CHAPTER 14

In Pursuit of Democracy

Answering the Call to Fight

Jim Crow Military Camps

Service Overseas

On the Home Front

Members of the 369th Regiment Coming Home, 1919

Members of the Harlem-based 369th Regiment celebrating as they arrived in New York after fighting in Europe in World War I.

When war erupted in Europe in 1914, the American people received the news with varying degrees of concern. From thousands of miles across the Atlantic, they followed the media coverage of the rapidly worsening conditions: German and Austro-Hungarian imperialism; the growing nationalist sentiment in the Slavic states of southeastern Europe; the assassination in Bosnia of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, by a Serbian nationalist; and the fierce alignment of the Allied Powers (Great Britain, France, and Russia) against the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and Turkey).

President Woodrow Wilson expressed the isolationist and antiwar mood of most Americans when he declared his country's neutrality. While the war quickly engulfed most of the European continent like a blazing fire, the American people stood on the sidelines—watching, waiting, and hoping not to get involved with the Old World's seemingly endless quarrels. The popular song from this period—"I Didn't Raise My Boy to be a Soldier"—captured the wish of most Americans to stay out of the bloodshed.

The conflagration abroad took on ever-more global proportions, dwarfing domestic issues. For more than two and a half years, Americans remained neutral, although bombarded with gruesome news reports telling of the enormous toll of death, mutilation, and devastation caused by trench warfare, explosive mines, heavy artillery, poison gas, aircraft bombs, and submarine (German U-boat) torpedoes. The weapons of mass destruction and the sheer carnage of the war were unfathomable to most Americans. The European death toll climbed furiously. War ravaged France's male population; by the war's end, half of all Frenchmen between twenty and thirty-two years of age would be dead.

American neutrality became increasingly difficult to maintain. Passions ran high in both pro-Allied and antiwar circles, especially in August 1915, when newspaper headlines screamed that more than a hundred American lives had been lost after a German U-boat torpedoed the British liner *Lusitania.* The outcry from the United States persuaded the German government to suspend its unrestricted submarine warfare, but in January 1917 German submarines began attacking American ships in the Atlantic bound for Great Britain. On April 2, 1917, President Wilson stood before a joint session of Congress and asked for a declaration of war. He spoke passionately about the obligation of Americans to "fight for the things which we have always carried nearest our hearts—for democracy, for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own governments, for the rights and liberties of small nations, for a universal dominion of right by such a concert of free peoples as shall bring peace and safety to all nations and make the world itself at last free." Only six senators and thirty members of the House (among them Montana's Jeannette Rankin, the first woman representative and an avowed pacifist) voted against declaring war.

The United States fought on the side of the Allied Powers in World War I, also known at the time as the Great War and the War to End All Wars. About 370,000 African American men answered Wilson's stirring call to "make the world safe for democracy" by serving in the U.S. armed forces. The army camps in which they trained were racially segregated. Black soldiers were insulted and even violently assaulted by white American citizens and soldiers, and they were frequently assigned menial and overly laborious jobs by their white officers.

Disfranchised and segregated in the southern states, the great majority of blacks had no voice in their government or any semblance of equal treatment. Nor could they find solace in the idea of free and independent African nations, since most of Africa fell under the colonial rule of the very European nations at war. As southern blacks migrated northward

search of wartime opportunities, they found no respite or safety from the terror of race riots that grew more prevalent during and after the war. Despite this reality, black soldiers fought with valor and patriotism on the European front line, ever conscious of the democracy that eluded them in their homeland.

Answering the Call to Fight

In the years leading up to America's entrance into the war, the military showed little sign of preparedness. By the beginning of 1917, it had become obvious to the nation's leaders that a far larger force was needed than the regular army's relatively small number of enlisted men and National Guard, of which black soldiers made up a small proportion. Blacks in the military were serving in the Ninth and Tenth Cavalries, in the Twenty-Fourth and Twenty-Fifth Infantries, and in the various National Guard units: the Eighth Illinois, the Fifteenth New York, separate battalions of the District of Columbia and of the Ohio National Guard, and separate companies of the Maryland, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Tennessee National Guard.

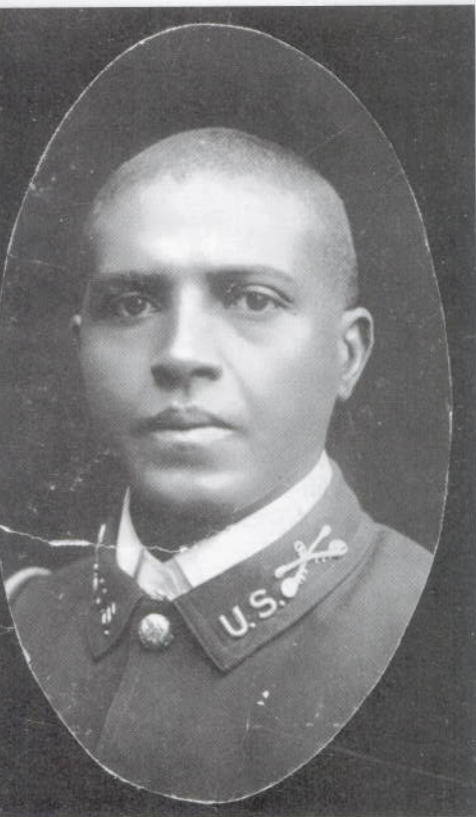
Despite the protests of Mississippi's James Vardaman in the Senate, Congress rejected the idea of a "whites-only draft" and passed the Selective Service Act in May 1917 with no racial restrictions, thus opening up the nation's armed forces to a far greater number of black men. On July 5, 1917, the first day of registration, more than 700,000 black men signed up for Selective Service. Blacks were generally eager to participate in the war, not only as enlisted men but also as officers. Before the end of the wartime draft, 2,290,525 blacks had registered, 367,000 of whom were called into the service.

The Selective Service Act

In some southern counties, draft boards sought to fill their quotas with blacks before even turning to whites. In other counties, the reverse occurred, with whites being inducted first to forestall the possibility of arming black men as soldiers. In the end, however, African Americans were disproportionately represented in the draft. Approximately 31 percent of all blacks who registered were accepted, compared to 26 percent of registered whites. In absolute terms, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina drafted a larger number of African Americans than of whites. Unlike the uproar over enlisting black troops during the Civil War, the necessity for raising enormous manpower to fight in the World War made the use of African American troops immediately self-evident to the great majority of government and military officials.

News coverage of black draftees differed from place to place. Although many white newspapers in the North and South gave the impression of an overall acceptance of blacks in the military, some did not. For example, newspapers in Baltimore, Memphis, and in Gainesville, Florida, sought to ignore, if not outright discourage, black participation, urging whites to volunteer and thus preclude the need for blacks. The Gainesville *Daily Sun* was explicit in its opposition to arming black soldiers. Draft boards at the district or county level, often composed of political appointees of the various state governors, revealed differing practices. In some southern agricultural areas, wealthy farmers obtained an agricultural exemption (because of their substantial crop production) under the Selective Service Act, while tenant farmers and sharecroppers of both races were called up. In rural Texas and Alabama, however, draft board members were known to help their rich white landowning friends by exempting their black farm workers so that they might harvest the crop.

