

TOURIST SOLDIER

A TELEVISION SERIES BASED ON ACTUAL EVENTS



tourist soldier /toor-ist sohl-jer/

noun

1. a person who served in the United States Army in post-war occupied W. Germany from 1950 to 1955 and traveled all around Europe, enjoying the sights
2. a soldier who enjoyed weekly cash payroll to spend in the community.
3. a new historical drama series for television



OVER A MILLION!!! Maj Leland E. Carr, Deputy Finance Officer 5th Inf Div (second from left), and Cpl John J. Herity, Hqs 5th In Div (left), check the division payroll, for Red Diamond soldier stationed in the Augsburg area, which amounted to \$1,200,000.00. Guarding the payroll are Cpl Vernon A. Newton (right) and Cpl Ralph V. Redding (second from right), both of the 5th MP Co.



SOURCE: Division in Europe — The Big Picture

LOGLINE

When President Eisenhower spares eight white soldiers from execution but allows eight Black soldiers to hang, one man's tragic journey from postwar Germany to the gallows at Fort Leavenworth exposes the lethal depths of America's racial injustice.

SUMMARY OF STORY

In the 1950s, *'Tourist Soldiers'* enjoyed the benefits of peacetime around the world. Soldiers toured exotic cities, visited museums and partied in bars. Yet the dangerous combination of young soldiers with too much time on their hands, access to alcohol and firearms, and a lack of education becomes a recipe for disaster. Fun was had by all, but some US soldiers got into big trouble!

TOURIST SOLDIER, based on actual events, follows a young Abraham Thomas' tragic journey from soldier to murderer - and those who tried to save him along the way.

Abraham's attorney, Augustus C. Felton, exposes the uphill battle for Black soldiers trying to gain any kind of justice in Jim Crow America, while the white soldiers' lawyers with the help of the media and the highest levels of government are successful in sparing the lives of their clients. Abraham's strong willed mother, Missouri Thomas, falters as she pleads for her son's life with wires to the Oval Office that go unanswered. Abraham's odyssey from post-war occupied W. Germany across the Atlantic on the Queen Mary with his fellow soldier, James Hall, to the courtrooms of DC, ultimately brings him to the gallows of Leavenworth, KS.

**All 16 soldiers committed crimes while serving their country....
only the Black soldiers paid the price.**

In 1976, President Ford pardoned all of the white soldiers and they died at home with their families

Soldier Hangs For Killing 4

2 German Women And 2 GIs Victims

FT. LEAVENWORTH, KA
July 23 (AP) — Abraham Thom
29-year-old soldier convicted
killing four persons in Germa
was hanged early today at
United States Disciplinary B
racks.

Thomas, from Montezuma, O
had been at the barracks f
years while a series of app
was filed in his behalf. A co
martial convicted him of sh
ing two soldiers and two
man women at Gersthofen
1954.

The execution took
shortly after midnight.

Thomas was a member of
109th Infantry regiment of
28th Infantry division at
time of the shooting.

Killed Feb. 23, 1954 were W
burga Wenderoth and Anna Wie
gel, both of Gersthofen, and Sgt.
Lafayette Bennett and Cpl.

THE FRESNO BEE
Wed., July 23, '54

Georgia Soldier Dies On Gallow

FT. LEAVENWORTH, KA
AP—Abraham Thomas, a 2
ear old soldier who kille
ur persons in Gersthofen
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Thomas, from Montezuma
, had been confined at the
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peals were filed in his be
f. A court martial con
ted him of killing Walburga
nderoth and Anna Wiegel,
h of Gersthofen, and tw
ow soldiers, Sergeant First
as Lafayette Bennett and
poral Edward Peters. The
were shot February 23,
1954.



SOLDIERS ON DEATH ROW*

BLACK INMATES

WHITE INMATES

| Rank & Name | Crime | Execution Date |
|------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Pvt. Chastine Beverly | Robbery, Murder | March 1, 1955 |
| Pvt. Louis M. Suttles | Robbery, Murder | March 1, 1955 |
| Pvt. James L. Riggins | Robbery, Murder | March 1, 1955 |
| Pvt. Thomas J. Edwards | Murder | February 14, 1957 |
| Pvt. Winfred D. Moore | Robbery, Murder | February 14, 1957 |
| Pvt. Ernest L. Ransom | Robbery, Rape, Murder | April 3, 1957 |
| Pfc. Abraham Thomas | Murder | July 23, 1958 |
| Pvt. John E. Day, Jr | Assault, Murder | September 23, 1959 |

