

## BOOK REVIEW

### **HALF AMERICAN, HALF AMAZING: A REVIEW OF *HALF AMERICAN* BY MATTHEW F. DELMONT AND AN EXPLORATION OF EXECUTIVE ACTION DURING WORLD WAR II AND ITS IMPACT ON BLACK SOLDIERS**

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Matthew F. Delmont's new book, *Half American: The Epic Story of African Americans Fighting World War II at Home and Abroad* (2022),<sup>1</sup> enriches the ongoing scholarship related to critical race theory<sup>2</sup> and the effects of executive action on the lived experience of Black Americans.<sup>3</sup> Delmont presents a well-woven narrative of the experience of Black American soldiers during World War II. Pieced together from letters, court documents, and articles published during the war, this book sheds light on accounts previously buried beneath a shield of trauma, frustration, and disbelief. *Half American* joins the limited collection of publications

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1. For other works by Matthew F. Delmont, see *BLACK QUOTIDIAN: EVERYDAY HISTORY IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS* (2019); *MAKING ROOTS: A NATION CAPTIVATED* (2016); *WHY BUSING FAILED: RACE, MEDIA, AND THE NATIONAL RESISTANCE TO SCHOOL DESEGREGATION* (2016); *THE NICEST KIDS IN TOWN: AMERICAN BANDSTAND, ROCK 'N' ROLL, AND THE STRUGGLE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS IN 1950S PHILADELPHIA* (2012).

2. See Jacey Fortin, *Critical Race Theory: A Brief History*, N.Y. TIMES, Nov. 8, 2021, which defines critical race theorists as those who "reject the philosophy of 'colorblindness.'" They acknowledge the stark racial disparities that have persisted in the United States despite decades of civil rights reforms, and they raise structural questions about how racist hierarchies are enforced, even among people with good intentions.

3. See, e.g., Vivian E. Hamilton, *Reform, Retrench, Repeat: The Campaign Against Critical Race Theory, Through the Lens of Critical Race Theory*, 28 WM. & MARY J. RACE, GENDER & SOC. JUST. 61, 75 (2021) (in response to the publication of the 1619 Project, President Trump issued Executive Order 13950 "to combat offensive and anti-American race and sex stereotyping and scapegoating." The 1619 Project is a *New York Times Magazine* initiative that "aims to reframe the country's history by placing the consequences of slavery and the contributions of black Americans at the very center of our national narrative.")

that explore the impact of presidential action on Black soldiers during World War II.<sup>4</sup>

The book lifts its title from a letter written to the editor of *The Pittsburgh Courier* posing the questions,

Should I sacrifice my life to live *half American*? Will things be better for the next generation in the peace to follow? Would it be demanding too much to demand full citizenship rights in exchange for the sacrificing of my life? Is the kind of America I know worth defending?  
(p. xi)

The letter, written by James G. Thompson, expressed the sentiments of many Black Americans of the time—without civil rights, American citizenship is incomplete. However, more than two million Black Americans saw World War II as an opportunity to escape second-class status.<sup>5</sup> Delmont highlights the wartime efforts of familiar heroes like Medgar Evers. Before making history as a leader in the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, Evers looked to the U.S. military as a way to escape the overt racism he experienced daily.<sup>6</sup> At the age of twelve, a friend of the Evers family was lynched, and the man’s bloody clothing hung on a fence for more than a year as a sign of intimidation. These regular acts of violence drove Medgar to drop out of high school and follow his brother into the Army during WWII.<sup>7</sup>

Evers found solace and a sense of humanity while serving in the European theater. Although Evers was assigned to a segregated field battalion,<sup>8</sup> his interactions while stationed in France were “the first time in his life that white people had treated him like a full human being, and he questioned if he could ever return to Mississippi.” (p. 225) But for many Black WWII soldiers, the policies of Jim Crow cast a familiar shadow over their military experience. The United States took the position its military should embrace Jim Crow segregation and turn a blind eye to racist attacks against Black soldiers to appease local residents where soldiers were stationed in preparation for combat overseas.<sup>9</sup> (pp. 161-166)

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4. See, e.g., RAWN JAMES, JR., *THE DOUBLE V: HOW WARS, PROTEST, AND HARRY TRUMAN DESEGREGATED AMERICA’S MILITARY* (2013); JON E. TAYLOR, *FREEDOM TO SERVE: TRUMAN, CIVIL RIGHTS, AND EXECUTIVE ORDER 9981* (2013).