Fewer blacks received the marriage exemption, which was based on a wife's dependent status. The selective service boards in the South routinely defined as dependents white wives, specifically those who did not work outside the home, but this was not done for black women. Outside work was expected, even forcibly demanded of them. For example, in some southern towns, black married women were fined if they did not work, and in Vicksburg, Mississippi, local whites even went so far as to tar and feather two black women who refused to work outside their own homes while receiving allotments from their husbands' military service. In Monroe County, Alabama, draft boards called up married white men if childless and black men with one child. One board in Georgia was discharged because of its flagrantly racist policy of denying exemptions to blacks.



Col. Charles W. Young

Although the draft opened to blacks and whites alike, racism in the armed forces was undeniable. In the Jim Crow atmosphere of early twentieth-century America, white soldiers and members of Congress sternly rejected offering black men officer's commissions. When the United States entered World War I, there were only a handful of African American military officers, all of them long-serving regulars.

The highest-ranking black officer in 1917 was Lieutenant Colonel Charles Young (born March 12, 1864, died January 8, 1922). Young, the third black graduate of West Point, was commissioned in 1889. He served in the Spanish-American War, in the prewar American incursion into Mexico, and in the Philippines. At the time of America's declaration of war in 1917, some senators complained that as a lieutenant colonel Young would outrank the white captains and lieutenants commanding segregated black units. Army officials then endeavored to force his retirement. They found Young unfit for active duty based on a medical condition—high blood pressure and a kidney disorder—discovered in a routine physical examination. Young attempted to prove his physical fitness by riding horseback from Ohio to the nation's capital. His efforts did not persuade the army until five days before the end of the war, at which time he was reinstated, promoted to colonel, and called to duty with the Ohio National Guard.

The NAACP

The interracial National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, a relatively new organization at the time, responded immediately to the "whites-only" policy of the Army's officer training camps. The NAACP was founded in 1909, when the white reformer and socialist William English Walling, horrified by the racist Springfield Riot in 1908, issued a "Call to Discuss Means for Securing Political and Civil Equality for the Negro." The call brought together a distinguished gathering of notable progressive reformers—educators, professors, publicists, bishops, judges, and social workers, including among others Jane Addams, Mary White Ovington, William Dean Howells, John Dewey, John Milholland, and Oswald Garrison Villard (the grandson of William Lloyd Garrison) among the white participants, and W. E. B. Du Bois, Ida B. Wells, and Bishop Alexander Walters of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church among the black participants. A permanent organization in 1910, the NAACP had only one black officer—Du Bois as the editor of its magazine *The Crisis.* He remained the only one, until James Weldon Johnson joined the official leadership in 1917.

With the war on, the NAACP seized the opportunity to seek racial fairness in the military. In 1917 the white NAACP officer Joel Spingarn led a citizens committee to Washington to confer with military authorities about the prospect of creating a black officer training camp. The struggle for black officers formed part of the larger civil rights agenda of the organization. Almost immediately, students at Howard, Fisk, Atlanta, Tuskegee, and other black colleges began to agitate for such training. Spingarn took up the matter with General Leonard Wood, the head of the government's crash program for training a mass army, and he promised to establish a training camp if two hundred black college-grade men could be found.

Early in May 1917, the Central Committee of Negro College Men organized at Howard University for this purpose, and within ten days it collected the names of 1,500 African American college men willing to become officers. The committee presented this information to Congress in a larger statement that justified the establishment of a black officers' training camp. With congressional endorsement, the movement to establish the camp began in earnest. The black press vigorously promoted the idea of commissioning black officers, which resulted in mass meetings in black communities throughout the nation.

It was in this context that Du Bois published his famous "Close Ranks" article in *The Crisis* in July 1918. At the time, he was being actively supported by Spingarn and others for a military commission, which ultimately never materialized. Du Bois began the article, fully recognizing the magnitude of the war—what he termed "the crisis of the world." Intoning that "for all the long years to come men will point to the year 1918 as the great Day of Decision," he beseeched the members of his race to "forget our special grievances and close our ranks shoulder to shoulder with our fellow citizens." Du Bois admitted that he was requesting "no ordinary sacrifice," but he believed the stakes to be too high and the outcome too dangerous for the world's "darker races" to allow a German victory. Du Bois was not alone in his sentiments, and it is fair to say that some of his most remembered language may have been influenced by that of black editor Robert S. Abbott of the *Chicago Defender.*

Two months before Du Bois wrote his article, Abbott had written his newspaper's editorial "Our Position in the War," using some of the same imagery that Du Bois would later employ. However, Abbott's advocacy of black patriotism was driven by considerably more optimism than Du Bois's. Abbott counseled patience, believing that "every great crisis" in American history had ultimately facilitated the advancement of black people. To African Americans he appealed: "In common with white American citizens let us put our shoulders to the wheel and push with might and main to bring this war to a successful conclusion." Optimistically, Abbott went on to predict that the black soldier "who fights side by side with the white American . . . will hardly be begrudged a fair chance when the victorious armies return."

With their nation at war, most African Americans supported demands for black officers, but some openly criticized the premise of a Jim Crow training camp for those officers. Racially segregated camps, they argued, defeated the purpose of struggling for equal citizenship. Nevertheless, the NAACP continued to endorse all-black training camps, perceiving that even this limited gain was far better than accepting the absence of any new black officers. "The army officials want the camp to fail," Springarn said. "The last thing they want is to help colored men to become commissioned officers. The camp is intended to fight segregation, not to encourage it. Colored men in a camp by themselves would all get a fair chance for promotion. Opposition on the part of Negroes is helping the South, which does not want the Negroes to have any kind of military training." On October 15, 1917, at Fort

Des Moines in Iowa, the army commissioned 639 African American officers: 106 captains, 329 first lieutenants, and 204 second lieutenants. Later, other blacks also received army commissions. At colleges and high schools throughout the country, blacks prepared to become officer candidates and served in a variety of ways in the Students' Army Training Corps and the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC).

Emmett J. Scott

Also in October 1917, Secretary of War Newton D. Baker announced the appointment of Emmett J. Scott as his special assistant. For eighteen years, Scott had been Booker T. Washington's secretary, and now he assumed the position of "confidential advisor in matters affecting the interests of the ten million Negroes of the United States and the part they are to play in connection with the present war." As the secretary of war's assistant, Scott urged the equal and impartial application of Selective Service regulations and formulated plans to raise morale among black soldiers and civilians. The military turned to Scott for his opinion on African American matters. Scott investigated scores of cases in which black soldiers charged unfair treatment and reported problems relating to the compulsory and voluntary allotments of their pay, war-risk insurance, and government allowances and compensation. He also worked with the Committee on Public Information—the government's powerful national wartime propaganda outlet—releasing news about black soldiers and various home-front activities involving African Americans. Scott answered thousands of inquiries from blacks on every conceivable subject.

Jim Crow Military Camps

In World War I, blacks served in many Army units: cavalry, infantry, engineer corps, signal corps, medical corps, hospital and ambulance corps, veterinary corps, sanitary and ammunition trains, stevedore regiments, labor battalions, and depot brigades. They also worked as regimental adjutants, judge advocates (that is, Army lawyers), chaplains, intelligence officers, chemists, clerks, surveyors, drafters, auto repairers, motor truck operators, and mechanics. Although blacks served in almost every branch of the Army, they were denied the opportunity to become pilots in the aviation corps. After a long struggle they became eligible to join coast and field artillery units, but they remained barred from the Marines and were permitted to serve in the Navy only in menial capacities.

