

JOHN WORSENCROFT

Salvaging Marginalized Men: How the Department of Defense Waged the War on Poverty

Abstract: Architects of social welfare policy in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations viewed the military as a site for strengthening the male breadwinner as the head of the “traditional family.” Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Robert McNamara—men not often mentioned in the same conversations—both spoke of “salvaging” young men through military service. The Department of Defense created Project Transition, a vocational jobs-training program for GIs getting ready to leave the military, and Project 100,000, which lowered draft requirements in order to put men who were previously unqualified into the military. The Department of Defense also made significant moves to end housing discrimination in communities surrounding military installations. Policymakers were convinced that any extension of social welfare demanded reciprocal responsibility from its male citizens. During the longest peacetime draft in American history, policymakers viewed programs to expand civil rights and social welfare as also expanding the umbrella of the obligations of citizenship.

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MARGINALIZED MEN AND MILITARY SERVICE

Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara was not known for barnstorming. But during the fall of 1967 he spent a fair amount of time traveling the country, talking to Americans outside the beltway “about the unused potential of the Department of Defense—a potential for contributing to the solution of social problems wracking our nation.” At one such occasion, on November 7, 1967, at the Denver, Colorado, meeting of the National Association of Educational

Broadcasters, McNamara posed a provocative question to the audience: could the resources of the Department of Defense, “the largest single institution in the world ... employing directly four and a half million men and women,” be “used to contribute to our nation’s benefit beyond the narrow—though vitally necessary—role of military power?”¹

Of course, McNamara would never ask a question to an audience without already having an answer prepared. This speech in Denver, which he would give again and again across the country, was not written to drum up support for a new policy proposal. Instead, this speaking tour was a bit like show-and-tell, meant to promote programs that had been in the works since the waning days of the John F. Kennedy administration.

In particular, the speech outlined three major programs that McNamara’s agency had been quietly working on since 1964. In Denver, McNamara announced Project Transition, a program to provide job training at the end of a serviceman’s enlistment, and Project 100,000, which lowered the mental and medical requirements for draftees. Finally, the Defense Secretary announced that the Department of Defense was taking dramatic steps to end segregation in off-base housing for military and Defense Department personnel, in essence decreeing that any home or rental property near military installations that discriminated against Black GIs would be off-limits to all service members, regardless of race.

Members of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations believed in the unparalleled value of the military as a manhood framing institution, where downtrodden men could be forged anew, retrained and salvaged for a lifetime of productive citizenship. These liberal policymakers saw military service—which had long been a masculine tradition during times of war and national emergency—as a necessary rite of male citizenship, alongside being a breadwinner, a father, and a husband. Indeed, serving in the military could set men on the path to securing those other elements of masculine citizenship.² And in the 1960s they began to articulate a strategy for salvaging who they called “marginalized men”—people who were otherwise failing to live productive lives in the eyes of the state—through the military and the broader Selective Service System.

They turned to the military as a site for building productive male breadwinners because nearly every key policymaker who served in the White House under Kennedy and Johnson wore a uniform during World War II. Indeed, military service was an informal prerequisite for key positions in government in the postwar era. In the 1960s, politicians and policymakers frequently expressed that men who could not serve in the military would

amount to little in life. They understood military service as a crucial step before the next important masculine function in society: starting a family. The vitality of the American family—and by extension the nation—required men who could fulfill their martial obligations to protect and serve their country, and military service would in turn make men better providers, husbands, and fathers.³

This vision of masculine citizenship took on a new valence in the context of the Civil Rights Movement, providing both a sense of urgency and a particular target for this form of government intervention: African American men. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, a key architect of Johnson's War on Poverty agenda, called the military "an utterly masculine world" that he believed could lift young African American men out of a cycle of poverty.⁴ The civil rights context also helped to reshape the broader military community as policymakers worked to desegregate off-base housing, a promise left unfulfilled ever since the Armed Services were desegregated in 1948.⁵

Contemporaneous critics and scholars have rightly argued that the Johnson Administration overzealously believed that America could have both guns and butter—that it could fight a land war in Southeast Asia and pursue an ambitious domestic agenda simultaneously. And of all the Department of Defense War on Poverty programs, Project 100,000 has garnered the most attention. Most recently, historian Amy Rutenberg persuasively argues that the 1960s liberal project of fighting the War on Poverty with military programs like Project 100,000 contributed to a realignment of American citizenship, effectively ending the obligation of every man to serve in a time of war, if called upon through the draft. Project 100,000, Rutenberg shows, targeted African Americans and the poor for military service, while the Selective Service System simultaneously offered deferments to middle-class (and mostly white) men. In pursuing War on Poverty goals, military manpower officials undermined the idea that all men bore a responsibility to serve in the military during wartime.⁶

In contrast, this article places Project 100,000 within a broader Department of Defense policy framework that also included Project Transition and the nationwide effort to desegregate off-base housing—a wholesale effort to improve the lives of African Americans and other marginalized men through military service. For too many of those men who were drafted and sent to Vietnam, the result of Project 100,000 was tragic—Christian Appy once wrote that it was "a Great Society program that was quite literally shot down on the battlefields of Vietnam"—but the programs' origins were rooted within a much wider effort to build productive masculine citizens and give them the tools they needed to succeed.⁷ Policymakers saw Project 100,000 working

alongside efforts to desegregate communities around military bases, and Project Transition, which offered servicemen training to help them compete in the civilian sector once their military service ended.⁸

While Project Transition and housing desegregation in military communities were more successful, the growing demands of the war in Vietnam crowded out the loftier goals of Project 100,000. Conservatives and liberals could agree that military service might transform a man, and instill in him the discipline to succeed in life, but too many congressmen refused to fund anything beyond a man's basic training and a ticket to Vietnam. Ultimately, these Defense Department's programs followed a similar path as those War on Poverty initiatives that created the War on Crime. Historian Elizabeth Hinton argues that when antipoverty programs in urban communities were launched at the same time as anticrime efforts, "the balance tilted from social welfare to punishment as the national law enforcement program crowded out the goals of the poverty war."⁹

Department of Defense job-training programs and policies to ensure access to affordable housing fit within the larger framework of postwar liberal policymaking to shore up the American family. Policymakers supplemented the "family wage," crafting policies that benefited households in which the husband was the breadwinner and the wife took care of the home. In her book on welfare policy from the 1960s to the 1990s, Marissa Chappell argues that the imaginations of even the most ambitious liberals in government were chained to ideas about "traditional" family and gender roles, and that their notion of the family wage "fatally undermined their generous social-democratic economic vision."¹⁰

Policymakers in the 1960s, who had living memories of the hardships of the Great Depression and the sacrifices of World War II, were deeply committed to solving the problem of American poverty. But they were convinced that any extension of social welfare demanded reciprocal responsibility from male citizens. During the longest peacetime draft in American history, policymakers viewed any program to expand civil rights as also expanding the umbrella of the obligations of citizenship. In his memoir on his time as president, published before his death, Lyndon Johnson recalled that in 1964, when many of his political advisers believed that he should pull back after the passage of the Civil Rights Act, "I feared that as long as these citizens were alienated from the *rights* of the American system, they would continue to consider themselves outside the *obligations* of that system." Benefits, rights, and obligations of citizenship marked the boundaries of the liberal imagination in the 1960s.¹¹

“ONE-THIRD OF A NATION ILL-HOUSED, ILL-CLAD, ILL-NOURISHED”

Standing at the intersection of the War on Poverty and Civil Rights is Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Shortly after completing a doctorate in 1961 at Tufts University’s Fletcher School, Moynihan went to work for the Department of Labor. Although in 1965 Moynihan would write the influential and controversial policy paper *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, usually referred to simply as “The Moynihan Report,” in 1963 he was waiting for his big break. That year, he was named Director of Policy Planning and Research, a position in the Department of Labor that also had a direct line of communication to the President. Moynihan’s first breakthrough in government policy work came when he was asked to assist the Taskforce on Manpower Conservation in writing its report to President Kennedy in 1963.

