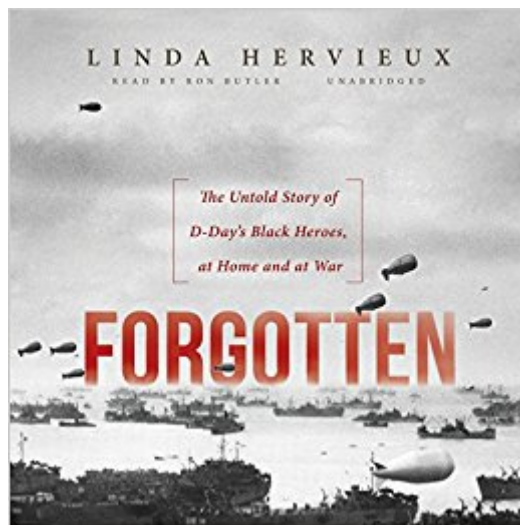




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# Forgotten: The Untold Story Of D-day's Black Heroes, At Home And At War



## Synopsis

[Read by Ron Butler] The injustices of 1940s Jim Crow America are brought to life in this extraordinary blend of military and social history, an account that pays tribute to the valor of an all-black battalion whose crucial contributions at D-day have gone unrecognized to this day. In the early hours of June 6, 1944, the 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion, a unit of African American soldiers, landed on the beaches of France. Their orders were to man a curtain of armed balloons meant to deter enemy aircraft. One member of the 320th would be nominated for the Medal of Honor, an award he would never receive because the nation's highest decoration was not given to black soldiers in World War II. Drawing on newly uncovered military records and dozens of original interviews with surviving members of the 320th and their families, Linda Hervieux tells the story of these heroic men charged with an extraordinary mission, whose contributions to one of the most celebrated events in modern history have been overlooked. Thousands of African Americans were sent abroad to fight for liberties denied them at home, including these members of the 320th: Wilson Monk, a jack-of-all-trades from Atlantic City; Henry Parham, the son of sharecroppers from rural Virginia; William Dabney, an eager seventeen-year-old from Roanoke, Virginia; and Samuel Mattison, a charming romantic from Columbus, Ohio. In Europe, these soldiers discovered freedom they had not known in a homeland that treated them as second-class citizens -- experiences they carried back to America, fueling the budding civil-rights movement. In telling the story of the 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion, Hervieux offers a vivid account of the tension between racial politics and national service in wartime America and a moving narrative of human bravery and perseverance in the face of injustice.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Hard to believe this story hasn't been written before. Linda Hervieux's *Forgotten* is essential, fiercely dramatic, and ultimately inspiring. All Americans should read this World War II history, which doubles as a civil-rights primer, to learn the true cost of freedom." --Douglas Brinkley, New York Times bestselling author of *Cronkite* "Linda Hervieux's *Forgotten* is a magnificent achievement, an inspiring story -- long overdue -- of an African-American US Army unit that landed against fierce opposition on Omaha Beach on D-day, June 6, 1944. In this mesmerizing book Hervieux relates how those GIs abruptly converted from civilians into soldiers and remained focused on their military tasks for years despite oppressive discrimination and apathy on the home front. *Forgotten* will surely appeal to both general readers and those with an abiding interest in World War II history." --Joseph Balkoski, author of *Omaha Beach: D-Day, June 6, 1944* "An account of the tension between racial politics and national service in wartime America through the story of the 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion." --Publishers Weekly