Locating Training Camps

Training African American soldiers in army domestic camps continually plagued the War Department, since most white communities did not want large numbers of black men in their midst. Although the Army was committed to activating an all-black division, for example, it did not permit the members of the all-black Ninety-Second Division to train together in a single location (a separate cantonment), but rather scattered the soldiers in different locations, sending them to seven widely separated camps—chiefly at Camp Grant in Rockford, Illinois, and at Camp Upton in Yaphank, New York, as well as at five other camps. Indeed, the constituent units of the Ninety-Second (composed of fourteen units of soldiers divided into regiments, battalions, and brigades) were brought together only after they arrived on the Western Front in Europe. Another black division, the Ninety-Third, was never allowed to fully organize before being sent abroad. Its four infantry units (the 369th, 370th, 371st, and 372nd regiments) also trained in different locations and went overseas at different times. The first of the divisions to go to Europe, the Ninety-Third, was assigned to fight with units of the French army by the order of the commander of the American Expeditionary Force, General John Pershing.

Rampant Discrimination

Rampant discrimination permeated the United States Army and the civilian agencies that served it. The progressive interracial ecumenical organization the Federal Council of Churches, founded in 1908, created a Committee on the Welfare of Negro Troops specifically to investigate racial conditions at home and abroad. Its two field secretaries, Charles H. Williams of Hampton Institute and G. Lake Imes of Tuskegee Institute, found many examples of discrimination and segregation in the service agencies. At Camp Greene, near Charlotte, North Carolina, they investigated discrimination by the YMCA. None of the five YMCA buildings in the area would serve the ten thousand African American recruits stationed there. A sign over one of these buildings even announced that "This building is for white men only." A single table was provided for the use of black soldiers who wanted to write letters to family and friends. At Camp Lee, near Petersburg, Virginia, white soldiers patrolled around a white prayer meeting to ensure that no blacks attempted to enter.

Complaints flooded the War Department from black soldiers who accused white officers of using such insulting language as *coons, niggers,* and *darkies.* White officers frequently forced black soldiers to work under unhealthy and difficult conditions. At Camp Hill in Virginia, a black stevedore regiment that worked at the embarkation port at Newport News slept in tents without floors or heat during the cold winter months. It was a common practice for blacks to be assigned to labor battalions even when they were qualified for more highly skilled jobs, thus making it extremely difficult for them to advance in rank. Friction between black soldiers and the white military police escalated as the war progressed, and the War Department's orders requiring fair and impartial treatment of black soldiers produced little discernible improvement.

The hostility of white civilians certainly dampened African American soldiers' morale. White southerners objected strenuously to the Army's sending northern black recruits into their communities for training, since they found it difficult to adapt to the South's racial etiquette. Not that the areas outside the South lacked racial prejudice; many northern towns also denied African American troops service in restaurants and admission to theaters. For example, when African Americans insisted on attending the movie theater at Fort Riley in Kansas, General Charles C. Ballou, the white commander of the Ninety-Second Division, issued an order commanding his men not to go where their presence was resented—and reminding them that "white men had made the Division, and they can break it just as easily if it becomes a trouble maker." A howl of resentment arose immediately from the black press, and African Americans found little consolation in General Ballou's effort to press legal charges against the theater operators who discriminated against his men.

African Americans Fight Back

Worse yet, in August 1917 a riot broke out in Houston between white civilians and the black soldiers of the Twenty-Fourth Infantry. The trouble began when white policemen harassed a black woman named Sara Travers, dragging her half-dressed from her home, and a black soldier from the Twenty-Fourth came to her defense. The police struck the black soldier and demanded that the other infantrymen disarm. In the ensuing melee, the enraged soldiers killed seventeen whites. After only a slight pretense of a trial, thirteen African American soldiers were hanged for murder and mutiny, forty-one were imprisoned for life, and forty others were held pending further investigation. Nothing since the Brownsville, Texas, incident in 1906 had done so much to wound the pride of African Americans or to shake their faith in their government.

Emmett Scott, a native of Houston and the secretary of war's special assistant for African American affairs, attempted to assuage whites' anxieties by observing that this tragic

incident "did not dampen the ardor of the colored men who went to the front for the Stars and Stripes." His words clearly failed to capture the outrage of the black community. Many men of the Twenty-Fourth Infantry swore vengeance on the officials, whom they accused of unjust treatment. A black newspaper in Baltimore exclaimed that "the Negroes of the entire country will regard the thirteen Negro soldiers of the Twenty-Fourth Infantry executed as martyrs," while the *New York Age* declared that "strict justice has been done, but full justice has not been done. . . . And so sure as there is a God in heaven, at some time and in some way full justice will be done."

White citizens in Spartanburg, South Carolina, where the black Fifteenth New York Infantry was training, felt uncomfortable with the buoyant self-confidence expressed by the northern soldiers in their midst. In October 1917, when Noble Sissle, the talented drum major of the infantry band, entered a hotel to purchase a newspaper, the proprietor cursed at him, demanding that Sissle remove his hat when approaching a white man. Before Sissle could respond, the white man knocked his hat off his head. As the young soldier stooped to pick it up, the man struck him several times and kicked him out of the place. On discovering what had happened, the black militiamen started to "rush the hotel," but Lieutenant James Reese Europe, the well-known black bandmaster, happened to be passing by. Europe called the men to attention and ordered them to disperse. The following evening the soldiers planned to "shoot up" the town of Spartanburg, but their commanding officer, a white man named Colonel William Hayward, overtook them as they were leaving and ordered them back to camp.

The War Department's Emmett Scott, having rushed to Spartanburg to investigate the situation, pleaded with the men to do nothing to bring dishonor on either their regiment or their race. The War Department considered three possible scenarios in order to prevent the recurrence of such incidents: it could keep the regiment at Camp Wadsworth and face a violent eruption; it could remove the regiment to another camp, conveying the impression that the military would yield to community pressure; or it could order the regiment overseas. The War Department decided on the last alternative. The Fifteenth New York Regiment, now designated as the 369th Infantry of the United States Army, went to Europe, becoming the first contingent of African American combat troops to reach the Western Front. As they left the country, the soldiers of the Fifteenth New York might well have reasoned that defending democracy in war-torn Europe would be easier than in their own country.

Service Overseas

The first African American military personnel to arrive in Europe after the United States entered the war, and among the first Americans to reach the war zone, were army laborers who built roads and dug trenches and stevedores who loaded and unloaded cargo from ships. They played a significant role in the tremendous task of providing the Allies with war materiel. The first black stevedores landed in France in June 1917, and from then until the end of the war they would come in ever increasing numbers, classified by the army as stevedore regiments, engineer service battalions, labor battalions, butchery companies, and pioneer infantry battalions. Before the end of the war, more than 50,000 stevedores had served in 115 different outfits.

