreak of the premature deaths of his wife and all three of his children, Emilio contributed a well-received article to the *Springfield Republican* (Mass.) about the assault on Fort Wagner, which gave him the confidence to write his regimental history, *A Brave Black Regiment*, which was published in 1891. It is considered by many scholars to be one of the best books ever written about the experience of black soldiers and their officers in the American Civil War.



**REGIMENTAL  
MOTTO:  
LIBERTY, LOYALTY,  
UNITY**

**IN HOC SIGNO  
VINCES  
(In this sign we  
conquer)**





## **Robert Smalls (1839- 1915)**

### **U.S.S. Naval Captain**

By Ilene Evans

I was born in Beaufort, SC on April 5, 1839 to at the Henry McKee Household. My mother, Lydia, was 43 at the time and owned and enslaved by Mr. McKee. Both she and my father were kept as a house servants. We lived in a two room shack behind the McKee house. As a boy, one day my mother read a speech to me that was by Frederick Douglass. I would never be the same. I was going be like him. I would be free. Someday.

As a teenager, I became a waiter at the Planter Hotel and I eventually became an expert sailor. In July 1861, I was made a deck-hand on *The Planter*, a Confederate transport steamer. I was one of 8 enslaved crewmen. While on the *Planter*, I was promoted to wheelman. I had memorized all the shoals, the reefs, the channels... and I knew that freedom lie across the water, beyond the Federal blockade—the line of Union ships guarding the ports. In April of 1862, when General David Hunter took command of the Department of the South, the word went around that he declared that all the slaves in his territory free and welcome to fight for the Union. I began to watch and listen carefully for a chance use our familiar travel routes to escape.

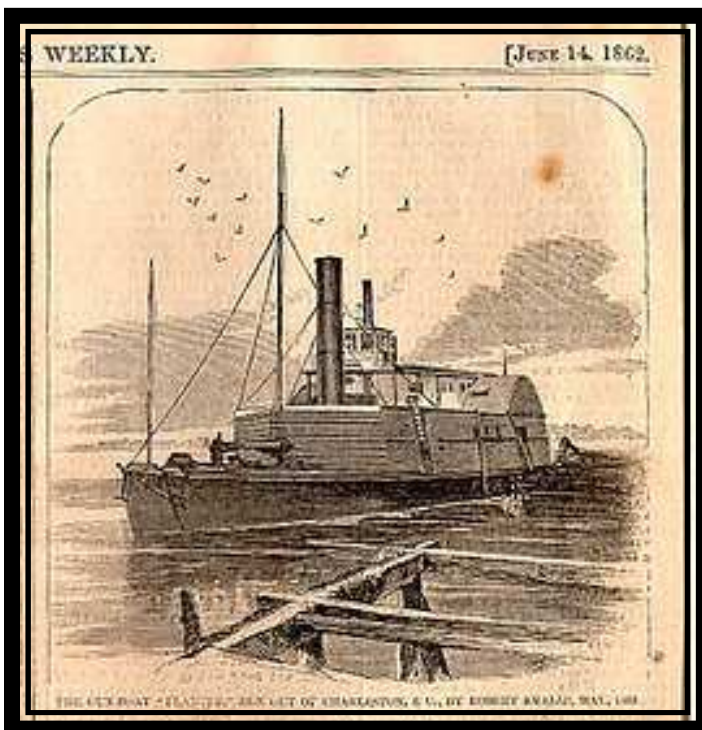
One day, when the officers left on leave, me and one of the crew was acting a fool -- I put on the Captain's hat. My ship-mate said, "Funny....you look just like the Captain." The idea was planted. My opportunity came May 13, 1862. The crew went ashore to be with their families even though they were violating regulations by doing so. They had left us yeomen alone onboard *the Planter* unguarded. (We had given them reason to trust us.) At 3:00 a.m. when all was quiet and still, we set sail. I was wearing Captain Relyea's cap and adopting his mannerisms. In this way, all the while I was up there on deck my head was turned one way—to Port Royal.

