

A Postscript: The Port Chicago Mutiny

MY FALL/WINTER 2022 *CSCHS Review* article, “The 1944 Port Chicago Mutiny and the Legacy of Racism in the U.S. Military,” described the explosion that killed 320 U.S. Navy and other personnel and the related court martial and mutiny convictions of 50 African Americans.¹ The events were manifestly racist, but the Navy never pardoned the men.

Since publication, two events have occurred. First, on July 17, 2024 — the explosion’s 80th anniversary — the U.S. Navy exonerated all 50 men of their convictions (and exonerated 206 other related Port Chicago personnel who had been convicted on lesser charges).² Unfortunately, all of the exonerations were posthumous.

1. <https://www.cschs.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/2022-CSCHS-Review-Fall-Port-Chicago-Mutiny.pdf> [as of July 23, 2024].

2. <https://www.navy.mil/Press-Office/Press-Releases/display-pressreleases/Article/3841792/the-secretary-of-the-navy->

Second, Professor Robert Allen, who wrote a history of the Port Chicago tragedy and court martial, died on July 10, 2024, a week before the exonerations.³ Allen taught at Mills College and then at UC Berkeley and in 1989 wrote *The Port Chicago Mutiny*, a definitive account of the event.⁴ Allen also campaigned for the men’s exoneration and for the tragedy to be remembered.

— John Caragozian

[exonerates-256-defendants-from-1944-port-chicago-gene/](#) [as of Oct. 12, 2024].

3. “Robert Allen, Who Recounted a Naval Mutiny Trial, Dies at 82,” *N.Y. Times*, Jul. 22, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/07/22/us/robert-l-allen-dead.html> [as of July 23, 2024].

4. Robert L. Allen, *The Port Chicago Mutiny: The Story of the Largest Mass Mutiny Trial in U.S. Naval History*. Berkeley, CA: Heyday, 2006.