At the French ports of Brest, St. Nazaire, Bordeaux, Le Havre, and Marseilles, black stevedores worked in mud and rain, sometimes in twenty-four-hour shifts, unloading supplies

Black American "Buffalo" soldiers of the 367th infantry, 77th Division, in France
These soldiers were among the more than 400,000 black Americans who joined the armed forces during the Great War (World War I). The majority of black Americans who saw active duty on the front line fought under French command, while those who stayed under American command served as laborers rather than fighters.

from the United States. At one port, a crew of black stevedores amazed the French by unloading 1,200 tons of flour in nine and a half hours—a job that had been estimated as requiring several days. In September 1918, at American base ports in France, a crew of mostly black stevedores handled 767,648 tons, an average of more than 25,000 tons per day. "One who sees the Negro stevedores work," reported an American war correspondent, "notes with what rapidity and cheerfulness they work and what a very important cog they are in the war machinery."

African American troops were among the first U.S. combat forces to go overseas. After enduring many hardships at sea, including breakdown, fire, and collision, the 369th United States Infantry arrived in France early in 1918. Some went immediately to a French divisional training school, where they learned to throw grenades, use bayonets, and handle French weapons. In April 1918, almost exactly one year after Congress declared war, they moved to the front. By May they were in the thick of the fight in northern France, where for a time they held a complete sector that represented 20 percent of all the territory assigned to American troops. After receiving some relief, they were assigned to block a German offensive at Minaucourt, and in the middle of July, they bore the brunt of the final great German assault. From that time until the end of

The 369th U.S. Infantry

Decoration of African American Soldiers

Overseas, African American soldiers who demonstrated bravery under fire were decorated lavishly by the French Army, under which they served. Not one African American received the Congressional Medal of Honor.

hostilities, the men of the 369th saw almost continuous action against the enemy. The first Allied unit to reach the Rhine, the 369th Regiment never had a man captured and never gave up a trench or a foot of ground.

No other black regiment in the First World War won more popular acclaim and celebration. One of the war's most sensational feats of American derring-do was performed by two privates, Henry Johnson of Albany, New York, and Needham Roberts of Trenton, New Jersey, both of the 369th. While the men stood guard at a small outpost in May 1918, a raiding party of nearly twenty Germans made a surprise attack, wounding the two black soldiers. When the Germans got within range, Johnson opened fire, and Roberts, lying on the ground, threw his grenades. The Germans continued to advance, and as the two black men were about to be captured, Johnson drew his bolo knife from his belt and attacked the Germans in a hand-to-hand encounter. He succeeded in freeing Roberts from the Germans. Both men received the Croix de Guerre for their gallantry.

The 369th was the first and longest serving of all American regiments assigned to support a foreign army—a total of 191 days in the trenches. The entire regiment won the Croix de Guerre for its action at Maison-en-Champagne, and 171 individual officers and enlisted men were cited for the Croix de Guerre and the Legion of Honor for exceptional gallantry in action. France erected a memorial to the 369th Regiment at Sechault. The 369th had the honor of being called the "Harlem Hellfighters" because of their tireless fighting spirit.

Window in Time

The 369th and 371st Win the Croix de Guerre

Both entire units won the French Cross of War with these citations:

[*369th Infantry . . . French Croix de guerre with silver star . . .*]

Under the command of Colonel Hayward, who although wounded, insisted on leading his regiment into combat . . . and Major Little, a real leader of men, the 369th Regiment of American Infantry, under fire for the first time, captured some powerful and energetically defended enemy positions, took the village of Sechault by main force, and brought back six cannon, mainly machine guns, and a number of prisoners.

[*371st Infantry . . . French Croix de guerre with Palm . . .*]

Under the command of Colonel Miles, the regiment, with superb spirit and admirable disregard for danger rushed to the assault of a strongly defended enemy position which it captured after a hard struggle under a violent machine-gun fire. It then continued its advance, in spite of the enemy artillery fire and heavy losses, taking numerous prisoners, capturing cannon, machine guns, and important material.

Source: *General Orders No. 11,* United States War Department (Washington, D.C.: National Archives, 27 March 1924), pp. 22–23.

Other African American Combat Units

The Eighth Illinois Infantry, renamed the 370th United States Infantry, reached France in June 1918, where it was equipped with French arms and sent to the front. After service in the hotly contested St. Mihiel sector, the 370th was sent to the Argonne Forest, another vital part of the front line, where it remained for the better part of July and August. In September, serving as part of the French Fifty-Ninth Division, the black soldiers of the 370th Infantry took over a full regimental sector in the area of Mont des Tombes and Les Tueries. From that time until the end of the war, the 370th, fighting alongside several units of the French army, drove the enemy out of French territory and back into Belgium. Twenty-one of its men received the Distinguished Service Cross, one received the Distinguished Service Medal, and sixty-eight received various grades of the Croix de Guerre. They became the first American troops to enter the French fortress of Laon when it was wrested from the Germans after four years of war. The 370th, too, fought the last battle of the war, capturing a German train of fifty wagons and their crews a half hour after the Armistice went into effect on November 11, 1918.

Both the 371st Infantry, organized in August 1917 at Camp Jackson, South Carolina, and the 372nd Infantry, composed of African American National Guardsmen from the District of Columbia, Ohio, Massachusetts, and Maryland, arrived in France late in April 1918. They were reorganized on the French plan and attached to the 157th French Division, known as the "Red Hand," under General Mariano Goybet. Late in May, the 372nd took over the assignment of holding the Argonne West sector and by May 31 was in the frontline

Horace Pippin, *Dog Fight over the Trenches* (1935)

Black artist Horace Pippin, a private in the 369th Infantry, kept a diary of his experiences in the war. He was sent into action in the French region of Champagne. Ironically, the war inspired Pippin to paint, even though he returned home to Pennsylvania discharged from the Army because of a severe wound to his right shoulder. He could not use his arm at all. Years later, at the age of forty, he learned to improvise a way to paint despite his partially paralyzed right arm. "The war," he said, "brought out all of the art in me. . . . I came home with all of it in my mind, and I paint from it today."

trenches. During the summer it took heavy shelling in the Verdun sector, and in September it pursued the retreating enemy. For gallantry in the final campaign, the regiment's colors were decorated with the Croix de Guerre and Palm just before the men sailed for America. Many individual soldiers also won honors, especially the men of the First Battalion of the District of Columbia National Guard.

The 371st performed with the same valor. They remained on the front lines for more than three months, holding first the Avocourt and later the Verrières subsectors, northwest of Verdun. In the Allies' great September 1918 offensive, the 371st took several important positions near Monthois and captured prisoners, plentiful machine guns and other weapons, a munitions depot, several railroad cars, and many other supplies. In recognition of this action, its regimental colors were decorated by the French government. Three officers won the French Legion of Honor, and thirty-four officers and eighty-nine enlisted men received the Croix de Guerre. Fourteen officers and twelve enlisted men were awarded France's Distinguished Service Cross.

