



# Black Officer in a Buffalo Soldier Regiment

The Military Career of Charles Young

Brian G. Shellum

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## Book Synopsis:

An unheralded military hero, Charles Young (1864–1922) was the third black graduate of West Point, the first African American national park superintendent, the first black U.S. military attaché, the first African American officer to command a Regular Army regiment, and the highest-ranking black officer in the Regular Army until his death. *Black Officer in a Buffalo Soldier Regiment* tells the story of the man who—willingly or not—served as a standard-bearer for his race in the officer corps for nearly thirty years, and who, if not for racial prejudice, would have become the first African American general.

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## Book Description

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Brian G. Shellum describes how, during his remarkable army career, Young was shuffled among the few assignments deemed suitable for a black officer in a white man’s army—the Buffalo Soldier regiments, an African American college, and diplomatic posts in black republics such as Liberia. Nonetheless, he used his experience to establish himself as an exceptional cavalry officer. He was a colonel on the eve of the United States’ entry into World War I, when serious medical problems and racial intolerance denied him command and ended his career. Shellum’s book seeks to restore a hero to the ranks of military history; at the same time, it informs our understanding of the role of race in the history of the American military.

## Author Biography

**Brian G. Shellum** is a senior intelligence analyst with the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization with the U.S. Department of Defense. He is the author of *Black Cadet in a White Bastion: Charles Young at West Point*, available in a Bison Books edition.

## Pre-Publication Praise

“During a long and distinguished career, Charles Young succeeded in spite of the Jim Crow prejudices permeating the American military of his time. His is a remarkable and inspiring story, though often overlooked. In this well-researched book, Brian Shellum finally gives Young the historical attention he deserves.”—Dayton Duncan, author of *The National Parks: America’s Best Idea*

“*Black Officer in a Buffalo Soldier Regiment* is more than just another military biography. As only the third African American to graduate from West Point, Charles Young belonged to an army that did not want him. Every day of his professional life brought challenges, slights, and hardships that never confronted the white officers who served beside him. With quiet dignity and determination, Young skillfully negotiated incredible obstacles to reach the rank of colonel. Brian G. Shellum has succeeded in capturing Young’s courage and the shameful milieu of America’s Jim Crow army.”—Gregory J. W. Urwin, editor of *Black Flag over Dixie: Racial Atrocities and Reprisals in the Civil War*

“Extensively researched and clearly written, *Black Officer in a Buffalo Soldier Regiment* places Charles Young back where he belongs, among the important figures of African Americans during the Progressive Era. Shellum’s account should be read by anybody interested in understanding how a black Army officer could not only survive, but prosper in the Jim Crow–era military.”—Mark Benbow, former resident historian of the Woodrow Wilson House

“Shellum has written a careful, concise, thoughtful, and easily read volume on the life story of Colonel Charles Young. . . . Using solid research and little-used documentary sources, Shellum brings into sharp focus a man and officer of whom too little is known, and not near enough is remembered. There is enough in Young’s life to fuel a dozen shows on the History Channel and be the subject of a decade of African American Heritage Months.”—William W. Gwaltney, former president of the Association of African American Museums

“Brian Shellum traces the development, experiences, and extraordinary accomplishments of a pioneering black officer who broke through one racial barrier after another in the decades straddling the turn of the twentieth century. The author follows Charles Young on his far-flung adventures with the Buffalo Soldiers on the Great Plains and in Sequoia National Park, leading his troopers in combat in the Philippines and Mexico, and his service in Haiti and Liberia as the first African American military attaché. Shellum places in the context of his times a leader who came to epitomize African American manhood. In so doing the author reveals a true hero to his country and his race.”—Floyd Thomas, curator at the National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center

## Post-Publication Praise

Please visit this book’s [Web page](http://www.nebraskapress.unl.edu/product/Black-Officer-in-a-Buffalo-Soldier-Regiment,674221.aspx) (<http://www.nebraskapress.unl.edu/product/Black-Officer-in-a-Buffalo-Soldier-Regiment,674221.aspx>) for the most current post-publication praise.

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