5. *Pictures of African Americans During World War II*, in Nat’l Archives, <https://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans/ww2-pictures> (last viewed Dec. 12, 2022).

6. See MEDGAR EVERS COLLEGE, <https://www.mec.cuny.edu/history/life-of-medgar-evers/> (last visited Dec. 18, 2022).

7. *Id.*

8. *Id.*

9. See also John L. Newby, II, *The Fight for the Right to Fight and the Forgotten Negro Protest Movement: The History of Executive Order 9981 and Its Effect Upon Brown v. Board of*

Delmont<sup>10</sup> provides previously untold accounts<sup>11</sup> of the violent discord between Black and white soldiers during the war. (pp. 160-176)

Enter Thurgood Marshall and Dovey J. Roundtree. While Marshall did not serve as a member of the U.S. armed forces, as the head lawyer for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), he traveled back and forth across the country litigating on behalf of Black troops on military bases. (p. xix) Answering direct and indirect calls for help from Black military men, Marshall represented soldiers charged with mutiny for protesting the treatment they received during their service. Roundtree not only served as a WWII officer,<sup>12</sup> she jeopardized her own military status to successfully block plans to segregate units that had not yet been separated.<sup>13</sup> When she was not fighting against segregation in the military, Roundtree traveled through the South encouraging Black women to join both the war and desegregation efforts, laying the foundation for an interracial military six years before President Harry Truman mandated an end to segregation in the U.S. military with Executive Order 9981.<sup>14</sup>

#### I. THE DOUBLE VICTORY CAMPAIGN

The American history books largely hold Pearl Harbor as the flash point of the United States' entrance into WWII.<sup>15</sup> (p. 103) However, Black Americans saw the war on fascism as a fight against racism and an opportunity to win this war both home and abroad. This concept was the very basis for the Double Victory campaign<sup>16</sup>—Victory at Home &

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Education *and Beyond*, 10 TEX. J. C.L. & C.R. 83 (2004) (“The War Department has failed to secure to the colored soldier protection against violence on the part of civilian police and to secure justice in the courts in communities near-by to Southern stations.”)

10. Cf. DELMONT, WHY BUSING FAILED, *supra* note 1 (where Delmont examines how school officials, politicians, the courts, and the media gave precedence to the desires of white parents who opposed school desegregation over the civil rights of Black students.)

11. Most Black soldiers in WWII don't talk about it because it was “humiliating, degrading, and cruel” (p. xv).

12. Katie McCabe, *Dovey Johnson Roundtree: A Legal Pioneer, Finally Getting Her Due (1914-2018)*, POLITICO (Dec. 30, 2018).

13. *Id.*

14. *Id.*

15. See also U.S. Nat'l Archives, *Day of Infamy: FDR's Response on Dec. 7, 1941*, GOOGLE ARTS & CULTURE, <https://artsandculture.google.com/story/day-of-infamy-fdr-s-response-on-december-7-1941-u-s-national-archives> (last visited Dec. 27, 2022).

16. During World War II, the *Pittsburgh Courier* ran a weekly series called the “Double V” campaign. The campaign was an effort of the paper to bring about changes in the United States regarding race relations. The campaign demanded that African Americans, who were risking their lives in the war, be given full citizenship rights at home.