| Rank & Name | Crime | Date Commuted |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| Sgt. Michael Kunak | Murder | 1955 |
| Pvt. John Vigneault | Robbery, Murder | 1955 |
| Pvt. Richard Hagelberger | Robbery, Murder | 1956 |
| Pvt. Ralph T. McFarlane | Assault, Robbery, Murder | 1956 |
| Pvt. Roy Travis Dunnahoe | Murder | 1957 |
| Pvt. Edward Heilman | Murder | 1959 |
| Mst. Sgt. Maurice Schick | Rape, Murder | 1960 |
| Sgt. Isaac Jackson Hurt | Rape, Murder | 1960 |

* 1955 to 1960 at Fort Leavenworth, KS.

Why Us?

After graduating from UCLA, Allyson began searching for untold stories and turned to the one place she hadn't looked—her own family. Her father had been drafted during the Korean War and sent to post-war West Germany as a special investigator. Most of his duties were routine, even mundane—arresting drunken soldiers, tracking prostitutes' health cards—but his final assignment would haunt him for decades: escorting a U.S. soldier back to America to be executed. That story became the seed of *Tourist Soldier*.

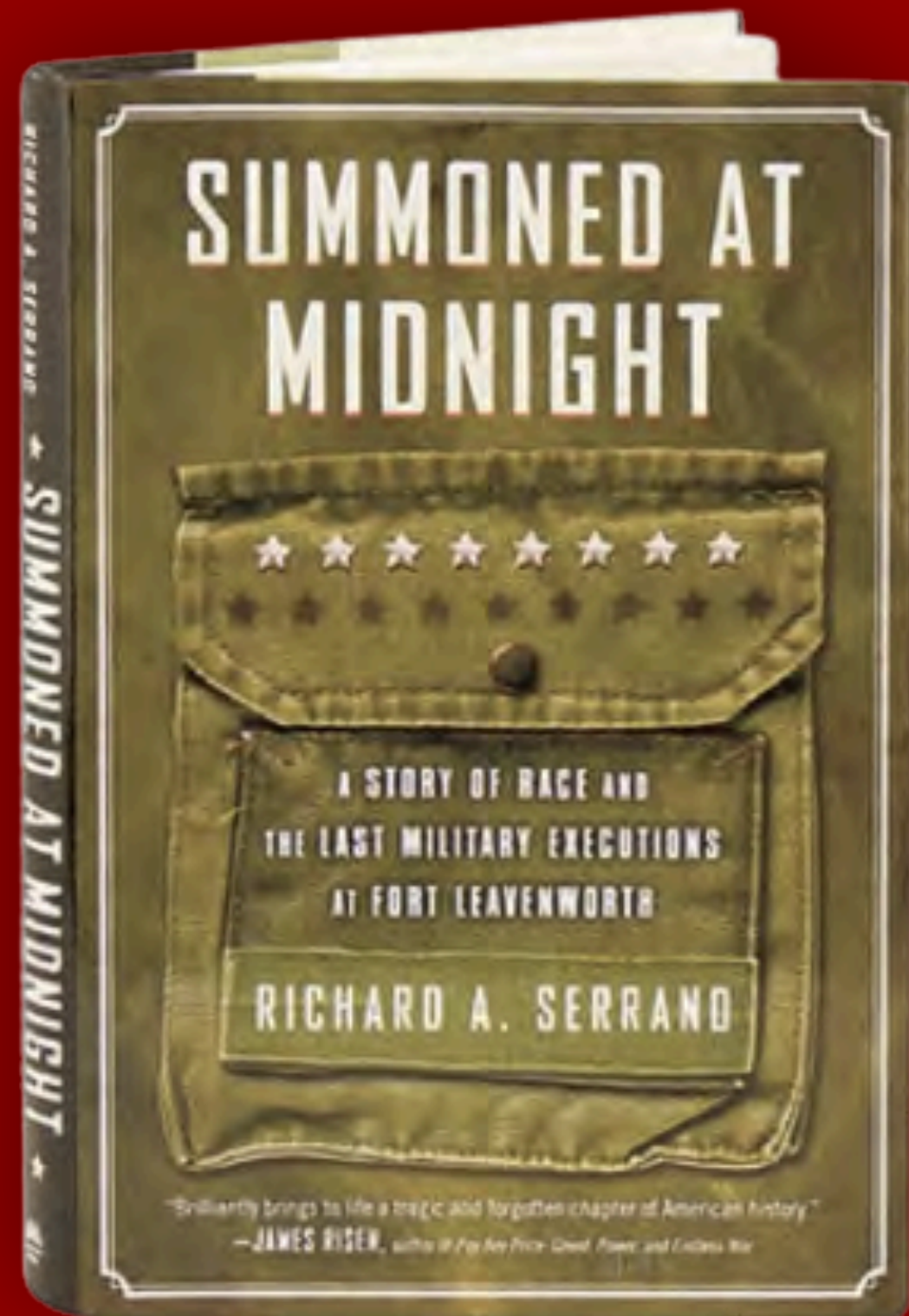


Why Now?