The men who were enlisted into the Taskforce believed that government had a singular power to solve big problems such as poverty and racism. The report, *One-Third of a Nation*, a homage to Franklin Roosevelt’s famous Depression-era speech, was an expression of how liberal policymakers viewed the interrelationship between citizenship, obligation, and social welfare policy. They believed that citizenship, and access to the benefits of citizenship, required reciprocal obligations from Americans. They assumed that willingness and ability to serve in the military was an essential component of male citizenship, and by extension, manhood. A man need not actually serve, but by submitting to the Selective Service System’s battery of mental and physical induction tests, he was proving himself a worthy and productive member of society. These tests also identified men who needed assistance.¹²

Beliefs about the linkages between military aptitude tests, intelligence, and “worthiness” to society go back at least to World War I, when influential psychological and psychiatric professionals began developing intelligence tests for draftees.¹³ Through World War II and into the postwar era, faith in data, complex social-scientific measures, and the experts needed to interpret those measures only grew. Except for a brief pause after the war, by the 1960s the draft had been a fact of life for the American people for more than thirty years. To the men who wrote the report, the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) had become a predictor of future performance in society, and “failure to pass it [is] a matter of unavoidable concern to the community-at-large. The qualities needed to be an effective soldier, sailor, or airman in today’s modern force are similar to those needed in a wide range of civilian jobs.”¹⁴ AFQT screenings and medical examinations through Selective Service would “enable the community, as well as the individual concerned, to learn

which young men are not qualified, and for what reasons, and to make appropriate plans for remedial action.”¹⁵ In the eyes of the administrators, men who failed the test were destined for failure in life. And, given that men were expected to be the breadwinner and head of the household, they believed his potential for failure would have a ripple effect in the wider community.¹⁶

Moynihan, like other social scientists at the time, was obsessed with the cyclical nature of poverty and how to disrupt it. Anticipating the Taskforce, the Department of Labor interviewed 2,500 Selective Service rejectees in order to ascertain the “social and economic profile of the group, and an evaluation of their apparent willingness to raise themselves above their present status in life.”¹⁷ They discovered the characteristics of the cycle of poverty in those who failed the mental test. They reported, “Too many of them are poor. If the present course of events continues, their children will be poor.” To Moynihan and the other men on the Taskforce, stopping the cycle was more than a manpower issue; its presence challenged the sturdiness of democracy itself. “One of the fundamental facts about democracy,” they posited, “is its recognition that mental ability is distributed widely throughout any population.” They channeled well-rehearsed Cold War narratives of democracy’s unique ability to provide equality of opportunity to those who want to lift themselves out of poverty. Within an equal opportunity environment, “offspring of the poor will prove their worth at an early age and go on to live lives of substantial achievement.” Policymakers viewed the AFQT as a tool to break the cycle, lift men up, and dust them off for a lifetime of economic and social productivity across the country.¹⁸

The Taskforce made recommendations that recalled some of the most ambitious public health goals of the Progressive era. Using the decentralized, local offices of the Selective Service System, policymakers could provide young men with the resources they needed to improve their lot in life, and by extension, make the entire community stronger.¹⁹ To its core, the report was a call to action for government intervention into the lives of young men, those marginalized men who the Taskforce members deemed a liability to the vitality of society. The Taskforce’s recommendations reflected what the late historian Michael Katz describes as a major contradiction in federal social welfare policy: despite their understanding of poverty as a structural problem — “too many of their parents are poor. Too many of them are poor” — policymakers backed programs that assumed poverty was a personal failing. The Taskforce focused on individual men’s masculinity and masculine worth and created programs designed to address these perceived deficits. Programs providing remedial education, practical vocational training, or medical attention to correct maladies that were impediments to gainful employment were

deemed more worthwhile than costlier alternatives such as a program for full employment.²⁰

The Taskforce chose to use existing Selective Service System to find and uplift marginalized men for practical reasons—the infrastructure was in place—but the choice also reflected policymakers' faith in the transformative effect military service could have on a young man. Undersecretary of Defense for Manpower Alfred Fitt remarked,

You have men in our society who are high school dropouts and what not, educational cripples, unemployed, who don't meet military entrance standards but who we think would, given the benefit of the expert training and motivating skills which now exist in the armed forces, could be brought up to a higher standard of performance, thus easing the burdens on the outside without adversely effecting combat readiness. That's a fairly appealing proposition.²¹

Without remedial training, men would never, in the words of the Taskforce on Manpower Conservation, “become effective citizens and self-supporting individuals.”²² Just a few weeks prior to his assassination, President John F. Kennedy (who originally convened the Taskforce) expressed concern that nearly half of all men who reported for pre-induction examinations through the Selective Service System were found unqualified for the military. In a statement, Kennedy said bluntly, “A young man who does not have what it takes to perform military service is not likely to have what it takes to make a living. Today's military rejects include tomorrow's hard-core unemployed.”²³

One-Third of a Nation shared many of the hallmarks of the coming War on Poverty, particularly the emphasis on a bottom-up approach and community-based programs. Wary of Congress and the American public's aversion to massive federal programs, the Taskforce envisioned revamping manpower policy at the local level, and through existing government agencies, chiefly the Selective Service System. They emphasized the community-building potential of a concerted manpower policy. Those men who were found unqualified for military service, wrote the Taskforce, “are members of their local communities. It is at the community level that the problems of youth in need of help are resolved. While some financial support is available from the Federal Government, the institutions that get the job done are part of the community and are to a considerable extent community-financed.”²⁴

WAGING THE WAR ON POVERTY THROUGH THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

After the legislative achievements of 1964 and 1965 to end racial segregation and secure political rights for African Americans, liberals within the Johnson administration turned to the ambitious goal of attaining economic equality for African Americans, and more broadly, for America's poor. The White House Conference on Civil Rights, convened in 1966 to maintain the administration's momentum after a string of legislative and electoral successes, established a four-pronged strategy for the Johnson White House: housing, economic security, education, and the administration of justice. This was breadwinner liberalism expressed through civil rights, and the cold war military proved to be a useful and ready ally in the War on Poverty.²⁵

From Civil War pensions to the World War II GI Bill, America has a long history of providing services, training, preferential treatment in hiring, or money to veterans returning to civilian life. Anticipating the recruiting slogans of the 1980s, the Vietnam-era military began offering training to troops near the end of their enlistments to provide "marketable skills" that would help them transition from military to civilian life. Project Transition began as a small pilot program at Ft. Knox, Kentucky, in 1967, but it soon spread to the entire military and would become the most successful and longest lasting of the DoD social welfare programs. Whereas some military skills readily translate into the civilian job market, especially in an era of increasing reliance on advanced technology, many soon-to-be veterans struggled to find ways to parlay other military skills into a civilian economy. Project Transition targeted men with less than 180 days left on their enlistment, particularly men who had no previous civilian occupation, men in the combat arms, and men who were disabled in combat.