Victory Abroad.<sup>17</sup> The emotion of Black Americans is reflected in “Doo Wop (That Thing),”<sup>18</sup> inspired by a popular genre<sup>19</sup> of music in Black American culture that originated in the 1940s.<sup>20</sup> Songwriter Lauryn Hill declares “respect is just the minimum.”<sup>21</sup> For Black servicemen, victory meant respect, dignity, and the right to vote. On voting rights, the separate fronts collided as Congress debated absentee voting for soldiers during the war. Congressmen fighting to maintain the current social order argued that “white servicemen were fighting to maintain white supremacy” and the federal government could not infringe on the states’ authority over their elections. (p. 191)

Delmont highlights the role played by the Black press in encouraging Black Americans to engage in the war efforts.<sup>22</sup> The *Pittsburgh Courier* sparked the Double Victory campaign by publishing over twenty newspaper articles promoting the slogan.<sup>23</sup> Publications like *The Tennessean*,<sup>24</sup> the *Oakland Tribune*,<sup>25</sup> and *Tampa Bay Times*<sup>26</sup> helped amplify the message across the nation. The author of *Half American* repeatedly points to the impact of the influential *Chicago Defender*<sup>27</sup> on the hearts and minds of Black readers. The publication grew so powerful

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17. *Double Victory: The African American Military Experience*, Nat’l Museum of African Am. History and Culture, <https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/exhibitions/double-victory> (last viewed Dec. 12, 2022).

18. LAURYN HILL, *Doo Wop (That Thing)*, on *THE MISEDUCATION OF LAURYN HILL* (Ruffhouse Records 1998).

19. *The Origin and Influence of Doo-wop Music*, BERTOLT PRESS, <https://bertoltpress.com/2020/04/24/doo-wop-music-history/>.

20. *Doo-wop Music*, BRITANNICA, <https://www.britannica.com/art/doo-wop-music> (last visited Dec. 20, 2022).

21. HILL, *supra* note 18.

22. Publications recognized in the book include *Pittsburgh Courier*, *Chicago Defender*, *Baltimore Afro-American*, *Louisville Courier-Journal*, *New York Amsterdam News*, *The California Eagle*, *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, *Birmingham Age-Herald*, and *Arkansas State Press*. (Note that Delmont also wrote *Black Quotidian*, which explores the everyday lives of African Americans in the twentieth century. The book reveals how the Black press popularized African-American history and valued the lives of both famous and ordinary Black people.)

23. *Double V Campaign*, NEWSPAPERS.COM, <https://www.newspapers.com/topics/world-war2/double-v-campaign/> (last visited Dec. 20, 2022).

24. A Vanderbilt Employee, *Excerpt From a Letter to the Editor in Tennessee About How Lynching Ties in With Double V Campaign*, THE TENNESSEAN, Mar. 3, 1942, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/33246147/excerpt-from-a-letter-to-the-editor-in/>.

25. Lena M. Wysinger, *Keen Interest Shown Here in Double V Victory Program*, OAKLAND TRIB., Apr. 26, 1942, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/33245348/california-newspaper-gives-information/>.

26. *Double V for Victory*, TAMPA BAY TIMES, May 17, 1942, <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/33265463/newspaper-photo-pictures-the-all-states/>.

27. See generally Ethan Michaeli, “Bound for the Promised Land,” THE ATLANTIC, Jan. 11, 2016, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/01/chicago-defender/422583/>.

that United States Attorney General Francis Biddle brokered a deal with the editor of the *Chicago Defender* for access to interview government officials in exchange for a tempering in coverage critical of the treatment of Black soldiers.<sup>28</sup> (pp. 107-110)

## II. EXECUTIVE ACTION AND THE PUSH-PULL OF SYSTEMATIC RACISM

We seldom discuss how in this fight against racism, racism fought back and it did so with vigor. Delmont, however, does not shy away from the topic. In the chapter *Civil Rights Battlefronts at Home*, the author demonstrates how states' rights and white supremacy as a matter of policy were used as Southerners' most effective weapons. (pp. 189-201) Formidable figures like Marshall and Ella Baker, who recognized the value of the leadership skills learned by Black WWII soldiers to organizations like the NAACP, led efforts by both military and civilians in pushing back against racism during the war.