In the early hours of June 6, 1944, the 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion, a unit of African American soldiers, landed on the beaches of France. Their orders were to man a curtain of armed balloons meant to deter enemy aircraft. One member of the 320th would be nominated for the Medal of Honor, an award he would never receive. The nation's highest decoration was not given to black soldiers in World War II. Drawing on newly uncovered military records and dozens of original interviews with surviving members of the 320th and their families, Linda Hervieux tells the story of these heroic men charged with an extraordinary mission, whose contributions to one of the most celebrated events in modern history have been overlooked. Members of the 320th and thousands of other African Americans were sent abroad to fight for liberties denied them at home. In England and throughout Europe, these soldiers discovered freedom they had not known in a homeland that treated them as second-class citizens' experiences they carried back to America, fueling the budding civil rights movement. Hervieux offers a vivid account of the tension between racial politics and national service in wartime America, and a moving narrative of human bravery and perseverance in the face of injustice. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

"*Forgotten*" is thoroughly researched and thoroughly readable. It is the story of the 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion, a unit of African-American soldiers who landed in France during the D-Day

invasion via a U.S. Army system then-rife with institutional racism. While their mission at Normandy--particularly the heroism of a medic named Waverly Woodson, who tended to the wounded and the drowning for 30 hours before collapsing from his own wounds--was mentioned in army press releases and received extensive coverage in the black press, their contributions quickly disappeared from the public record and public discourse. Medals, if they came at all, were of a lesser degree. Even the GI Bill had limits in its implementation, as veterans recount, since trades such as TV repairman became de facto earmarked for white veterans in the parts of the country where Jim Crow persisted. Hervieux threads strands of social history, military history and journalistic interviews with the handful of 320th veterans who were alive during the 10-year span of her project to create a stirring narrative that is never sentimental. Boardwalk Empire fans will enjoy the vibrant chapter on Atlantic City, NJ, and the enduring love story of Wilson Monk and Mertina Madison. Quiz night and general knowledge aficionados will appreciate the chapter on the history of barrage balloons. British readers like me will find fascinating the policy battles that surrounded the stationing of U.S. soldiers on UK soil. "Forgotten" does the men and families of the 320th honor.

This is an important book to read. It describes, what many of us already know, how segregation and Jim Crow and the Army treated our African Americans before and during WWII. It is difficult to understand how the nation treated fellow Americans in the south and in the Armed Forces while fighting the Nazi's. It is a shameful part of our history.

I'm about halfway through the book and I would highly recommend it. The writing is crisp and descriptive and the reporting is impeccable. You feel like you're reading something really 'new,' not a rehashed version of events. I keep feeling amazed and somewhat ashamed at how little I know about that era in American history, yet grateful I picked up this book.

After seeing Linda on a talk show, I decided to buy her book. Though very depressing, I am glad that I've had the opportunity to learn so much more about our African Americans brothers who's crucial contributions on D-Day have gone unrecognized. So, little is known about them and their contributions. They are even omitted during the month of February, Black History month!!!

Excellent read for all interested in the truth. It is especially interesting for military veterans and for all interested in the fair and honorable treatment of veterans.

Did not expect much from this book. It was only \$1.99 through Book Bub and I figured I would read a few pages because I had heard very little about any balloon battalion in WW2. I read it in one afternoon. It is riveting. It gives a short history of what African American soldiers faced during basic training. With Jim Crow laws rampant the army sent black men to states like Georgia and North Carolina for training. The book details what the men faced and how they dealt with the blatant racism. It also touches on the exact opposite treatment the men received when they got to England. Unbelievable. I certainly recommend this book to any student of history or anyone who wants to learn more about the treatment of African Americans in the military during the 40's. It also touches on the way perceptions change during the war among white commanders and the white enlisted man towards these brave men.

Fascinating read. This book is well researched, well presented. It panders to no one. The content allows the reader to form opinions on one's own. The author gives much detail of the times while at the same time presenting to the reader the background and biographical detail of the individual persons whose lives have for the most part been ignored.

Well done account of African American boys and men, before, during and after WW II; from their segregated and demeaning days at home, to equally harsh treatment in the US Army and then back home in victory, only to be thrust back to a viciously Jim Crow homeland. Heroism was ordinary, but recognition from a White run Army and Government was meager and often belated. A must read for anyone seeking a clearer understanding of racism in this the "Land of the Free".

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