On June 4, 2020, as the nation reeled from the murder of George Floyd, we watched Senators Cory Booker and Kamala Harris debate the Emmett Till Antilynching Act on the Senate floor. We were stunned to learn that, until that moment, the United States had never passed a federal antilynching law. As we dug deeper into the fate of Black soldiers on death row in the 1950s, a chilling pattern emerged—one that suggested the military and federal government, in the wake of Truman's desegregation order, had created a form of legalized lynching aimed at Black servicemen. This series exists to expose that buried truth—and to ask why it took so long to confront it.



On March 7, 2022 the Senate passed the
Emmett Till Antilynching Act.
President Joe Biden signed it into law.
It took over 100 years & 200 attempts to make this happen.



While the storyline of **Tourist Soldier** is based on actual events as told by Allyson's father, James Upton Hall, much of the death row details were obtained from Richard Serrano's book entitled *SUMMONED AT MIDNIGHT: A Story of Race and The Last Military Executions at Fort Leavenworth*.

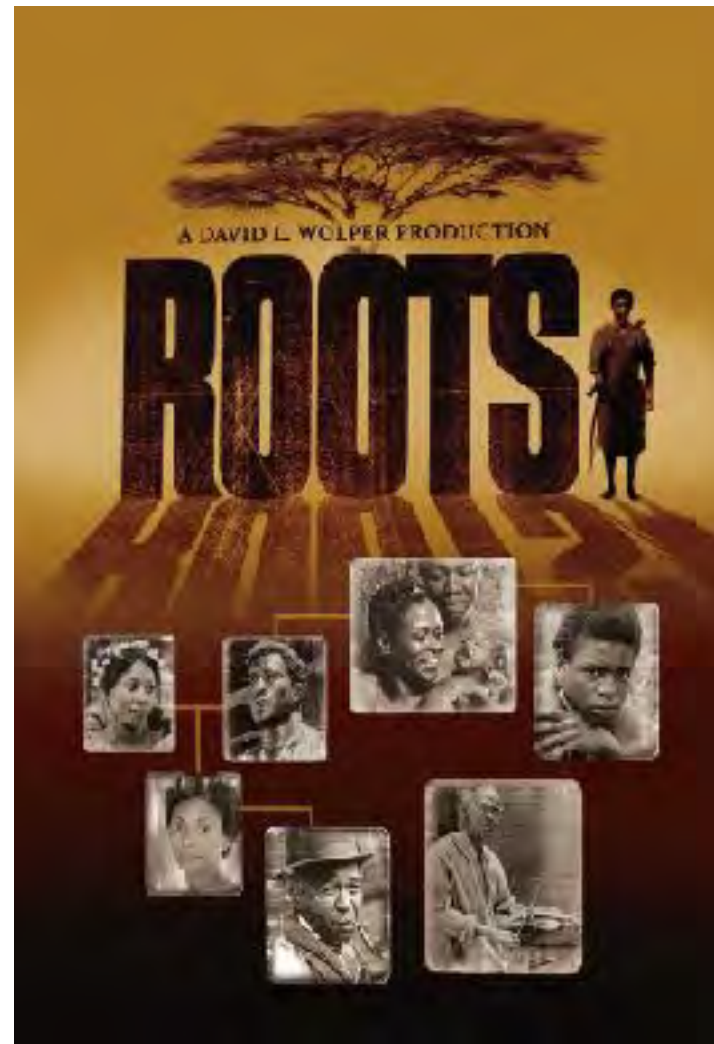
The book serves as reference material and has been optioned for the television series, **Tourist Soldier**.

Mr. Serrano has agreed to make himself available as a consultant.

