Allensworth, Allen—Communities/Law and Government/Military/Religion

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**Allensworth, Allen (b. 1843?, Louisville, KY; d. 1914, Monrovia, CA). first African American in Kentucky selected as an elector for the Republican National Convention and co-founder of Allensworth, California.**

Allen Allensworth was born of slave parents, Levi and Phyllis, in Louisville, Kentucky. Sold as a child, he lived with different masters in Henderson County, Kentucky, and New Orleans, Louisiana. He returned to Louisville as a slave in 1861, but the following year he left the city with soldiers and obtained his freedom by joining the United States Navy.

Following his tenure in the Navy, he attended Ely School and the Nashville Institute. After a brief stint as a teacher in Georgetown, Kentucky, Allensworth served as pastor of churches in Louisville, Bowling Green, and Cincinnati. In 1880 and 1884, he became the first black delegate from Kentucky to attend the Republican National Convention. Later, while pastoring Union Baptist Church in Cincinnati, he was appointed by President Grover Cleveland as chaplain of the Army’s 24th Infantry and was promoted to lieutenant colonel.

After his service in the Spanish American War, Allensworth retired and moved to Los Angeles, California, where he became the president and co-founder of the California Colony and Home Promoting Association in 1908. The organization sought to establish an all-black community in the state, and encouraged African American emigration from across the country. By 1914, the community was officially named Allensworth, had an all-black local government, and became the first African American school district in California.

See:

Beasley, Delilah. *The Negro Trailblazers of California*. Los Angeles, CA: Eagle Publishing Co., 1919.

Oder, Barron Krieg. “Education, ‘Race-Adjustment,’ and the Military: The Life and Work of Chaplain Allen Allensworth, 24th Infantry, U.S. Army.” Ph.D. dissertation, University of New Mexico, 1994.

Simmons, William. *Men of Mark: Eminent, Progressive and Rising*. Cleveland, OH: Geo. M. Rewell, 1887.