

Defining Duty in the Civil War: Personal Choice, Popular Culture, and the Union Home Front

J. Matthew Gallman

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J. Matthew Gallman explores the issues of manhood and duty in the North during America's Civil War as found in the popular press. He intends to show that while expectations of white Americans are individualized, those of black Americans are collectivized. In other words, European American men were supported in making choices to serve the nation or not based on their individual circumstances and consciences, while Americans of African descent were told they owed their decisions about service to the good of their community.

The first five chapters explore the "don't's" and "do's," respectively, for civilian white men eligible to serve in the military or in war-related industries. The prescriptions were articulated in popular literature, magazines, novels, short stories, and political cartoons. Some might resonate with American citizens today. *Don't* bluster about how much you're doing for the war effort if you aren't serving or doing anything for that effort. *Don't* wear a uniform if you are not in the service. *Don't* sell substandard goods to the government and brag about the profit you are making at the expense of men in the field. *Do* support the government and the war effort. *Do* go if you are called by the draft: the country needs you.

What surprised me most about these messages was how little pressure there was on men if they did not enlist. Several books that examine the war through soldiers' correspondence, such as Chandra Manning's *What This Cruel War Was Over* or Reid Mitchell's *The Vacant Chair*, offer examples of peer and community pressure to serve. Yet this message doesn't seem to have found its way into the popular literature Gallman examined.

The sixth chapter focuses on women and what might be expected of them in time of war. The author mentions Republican Motherhood and the traits of the True Woman as he argues that the most important role of patriotic women is the urging of their men, whether husband, father, brother, or beau, to join up. It is interesting that while the prescriptive message for men is "join up or not at your pleasure," for women it is "send those men to serve or else you are unpatriotic." Actually, this section is as much about shaming men for not serving as it is about what women should do in war.

The word to enlist is must stronger in the literature Gallman identifies as feminine, which seems to contradict the rather blasé attitude cited in the first five chapters. I would have liked to see an exploration of why the messages for women were so different from those for men. I also wondered

why more patriotism and duty were expected of women than men.

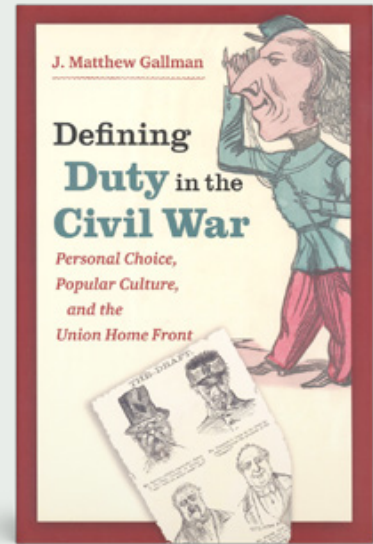
In the seventh chapter, Gallman studies speeches and essays by abolitionists and prominent African Americans. Some came down on the side of service, as did Frederick Douglass. Others argued against service, pointing to draft riots that targeted African Americans for lynching and arson, unequal pay, the government's unwillingness to commission officers, and that same government's lack of action when confronted with the enemy's policy of enslaving and executing its soldiers of African descent.

Gallman points out that the recruiting campaign for black men focused on their collectivity as a people in contrast to the literature that left such decisions to the individual white man or woman.

In his conclusion, Gallman looks at citizenship and its obligations, but points out that such discussion comes after the war, except with regard to the northern African American community. Here, the *obligations* of citizenship in contrast to the privileges or lack thereof informed the public rhetoric of recruitment. Yet, in the European American community there is a complete lack of discussion of the obligations of citizenship in reference to one's decision to serve or not.

I liked this book. Gallman shows that white individuals were encouraged to make the serious decisions about service to their country based on their own circumstances and experiences, while black individuals were called on to serve the greater good, a much heavier burden. And he uses very different sources for each of these groups. Would Gallman find the same if he included popular culture and political sources in studies of both African and European Americans?

—Betsy Glade



BETSY GLADE has taught at St. Cloud State University since 1997 and currently serves as chair of the history department. She is working on a digital exhibit on slavery in St. Cloud in the late 1850s for the Stearns History Museum, entitled "They Have Names," based on the scholarship of Dr. Christopher Lehman of the department of ethnic and women's studies at St. Cloud State University.



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