In practice, Project Transition illuminates how America's military-industrial complex functioned. DoD first partnered with the Labor Department and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, but soon expanded to other agencies such as the Postal Service, and later to private corporations. Keeping within the broader contours of the War on Poverty, program decision-making was pushed down to the local level. Commanders at major military installations were encouraged to partner with local agencies and local businesses. According to Undersecretary of Defense Alfred Fitt, the "business of the military departments, aside from fighting wars, is to train people. They are the best training institutions—most able in our whole society in terms of taking masses of men who don't know something and over a period of time

teaching them.” To policymakers inside and out of the Department of Defense, the military wasn’t just for fighting the nation’s wars: the military had an active and positive role to play in society, and providing a ready-supply of manpower to the private sector fit that belief.²⁶

And businesses wanted in on the action. Private industries, seeing the potential for freshly trained new hires, not only sent their job recruiters to military bases, but they also provided the resources, curriculum, and expertise necessary to train soon-to-be veterans. Dictaphone, the dictation machine and recording equipment giant, strategically placed its corporate “Advanced Training Center” in Columbia, South Carolina, a few miles down the road from Fort Jackson so that GIs could attend. Dictaphone’s president Walter Finke thought the program was a win-win for his corporation, providing it with a steady stream of qualified applicants at a time when the corporation was expanding into new sectors of the tech economy, adding, “at the same time, it gives us an opportunity as good corporate citizens, to help solve an important national problem.”²⁷ Humble Oil & Refining set up a classroom-on-wheels in a refurbished cargo trailer to teach soldiers how to manage and run roadside service stations. Out of one class of twenty, chosen from nearly one hundred applicants, six former GIs took over managing service stations after their contracts were up, and three more were placed on a waiting list. In contrast with the beginning of their enlistments, when these young men had spent months training to become soldiers, observers argued that Project Transition was like running boot camp in reverse.²⁸

Government agencies at the local, state, and federal level, too, contributed to the program. The United States Post Office was the first government agency to provide training to GIs in the original pilot program. In mock post offices, soldiers learned how to sort and process mail, operate machinery, and drive delivery trucks, all while getting coached on how to pass the Civil Service exam.²⁹ In 1967, the Los Angeles Police Department formed a partnership with Project Transition to entice qualified GIs to trade in one uniform for another. To politicians and department brass in Los Angeles, Project Transition was viewed as a means of recruiting minorities—especially African Americans—into the police force. Equal Opportunity employment and growing the number of minorities in police uniform were goals that local elected officials were under increasing pressure to achieve in major cities in 1967, especially officials in charge of the LAPD.³⁰

These partnerships with the private sector and civilian law enforcement helped to keep the cost of Project Transition low, between eight and ten million dollars a year.³¹ Project Transition also remained uncontroversial

because it traversed well-travelled avenues of acceptable government programs for veterans going back to the Civil War. First, it was designed to help veterans transition from military life to civilian life, a recurring concern to the American public—the specter of an unskilled, maladjusted, and idle veteran population has long been a driving force in debates over veterans benefits.³² Second, although the program was coordinated at the federal level in the Department of Defense, the program was administered locally, and one of its strengths was that it drew support from local businesses and the needs of the local economy in base communities. Finally, although its creators conceived of Project Transition as a social welfare program within the Great Society’s War on Poverty, the program was ostensibly available to any serviceman, regardless of race or socioeconomic status. This, and the fact that most major military installations were in the American South, made it palatable to Southern “Dixiecrats” in Congress, who were skeptical of supporting any program that could be construed as having a civil rights agenda.

In contrast to Project Transition, Project 100,000 would become one of the most controversial programs of the era. This program was the clearest expression of the belief, held by men in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, that military service was a fundamental component of manhood. To recall the language in *One-Third of a Nation*, “The qualities needed to be an effective soldier, sailor, or airman in today’s modern forces are similar to those needed in a wide range of civilian jobs.” Men like Moynihan and McNamara believed that those who failed the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) could “be expected to lack many of the qualities needed to lead self-sufficient, productive lives in the civilian economy.”³³

Policymakers and elected officials saw military service as a step in the path to stable families with a strong male breadwinner. President Kennedy wrote in his letter establishing the Taskforce on Manpower Conservation, “[We have] a unique opportunity to identify those young men in our Nation who are—for reasons of education, or health, or both—not equipped to play their part in society.”³⁴ Within the context of the 1960s, questions of race often overlapped with discussions of poverty. The language in *One-Third of a Nation* would presage much of what Moynihan would later write in the controversial *Report on the Negro Family*. Although the latter document would touch off a firestorm of criticism, in it Moynihan continued to articulate the belief that military service imbued men with the right stuff to succeed in life. In the *Report on the Negro Family*, he described the transformation in an almost mystical fashion. “There is another special quality about military service for Negro

men,” Moynihan wrote, “It is an utterly masculine world . . . a world away from women, a world run by strong men of unquestioned authority, where discipline, if harsh, is nonetheless orderly and predictable, and where rewards, if limited, are granted on the basis of performance.”³⁵ Indeed, putting African American men into the military was the only prescription Moynihan enumerated as a way to unwind the “tangle of pathology” that had ensnared the Black community.

Moynihan, and others policymakers in government, believed that the number of Black men in uniform should be brought to parity with their percentage of the population. Moynihan reported that in 1965, African Americans comprised roughly eight percent of the Armed Forces, which was about three percent less than their representation in the population as a whole. A major obstacle was the AFQT, which fifty-six percent of Black men failed.³⁶ At the time, putting more Black men in uniform was not controversial; indeed, getting African Americans to join the military—either voluntarily or through the draft—could be characterized as a primary goal of policymakers in the Johnson administration. Nor was the policy the subject of ridicule outside of the administration. That would come later, and much of the controversy over Project 100,000 got mixed up in the ire over “The Moynihan Report.”

Many people—including some scholars—believe that Project 100,000 was started because of the recommendations in “The Moynihan Report.” But it was actually first conceived in the final days of the Kennedy Administration, as a result of the President’s Committee on Equal Opportunity in the Armed Forces, often referred to as the Gesell Committee after its chairman, Gerhard Gesell, and also from the ideas put forth in *One-Third of a Nation*. In a trial balloon to what would become Project 100,000, Robert McNamara introduced the Special Training Enlistment Program (STEP) in 1964, shortly after his service on the Taskforce on Manpower Conservation and the release of *One-Third of a Nation*. STEP targeted potential enlistees scoring between fifteen and thirty on the AFQT, which required a minimum score of thirty-one for enlistment. The goals of the program were to enlist 15,000 men annually and send them to Fort Leonard Wood for intensive educational training prior to their completion of boot camp. The Defense Department estimated that the additional cost per trainee would be \$2,100. Critics in Congress argued that job programs already existed and there was no need.³⁷

McNamara reintroduced STEP to Congress in 1965. He believed that the objections were as much about race politics as money, stating, “When the Congress learned that we were considering modest incremental expenditures on such individuals, it actually passed a law prohibiting such expenditures.