One of the enlisted men in the 371st, Corporal Freddie Stowers of Sandy Spring, South Carolina, was recommended by his commanding officer for the Congressional Medal of Honor, the United States' highest military award. Stowers had led his company in a victorious charge against a German-held hill, an assault that left more than 50 percent of his company dead. Because the recommendation was "misplaced," Stowers, the only black member of America's World War I military forces to be recommended for the Medal of

Honor, did not receive it in his lifetime. Seventy-three years later, in April 1991, following historian Leroy Ramsey's criticism of the U.S. military for failure to award the Medal of Honor to any of the 1.5 million blacks who served in World War I and World War II, President George H. W. Bush finally presented the decoration, posthumously, to Stowers's elderly sisters.

The Ninety-Second Division took longer to become welded into an efficient fighting unit, since it had to wait for its various divisions to arrive in France. Most of the units arrived in June 1918 and underwent eight weeks of training. It was not until July that the complete Artillery brigade and Ammunition Train reached France and began training. Reaching the front by late August, the Ninety-Second Division assumed control of the St. Die sector, relieving several regiments of American and French forces—and the Germans almost immediately bombarded the all-black division with shrapnel and poison gas (which was heavily used by both sides during World War I). The division, eager to attack, found its opportunity in September. During the ensuing battle, the black troops captured several Germans, although the Germans took two blacks as prisoners.

German Propaganda

When the Germans realized that they were facing an African American division, they launched a propaganda campaign to accomplish with words what they had not been able to achieve with arms. On September 12 they scattered circulars across the lines, trying to persuade the Ninety-Second to lay down its arms. The printed material, written in English, argued that African American soldiers should not be deluded into thinking that they were fighting for democracy, as President Wilson claimed. The circular read: "What is Democracy? Personal freedom, all citizens enjoying the same rights socially and before the law. Do you enjoy the same rights as the white people do in America, the land of Freedom and Democracy, or are you rather not treated over there as second-class citizens? Can you go into a restaurant where white people dine? Can you get a seat in the theater where white people sit? . . . Is lynching and the most horrible crimes connected therewith a lawful proceeding in a democratic country?" The circular also asserted that Germans liked blacks and treated them as gentlemen in Germany. "Why, then, fight the Germans only for the benefit of the Wall Street robbers and to protect the millions they have loaned to the British, French, and Italians?" The propaganda message closed by inviting the African American troops to surrender and come over to the German lines, where they would find friends to aid them in the cause of liberty and democracy. Not one black soldier took this bait and deserted.

At times African Americans came under severe criticism by white American commanders and soldiers, who posited any and all failure to achieve a successful mission as reason for the inferiority of black troops in combat. It mattered little that white units suffered defeats for the same reasons as did black units—the black troops alone were faulted for deficient training, for unfamiliarity with the French countryside, and for insufficient combat equipment. Such was the case on September 20, 1918, when the 368th Infantry Regiment of the Ninety-Second Division failed a strategically important mission in Argonne Forest in preparation for the Argonne-Meuse offensive. Emmett Scott described the fighting as "harder than anything the Division had experienced up to that time." The division's total casualties exceeded 450.

Slander Campaigns

Black troops became the brunt of slander campaigns, especially after the war ended. A white American commander opined that "in a future war the main use of the negro should be in labor organizations," and such critics discouraged organizing blacks in large divisions,

Lt. James Reese Europe

preferring instead combat troops no larger than regiments. In his research on black soldiers during the war, Du Bois noted that the Ninety-Second Division, the last to leave France, was at the mercy of white American officers who belittled the black soldiers, gave them extremely demanding physical labor assignments, discredited their valor in the war, and unsuccessfully attempted to diminish French sympathies for blacks. Yet in January 1919, General John J. Pershing praised the soldiers of the Ninety-Second Division as they embarked from France: "I want you officers and soldiers of the Ninety-Second Division to know that the Ninety-Second Division stands second to none in the record you have made since your arrival in France. I am proud of the part you have played in the great conflict which ended on the 11th of November."

Even in the midst of war, black soldiers found time for pleasantries, cultural experiences, and social contact. Most combat units had their own bands, but the best known was the 369th Regiment Band under the direction of James Reese Europe, assisted by Noble Sissle. James Europe, as bandmaster and as an officer in the "Harlem Hellfighters," has been identified as the musician primarily responsible for bringing jazz to France. Another popular military band was that of the 350th Field Artillery under J. Tim Brymm, whose jazz repertoire won French admiration. Although no African American theatrical entertainers performed overseas during the war, after the Armistice and at the behest of General Pershing, Rev. Henry Hugh Proctor of Atlanta, along with song leader and teacher J. E. Blanton of South Carolina and concert pianist Helen Hagan of New Haven, Connecticut traveled throughout France staging programs for white and black troops still stationed there. Proctor noted the black soldiers' emotional response to the music, which had an immediate uplifting effect, particularly Hagan's performance on the piano. Proctor wrote: "They [black soldiers] had not seen a woman of their race since they left home, and frequently tears would well up in the eyes of these men as they looked upon this talented woman."

Cultural Experiences

In contrast to the YMCAs in the American South, the YMCA and YWCA in France served black soldiers overseas by providing literacy classes, libraries, canteens, letter-writing facilities, and other services for the men's comfort. African Americans engaged in this work included Matthew Bullock, J. C. Croom, John Hope, William J. Faulkner, Max Yergan, Addie Hunton, and Kathryn Johnson. Of the sixty African American chaplains in the United States Army, approximately twenty ministered to the spiritual needs of black soldiers overseas. YMCA workers Addie Hunton and Kathryn Johnson wrote about their experiences among the black troops in France in their book *Two Colored Women with the American Expeditionary Forces* (1920). Although African American nurses in the United States offered their services in large numbers, the government was very slow to accept them and

Women's war work
Red Cross nurses on duty at the base hospital at Camp Grant, Illinois.

sent them overseas only after the fighting had ended. During periods of rest and recuperation, and also after hostilities had ceased, some blacks attended French universities in Paris, Bordeaux, Toulouse, and Marseilles.

African American soldiers found greater opportunities to move about freely in France than they had in the United States. They socialized with French men and women, much to the chagrin of many white American soldiers, who warned the French against African Americans. Some told the French that blacks could not be treated with common civility and repeatedly claimed that black men were rapists. In August 1918 an American-produced document titled "Secret Information Concerning Black Troops" circulated among the French, asserting that strict segregation was essential to prevent black men from assaulting and raping white women. The document warned against any contact outside the requirements of military service. Neither French civilians nor soldiers seemed to take this "warning" seriously,

since they continued to welcome African Americans into their homes and sought to make their black defenders as comfortable as possible.

Toward the end of the war, reports came to the United States that the African American soldiers stationed in France had developed habits and practices that would prove detrimental to interracial stability on their return to the United States. With the war over by December 1918, concern rose to such an extent that the War Department asked Robert R. Moton, Booker T. Washington's successor at Tuskegee, to go to France to investigate the rumors and examine the conditions affecting African American soldiers. The secretary of war and the president placed every facility at Moton's disposal and arranged for him to travel freely among the black troops. Moton made many speeches to groups of black soldiers, including these remarks, which he included in his autobiography:

Coming Home

> You have been tremendously tested. . . . Your record has sent a thrill of joy and satisfaction to the hearts of millions of black and white Americans, rich and poor, high and low. . . . You will go back to America heroes, as you really are. You will go back as you have carried yourselves over here—in a straightforward, manly, and modest way. If I were you, I would find a job as soon as possible and get to work. . . . I hope no one will do anything in peace to spoil the magnificent record you have made in war.

