



# **Black Officer in a Buffalo Soldier Regiment: The Military Career of Charles Young**

*Brian G. Shellum*

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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.

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.

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