The fight to disenfranchise Black soldiers continued long after they returned home. Originally established to provide services and benefits to the new veterans, a cohort of congressional representatives ensured that access to the GI Bill of Rights<sup>29</sup> was funneled through the states, where the benefits were distributed in light of any standing segregationist policies. (p.266) Over time, the battle for voting rights was won.<sup>30</sup> The battle over GI Bill access, however, was lost by many Black veterans.<sup>31</sup>

Two executive orders signed on either side of the United States' involvement in the second global conflict are considered to be steppingstones to the landmark desegregation case, *Brown v. Board of Education*.<sup>32</sup> In 1941, President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802, which banned discrimination in employment. The federal government employed a significant number of Americans during the war.<sup>33</sup> By opening up jobs in

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28. See also ETHAN MICHAELI, *THE DEFENDER: HOW THE LEGENDARY BLACK NEWSPAPER CHANGED AMERICA* 242-267 (2016).

29. The GI Bill of Rights offered federal aid to help veterans adjust to civilian life in the areas of hospitalization, purchase of homes and businesses, and education. The act provided tuition, books, and supplies for veterans to continue their education in college. Those who wished to continue their education in college or vocational school could do so tuition-free for up to \$500 while also receiving a cost-of-living stipend. By July 1956, nearly 8 million World War II veterans had received education or training, and 4.3 million home loans worth \$33 billion had been granted. [hereinafter *GI Bill*]

30. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 outlawed discriminatory voting practices. By the end of its first year in effect, a quarter of a million new Black voters successfully registered to vote.

31. See generally Juan F. Perea, *Doctrines of Delusion: How the History of the G.I. Bill and Other Inconvenient Truths Undermine the Supreme Court's Affirmative Action Jurisprudence*, 75 U. PITT. L. REV. 583 (2014).

32. 347 U.S. 483.

33. Newby, *supra* note 9, at 85.

the defense sector, World War II presented a unique opportunity for Black Americans to advance in the workforce because of the increase in job openings and wages. (p. 140) Therefore, joining in the war effort was a way for Black people to participate economically. (p. 80) Opening the door for equal participation in the workforce was likened to the Emancipation Proclamation in that it freed Black Americans from the economic servitude that followed slavery.<sup>34</sup> Due largely to the struggles and efforts documented throughout *Half American*, President Truman issued Executive Order 9981 following the war, desegregating the military and paving the way for *Brown v. Board of Education* six years later.<sup>35</sup>

Colonel Eugene R. Householder told the Black press that “the Army is made up of individual citizens of the United States who have pronounced views with respect to the Negro.” (p. 90) Army Chief of Staff G.C. Marshall added, “It is the policy of the War Department not to intermingle colored and white enlisted personnel in the same regimental organization. The condition which has made this policy necessary is not the responsibility of the Department . . . .”<sup>36</sup> With that understanding, the military required segregation on nearly all of the training bases, including voluntarily integrated places, like Iowa.<sup>37</sup> As American soldiers were disseminated around the world, World War II accelerated the spread of American values and culture.<sup>38</sup> Consequentially, the United States military perpetuated the idea that Black Americans are incapable and subservient to the rest of the world. (p. 231) Prominent Akron<sup>39</sup> businessman William Russell Miller often spoke fondly of his arrival into the Pacific.<sup>40</sup> The initial reception by the Kiwi people of New Zealand paralleled the experience of Medgar Evers in France. Born in Albany, Kentucky on April 6, 1922, Miller grew up in the segregated South.<sup>41</sup> After graduating from high school, he enlisted in 1942.<sup>42</sup> During his three

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34. DOVEY JOHNSON ROUNDTREE & KATIE MCCABE, *MIGHTY JUSTICE: MY LIFE IN CIVIL RIGHTS* 43 (2009).

35. See generally Newby, *supra* note 9, at 84.

36. *Id.* at 87.