This was because the program would deal with large numbers of blacks.”³⁸ One such member of Congress was South Carolina Senator Strom Thurmond, who argued that STEP would drain the Army’s training resources. On the Senate floor, he asked Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson, “Does not the Senator feel that these young men should be trained in the educational fundamentals by the Job Corps rather than to place this responsibility upon the Army, which has its hands full training soldiers?” Nelson responded, “We provide education in our schools, which education [*sic*] helps young men enter the Army. . . . The Army is the biggest single educator in America. . . . This is a function the Army could handle very well.”³⁹ Senator Thurmond and others were not convinced: while the House voted to allow the Defense Department to proceed with STEP, the Senate balked at the price and the program died.

McNamara was furious. According to Undersecretary Fitt, “[He] was quite put out at having met this defeat . . . of a project that seemed to have a very high potential for good without any real degradation in military readiness.”⁴⁰ In order to end-run around Congress, McNamara devised a program that did not require additional funding. This new program would lower the induction standards to allow rejected men in, send them straight to boot camp, and merely monitor their progress. In essence, McNamara envisioned a STEP-like program without the need for separate or additional training facilities. Worried that Congress would see this as a ruse to initiate STEP behind their backs, Fitt advised McNamara to wait until year’s end to make any announcements. McNamara, who did not like being told what to do, refused, and in fact, had already issued orders to lower the requirements on the AFQT in April 1966, something he deemed the Defense Department could do without congressional approval. Project 100,000 was officially born October 1966 without further response from either the House or Senate.⁴¹

Despite its artful inception, the Johnson administration soon incorporated Project 100,000 into its broader post–Civil Rights Act and post–Voting Rights Act strategy for economic and social justice for African Americans. Recall the four-pronged strategy that the President’s advisors laid out at the 1965 “To Fulfill These Rights” conference at the White House: housing, economic security, education, and the administration of justice. The president took this message to Congress on March 6, 1967 in a speech on the Selective Service System and Project 100,000. He reminded Congress of the sacrifices that freedom required: “The knowledge that military service must sometimes be borne by—and imposed on—free men so their freedom may be preserved is woven deeply into the fabric of the American experience.” Project 100,000 would allow, “disadvantaged youths with limited

educational backgrounds” to share in the benefits and burdens of service. His words illuminated the boundaries of the liberal vision of citizenship: “The nation can never again afford to deny to men ... the obligation—and the right— to share in a basic responsibility of citizenship.”⁴² And he also called upon the belief that military service was inherently good for men, that it would imbue them with the character traits to lead successful and productive lives. As Johnson recalled his feelings about this moment in his memoir, the “two great streams in our national life converged—the dream of a Great Society at home and the inescapable demands of our obligations halfway around the world. They were to run in confluence until the end of my administration.”⁴³

Roughly 40,000 New Standards Men, as they were called, were inducted in 1966 and 100,000 in both 1967 and 1968. About half were drafted and half enlisted on their own.⁴⁴ Critics of the earlier program, STEP, who argued that tinkering with induction standards would drain Army resources, were silenced when 96 percent of New Standards Men completed boot camp, which was only two 2 percent less than other recruits. Feeling somewhat vindicated after Congress’s rebuke, McNamara proclaimed, “The plain fact is that our Project 100,000 is succeeding beyond even our most hopeful expectations.” Meanwhile, newfound supporters in Congress deployed rhetoric that often treaded into the ethereal. Massachusetts’ Representative John McCormack, the Speaker of the House, observed, “Like the glorious sun breaking through dark clouds on a stormy day, the President’s message lights up a clear and welcome path ahead.” Speaker McCormack believed that Project 100,000 would “[remove] the cancer of doubt and hopelessness that has been gnawing at the Nation’s vitals.”⁴⁵ Speaker McCormack, like many white northern liberals, was deeply concerned about recent urban riots in northern cities.⁴⁶ Many hailed the idea of putting Black men in uniform as a solution to urban unrest. Testifying before the House Armed Services Committee in May 1967, Senator Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts quoted a Project 100,000 trainer:

The Army is the last chance for many of them, if they are rejected from the Army, they have nothing left... . They roam the streets. They get in a group, something develops, and the next thing you know they are in the courts. On the other hand, those who have served, maybe in Vietnam, are very proud of their service. Many want to go back and serve in Vietnam for their nation.⁴⁷

Kennedy supported Project 100,000, noting, “preliminary results” were “highly satisfactory ... particularly from the standpoint of the military, because of the high military motivation of this group.”⁴⁸

But, at the time of Kennedy’s testimony, no data on the performance of Project 100,000 recruits existed, and none was ever collected on the “motivation” or morale of New Standards Men while they were in the service. To solicit the opinions of New Standards Men would have violated McNamara’s policy to protect them from unjust scrutiny and ridicule: New Standards Men were not supposed to know that they were part of “McNamara’s Moron Corps,” as his critics derisively called the program.⁴⁹ When Kennedy spoke about “high military motivation,” then, he was conjuring the commonly held belief that the military produced motivated men.

To paraphrase the historian Robert Dean, ideals of manhood that held currency within society were circulated and repeated.⁵⁰ The belief that the military built strong, capable men was an unquestionable truth to many men in government, as many had served in the military during World War II in some capacity. More important, they also believed military men made better future family men because the military gave them the gumption to be good breadwinners. In a speech to Congress in January 1968, President Johnson proclaimed that New Standards Men “have gained self-confidence and a sense of achievement” from their service in the military.⁵¹ When McNamara spoke to the Educational Broadcasters Association, he proclaimed, “The Defense Department is the world’s largest producer of skilled men. [There are] 1,500 different skills, in more than 2,000 separate courses. And each year we return about three-quarters of a million men to the nation’s manpower pool.” Using the same words as the president, McNamara told the audience what was most important: the military could deliver a “vital sense of achievement and self-confidence.” He concluded his speech by saying, “Hundreds of thousands of men can be salvaged from the blight of poverty, and the Defense Department ... is particularly well equipped to salvage them.”⁵²

Still, Project 100,000 had many critics who were less sanguine on the virtues of military service. Many African American Civil Rights leaders deplored the program. Representative Adam Clayton Powell of New York called Project 100,000 “brutal” and tantamount to “genocide.” He stated, “It’s nothing more than killing off human beings who are not members of the elite.”⁵³ In late 1966, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) issued a statement to condemn the program, arguing that it would “increase the imbalance of black Americans in the war in Vietnam.”⁵⁴

However, gender complicated the politics of race. In 1967, in response to rumors that President Johnson was going to ask for Secretary McNamara's resignation, the editorial board of *The Baltimore Afro-American*—which was firmly and consistently critical of the American war in Vietnam—lavished praise on McNamara and his sense of “Christian ministry”:

One of the tenets of modern Christian religion is that the moral and ethical teachings of Jesus have relevance to all men in all pursuits—that the barber, the baker, the candlestick maker should all create opportunities to perform a Christian ministry. Doubtless the man whose business is maintaining the fighting and killing capability of a country would have to be most creative to relate the ethics of brotherhood with his main pursuit. But that is just what Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara has accomplished.⁵⁵

The editors agreed that “salvaging” men from a life of poverty and giving them the tools to become good breadwinners and family men was prudent, that America needed “more top echelon administrators with McNamara’s sense of ministry.”

