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# THE NEGRO CITIZEN IN OUR WARS FOR FREEDOM

BY CHARLES H. WESLEY

THE Negro citizen has carried with consistency his obligations to the United States Government throughout the years of its existence. He has sacrificed his life and his wealth along with other citizens in order that freedom might live. There have been five major wars in which freedom has been a fundamental consideration, and in each of these the Negro citizen has participated and made sacrifices: The American Revolution, the War of 1812, the Civil War, the Spanish-American War and the first World War. The path of the onward march of freedom has been filled with obstacles but each war has brought hope to the Negro citizen, whatever the temporary reactions have been which have followed the periods of peace. We are now engaged in another war, in which freedom is a far more prominent issue than it has ever been. It will be interesting, therefore, to observe the relationships between freedom as a war-cry and a battle-cry and freedom as a fact following the wars. Have we any right to expect an automatic extension of freedom as a result of this war? Do wars of freedom result ultimately in the subordination of some of those citizens who may have participated in them? Particularly, what has happened to Negroes who were free citizens, and not slaves, when they have fought, cooperated and sacrificed in our wars for freedom?

There are so many persons who think of Negroes as slaves freed by a war terminating in 1865, that it is inconceivable that there were Negroes who could have been citizens, in the legal acceptance of the term, and who performed their duties as did other citizens in spite of the special handicaps which were placed around them. Negroes obtained their citizenship just as did other Americans. Birth within the allegiance was a tenet of English law, which prevailed in the English colonies. Under this principle,

there were free Negroes who accepted and performed duties as citizens in these colonies. Under the constitution, they continued to perform such duties. While the Fourteenth Amendment gave definition to this fact, revoked the ideology of the Dred Scott Decision and affirmed the principles of birth and naturalization as bases of citizenship, there were Negroes who were citizens, as were other persons, prior to this period as well as afterwards. As Supreme Court Justice Taft once said to a group of soldiers at Camp Meade in 1918, "There is no doubt about your American citizenship. Born in this country under the American flag, you have no other country to look to but the United States."<sup>1</sup>

The first census in 1790 listed 59,557 free Negroes in a white population of 3,172,006. Many of these Americans were circumscribed in many ways. There were political, economic and social disabilities which affected them in various aspects of their individual lives. Not all of them could vote. All of them were not granted the opportunity of education. Some of them were indentured servants and many were conscious of the inequalities of the democracy of their day. The Negroes were similarly situated, and oftentimes in worse conditions, but many of them participated in the various aspects of life in the United States as citizens. They fought as soldiers, they labored as workers, they purchased homes, paid taxes and lived just as other citizens of our democracy. If they could not do one thing, they did another. They voted in several colonies, but if they could not do so, they performed other duties. A committee of Negroes in Massachusetts under the leadership of Paul Cuffe declared in 1780, "While we are not allowed the privilege of freemen of the State, having no vote or influence in the election of those that

tax us, yet many of our color have cheerfully entered the field of battle in the defense of the common cause."<sup>2</sup>

From the period of this first war for freedom, the American Revolution against Great Britain, Negro citizens have not failed to do their duty as soldiers and as patriots. They were in the opening battles as well as the closing ones of the Revolution. They assembled at the call of Paul Revere voluntarily with white Americans at Lexington and Concord in April, 1775. Early in this year, there was posted at Newport, Rhode Island, a sign asking for "Ye able-bodied sailors, men, white or black, to volunteer for naval service in ye interest of freedom."<sup>3</sup>

In this first of the wars for freedom, it was proposed officially that only free persons should participate. On May 20, 1775, the Committee of Public Safety of Massachusetts adopted a resolution to this effect. Pursuant to this resolution, free Negro citizens were received into the armed forces of the colony. Bancroft, the historian, states that "the right of free Negroes to bear arms in public defense, was, at that day, as little disputed in New England as their other rights." He continued this comment with the further statement that these free Negroes "took their place not in a separate corps, but in the ranks with the white man and their names may be read

<sup>2</sup>H. N. Sherwood, "Paul Cuffe," *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. VIII, No. 2, April, 1923, p. 162; Dr. Lorenzo J. Greene in his *The Negro in Colonial New England* states "Strictly speaking, they were not free for they were proscribed politically, economically and socially, while the white indentured servant, once freed, became a respected member of the community, but the Negro, because of his color, continued in an inferior social status, even though he may have adopted the culture of his former master," pp. 298-299.

