



My Brother's Keeper: African Canadians and the American Civil War

Bryan Prince

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The story of African Canadians who fled slavery in the United States but returned to enlist in the Union forces during the American Civil War.

On New Year's Eve in 1862, blacks from across British North America joined in spirit with their American fellows in silent vigils to await the enactment of President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. The terms declared that slaves who were held in the districts that were in rebellion would be free and that blacks would now be allowed to enlist in the Union Army and participate in the civil war that had then raged for more than a year and a half.

African Canadians who had fled from the United States had not forgotten their past and eagerly sought to do their part in securing rights and liberty for all. Leaving behind their freedom in Canada, many enlisted in the Union cause. Most served as soldiers or sailors while others became recruiters, surgeons, or regimental chaplains. Entire black communities were deeply affected by this war that profoundly and irrevocably changed North American history.



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