Although some African American soldiers who served in France were hesitant about making the return trip to the United States lest they lose what democracy and freedom they had found in faraway places, the great majority seemed anxious to return. Some doubtless believed that conditions would be better than before the war, while others were indifferent to the future, thinking only of the pleasures of being home again.

They were not required to wait very long before finding out what changes had taken place in the United States; shortly after the Armistice was signed, American military authorities began to make preparations for the return and demobilization of American troops. Some African American troops were detained to assist in cleaning up campsites and clearing away debris left from the battles, but the greater part of them were en route to the United States within four months after the end of the war. By April 1919, many troops were already in the United States, and some of them were being demobilized.

African American troops, for the most part, disembarked in the New York area to a joyous first reception in the United States. They were greeted by enthusiastic crowds who never seemed to tire of the apparently endless parades of troops, both black and white, that proceeded almost immediately from their ships to the triumphal march up Fifth Avenue. When New York's own black regiment, the 369th, returned on February 17, 1919, approximately 1 million people witnessed their parade from lower New York up Fifth Avenue to Harlem. A similar reception was given various units of the Ninety-Second Division, the last of whose troops landed at Hoboken, New Jersey, on March 12, 1919.

Other cities vied with New York in welcoming their black troops. Buffalo turned out en masse to receive them, while huge crowds filled the streets of St. Louis to cheer the blacks who had fought in Europe. When the 370th, the "Old Eighth Illinois," reached Chicago, much of the business of the city was suspended to welcome the veterans. The soldiers paraded through the Loop as well as through the thickly populated black South Side, and in many places the crowds were so dense that the troops could not march in regular formation.

Window in Time

Reverend Francis J. Grimké Welcomes Returning Black Soldiers—1919

Young gentlemen, I am glad to welcome you home again after months of absence in a foreign land in obedience to the call of your country—glad that you returned to us without any serious casualties. . . .

We, who remained at home, followed you while you were away, with the deepest interest; and, our hearts burned with indignation when tidings came to us, as it did from time to time, of the manner in which you were treated by those over you, from whom you had every reason, in view of the circumstances that took you abroad, and what it was costing you, to expect decent, humane treatment, instead of the treatment that was accorded you. The physical hardships, incident to a soldier's life in times of war, are trying enough, are hard enough to bear. . . . To add to these the insults, the studied insults that were heaped upon you, and for no reason except that you were colored, is so shocking that were it not for positive evidence, it would be almost unbelievable. . . .

Again, most gladly do I welcome you back home; and most earnestly do we express the hope that every man of you will play a man's part in the longer and more arduous struggle that is before us in battling for our rights at home. If it was worth going abroad to make the world safe for democracy, it is equally worth laboring no less earnestly to make it safe at home. We shall be greatly disappointed if you do not do this—if you fail to do your part.

Source: Francis J. Grimké, *The Works of Francis J. Grimké,* Carter C. Woodson, ed., Volume I, *Addresses Mainly Personal and Racial* (Washington, 1942), pp. 589–591.

It was precisely the valor of black soldiers that emboldened persons of African descent, both in the United States and elsewhere in the world, to attempt to bring the plight of racial minorities before the Allied leaders when they assembled for the Paris Peace Conference after the war ended. To the disgust of black leaders, the only consideration that African peoples received was when it came to redistributing Germany's African colonies among the victorious Allies. No African colony received independence. Black leaders had hoped that the European powers would at least free Germany's former African colonies. Instead, those colonies were divided among Belgium, Great Britain, France, and the white-dominated Union of South Africa under a "mandate system" supervised by the League of Nations, the newly founded international organization that was promoted tirelessly by Wilson as the vehicle for lasting peace.

In *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil* (1920), a sorely disappointed Du Bois pondered Wilson's contradictory position in regard to Europe and Africa. During the war Wilson's idealism was epitomized in his famous "Fourteen Points" speech to Congress, in which he

urged among other things the German evacuation from Belgium and national sovereignty in the Balkans and other parts of Europe. The president had also called for an "absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims" and for a "fair dealing by the other peoples of the world against force and selfish aggression." With the war now over and peace restored, Du Bois asked in frustration: "Has the world forgotten Congo?"—reminding his readers of the well-documented atrocities of King Leopold II and his Belgian officials against the Congolese people in the first decade of the twentieth century. The peace settlement had actually strengthened Belgium's foothold in Africa by awarding to that country Germany's East African Ruanda-Urundi region (the present-day republics of Rwanda and Burundi).

Wilson's Contradictory Positions

It was impossible for such leaders as Du Bois, A. Philip Randolph, Chandler Owen, and the Afro-Caribbean political activists and writers Hubert Harrison, Cyril V. Briggs, and Claude McKay to trust the sincerity of Wilson's peace rhetoric when Africa remained under the yoke of colonialism. And they, along with other black socialists and nationalists, identified European greed and rivalry over African and Asian colonies as a major cause of the war itself. In addition, seeing African troops in Europe, especially those from the French colony of Senegal, who had helped to dig the many thousands of miles of trenches just as had many African Americans, figured significantly in the emergence of a new, postwar diasporic politics. The encounter of African Americans, Caribbeans, and Africans during the World War had fostered a dialogue with regard to a common oppression and common racial destiny, and this emergent pan-African sensibility would grow profoundly afterward.

Hoping to place the cause of African peoples before the world in a dramatic way, Du Bois called a Pan-African Congress to meet in Paris in 1919. Du Bois was already in France, having traveled to Paris with other American news correspondents in December 1918 to cover the peace talks. He also planned to investigate the treatment of African American soldiers and to collect information concerning their participation in the war. Through Blaise Diagne, a Senegalese member of the French Chamber of Deputies who was highly respected in French circles, Du Bois secured permission from French premier Georges Clemenceau to hold his Pan-African Congress in the Grand Hotel in Paris in February 1919. Fifty-seven delegates, including sixteen African Americans, twenty West Indians, and twelve Africans, gathered in this hastily organized meeting, which called the world's attention to the abuses of European colonialism in Africa and Asia.

On the Home Front

The war years marked a time of valiant sacrifice and patriotism on the part of the American people. On some levels, patriotic fervor translated into a willing acceptance of unprecedented government regulation of corporations, agricultural production, railroads, speech, and time itself. One of the lasting conservation measures of World War I was the introduction of daylight saving time. Americans appeared genuinely supportive of food and fuel conservation. (They rationed their food on the designated "meatless" and "wheatless" days.) They responded enthusiastically when the government called for "Liberty Loan" bond drives and savings-stamp campaigns, in order to help fund war costs, and they promoted wartime patriotism through various forms of propaganda in film and the media.

African Americans joined in this domestic war effort. For example, the black press estimated that blacks purchased more than $250 million worth of bonds and stamps in various

African Americans Support the War

government-sponsored bond drives. Mary B. Talbert, president of the National Association of Colored Women, reported that African American women alone bought more than $5 million worth of bonds in the Third Liberty Loan campaign. Both individuals and organizations in the black community participated. The black-owned North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company purchased $300,000 worth of bonds in less than two years. Blacks also generously supported the fund-raising campaigns of the YMCA, YWCA, and the American Red Cross.

