

returning soldiers

By W.E.B. Dubois

We are returning from war! The Crisis and tens of thousands of black men were drafted into a great struggle. For bleeding France and what she takes and has meant and will mean to us and humanity and against the threat of German war supremacy, we fought gladly and to the last drop of blood; for America and her highest ideals, we fought in far-off hope; for the dominant nations oligarchically attacked in Washington, we fought in bitter indignation. For the America that represents and plots to lynch, disfranchise, cage, torture and de-stabilize us—for this, in the hateful upturning and mixing of things, we were forced by conflictive fate to fight also.

But today we return! We return from the slavery of conditions which the world's nations demanded us to meet to the freedom of civil war. We stand again to look America squarely in the face and call a spade a spade. We say: This country of ours, despite all its better words have done and dreamed, is yet a shameful land.

It lynches.

And lynching is barbarism of a degree of contemptible savagery unparalleled in human history. Yet for 50 years we have lynched ten Negroes a week, and we have kept this up right through the war.

It disfranchises its own citizens.

Disfranchisement (taking away the right to vote) is the deliberate theft and robbery of the only protection of poor against rich and black against white. The land that disfranchises its citizens and calls itself a democracy lies and lies to its face.

It encourages ignorance.

It has never really tried to educate the Negro. A dominant minority does not want Negroes educated. It wants servants, dogs, whines and monkeys. And when this land allows a necessary group by its stolen political power to force as many black folk into these categories as it possibly can, it calls it contemptible hypocrisy. "They deserve us with ignorance; they cannot be educated!"

It steals from us.

It organizes industry to cheat us. It cheats us out of our land, it cheats us out of our labor. It confiscates our savings. It reduces our wages. It mis-takes our tax. It steals our profit. It taxes us without representation. It keeps us consistently and unreasonably poor, and then feeds us charity and denies our poverty.

It humiliates us.

It has organized a nation-wide and lately a world-wide propaganda of deliberate and conscious insult and defamation of black blood whenever forced. It declares that it shall not be possible to travel our residence, work our job, education or instruction for a black man to exist without tacit or open acknowledgment of his inferiority to the distant white dog. And it looks upon any attempt to question or even discuss this dogma as treason, unexcused assumption and treason.

This is the country to which we Soldiers of Democracy return. This is the homeland for which we fought! But it is our homeland. It was right for us to fight. Under similar circumstances, we would fight again. But by the God of Heavens, we are cowards and jackasses if now that that war is over, we do not manifest a every ounce of our brain and brawn to fight a longer, more self-protecting battle against the forces of hell to our own land.

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.

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