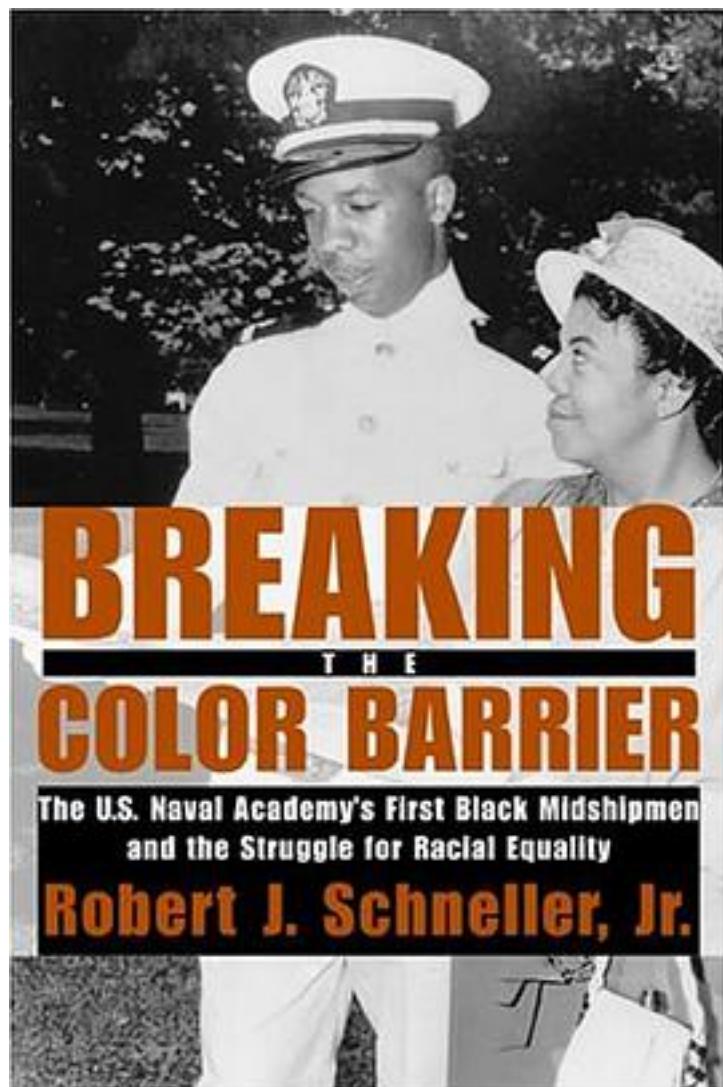


Breaking the Color Barrier



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Only five black men were admitted to the United States Naval Academy between Reconstruction and the beginning of World War II. None graduated, and all were deeply scarred by intense racial discrimination, ranging from brutal hazing incidents to the institutionalized racist policies of the Academy itself. *Breaking the Color Barrier* examines the black community's efforts to integrate the Naval Academy, as well as the experiences that black midshipmen encountered at Annapolis. Historian Robert J. Schneller analyzes how the Academy responded to demands for integration from black and white civilians, civil rights activists, and politicians, as well as what life at the Academy was like for black midshipmen and the encounters they had with their white classmates. In 1949, Midshipman Wesley Brown achieved what seemed to be the impossible: he became the first black graduate of the Academy. Armed with intelligence, social grace, athleticism, self-discipline, and an immutable pluck, as well as critical support from friends and family, Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, and the Executive Department, Brown was able to confront and ultimately shatter the Academy's tradition of systematic racial discrimination. Based on the Navy's documentary records and on personal interviews with scores of midshipmen and naval officers, *Breaking the Color Barrier* sheds light on the Academy's first step in transforming itself from a racist institution to one that today ranks equal opportunity among its fundamental tenets.

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