37. ROUNDTREE & MCCABE, *supra* note 34, at 60.

38. See generally Susan L. Carruthers, *Not Like the US? Europeans and the Spread of American Culture*, *INT’L AFFAIRS* 883 (Royal Inst. of Int’l Affairs 1944) (2022).

39. The University of Akron School of Law is located in Akron, Ohio.

40. Interview with Shana Miller-Allshouse, daughter of William Russell Miller (Dec. 16, 2022).

41. *Former Goodyear Vice President Bill Miller Dies at 91*, *AKRON BEACON J.*, Jan. 4, 2014.

42. *World War II Draft Registration Cards, 1942*, digital image, Draft Registration Card for William Russell Miller, Birth Date: 6 Apr 1922; Serial Number N35.

years of service, he became a technical sergeant<sup>43</sup> in a segregated unit.<sup>44</sup> Like most World War II veterans, Miller refused to disclose specific details but describes the arrival of white American soldiers from Texas as the turning point in his experience.<sup>45</sup> The battalion from Texas aggressively demanded foreign locals be prohibited from engaging with Black troops, installing Jim Crow halfway around the world.<sup>46</sup>

*Half American* makes several references to “The Use of Negro Manpower in War,” a report published by the Army War College in 1925. The report was a synthesis of biased evaluations of Black troops during the first world war and was used to set policy and expectations during the second. Pride, aggression, and initiative are traits valued in the military but may result in a Black soldier’s death at home. (p. 230) The temperament required of Black Americans for survival, particularly in the South, is largely criticized by the Army War College’s report. As a result, Black soldiers were categorically unwanted in the war effort and everything in their experience reflected that opinion (pp. 26-28). Desperation for uniformed bodies needed to cover “two oceans and four continents” is the only reason Blacks were allowed to participate.<sup>47</sup>

America was on the winning side of World War II despite the inefficiencies created by the military’s segregationist policies. Wasting already tight resources, the United States doubled its expenditures for training, transportation, and housing to separate Black and white soldiers. (p. 105) Several commissioned reports illustrated the impracticality and injustice that resulted from the WWII policies.<sup>48</sup> On the recommendation that President Truman act to end discrimination and segregation in the military,<sup>49</sup> Truman issued Executive Order 9981 declaring it,

[the] policy of the President that there shall be equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion or national origin. This policy shall be put into effect as

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43. Bill Miller, *Pioneering Goodyear Employee, Dies*, MODERN TIRE DEALER, <https://www.moderntiredealer.com/articles/11089-bill-miller-pioneering-goodyear-employee-dies> (Jan. 7, 2014).

44. *Former Goodyear VP*, *supra* note 41.

45. *Id.*

46. *Id.*

47. ROUNDTREE & MCCABE, *supra* note 34, at 50.

48. In April 1946, the Gillem Board advised that the U.S. Army’s policy should be to “eliminate, at the earliest practicable moment, any special consideration based on race.” The Gillem Board recognized the inefficiencies of prohibiting Black soldiers from advancement but did not challenge the overall policy of segregation. In October 1947, the Committee on Civil Rights issued a report that outlined the shortcomings of segregation in the military.

49. Newby, *supra* note 9, at 101.

rapidly as possible, having due regard to the time required to effectuate any necessary changes without impairing efficiency or morale.<sup>50</sup>

The order created the Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services, charged with bringing the policies, practices, and procedures of the armed forces in line with the executive order.<sup>51</sup> With Executive Order 9981, Truman provided a concrete statement against the institution of segregation. Six years later, Thurgood Marshall would echo the President's argument to the Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education*.<sup>52</sup>

### III. WWII VETERANS RETURN

Black American soldiers who served the country in World War II came home to the same segregationist society that existed before the war.<sup>53</sup> The GI Bill offered substantial benefits to 16 million veterans in the form of financial aid for higher education, home loan guarantees, and unemployment allowances to help reintegrate into civil society.<sup>54</sup> A pattern of discrimination against Black veterans resulted from the state and local administration of the GI Bill benefits.<sup>55</sup> As a result, only 6 percent of Black WWII veterans earned a college degree, compared to 19 percent of white WWII veterans.<sup>56</sup>