<sup>3</sup>See also, Howard Chapin, *Rhode Island Soldiers and Sailors, 1755-1762*, pp. 29, 34, 36, *passim*; Laura E. Wilkes, *Missing Pages in American History*, p. 18.

<sup>1</sup>*The New York Age*, February 2, 1918.

on the pension rolls of the country, side by side with those of other soldiers of the revolution."<sup>4</sup>

Other colonies adopted a similar policy of employing free Negroes along with whites. In Rhode Island, it was stated that "the names of colored men were entered with those of white citizens on the rolls of the militia" and in Connecticut that "some hundreds of blacks—slave and freemen—were enlisted, from time to time, in the regiments of state troops and of the Connecticut line. How many, it is impossible to tell, for from first to last, the company or regimental rolls indicate no distinction of color."<sup>5</sup> However, when George Washington took command of this army at Cambridge, Massachusetts, on July 3, 1775, he found free Negroes in the militia. At a Council of War on October 9, at which he presided, it was agreed unanimously to reject all Negro enlistments.<sup>6</sup> The fortunes of war have a way of changing such decisions. For about one month later, on November 7, 1775, Lord Dunmore, the British Governor of Virginia, issued a proclamation declaring to be free "all indented servants, Negroes or others (appertaining to Rebels)," who would join the British Army.<sup>7</sup> This action led to a change in the views of the American leaders. George Washington wrote to the President of Congress on December 31, 1775, that "the free Negroes, who had served in the army, were very much dissatisfied at being discarded, and that he had granted them permission to enlist."<sup>8</sup>

A second reaction to this Dunmore Proclamation was the increase of Negro enlistments in the British Army. These Negroes were promised their freedom; and freedom was as dear to the black man as to the white. In spite of the appeal of Southerners to Negroes to remain

in slavery and be loyal to "their present masters," Negroes continued to flock to the armies which held out freedom to them. A Williamsburg, Virginia, paper carried an appeal, "But should there be any amongst the Negroes weak enough to provoke the fury of the Americans against their defenseless fathers and mothers, their wives, their women and children, let them only consider the difficulty of effecting their escape, and what they must expect to suffer if they fall into the hands of the Americans."<sup>9</sup> Here was a threat which meant nothing to brave men who were in search of freedom. It was not long, however, before the Americans realized their errors of strategy; and the number grew smaller who joined the enemies of the United Colonies, as soon as Negroes perceived that they could join the side of the colonists and that freedom could also be secured and upheld through service in the American Army. On January 16, 1776, a Congressional Committee brought in its report stating that "the free Negroes who have served faithfully in the army at Cambridge may be re-enlisted therein, but no others."<sup>10</sup>

Free Negroes were thus permitted to enlist in the Army of Wash-

<sup>9</sup>Force, *American Archives*, 4th Series, Vol. III, p. 1387.

<sup>10</sup>*Journals of the Continental Congress*, Vol. IV, p. 60.

ington. They fought with patriotic valor and devotion in many battles and experienced numerous hardships with their American comrades. They continued to press their offer of services upon the commanders, and as the pressures became more acute in the Valley Forge Winter of 1778, the more extensive employment of Negroes who were slaves, as well as free, became a necessity. On the promise of freedom for war service, Negroes who had been slaves were accepted for army service. It has been variously estimated that there were from 3,000 to 5,000 Negro soldiers who served in the American armies. It is also significant to call attention to the fact that the call of freedom through the British armies led approximately 15,000 Negroes to join these armies, some of whom were carried either to the West Indies or to Canada.

This first War for Freedom, closing in 1783, was followed by a period of reaction which witnessed the retardation of emancipation and a fixation of status. However, the number of free persons increased with each census. The slaves who served in the armies received their freedom. There were masters, motivated by the revolutionary doctrines of the Rights of Man, who made provision for the freedom of their slaves either by manumission or purchase or by their wills before death. Apparently, freedom for Negroes was stalemated, but actually freedom marched onward to higher ground.