Considering the large number of blacks who worked as farmers and cooks, the United States government depended heavily on African Americans in its programs to produce and conserve food. Herbert Hoover, the progressive-minded businessman whom Wilson named as director of the federal Office of Food Administration, sought greater participation of blacks by appointing Ernest Atwell of Tuskegee as field worker for Alabama and later for the other southern states. In September 1918, Atwell went to Washington, where he served as director of activities for African Americans from the headquarters of the Food Administration and circulated an open letter to blacks asking for their cooperation in general food conservation. Black directors were appointed in eighteen states, and organizations were perfected to carry the program forward.

Curtailing Civil Liberties

America's patriotic fervor also led to the curtailment of civil liberties and the stifling of dissent through government surveillance. Popular forms of coercion had a similar censoring effect. In Iowa schools, teachers were forbidden to teach German to their students. Persons of German ancestry were called "Huns" and vilified with negative stereotyping. Libraries removed books written in German from their shelves, and symphony orchestras refused to perform German opera or orchestral pieces. In this political climate, some African American leaders, while supportive of the war, felt the consequences of criticizing President Wilson's vision of freedom.

In April 1917, a month before America's declaration of war, the black minister and civil rights advocate John Milton Waldon wrote to Wilson seeking his commitment to a nondiscriminatory military policy. Waldron, one of few black supporters of Wilson's presidential campaign in 1912, hoped to persuade the president of the importance of black loyalty. Instead, Wilson interpreted Waldron's comments as potentially disloyal. The president challenged not only Waldron's patriotism but that of blacks in general. "Your letter was the first notice I had," Wilson responded within a week of receiving Waldron's letter, "that many of the members of the colored race were not enthusiastic in their support of the Government in this crisis." The NAACP's newly appointed field secretary James Weldon Johnson voiced the spirit of many other blacks in 1917 when he admonished his people to demand equal rights, while at the same time understanding the "bald truth" that they could not afford to be perceived as unpatriotic.

Silencing Dissent

Long-existing racism against African Americans easily became conflated with the nationalistic zeal of wartime intolerance. This was especially true in the southern states. When blacks protested their economic condition, joined the NAACP, failed to participate in bond drives, or attempted to dodge the draft, whites often believed that they had been influenced by outside saboteurs. Black protest echoed through the press, church gatherings, and numerous public forums, but it often led to federal surveillance, especially after the passage of the Espionage Act of 1917 and the Sedition Amendment to this act in 1918. For example, military intelligence put Rev. Charles H. Mason, a founder of the Church of God in Christ, under investigation between 1917 and 1919. At a

time when Mississippi sought to meet its draft quota, Mason was arrested in 1918 for perceived "disloyal" statements in his sermons to his congregation in Holmes County, for allegedly discouraging black voter registration in the county.

In the same year, the black women's club and religious leader Nannie Helen Burroughs was similarly targeted for surveillance by the War Department. She publicly attacked Woodrow Wilson's failure to denounce lynching in a speech at a black Baptist convention. Asserted Burroughs in 1918: "He [Wilson] has used up all the adverbs and adjectives trying to make clear what he means by democracy. He realizes and the country realizes that unless he begins to apply the doctrine, representatives of our nation would be hissed out of court when the world gets ready to make up the case against Germany."

In this wartime environment—marked by flagrant violations of individual civil liberties and furious attacks on socialists, pacifists, left-wing progressives, and other voices of dissent—many whites and blacks hesitated to articulate nonconformist ideas in public. As diverse a group of white leaders as the racist, xenophobic, and ex-Populist Tom Watson, the white socialist and labor champion Eugene V. Debs, and the left-wing intellectual and writer Randolph Bourne all came under heavy fire for their opposition to the war. Debs was arrested and sentenced to federal prison for his critique of the capitalist motivations of the war—a critique not too dissimilar from that of Du Bois, Randolph, and other black leaders on the political left.

And yet, it was in this very environment that the black press came into its own. Black newspapers encouraged African Americans to move to industrial centers in search of work, urged support of the war, protested racist incidents, and also led in the fight for complete integration of blacks in the military and in American life. Older newspapers such as the *Baltimore Afro-American* and the *Chicago Defender* enjoyed unprecedented growth, while newer ones such as the *Pittsburgh Courier* and the *Norfolk Journal and Guide* made rapid strides both in circulation and influence. The African American press, while generally supportive of the war effort, did not fail to expose racial injustice. At a conference sponsored by Emmet Scott in June 1918, thirty-one leading black newspaper publishers denounced mob violence, called for the use of black Red Cross nurses, requested the return of Lieutenant Colonel Charles Young to active duty, and asked for the appointment of a black war correspondent. Ralph Tyler of Columbus, Ohio, was subsequently designated as the war correspondent by the government's propaganda arm, the Committee on Public Information, and he sent press dispatches from Europe to the black newspapers back home. His stories generally gave glowing accounts of the gallantry and heroism of the black troops overseas.

The *Messenger,* a newspaper published in New York by black socialists A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen, remained one of the few journals to refuse to speak about the war in patriotic terms. The two men lambasted Wilson's rhetoric "to make the world safe for democracy" and his advocacy of the right of nations to self-determination, asserting that it flew in the face of his own racial attitudes, which condoned Jim Crow at home and colonialism in Africa and Asia. In July 1918, the editors of *The Messenger* wrote: "The government is drafting Negroes to fight. It asks their loyalty." In return, Randolph and Owen concluded, black soldiers received no more than "lynching, burning at the stake." For publishing the article "Pro-Germanism among Negroes," Randolph and Owen were sentenced to two and a half years in jail and had their second-class mailing privileges rescinded. Indeed, Du Bois's editorial "Close Ranks" in *The Crisis* in July 1918 served as a crucial counterpoint to *The Messenger*'s cynicism, but it came at the tail end of a flurry of articles that he had written in a different, more critical and militant tone between 1914 and 1917—before American military involvement.

Black Exodus

Perhaps the most important social and economic consequence of the war was the migration of hundreds of thousands of African American men and women out of the South and into northern cities. The fundamental cause of this exodus was economic, although important social considerations also contributed to the migration. A severe labor depression in the South in 1914 and 1915 sent wages tumbling, and damage to the cotton crops, caused by boll weevil infestations in 1915 and 1916, discouraged many who depended on cotton farming for their livelihood. Moreover, Mississippi River floods in the summer of 1915 left thousands of blacks in the Gulf Region destitute, homeless, and ready to accept almost anything as preferable to the devastation around them. As southern agriculture faltered, northern industry boomed, and the wartime demand for labor skyrocketed.