While Civil Rights leaders criticized Project 100,000 in particular and the Vietnam War in general, many African American men volunteered for combat duty in Vietnam. For example, nearly thirty percent of the Army’s elite airborne units were African American (airborne personnel were volunteers) and reenlistment rates for Blacks were three times higher than those for whites. Of course, inequalities in the draft system pressed more Black men into the military because they were less likely to receive deferments. African Americans also performed poorly on the AFQT, and Project 100,000 increased the number of low-scoring Black men in the military. Facing unemployment that was twice as high as that of whites, the military was an attractive option to many African Americans. More important to some Black veterans was the desire to feel like a man. According to one Black ex-Marine, “For some goddamned reason I believed that the U.S.M.C. [United States Marine Corps] made a man out of anybody. And I wanted to be a MAN more than anything in this whole goddamned world.”⁵⁶ If some Black men saw the military as a steady job, many felt that military service meant taking on the burden of citizenship and being a man.⁵⁷

"I'LL BE HONEST, I NEED THE MILITARY": DESEGREGATING OFF-BASE HOUSING

For a man to provide economic security for his family, a home was essential. But since the end of World War II, the military could not build houses fast enough to keep up. In order to meet demand, the military authorized servicemen to find housing off-base, and it provided subsidies for paying rent or a mortgage. While popular among servicemen because on-base housing at this time ranged from simply inadequate to grossly dilapidated, this arrangement posed a unique problem for African American servicemen. In 1962 the Department of Defense used three basic criteria for measuring the adequacy of off-base housing. First, the location of the dwelling should be close enough that the commute to base did not exceed forty-five minutes one way. Second, that the cost for rent/mortgage plus utilities could not be more than the serviceman's allowance for housing. And, third, the dwelling needed to be in good repair and meet the basic needs of the size of the family occupying it. According to the 1963 US Commission on Civil Rights report on the Armed Services, the current housing stock available to African American GIs and their families routinely failed all three of those criteria.⁵⁸

Housing discrimination contributed to structural racism in America, and the contours of that struggle are embedded into the layers of federalism—local, state, and federal actors pushed and pulled at the racial status quo. In 1948, when the US Supreme Court ruled in *Shelley v. Kraemer* that restrictive covenants, or clauses that prevented home ownership or access to rental properties on the basis of race were unconstitutional, state and local actors went about interpreting what that meant in the absence of federal mechanisms of enforcement. As Thomas Sugrue writes in his landmark study on race in postwar Detroit, "The liberal state communicated an ambivalent message on matters of race that had a powerful impact on individual group interactions at the local level."⁵⁹ In the wake of *Shelley v. Kraemer*, African Americans pushed back against restrictive covenants, redlining, and other racist methods for maintaining segregated communities, and whites also began to organize community groups to maintain the housing status quo. "Localism" remarks Sugrue in another work, "as in the case of housing and social welfare policies—often reinforced structural patterns of inequality by enshrining local prejudices into real practices." Because of federal ambivalence, these white community groups were largely successful in maintaining segregated communities in the postwar era.⁶⁰

Segregation in military housing had a parallel story. When President Harry Truman desegregated the services, it had ramifications beyond black and white troops serving in the same units. Every aspect of military life, in theory, became integrated, including on-base housing. According to the 1963 report by the United States Commission on Civil Rights, “North and South, Negro servicemen reported that the Government-owned housing, to the extent available, was assigned without regard to color and on a completely non-discriminatory, nonsegregated basis.”⁶¹ Of course, this is not to say that racism, whether personal or structural, had ceased to exist on military installations. That same report pointed out that because scarce on-base housing was assigned largely by seniority, and because African Americans were disproportionately underrepresented in the upper echelons of the officer and enlisted ranks, these structural forms of racism made on-base housing unattainable for most Black servicemen and their families, even while they could not blame a specific discriminatory housing policy. Again, the report stated:

The criterion of rank in the assignment of family quarters, although fair and impartial, nevertheless works to the disadvantage of the Negro serviceman. The result is that a higher proportion of Negro servicemen than white servicemen are forced to resort to the community housing market where it is more difficult for them to locate housing because of discriminatory practices.⁶²

Making matters worse, the report pointed out, because the military sought to maintain “color-blind” metrics for deciding when to build more on-base housing, it failed to account for racial discrimination when surveying available housing options in the surrounding community. In other words, to base housing planners, all off-base housing was erroneously counted as equal opportunity, even though many communities refused to rent to Black families.

Black military families in search of housing around military installations faced the same discriminatory practices confronting Black civilians—restrictive covenants, redlining, intimidation, and coercion. The wife of one airman recalled having a door shut in her face by a landlord. She had called and scheduled an appointment to see the property, but when she showed up, the landlady exclaimed, “You don’t sound like you look.” One African American major recalled a similar experience while looking for a place to rent near his duty station. “By telephone the place would be available, but as soon as I appeared in person, the vacancy no longer existed.” When he instead sought to

buy a home, he was confronted by the insidious nature of housing market discrimination at midcentury for African American would-be homebuyers. After two weeks, he confessed that buying a home was “highly improbable, if not impossible.” Frustrated, the Black officer said:

I have talked to real estate agents, builders, and homeowners. The real estate agents blame the builders, the builders blame the homeowners, the homeowners blame the neighbors. One builder told me his development mortgages contain restrictive covenants, no Negroes, one dog, no boats in the driveway and so forth.⁶³

Housing for Black servicemen and their families illustrates just how entrenched racial segregation was across the United States—north, south, east, and west. But, being chronically short on housing, the 1950s military adopted an approach to off-base housing discrimination that paralleled federal housing policies—ambivalence and neglect. In 1963, the US Commission on Civil Rights shed light on the problem, but DoD continued to pursue the path of least resistance to avoid upsetting long-standing racist traditions.

In response to the Commission on Civil Rights, Secretary McNamara issued a DoD-wide directive on equal opportunity and racial discrimination, arguing that “discriminatory practices directed against Armed Forces members, all of whom lack a civilian’s freedom of choice in where to live, to work, to travel, and to spend his off-duty hours, are harmful to military effectiveness.”⁶⁴ He ordered members of the military to “oppose such practices on every occasion.” But, as McNamara later confessed to the Educational Broadcasters Association in Denver, his order did little to challenge the status quo. “One fact became painfully clear” in the ensuing years, McNamara admitted, “Our voluntary program had failed, and failed miserably.” He told the audience:

I put the matter to you bluntly: our nation should not, and will not, ask a Negro sergeant, for example, to risk his life, day after dangerous day, in the heat and hardship of a jungle war, and then bring him home and compel him to remain separated from his wife and his children because of the hate and prejudice that parades under the pomposity of racial superiority.⁶⁵

McNamara told the broadcasters that “thousands of our Negro troops, returning from Vietnam” were facing systematic discrimination in off-base housing.⁶⁶

In 1967 McNamara announced an open-housing initiative beginning in the greater Washington area, including communities around bases in Maryland, Delaware, and Virginia. The Department of Defense sent surveyors out into the suburban communities around Washington to assess the extent of the problem. Segregated communities that rented to servicemen were flagged, and DoD officials were dispatched to meet with the landlords and realtors. To demonstrate how serious DoD was, property owners and their agents were not confronted by lowly bureaucrats but by assistant secretaries of defense, the service secretaries, service chiefs, and base commanders.