In the continuation of our wars for freedom from 1812 to 1814, Free Negroes were again active fighters on sea as on land. They had been serving on the ships of the continental Navy as pilots, gunners, boatswains and sailors in the war with France in 1798 and with the Barbary powers in 1801. Negro sailors were on the flagship of Commodore Rodgers, the *President*, on which a Negro midshipman and two Negro gunners were killed in a battle with the British frigate, *Belvidera*, in 1812. They were on the *Essex* when it fought the *Alert* on August 13, 1812. Commodore Perry, in 1813, had what he called "a motley set of black soldiers, sailors and boys" in the Battle of Lake



CHARLES H. WESLEY

<sup>4</sup>Bancroft, *History of the United States*, Vol. VII, p. 421.

<sup>5</sup>George Livermore, *Opinions of the Founders of the Republic on Negroes as Slaves, as Citizens and as Soldiers*, pp. 117, 148.

<sup>6</sup>Peter Force, *American Archives*, 4th Series, Vol. III, pp. 1039-1040.

<sup>7</sup>Force, *American Archives*, 4th Series, Vol. III, p. 1385.

<sup>8</sup>Jared Sparks, *Writings of George Washington*, Vol. III, p. 218.

Erie. Eighty-three black volunteers died on the Perry flagship, which these men refused to abandon. It is said that three-fourths of Perry's crew were colored men. Their treatment by the Navy today cannot dull the luster of the glory of the deeds of the black sailors who helped to found the United States Navy.<sup>11</sup>

The most glorious page of the Army's record in the War of 1812 was the Battle of New Orleans which came near the close of the war. The famous proclamation of General Jackson on September 21, 1814, called these men to the colors, with the statement that "as sons of freedom, you are now called upon to defend our most inestimable blessing. As Americans, your country looks with confidence to her adopted children for a valorous support, as a faithful return for advantages enjoyed under her mild and equitable government."<sup>12</sup> In response to his challenge to men as "sons of freedom," free Negroes flocked to the American forces and joined with their comrades in another war for freedom. Their participation and aid to the nation, however, in its pursuit of freedom had little beneficial action upon their own freedom. This period was followed by the launching of a program, the Colonization Plan, which was intended to carry them from their land of freedom across the seas to a land which was also un-free.

Nevertheless, in peace as in war, there were Negroes who continued to express belief in their citizenship and their rights as free men in the United States. In the first annual convention of Negroes held in 1831, expression was given to these views.<sup>13</sup> After referring to the acts of Great Britain and Denmark in condemning slavery, the delegates of the convention stated that "it is only when we look at our own native land, to the birth-right of our fathers, to the land for

whose prosperity their blood and our sweat have been shed and cruelly extorted, that the convention has had cause to hang its head and blush." In the words of the Convention Address, it was declared that the delegates rejoiced in exclaiming, "This is our own, our native land." Free Negroes, who were thoughtful, continued to maintain this view of their relation to the United States even in the days of slavery and physical oppression.

This view was expressed again in 1861, when the third of our wars arose, during which freedom was again an issue. A Negro citizen of Boston wrote to the *Daily Atlas and Bee* on April 19, 1861, with the statement, "Though the Colored American has had but little inducement, so far as the policy of the national government is concerned, to be patriotic, he is, nevertheless, patriotic; he loves his native land; he feels for 'the glory and the shame' of his country; his blood, as in revolutionary times—in the time of old Sam Adams, and of Crispus Attucks the black—boils, ready to flow in its defense; not as a black man, but as an American—he will fight for his country's defense, for her honor, and asks only for his rights as an equal fellow-countryman." The writer continued, "The colored man will go where duty shall call him, though not because he is colored. He will stand by the side of his white brave fellow-countrymen. They will stand together; if needs be, make 'a great sacrifice of life'; they will together occupy, if needs be, 'the yellow fever posts in the enemy's country during the summer months.' Yes, all this for freedom, their common country, and the right. This he will do without price; but he would have his rights."<sup>14</sup>