The author **Richard A. Serrano** was a longtime Washington correspondent for the Los Angeles Times and shared in three Pulitzer Prizes. He spent 45 years covering the Pentagon, wars in Haiti and the Middle East, the US Justice Department, the FBI, and the War on Terror. During his early days of reporting, he met and interviewed dozens of former soldiers on death row at Fort Leavenworth, prison guards, counselors, and attorneys, and even the Army's hangman. It was there he also discovered the military's tragic two-tiered system of Army injustice in the Eisenhower years.

COMPARABLE SHOWS

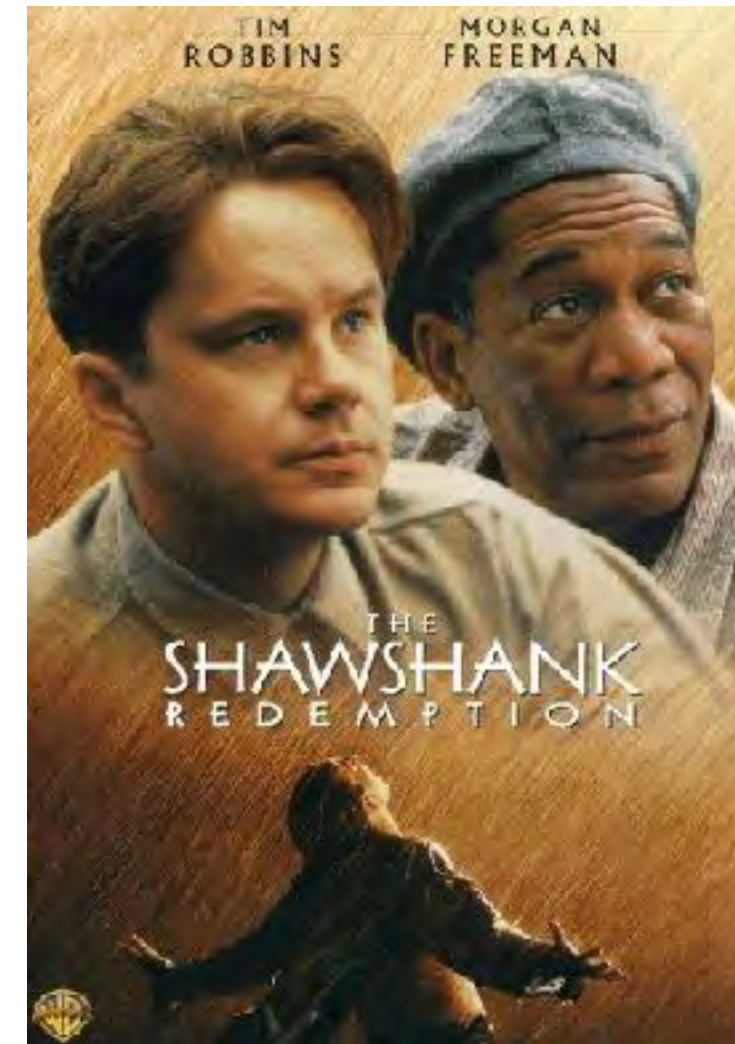
“Roots”



“A Few Good Men”



“The Shawshank Redemption”



“Dead Man Walking”



CAST OF CHARACTERS

Rooted in real events, this story is populated by real people and carefully constructed composite characters whose lives intersect with Abraham's over nearly three decades. The scope of the series is expansive, tracing the human consequences of history as it unfolds—through soldiers, lawyers, mothers, wardens, politicians, and witnesses who shape and are shaped by Abraham's fate.

Set against the backdrop of postwar America, the series moves through a world often mythologized as an era of prosperity and opportunity. While white veterans returned from World War II to the promise of the GI Bill and the rewards of victory, Black soldiers were systematically denied those same benefits, left to navigate a nation that celebrated freedom while withholding it.

Our characters reflect the truth of that contradiction. Presidents, civil rights leaders, and cultural icons appear not as distant legends, but as forces—visible and unseen—whose decisions ripple through individual lives. This is not the polished memory of the 1950s, but the lived reality beneath it, where justice was unequal, opportunity was rationed by race, and the cost was paid by men like Abraham Thomas.





*PRIVATE FIRST CLASS
ABRAHAM THOMAS*

24 years old, Black soldier, born and raised in Montezuma, Georgia. During the series, ages from 16 years old to 28 years old. Son of a sharecropper with a 3rd-grade education and a history of mental illness. The wily kid on the farm who worked hard but was the class clown, and always made everyone laugh. Escaped poverty by joining Eisenhower's army in 1947 at the age of 17 with the hopes of seeing the world. During his tour in Germany, Abraham meets the love of his life and can now envision a real future. However, his family's enslavement and its Inherited Trauma destroy everything and everyone around him.