I was able to get the boat through all of the checkpoints. By 10 am, we were safely in port at Port Royal. Upon surrendering the boat to a Lt. Nichols, I told him, "I thought this ship would be of use of Uncle Abe." The ship was then turned over to US Admiral Samuel DuPont. *The Planter* was valuable to the Union not only for the steamship it was, but for the weapons on board and especially the Confederate Book of codes from the signal corps, the meaning of the

## Flag Signals.

We were rewarded for our capture of the Planter and I was kept on as a pilot. I received \$1500 for leading the mission. I continue to work for Admiral DuPont, piloting the soldiers where he says - and his flagship, *the Wabash*. I hear that was the very ship that entered St. Helena sound and liberated Port Royal in November 7, 1861.

Admiral DuPont was impressed that I could read and write and that I could speak Gullah, the language of the island people in the South that made me a representative to the Port Royal Experiment. This position allowed me to meet Secretary of War Stanton and Mr. Lincoln himself. I have received a commission in the navy, I am a captain now. I told the President, African-Americans will be better soldiers because they will be fighting for their freedom. Although I was born a slave, I was a man and ought to be free, and I would be free or die. My people need no special defense, for the past history of them in this country proves them to be the equal of my people anywhere. All they need is an equal chance in the battle of life.



The Confederate Steamship captured by Robert Smalls "The Planter" as reported by Harper's Weekly June 14, 1862.



## Resources

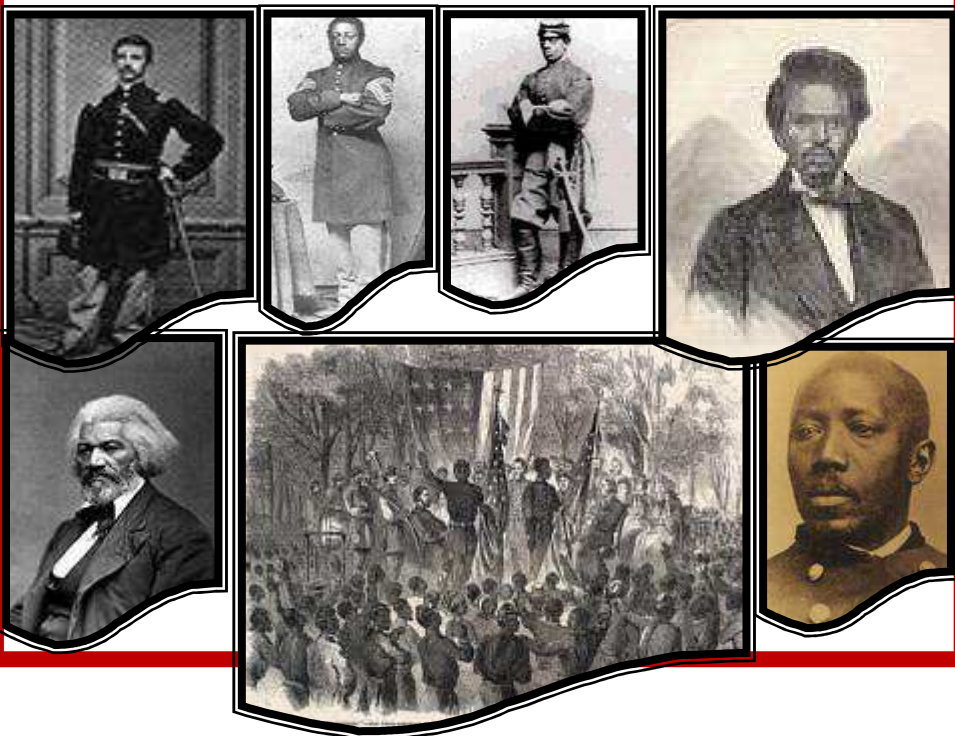
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