When in 1861, began the third of our wars in which liberty was an issue, the Negro citizen was again found on the side of freedom. When the war began, this issue was not clearly defined. While the Southern states which composed the Confederacy were prepared to defend slavery and its extension, the Northerners were not ready to in-

terfere with slavery and defend freedom. In fact also, when the war began, it was looked upon definitely as "a white man's war." Although President Lincoln appealed "to all loyal citizens to favor, facilitate and aid his effort to maintain the honor, the integrity and the existence of our National Union and the perpetuity of popular government and to redress wrongs already long endured," free Negro citizens who volunteered their services found that they were as promptly declined.<sup>15</sup> They were patriotic and enthusiastic but they were silenced by the refusals to accept their aid. In the press, in the pulpit and in Congress it was even denied that slavery was the cause of the war.

Negroes in the Northern states who numbered 340,240 in 1860 began to realize the significance of the war and waves of patriotic enthusiasm swept over them. They yearned in the early periods of 1861 to follow the flag and to defend the nation. It was said of them, "in their hearts they felt that the time would come when they too would be called upon to shoulder arms for the restoration of the union and its re-establishment on higher grounds, and a broader and truer basis."

Other Negro leaders expressed similar views as the war advanced. Charles Lenox Remond spoke at the 12th Baptist Church on January 20, 1862, using as his topic, "The People of Color—Their Relation to the Country and Their Duties in the Present Crisis."<sup>16</sup> William Wells Brown toured New York State giving free lectures on "The War and Its Connection with Slavery."<sup>17</sup> A group formed the Emancipation League and sponsored six lectures on "The Reasons in this Crisis of Our Country's Affairs for Emancipating the Slaves." Frederick Douglass was one of these lecturers.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup>James M. Guthrie, *Camp-Fires of the Afro-American or The Colored Man as a Patriot*, pp. 248-249; Charles H. Wesley, *Negro Labor in the United States*, pp. 87-88.

<sup>16</sup>*The Liberator*, January 17, 1862.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, April 4, 1862.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, January 24, 1862.

<sup>11</sup>Lydia T. Brown, "U. S. Fleet that fought British in 1776 drew no Color Line." *The Afro-American*, November 23, 1940.

<sup>12</sup>*Niles Register*, Vol. VII, p. 205.

<sup>13</sup>*Minutes of the First Annual Convention of the People of Color*. Philadelphia, 1831.

<sup>14</sup>*The Liberator*, May 10, 1861.

They were among the first groups called to Washington to defend the Capitol of the Nation. It is recorded that the first casualty of this war for freedom was Nicholas Biddle, a Negro. A tablet was erected in his honor at Pottsville, Pennsylvania, which bears the words, "His was the Proud Distinction of Shedding the First Blood in the Late War for the Union, Being Wounded while Marching Through Baltimore with the First Volunteers from Schuylkill County, 18 April 1861."<sup>19</sup>

The Negroes of New York City formed a military club and drilled themselves in anticipation of joining the Federal forces. There was sentiment frequently expressed for arming the Negroes who were free but against the arming of slaves. The Negro citizens of Boston held a meeting in April, 1861, and resolved "to defend the government and the flag of the country." They said that they "were ready to raise an army of 50,000 men if the laws can be altered to allow them to enlist." A Military Corps was organized in Cleveland in the same year, following the adoption of a resolution to the effect that, "Today, as in the times of '76 and the days of 1812, we were ready to go forth and do battle in the common cause of the country."<sup>20</sup>

Differences of opinion concerning the use of Negroes as soldiers continued to exist until it was found that the Confederacy was employing them as servants, workers and war laborers also and until the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation. During 1862, they were employed as laborers, scouts, teamsters and cooks in the Federal armies and for menial duties in the Navy. The organization of the Fifty-fourth and Fifty-fifth Massachusetts Regiments from free Negro citizens soon convinced some of the American people of the practicability of the program. Recruiting was begun on February 14, 1863, for the Fifty-fourth Regiment. Frederick Douglass, William Wells Brown, Charles Lenox Remond, John S. Rock, Ne-

gro leaders in Massachusetts, joined in support of the recruiting. Douglass, especially, made eloquent appeals through the columns of his paper as well as in his addresses to the colored people of the North to enlist.<sup>21</sup> He issued a pamphlet under the title, "*Men of Color, to Arms*," urging enlistment by colored citizens as an opportunity to wipe out the reproaches made against them.<sup>22</sup> In spite of anti-Negro sentiment and even riots in various Northern cities, they filled the ranks of the regiments.