*SPECIAL INVESTIGATOR
JAMES HALL*

24 years old, white soldier, born and raised in Hollywood, California. During the series, he ages from 16 years old to 28 years old. His friends called him Lucky Jim because things always came easy to him. Whether packing groceries for starlets at the Farmers Market on Fairfax or earning a full college scholarship to Cal for baseball, he loved his life and all the privileges that came with it. The army came knocking after Hall graduated with a degree in criminology. Hall was drafted during the Korean War but once again he lucked out and was sent to Germany. After taking immersion classes to learn German, he became a special investigator in the criminal investigation division. The unlikely pairing with a fellow soldier would change the course of his life.





AUGUSTUS C. FELTON III

49 years old, white, attorney and mayor of Montezuma, Georgia. Augustus represented Abraham while he was imprisoned in Fort Leavenworth but felt crippled by the fact that he was a 'country' lawyer and didn't understand federal capital punishment laws. He was particularly close with Missouri Thomas, as his extended family once enslaved Missouri's parents and he felt an obligation to help her whenever he could. The Black Feltons and the white Feltons have a long lineage in Montezuma, Georgia to this day.



MRS. MISSOURI THOMAS

63 years old, Black, mother of Abraham Thomas. During the series, ages from 39 years old to 67 years old. Missouri was one of 11 children born to Patsey and Ben Felton who were slaves on the Felton Plantation in Marshallville, Georgia, just outside of Montezuma. She married John Thomas, had four children, and ran the communal kitchen for Flint River Farms which were dispersed by the Roosevelt Administration during the New Deal. Missouri knew no bounds in her love for her children. Prior to her son's death, she begged President Eisenhower numerous times for her son's life. Her wires went unanswered.



Pilot - "The Ring"

Our series opens in Germany, 1954...

As snow blankets the countryside near Augsburg, a troop of U.S. soldiers returns from grueling field maneuvers. Three Black soldiers—Abraham Thomas, Williams, and Ezra—lag behind, laughing and talking about girls and engagement rings. Abraham, in love with a German woman named Lizzie, plans to surprise her with a ring.

The soldiers' disregard for time angers their commanding officers, Peters and Bennett. Abraham, facing discharge for illiteracy, pleads for a furlough and is reluctantly granted one. He and Williams head to Regensburg, where Abraham finds the perfect ring.

Back at the barracks, Abraham quickly prepares for his date and hops on a bus to Lizzie's apartment. Henry, a neighbor's German Shepherd, greets Abraham, tail wagging. But when he arrives at Lizzie's apartment, the tone shifts. She's surprised, cold, and asks him to leave. Suddenly, Henry barks wildly as Peters and Bennett appear moments later, and a confrontation brews. A glance from Lizzie tells Abraham everything—he walks away.

The next morning, horror strikes. Four people are found murdered in Lizzie's apartment—two German women and two Black U.S. soldiers. Special Investigators Hall and Roberts arrive at a chaotic scene. Jurisdictional tension flares between U.S. and German authorities. A U.S. soldier found at the scene, Sgt Bryant, is taken into custody by MPs against the wishes of a local German magistrate.

Two months later, in Washington, D.C., Abraham's case is sent to the U.S. Court of Military Appeals - one of several soldiers facing execution. Meanwhile, in Montezuma, Georgia - Abraham's hometown - Mayor Felton receives a telegram. He delivers the devastating news to Abraham's mother, Missouri, who worries, "They hang negro boys like mine in the army."

Final image: Abraham, alone on his bunk, polishing the ring that was meant for love—now a symbol of what he's about to lose.



Episode Two...

Opens in slow motion: Abraham locked in a fight with a Black man. At first, we think it's a fellow soldier—but it's his father. A voiceover from Missouri fades in as we cut to her home in Georgia, where she's speaking with Felton fiercely defending her son. We learn of Abraham's harsh upbringing: poverty, lack of opportunity, and a father who disciplined with fists, not words.

Back in Augsburg, Hall and Roberts interrogate Bryant, who insists he had nothing to do with the murders. He's released—but forensics quickly matches bullet casings to a carbine signed out by Abraham Thomas. He's arrested.

Four days of interrogation follow. Neighbors told the investigators they never heard the dog bark the night of the murders. Abraham is taken to the crime scene repeatedly, where the dog never barks in his presence. Under intense pressure, he confesses.