What began as a request for voluntary compliance soon escalated, as landlords continued refusing to rent to African Americans and their families. Landlords argued that if they opened their properties to Black families, whites would no longer want to live there. The local Chamber of Commerce in Laurel, Maryland, which is home to many service members stationed at nearby Fort Meade, called the DoD efforts “precipitous and unwarranted.” The president of the Laurel Chamber, Fred Frederick, worried that the order would “cast a stigma of off limits to a community not deserving of it,” and warned of adverse consequences for the “economic welfare of our entire community.”⁶⁷

In the DC Metro area alone, McNamara had to declare entire neighborhoods off-limits to all uniformed personnel, regardless of race, near Fort Meade, Aberdeen Proving Ground, Fort Holabird, Andrews Air Force Base, and Edgewood Arsenal. For his part, McNamara expressed sympathy with business leaders’ economic arguments, even while he called them “shortsighted.” Still, by making segregated rental properties off-limits to white and Black servicemen, McNamara had changed the landlords’ calculus. Ever the Harvard business professor, McNamara said dryly, “This had the effect of applying a countervailing economic pressure, and [afterward] our open-housing program took on an altogether new and positive direction.”⁶⁸

Within the context of southern states’ massive resistance to desegregation, the open-housing initiative was successful largely because of the federal and hierarchical nature of the military and broader Department of Defense. Robert McNamara could unilaterally declare that everyone under him—DoD civilian employees, contractors, and uniformed members of the military—must comply with this directive. Military leaders could not object because the military was, ostensibly, an equal-opportunity employer and entirely integrated. Those white servicemen and their family members who

would have preferred to live in segregated housing off base could not object to a lawful order. And, landlords and business groups in towns and cities that were dependent upon Defense dollars could not really object either, once they realized the potential for huge losses if they didn't rent to all members of the military. More than just money from rental payments, entire municipalities near bases relied on the revenue streams that service personnel and their families generated; local schools needed military children sitting at their desks; the local grocery, hardware, and drug stores that sold food and daily necessities needed those servicemen and their government paychecks to stay open.

W. Dale Hess understood this basic fact all too well, even while he hated the idea of renting to African American servicemen. Hess was the owner of a 150-unit apartment development under construction near Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland, and he was also the Democratic Majority Whip in the state's House of Delegates. In the late hours of the 1967 legislative session, Hess used his power as Whip to try to get his apartment complex exempted from a new antidiscrimination law the Maryland Legislature was debating that March. The law stipulated that properties built after June 1, 1967, would have to comply with the antidiscrimination ordinance and allow renters regardless of race. Hess had the bill amended also to allow developments that had only filed for permits prior to June 1 to be exempted. But, when McNamara issued his directive in July, Hess knew that his conniving legislative work was for naught. He projected that one-third of his tenants would be military, admitting, "I'll be honest, I need the military."⁶⁹

Southern segregationists in Congress were incensed, but they could do little but bluster and hope that the plan would fail. The Chairman of the Armed Services Committee, southern Democrat L. Mendel Rivers, fumed that McNamara's move was a "purely political ... completely unenforceable move." But Rivers was wrong: in northern Virginia and Maryland alone, the open-housing initiative more than tripled the number of housing units available to African American families from 15,000 to 53,000 in just four months. And Black families immediately took advantage. Of the 633 African American military families that applied for off-base housing in the Washington metro area between July and December 1967, 287 applications were approved in housing units that had been segregated six months earlier.⁷⁰ Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina called it "another unconstitutional extension of executive power."⁷¹ McNamara later recalled that his department faced "substantial pressure from members of Congress representing white property owners who strongly objected to the policies we were

following.” But he knew he had the full support of the President, and the service chiefs were “quite willing to pursue” a policy of desegregation.⁷²

McNamara ordered Alfred Fitt, along with the service secretaries, chiefs, and base commanders, to meet with national real estate organizations and other national business groups to request that they comply with the open-housing initiative. The Department of Defense began conducting surveys nationwide in every community with a military base to ascertain the scope of segregation in off-base housing. On Veterans’ Day in 1967, Undersecretary Fitt addressed the National Association of Real Estate Boards (NAREB), which was holding its annual meeting in Washington, where he asked them for their support in this nationwide effort. Echoing the words in McNamara’s Denver speech, given just a few days earlier, Fitt told them that “our nation should not, and will not, ask a Negro sergeant, for example, to risk his life in Southeast Asia and then bring him home and compel him to remain separated from his wife and children, or condemn him to off-base housing which in many instances is at once more distant, less desirable, and more expensive than that opened to other servicemen.” According to one reporter for *The Washington Post*, the DoD’s message was received by a “polite but restrained audience.” Nonetheless, Fitt urged NAREB to adopt a resolution endorsing the end of housing discrimination. He ended with a simple warning: comply voluntarily or face sanctions like those the DoD imposed in Washington.⁷³

After initial success in Washington, the Department of Defense nationalized the open-housing program. Policymakers immediately turned their attention to California, in part because it was the state with the most military installations and military personnel, but also because, of the fourteen states with statewide open-housing regulations and laws on the books, it had the lowest percentage of apartments open to Black tenants. With the notable exception of the municipalities surrounding Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton in southern California, where surveyors found a “healthy acceptance” of African American renters, most base communities around the Golden State were not willing to rent to Black GIs. In Santa Barbara and Ventura counties, surveyors estimated that 20 percent of off-base housing was off limits to Black families. Perhaps noticing the national attention this issue attracted, many rental property owners began refusing to answer government questionnaires about their rental policies. In Oxnard, which is in Ventura County and home to a missile-testing range at Point Mugu, a group of landlords who owned more than 500 units refused to answer specific questions about their policies.