At Philadelphia and in other Pennsylvania cities, Douglass was again in the service to tell the Negro citizens that they could become citizens by sealing their claim to rights with their blood. At one time, he was discouraged and discontinued his labors, but finally went to Washington and conferred with the President and the Secretary of War over the questions of pay, pensions and equitable treatment for Negro soldiers.<sup>23</sup> This action by Douglass and the pressures from many sides finally led Congress on January 1, 1864 to vote full pay to Negro soldiers. However, they had already demonstrated their loyalty and their own love of freedom by service under many handicaps. This had been confidently expressed by an editorial in the *Chicago Tribune*, which stated "The Negro will fight for his liberty, for his place among men, for his right to develop himself in whatsoever direction he chooses; he will prove himself a hero, and if need be, a martyr."<sup>24</sup>

Alarm was expressed in several cities at the employment of Negroes as workers. Disturbances occurred in Chicago, New York, Cincinnati, Detroit, Cleveland and Boston when Negroes were used as strike breakers and workers. Industrial discontent and racial bitterness seemed to go hand in hand.

<sup>21</sup>John M. Daniel, *In Freedom's Birthplace*, p. 73; *The Liberator*, March 13, 1863.

<sup>22</sup>*Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, written by Himself*, pp. 414-415; James Gregory, *Frederick Douglass, the Orator*, pp. 50-51; *Men of Color, To Arms*. Rochester, N. Y., March 2, 1863.

<sup>23</sup>*Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, pp. 421-425.

<sup>24</sup>*The Chicago Tribune*, August 1, 1863.

The attitudes towards Negro workers became so intense that the *New York Tribune* declared editorially that "This is not Richmond but New York—here at least the Negro is a citizen, with rights which white men are bound to respect."<sup>25</sup> The draft riots became so menacing in New York City that committees were formed to assist in maintaining order. One of these was a Committee of Merchants for the Relief of Colored People Suffering from the Late Riots in New York. Negro ministers including in particular Rev. Henry Highland Garnet, aided in this relief work and other groups of persons advocated equal work opportunities for Negroes as well as whites.<sup>26</sup> One attitude of white workers was expressed by the *New York World*, "If the working men of this city are disinclined to be forced into a fight for Emancipation—it is a strange perversion of the laws of self-preservation which would compel the white laborer to leave his family destitute and unprotected while he goes forth to free the Negro, who being free, will compete with him in his labor."<sup>27</sup>

There were small numbers of Negroes in the South whose sympathies were with the Confederacy at the opening of the war when the issues were not as well known to them as they were after 1863. It was reported by the *Vicksburg Whig* that a free Negro, Jordan Chavis, who was too old for service, having served in the War of 1812, had given a horse to a Confederate cavalry company and authorized the Confederate agent to draw on him for five hundred dollars. The article was headed "Patriotic Loyalty of a Colored Man."<sup>28</sup> It was alleged by the *Charleston (S. C.) Mercury* that the free Negro of Charleston had contributed four hundred and fifty dollars to the Confederate cause.

<sup>25</sup>*The New York Tribune*, April 14, 1863.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, July 20, 1863; *Report of the Committee of Merchants for the Relief of Colored People suffering from the Late Riots in New York*. New York, 1863.

<sup>27</sup>*The New York Tribune*, July 15, 1863, quoting the *New York World*.

<sup>28</sup>*The Liberator*, July 12, 1861, quoting the *Vicksburg Whig*.

<sup>19</sup>Guthrie, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

<sup>20</sup>*The Springfield Republican*, July 19, 1862; *The Liberator*, April 26, 1861.