As German police and the public demand a civilian trial, the U.S. military refuses. With no meaningful defense, Abraham is found guilty, court martialed, and sentenced to hang.

In Georgia, Missouri begs Felton to take on Abraham's defense. Felton—hiding a deeper personal tie—agrees to take over representation. Missouri is relieved.

Hall escorts Abraham back to New York on the R.M.S. Queen Mary. While crossing the Atlantic, Abraham dreams of Lizzie and their travels around Europe.

We cut to President Eisenhower reading a telegram from Missouri:

“Mr. President, we have no money to hire lawyers or to find out exactly what was happening to my son. My son should be punished but not with the supreme penalty of death. I am begging you in the name of the Good Lord, please be liency with my child and spare his life. Have mercy on this poor negro boy.”

He sees a “C” marked in the corner—for colored—and tosses it on a growing pile.





Season Two: "The Crossing"

- The R.M.S. Queen Mary carries condemned soldier Abraham Thomas across the Atlantic under the escort of James Hall.
- During the two-week voyage, Hall and Abraham form an unlikely bond over baseball—Cleveland Indians vs. New York Giants—a human connection cutting through confinement.
- Juxtaposed memories of Hall's privileged life with those of Abraham's:
 - Abraham's generational trauma of growing up in extreme poverty, losing his father at 16, having a 3rd-grade education, and working on a sharecropping farm.
 - Hall enjoyed a comfortable life in the Fairfax district of Los Angeles, working at the Farmers Market, and receiving a full scholarship to Cal for playing baseball. His friends called him Lucky Jim.
 - A young Abraham complains about working the fields to his grandmother, Patsey, who reminds him to be grateful that no overseer is whipping him to work. Flashback to The Felton Plantation, where a younger Patsey works the fields.
 - Abraham enlisted in 1947 as a private at the age of 17, while Hall was drafted in 1952 at the age of 22 as a special investigator because of his education
- After docking in New York, Hall escorts Abraham to Washington, D.C., for his first appeals meeting with his military attorney, Major Doran.
- For the first time in three years, Abraham is reunited with his mother, Missouri, accompanied by Mayor Felton, who reassures Abraham he'll do everything in his power to get his conviction commuted.
- Guards deny Missouri a parting embrace with her son until Hall intervenes.
- A military patrol car drives Abraham and Hall down a dusty road to Fort Leavenworth as the MLB All-Star Game plays on the radio.
- Abraham celebrates the American League win—then realizes this is the end.
- As Abraham is led inside, he calls back to Hall: "Indians gonna win the series!"
- Hall watches Abraham disappear as the camera pulls back to reveal the vast stone walls of "The Castle."

Season Three - "The Castle"

- The story moves deep inside both Fort Leavenworth's penitentiary and the U.S. military appellate court system.
- Abraham lives on Seven Base – death row for military prisoners – where inmates never know when footsteps from the warden may mean the gallows.
- All condemned soldiers appeal for commutation, sending wires to the Eisenhower administration.
 - One by one, the white soldiers are released, their pardons aided by sympathetic media coverage.
 - The remaining Black soldiers cling to hope as executions continue.
- Social worker Joseph A. Thompson, the grandson of enslaved people, counsels the death row inmates and becomes a witness to their fear.
- Legal inequities become clear:
 - White soldiers benefit from stronger representation.
 - Felton exhausts every option, even attempting to confront Eisenhower at a Georgia golf club—only to be turned away.
- Civil rights attorney Homer Davis takes over Abraham's case, challenging media bias and renewing Missouri's clinging hope.
- Months before his execution, Abraham suffers a stroke.
 - Despite paralysis and vision loss, prison doctors declare him fit for execution.
- As appeals fail, Abraham confesses his truth to Thompson.
 - His account of the night at Lizzie's apartment unfolds silently, underscored by a recurring melody: "Bye Bye Love."
- Shortly before midnight, Abraham is led to the gallows.
 - With only one working leg, Abraham struggles to reach the top of the platform, where he meets the military's hangman, Master Sgt. Maddox, who ties ropes around his arms and legs, and puts the noose around Abraham's neck.
 - Tears are seen through the burlap hood as we hear the snap of the trapdoor falling.
- At that exact moment, in California, James Hall reads about the execution in the L.A. Times.
- Abraham Thomas is executed at 12:01 a.m. on July 23, 1958.



TOURIST SOLDIER

Created by

ALLYSON HALL & PAUL COSENTINO
818.571.5730 **917.345.8789**

allysonhall48@gmail.com

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