In spite of state open-housing laws and DoD's new push, 13 percent still said they would not rent to Black families.⁷⁴

In the face of opposition from property owners, national real estate groups, and members of Congress, the open-housing program had measurable success. In California alone, the number of desegregated housing units rose from 206,100 to 253,800, or from 71 percent to 87 percent overall. Nationwide, the DoD estimated that the number of equal-opportunity housing units available to Black military families increased by more than 150,000 in the last seven months of 1967, from 646,700 to 802,200. The progress in some states was remarkable: North Carolina's available housing stock jumped from 68 to 93 percent; Arizona from 72 to 98 percent. Of the forty-six states surveyed, only Louisiana remained below 50 percent open-housing compliant by December 1967.⁷⁵

April 1968 saw the passage of another major Civil Rights bill, which enshrined the Fair Housing Act, an elusive goal of the Johnson administration, into law under Title VII of its provisions. But as late as December 1967, when DoD issued its glowing report on open housing, the landmark federal legislation looked doomed. Open housing had become a major issue in the '68 election campaign. Republicans and segregationist democrats stoked fears of "LBJ's bureaucrats ... swarming over every neighborhood setting up Negro-white quotas, forcing homeowners to sell their property, and encouraging vicious gangs of rioters and looters to destroy neighborhoods which dare to resist."⁷⁶ President Johnson's liberal supporters, fearing backlash over the housing issue, could not even get a bill out of committee in 1967. Within this context, McNamara's Open Housing initiative provided the opposition with ammunition. Although the most virulent of the opposition rhetoric was a gross distortion of reality, meant to scare white voters, the Department of Defense *was* dispatching "bureaucrats" into neighborhoods and, in some communities, ordered desegregation by military decree. To the chagrin of Johnson administration policymakers, the headway that the DoD was making on desegregating housing in military communities was making the passage of federal civil rights legislation more difficult.⁷⁷

But in early 1968, several events changed the political calculus. First, the senate was finally able to break the two-year-long filibuster on the bill in February. The motion for cloture carried by one vote; the bill passed the senate on March 11. President Johnson wrote to Speaker of the House John McCormack and implored him to bring the measure to a vote. He argued that passage of the bill would be a signal to Americans and the world that the United States

was committed to civil rights. In the letter, he invoked the unassailable character of the Black soldier:

To one man—the Negro veteran of Vietnam—the fair housing provision will have a special meaning. I do not need to tell you what he has done for our country. It is up to us—to all of us—to assure him the elemental rights in his own country for which he risked his life overseas. That man—and his race—are entitled to the justice this bill provides.⁷⁸

All eyes were on the House, where it looked like it was going to get buried in committee. But then Johnson made his March 31 announcement that he was not going to seek reelection, and, on April 4, Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. The morning after King was shot, Johnson wrote another letter to the Speaker telling him that the time to act was now. He invoked a fundamental belief of liberal policymakers in the 1960s, that “the right of a man to secure a home for his family regardless of the color of his skin” was a basic tenet of American citizenship (clearly, here, citizenship was gendered male). The President’s words echoed those of Robert McNamara’s several months earlier in his speech to the educational broadcasters: “The Negro serviceman has been loyal and responsible to his country. But the people of his country have failed in their loyalty and responsibility to him.” The Civil Rights Act of 1968 passed a few days later and Johnson signed it into law on April 11.⁷⁹

CONCLUSION

To policymakers in the Department of Defense, participation in the Great Society and War on Poverty was not just ancillary to growing wartime needs. This was not a shrewd numbers game in the bowels of the Pentagon aimed at sending more young men to Vietnam. Rights and obligations were two sides of the same coin to liberals in the Johnson administration. Like most social policy during this time period, the intention of Projects Transition and 100,000, as well as efforts to open up housing to black GIs and their families, was to aid the male breadwinner and shore up the institution of the American family. Significantly, these programs had origins in the earliest expressions of social welfare policymaking in the Kennedy administration, years before President Johnson escalated the war in Vietnam. In sum, these

programs were the epitome of Johnson's vision for achieving the broader goals of the War on Poverty and the Great Society. Policymakers believed that military service—by fulfilling one's obligations of male citizenship—would translate into jobs and the necessary skills to lead successful lives. More important, they felt that the military would instill a sense of pride, motivation, and self-worth in those lacking these ideals of manhood. These are the principles and traditions that drove Project 100,000. In part, they recreated the World War II crucible that had so shaped their vision of masculinity.

War changed men, confronting them with challenges that demanded courage and elicited new strengths. Yet, the reality of the Vietnam War and wartime necessity trumped well-intentioned idealism. Too many New Standards Men were handed an M-16 rather than a hammer or a welding torch. Too few received remedial training in reading and mathematics. The disappointment of Project 100,000 is that it was overtaken by the tragedy of Vietnam.

Almost through stubborn willpower alone, Lyndon Baines Johnson made the Great Society and Vietnam run in confluence during his administration. But the two streams could not be held back from their diverging paths, and in early 1968 their power broke the President. On March 31, looking exhausted and forlorn, the once-towering president stared into the camera and told the American people that he would not seek reelection that November. After mounting casualties, the broken promises of a corner turned or a "light at the end of the tunnel," and the January Tet Offensive, American opinion finally turned against Johnson's war. Moreover, Americans no longer believed in the value of martial obligations. The logic of masculine citizenship that was first articulated in *One-Third of a Nation*, and later on in "The Moynihan Report," shaped government policy from 1963 until 1968. But by the time Johnson left the White House, too many American men wanted nothing to do with compulsory military service.

Although Project Transition would continue on in one form or another for years to come, providing a sturdy foundation for the jobs-and-vocational-training friendly image that the volunteer military would adopt in the 1980s, and the Department of Defense would continue to fight housing discrimination around the country, Project 100,000 ended with the Johnson administration. The incoming Nixon administration quickly abandoned the complex draft "channeling" system that had become synonymous with inequity, putting the longest era of conscription in US history on life support. In 1969, Nixon implemented a lottery, declaring an end to "social engineering"

through the Selective Service System, and in 1973 the President did away with the draft altogether with the institution of the All-Volunteer Force.⁸⁰

Louisiana Tech University, USA

NOTES

1. Robert McNamara, Speech to the National Association of Educational Broadcasters (Denver, November 1967), Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University.
2. On Cold War masculinity and political culture, see K. A. Cuordileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War* (New York, 2005); Robert D. Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy* (Amherst, 2001).
3. Cuordileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture*; Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood*; John Worsencroft, *Salvageable Manhood: Project 100,000 and the Gendered Politics of the Vietnam War*, M.A. thesis (Salt Lake City, 2011).
4. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (Washington, DC, 1965).
5. On Civil Rights during the Cold War, the classic text is Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, 2000). Also see Steven Estes, *I AM A MAN: Race, Manhood, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Chapel Hill, 2005) or Part 1 (“This is a Man’s World”) in Robert O. Self, *All in the Family: The Realignment of American Democracy Since the 1960s* (New York, 2012), 17–103.
6. Amy J. Rutenberg, “Rough Draft: Cold War Military Manpower Policy and the Origins of Vietnam-Era Draft Resistance (Ithaca, 2019).
7. Christian Appy, *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam* (Chapel Hill, 1993), 32.
8. Kathleen Frydl, *The GI Bill* (New York, 2009); Michael Sherry, *In the Shadow of War: The United States Since the 1930s* (New Haven, 1995).
9. Elizabeth Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America* (Cambridge, Mass., 2016), 14.
10. Marisa Chappell, *The War on Welfare: Family, Poverty, and Politics in Modern America* (Philadelphia, 2010), 5. On welfare policy, gender, and war prior to World War II, see Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995). For the postwar era, see Jennifer Mittelstadt, *From Welfare to Workfare: The Unintended Consequences of Liberal Reform, 1945–1965* (Chapel Hill, 2005). Mittelstadt also argues that gender and the maintenance of family roles shaped military welfare policy in *The Rise of the Military Welfare State* (Cambridge, Mass., 2015).
11. Lyndon B. Johnson, *The Vantage Point: Perspectives of the Presidency, 1963–1969* (New York, 1971), 160 (emphasis his).
12. President’s Task Force on Manpower Conservation, *One-Third of a Nation: A Report on Young Men Found Unqualified for Military Service* (Washington, DC, 1964).
13. Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton, 2009), 64–65.