Staunchly dedicated to the goal of "victory at home," many former service members continued to fight against racial discrimination and oppression. William Miller utilized his GI Bill benefits to earn a bachelor's degree at Tennessee State University.<sup>57</sup> Applying as a college graduate, he was hired sight unseen at the Goodyear atomic energy plant in Piketon, Ohio.<sup>58</sup> Once he arrived and plant officials realized the veteran they hired was Black, Miller was relegated to janitorial duties at the plant.<sup>59</sup> Drawing from the tenacity and acumen sharpened during his war service, Miller climbed the corporate ladder with Goodyear, eventually

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50. Exec. Order No. 9981, 13 Fed. Reg. 4313 (July 26, 1948).

51. Newby, *supra* note 9, at 106.

52. *Id.* at 108.

53. See Quil Lawrence, *The GI Bill Left Behind Black World War II Vets. Now There's a Move to Fix That*, NPR (Oct. 20, 2022), <https://www.npr.org/2022/10/20/1129753937/the-gi-bill-left-behind-black-world-war-ii-vets-now-theres-a-move-to-fix-that>.

54. Sgt. Isaac Woodard, Jr. and Sgt. Joseph H. Maddox GI Bill Restoration Act of 2021, H.R. 5905, 117th Cong. § 2 (2021).

55. *Id.*

56. *Id.*

57. *Former Goodyear VP*, *supra* note 42.

58. *Pioneering Goodyear Employee*, *supra* note 43.

59. Miller-Allshouse Interview, *supra* note 40.



becoming the first African American Vice-President of a major rubber company.<sup>60</sup> In 1980, Miller was promoted to the newly created position of Vice President of Governmental Personnel Relations.<sup>61</sup> In the role, he promoted integration in places like South Africa to ensure that Black workers in the Eastern Cape were shielded from the local apartheid rules.<sup>62</sup> After leaving Goodyear, he worked at the University of Akron and remained involved in other business ventures, spent two years teaching capitalism in Russia under the Peace Corps, and was active in numerous Akron-area organizations.<sup>63</sup> He was chairman of at least 19 community and corporate boards that he joined over the years, including Blue Cross/Blue Shield, FAMU College of Business Advisory Board, Alpha Homes Inc., Akron City Hospital, Green Cross Hospital, Huntington Bank, Akron Roundtable and Summit County Children Services.<sup>64</sup>

Hosea Williams earned a bachelor's degree at Morris Brown College in Atlanta, and a master's from Atlanta University. He worked for the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Savannah, Georgia as the first federally employed Black research chemist in the South.<sup>65</sup> In addition to his professional accomplishments, Williams and Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee leader John Lewis jointly led the voting rights march that became known as "Bloody Sunday."<sup>66</sup> The demonstration was a key factor in persuading the American public to support voting rights for Black citizens.

Having received her bachelor's degree from Spelman College before enlisting in the U.S. army,<sup>67</sup> Dovey J. Roundtree used her GI Bill benefits to study law.<sup>68</sup> Armed with her law degree and her experience persuading military officials, Roundtree "transformed the legal canvas in Washington" by winning major cases heard by white judges and decided by predominantly white juries.<sup>69</sup> Roundtree drew on her own experiences

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60. *News Obituary*, CLINTON CNTY., <http://clintonnews.net/pages/?p=12195> (last updated Jan. 3, 2014).

61. Black Enterprise, *On the Move* 70 (Dec. 1980).

62. Felix Kessler, *Goodyear Toughs It Out*, FORTUNE MAG., Sept. 30, 1985.

63. *Former Goodyear VP*, *supra* note 41.

64. *Id.*

65. The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, *Hosea Williams: American Activist and Politician*, BRITANNICA (last updated Nov. 22, 2022).