The flood of European immigrants pouring into early twentieth-century America ended abruptly with the outbreak of war in 1914, and this drying up of the transatlantic migration exacerbated the labor shortage, sending agents scurrying into the South to entice both blacks and whites to move north for work. Injustice in the southern court system, disfranchisement, segregation, and lynching doubtless served as powerful incentives for black migration out of the South. Historian Darlene Clark-Hine asserts that violence against black women, specifically rape, also accounted for their eagerness to escape the South. The black press portrayed the North as the "land of promise" and did much to persuade blacks to abandon a world that offered at best second-class citizenship. The *Chicago Defender* exclaimed: "To die from the bite of frost is far more glorious than at the hands of a mob." In a similar vein, the AME news organ the *Christian Recorder* wrote in 1917 that "if a million Negroes move north and west in the next twelve months, it will be one of the greatest things for the Negro since the Emancipation Proclamation." In 1916 black migration out of the South steadily rose, reaching flood tide by summer. The Pennsylvania Railroad brought from southern states 12,000 blacks—all but 2,000 of them from Florida and Georgia—to work in its yards and on its tracks. Even black professionals moved north to continue serving their migrating clientele. Southern whites became increasingly alarmed at the loss of black labor. City officials in Jacksonville, Florida, passed an ordinance requiring migration agents to pay a license fee of $1,000. White citizens in many southern towns threatened blacks who wanted to leave, while the white press urged them to remain in the South. Despite such pressure, more than a half million African Americans are estimated to have participated in the Great Migration during the war years.

New Opportunities

Migration to the North and West, coming when it did, gave blacks opportunities for industrial employment that they had never enjoyed before. The Department of Labor, aware of the importance of black workers in relieving the labor shortage in the crucial early years of the war, created a Division of Negro Economics under the direction of sociologist and social worker George Edmund Haynes. The division supplied the secretary of labor and the heads of other government bureaus with plans and policies for improving black workers' conditions and for securing white employers' full cooperation in achieving maximum production. Several state and local advisory committees were established to promote cooperation and reduce friction between white and black workers. For the same purpose, twelve states held conferences with the support of governors, employment agencies, employers, and workers.

The National Urban League assumed a decisive leadership role in helping newly arrived African Americans adjust to life in northern industrial centers. By 1911, the year of the Urban League's founding, southern unskilled black workers had already begun to migrate to

NEW JOBS FOR WOMEN

Everyone is getting used to overalled women in machine shops

Women have made good as Street Car Conductors and Elevator Operators

Clerical Work quite a new job for Negro Girls

Slav, Italian and Negro Women making bed springs

The war brought us Women Traffic Cops and Mail Carriers

Laundry and domestic work didn't pay so they entered the garment trade

New Jobs for Women

This poster expresses optimism about the new employment opportunities for African American women opened up by the war.

the northern cities in such numbers that reform-minded whites and blacks, especially in New York City, organized to address the problems related to the newcomers' adjustment. Called initially the National League on Urban Conditions among Negroes (adopting the simpler title National Urban League in 1920), the organization had come into existence from the merger of three Progressive-era organizations—the National League for the Protection of Colored Women (founded in 1905), the Committee for Improving Industrial Conditions of Negroes in New York (founded in 1906), and the

The National Urban League

Committee on Urban Conditions (founded in 1910). The Urban League was born of Progressivism's focus on urban conditions and municipal government, its reliance on investigative studies and data collection, its social work impulse to create institutions, such as settlement houses and employment bureaus for moral influence and economic guidance, and its laboratory approach in the training of social workers.

George Edmund Haynes, director of the organization and also the first black Ph.D. from Columbia University, played a crucial role in designing the initial research agenda —identifying problems related to employment, housing, health, education, and recreation. While the League's director, he also taught sociology at Fisk University in Nashville, where he trained social workers. His Urban League work was assisted by Eugene Kinckle Jones, formerly a black high school teacher in Louisville, Kentucky. Jones moved to New York in 1911 to serve as field secretary; he would eventually head the organization. The Urban League's work was supported by notable reformers and philanthropists who sat on its board, including Ruth Standish Baldwin, the widow of the railroad magnate William Baldwin, Frances Kellor, who founded protective associations with the aid of black and white social workers, and Edwin R. A. Seligman, the noted Columbia University economics professor. The League's formative years also benefited from the philanthropic support of John Rockefeller and the influence of Booker T. Washington. By the end of World War I, branches of the National Urban League operated in thirty cities.

Employment in Industry

African Americans organized several unions of their own, such as the Associated Colored Employees of America. However, in 1917 the American Federation of Labor (AFL) began to express sympathy for workers of all races, encouraging them to unite and present a common front to industry. The intention was to discourage blacks from serving as strike breakers. In 1918 the Council of the AFL invited several prominent African Americans to discuss the matter, including Robert R. Moton of Tuskegee, Emmett J. Scott of the War Department, Eugene Kinckle Jones of the National Urban League, and Fred Moore, the editor of the black newspaper the *New York Age.* Few tangible results came of their deliberations. During the war the vast majority of labor unions continued to oppose black membership, echoing the often racist views of white workers.

Because immigration from Europe stopped suddenly with the outbreak of war in 1914, African Americans found jobs in most industries in the urban North, which had previously depended on immigrant labor. They manufactured munitions and iron and steel products. They labored in the meatpacking industry, in turning out automobiles and trucks, and in manufacturing electrical products. There were 26,648 blacks in 46 of the 55 occupations related to shipbuilding as classified by the U.S. Shipping Board. A black man, Charles Knight, broke the world's record for driving rivets in building steel ships at the Bethlehem Steel Corporation plant at Sparrow's Point, outside Baltimore. More than 75,000 blacks worked in the coal mines of Alabama, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and West Virginia. Approximately 150,000 assisted in the operation of the railroads, while another 150,000 kept up other vital means of communication. In 152 typical industrial plants, 21,547 black women performed 75 different tasks.

Riots and Lynchings

The war elicited conflicting emotions in African Americans. The patriotic stories of black valor served to give pride, but outbreaks of racial injustice hurt morale. At least thirty-eight African Americans lost their lives at the hands of lynch mobs in 1917, and in the following year that number rose to fifty-eight. Racial clashes in the North and South did not diminish. In Tennessee, more

than three thousand whites responded to the invitation of a newspaper to come witness the burning of a "live Negro." In East St. Louis, Illinois, at least forty blacks lost their lives in a riot that grew out of the migration of blacks to that city and their employment in a factory that held government contracts. African Americans were stabbed, clubbed, and hanged, and one two-year-old child was shot and thrown into the doorway of a burning building. In *Darkwater,* Du Bois vented his anger over the East St. Louis riot. In an expanded version of an article he had written right after the riot, Du Bois associated the riot's brutal killings with the World War, specifically with the "rush toward the Battle of the Marne . . . dear God, the fire of Thy Mad World crimsons our Heaven." In 1917 riots in Philadelphia and Houston also occurred. The riots served as a prelude to 1919, when in the first summer after the war, more than fifty cities erupted in racial violence.

Black soldiers had fought courageously abroad, and they expected, in return, a post-war America of greater economic opportunity and civil rights. Indeed, the First World War instilled in the minds and hearts of all African Americans both guarded hopes for the possibility of democracy at home and renewed determination to fight for that goal. Yet none doubted that the pursuit of democracy would require a protracted struggle, what Du Bois called a "sterner, longer, more unbending battle against the forces of hell in our own land." At the historic moment of national victory, Du Bois pronounced the battle for democracy unfinished. In his article "Returning Soldiers," which appeared in *The Crisis* in May 1919, Du Bois declared on behalf of his people: "We return. We return from fighting. We return fighting. Make way for Democracy! We saved it in France, and by the Great Jehovah, we will save it in the United States of America, or know the reason why."