14. *One-Third of a Nation*, 15.
15. *One-Third of a Nation*, 35.
16. *One-Third of a Nation*, 15. On the cult of expertise in the postwar era, see Carolyn Herbst Lewis, *Prescription for Heterosexuality: Sexual Citizenship in the Cold War Era* (Chapel Hill, 2010), 7–10; Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era, Revised* (New York, 1999), 167–71.
17. *One-Third of a Nation*, 15.
18. *One-Third of a Nation*, 15. The report noted that the rejectees had a 28 percent unemployment rate, or four times greater than the national average for 1963, and four out of five were high school dropouts, with only 75 percent ever completing grade school. For more on Cold War narratives of American exceptionalism, see John Fousek, *To Lead the Free World: American Nationalism and the Cultural Roots of the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, 2000).
19. *One-Third of a Nation*, 35.
20. Michael B. Katz, *The Undeserving Poor: From the War on Poverty to the War on Welfare* (New York, 1989).
21. Transcript, Alfred B. Fitt Oral History Interview by Dorothy Pierce, Interview 1 (25 October 1968), LBJ Library, 18.
22. *One-Third of a Nation*, 29.
23. A copy of Kennedy's statement establishing the Taskforce on Manpower Conservation, dated 30 September 1963, can be found in the appendix to the report, in *One-Third of a Nation*.
24. *One-Third of a Nation*, 35.
25. On breadwinner liberalism, see Self, *All in the Family*.
26. Fitt Interview.
27. Quoted in John Rogers, "From Skilled Soldiers to Skilled Civilians," *Boston Globe*, 17 November 1968, B25.
28. "U.S. Offers Discharged Soldiers Job Training," *Los Angeles Times*, 1 May 1969, B4.
29. "U.S. Offers Discharged Soldiers Job Training," B4.
30. "LAPD Pilots a Worthy Job Project," *Los Angeles Times*, 17 October 1967), A4.
31. U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Appropriations, *Department of Defense appropriations for fiscal year 1970: Hearings before the subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, United States Senate, Ninety-first Congress, first session, on H.R. 15090, an act making appropriations for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1970, and for other purposes*, 306.
32. See Kathleen Frydl, *The GI Bill* (New York, 2009).
33. *One-Third of a Nation*, 15.
34. *One-Third of a Nation*, A-2.
35. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (Washington, DC, 1965).
36. Moynihan, *The Negro Family*.
37. Janice H. Laurence and Peter F. Ramsberger, *Low-Aptitude Men in the Military: Who Profits, Who Pays?* (New York, 1991), 16.
38. McNamara Interview, 46.
39. *Congressional Record*, 89th Cong., 2nd sess., 25 August 1965, Senate 21719-20.
40. Fitt Interview.

41. Lawrence M. Baskir and William A. Strauss, *Chance and Circumstance: The Draft, The War, and The Vietnam Generation* (New York, 1978); Laurence and Ramsberger, *Low-Aptitude Men in the Military*; Fitt Interview, 11–12.
42. “Text of President Johnson’s Message to Congress on the Selective Service System,” *New York Times*, 7 March 1967, 32.
43. Johnson, *The Vantage Point*, 324.
44. Rutenberg, *Rough Draft*, 150.
45. *Congressional Record*, 90th Cong, 2nd sess., 30 January 1968, House 1409.
46. Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime*.
47. *Congressional Record*, 90th Cong, 1st sess., 4 May 1967, Senate 11854–55.
48. *Congressional Record*, 90th Cong, 1st sess., 4 May 1967, Senate 11854–55.
49. McNamara believed that protecting the identity of New Standards Men was the key to Project 100,000’s success. However, many in each recruit’s chain of command had access to personnel files, which made deducing who was a New Standards Man relatively easy. Also, in the early stages of Project 100,000, New Standards Men were assigned a service number beginning with “67.” Although the DoD quickly fixed this problem, New Standards Men were referred to derisively as “sixes and sevens,” which ironically is an old English idiom, meaning a state of confusion and disarray. Worsencroft, *Salvageable Manhood*, 36.
50. Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood*.
51. *New York Times*, 7 March 1967, 32.
52. McNamara, Denver Speech.
53. Quoted in “Rights Leaders Deplore Plan to ‘Salvage’ Military Rejects,” *New York Times*, 26 August 1966, 3.
54. “Rights Leaders Deplore Plan,” 3. See also Sol Stern, “When the Black G.I. Comes Back from Vietnam,” *New York Times*, 24 March 1968), 27. While African Americans in the military were proportionally represented, their share of combat deaths was often disproportionate, reaching a height of 20 percent in 1967. On the whole, however, black casualties during the war averaged 12.5 percent, and the precipitous decline can be attributed to the backlash from those in the Civil Rights community. Appy, *Working-Class War*, 20–22.
55. “Mac’s Sense of Ministry,” *The Baltimore Afro-American*, 18 November 1967, 4. For more on *The Baltimore Afro-American*’s editorial stance on Vietnam, see Lawrence Allen Eldridge, *Chronicles of a Two-Front War: Civil Rights and Vietnam in the African American Press* (Columbia, Mo., 2011), 142 and passim.
56. Quoted in Estes, *I Am A Man!*, 166.
57. Worsencroft, *Salvageable Manhood*, 38–39.
58. *Family Housing and the Negro Serviceman*, 13.
59. Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, 1996), 10.
60. Thomas Sugrue, “All Politics Is Local: The Persistence of Localism in Twentieth-Century America,” in *The Democratic Experiment: New Directions in American Political History*, ed. Meg Jacobs, William J. Novak, and Julian E. Zelizer (Princeton, 2003), 310. See also Robert Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, 2005).
61. *Family Housing and the Negro Serviceman*, 13.
62. *Family Housing and the Negro Serviceman*, 13.

63. *Family Housing and the Negro Serviceman*, 13.
64. *Family Housing and the Negro Serviceman*, appendix B.
65. McNamara, Denver Speech.
66. McNamara, Denver Speech.
67. Quoted in Michael Drosnin, "Laurel Raps Housing Rule by Pentagon," *Washington Post*, 7 July 1967, B1.
68. McNamara, Denver Speech.
69. "Hess Exemption Undone; He Integrates for Military," *Washington Post*, 13 July 1967, B1.
70. McNamara, Denver Speech; James MacNees, "Open Housing Gains Listed By Pentagon," *Baltimore Sun*, 31 December 1967, 16.
71. "Pentagon Reports New Housing for Negro GIs," *Los Angeles Times*, 31 December 1967, D5.
72. McNamara Interview.
73. John B. Willman, "Military Notes Housing Gains," *Washington Post*, 12 November 1967, D2.
74. McNamara, Denver Speech; Howard Kennedy, "Bias in Housing Near Military Bases Noted," *Los Angeles Times*, 23 September 1967, 14; Julian Hartt, "Acceptance of Negroes Cited: Pendleton Area Praised for Open Housing Policy," *Los Angeles Times*, 3 July 1967, A6.
75. "Pentagon Reports New Housing for Negro GIs," D5; Macnees, "Open Housing Gains Listed by Pentagon," 16.
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