



Forgotten: The Untold Story of D-Day's Black Heroes, at Home and at War

Linda Hervieux

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The injustices of 1940s Jim Crow America are brought to life in this extraordinary blend of military and social history—a story 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. 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—Wilson Monk, a jack-of-all-trades from Atlantic City; Henry Parham, the son of sharecroppers from rural Virginia; William Dabney, an eager 17-year-old from Roanoke, Virginia; Samuel Mattison, a charming romantic from Columbus, Ohio—and thousands of other African Americans were sent abroad to fight for liberties denied them at home. In England and 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.

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