66. The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute, *Williams, Hosea*, STANFORD, <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/williams-hosea> (last visited Dec. 11, 2022).

67. See ROUNDTREE & MCCABE, *supra* note 34.

68. Jennifer Davis, *Dovey Johnson Roundtree, Civil Rights Lawyer*, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS (Feb. 9, 2022), <https://blogs.loc.gov/law/2022/02/dovey-johnson-roundtree-civil-rights-lawyer/>.

69. Harrison Smith, *Dovey Johnson Roundtree, Defense Lawyer and Civil Rights Warrior, Dies at 104*, WASH. POST, May 21, 2018.

with segregated busing in her representation of the plaintiff in *Keys v. Carolina Coach Company*.<sup>70</sup> Six days before Rosa Parks' protest on the bus in Montgomery, Roundtree and her partner won the milestone case for desegregation and interstate travel.<sup>71</sup>

Returning to the United States just home from the Battle of Normandy, Medgar Evers definitively became a civil rights activist when he was turned away from a local election at gunpoint.<sup>72</sup> As Field Secretary for the NAACP, Evers established new chapters, promoted desegregation, and investigated lynchings—including the murder of Emmitt Till.<sup>73</sup> A less-celebrated figure in the civil rights movement, Evers was murdered by a white WWII veteran who was connected to the crime by his military service prints.<sup>74</sup> Evers' killer, an obsessed segregationist,<sup>75</sup> considered integration to be anti-American and counter to conditions of his military service. The assassination was deemed “a patriotic act”<sup>76</sup> and “an act of self-defense—in defense of the American way of life.”<sup>77</sup>

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Examining history highlights the resilience of racism and the ongoing need for advocacy. Matthew Delmont considers the original GI Bill to be one of the best pieces of policy that the United States ever created.<sup>78</sup> The uneven distribution of benefits for WWII veterans planted a seed for longstanding economic inequality that persists today.<sup>79</sup> Adjusted for today's dollars, white veterans received \$180,000 in benefits from the GI Bill more than their Black counterparts.<sup>80</sup> *Half American* delves in the micro-experiences of Black American servicepeople during

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70. 64 MCC 769 (1955) (“The disadvantage to a traveler who is assigned accommodations or facilities so designated as to imply his inherent inferiority solely because of his race must be regarded under present condition as unreasonable.”).

71. Davis, *supra* note 68.

72. Civil Rights Leaders, Medgar Evers, Nat'l Ass'n for the Advancement of Colored People, <https://naacp.org/find-resources/history-explained/civil-rights-leaders/medgar-evers> (last visited Dec. 27, 2022).

73. Jennifer Davis, *Medgar Evers' Role in Civil Rights Law*, LIBRARY OF CONG. BLOG (July 2, 2021).

74. Famous Cases & Criminals: Medgar Evers, FED. BUREAU OF INVESTIGATIONS, <https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/medgar-evers> (last visited Dec. 27, 2022).

75. *A Little Abnormal*, TIME, Jul. 5, 1963, <https://web.archive.org/web/20080405174115/http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,875008-2,00.html>.

76. *Id.*

77. THE LAST WHITE KNIGHT (Brainstorm Media 2012)

78. See Lawrence, *supra* note 53.

79. *Id.*

80. See *id.*

World War II and formulates an important knowledge base which supports remedial efforts to right wrongs from the era. One such effort is the GI Bill Restoration Act,<sup>81</sup> a Congressional bill that would extend housing and education assistance programs administered by the Veteran Affairs administration to surviving spouses and direct descendants of Black World War II veterans. (p. 306) The bill was introduced in the House on November 5, 2021, and in the Senate 10 days later. Both bodies referred the bill to their respective Veterans' Affairs committees in the months before the end of the current session.

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81. GI Bill Restoration Act of 2021, *supra* note 54 (“To amend title 38, United States Code, to extend to Black veterans of World War II, and surviving spouses and certain direct descendants of such veterans, eligibility for certain housing loans and educational assistance administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.”)