The writer said, "The zealous and unflinching alacrity with which this class of our population have always devoted their labor and their means to promote the safety of the State is alike honorable to themselves and gratifying to the community."<sup>29</sup> At New Orleans, some free Negroes enrolled for military duty at a meeting called for this purpose, and at Norfolk, Virginia, there were isolated evidences of loyalty to the Confederacy, just as there were numerous evidences of disloyalty.<sup>30</sup> As the war progressed, the latter became increasingly numerous.

Quite aside from these isolated instances, Negroes supported the cause of freedom until there were 178,975 of them in the Union armies, with 7,122 white officers and over 200,000 of them in the Quartermaster Corps, both groups of whom gave their blood and their lives in order that freedom might live. History has recorded their deeds of patriotism. It is interesting to observe that of the 178,975 in the ranks, 7,916 were raised in New England; 13,922 in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania; 12,711 in the Central Northern and Western states and 45,184 in the border states of Delaware, the District of Columbia, Kentucky, Missouri, Maryland and West Virginia. These Negro soldiers were volunteers. The remainder of the number, 99,711, were raised in the Southern states with one-half of them as virtual conscripts. Over 3,000 of this number were killed or died of wounds in the years 1863-1865.<sup>31</sup>

Negro civilians aided the contrabands in their journeys through Confederate lines. Among the outstanding heroines of this type of work was Harriet Tubman.<sup>32</sup> The women also made flags for the troops and served as nurses. Though denied the suffrage and other rights as citizens, and circumscribed by

economic and social disabilities, Negro men and women sacrificed for the freedom of the nation and for themselves.

In 1864, a National Convention of Colored Men was called in Syracuse, New York, and a Declaration of Wrongs and Rights was drawn up. This was a protest against the indignities heaped upon them, the denial of the right of representation, the benefits of the institutions they were taxed to support and the privileges and immunities of citizens. John S. Rock, the first Negro lawyer admitted to practice before the U. S. Supreme Court, stated to this Convention, "All we ask is equal rights. This is what our brave men are fighting for. They have not gone to the battlefield for the sake of killing and being killed, but they are fighting for liberty and equality."<sup>33</sup>

Throughout the Civil War, there were reactions among slaves to the cause of freedom as there had been throughout the period of slavery. The unrest and insubordination among the slaves led to rumors of insurrections in several places, but the actual outbreaks were few. There were approximately twenty-five plots and insurrections. In many of these, white men with abolition sympathies were said to have had some participation, but it is equally sound to conclude that the Negro's love of freedom was as active a cause as any other.<sup>34</sup> The constant fear of slave rebellion, aided by Northern sympathizers, white and black, was an important factor in wearing down Southern resistance. Freedom was as dear to the enslaved as to the partly free.

Physical freedom was an outgrowth of the Civil War. Political freedom followed rapidly. Civil rights were written into law and for a decade it seemed that freedom would be a reality to Negro citizens. But the specter of "white supremacy" and the cry of "Black Domination" arose again to besmirch the flag of freedom and the work of the Civil War and Recon-

struction was undone by the reactionary leadership which was returned to power and which proceeded to intrench itself by legal chains binding again the Negro people in a form of slavery. This situation was graphically described by Frederick Douglass in 1865 in a speech entitled, "What the Black Man Wants," delivered in Boston, Massachusetts. He stated that if Negroes knew enough to pay taxes, to support the government and to fight for the country—then they knew enough to vote on good American principles. He said that the Negro had been a citizen three times in the history of the government, in 1775, in 1812 and in 1865, and that in time of trouble the Negroes were citizens and in time of peace they were aliens.<sup>35</sup>

The opportunities of Negro citizens were enlarged in some areas, but they were proscribed in social, economic and political fields. Freedom in America was crushed and cried out in vain as the Reconstruction period was terminated. Progress in freedom was being made without doubt, but the student of history must admit that the path of its onward marching was now forward and then backward. Nevertheless, the torch of freedom in peace as in war beckoned its followers onward and upward along a tortuous mountain pathway.

When the Army was reorganized after the Civil War, a policy was adopted of giving to the Negro citizens twenty per cent of the armed forces. As the number has varied from time to time, the proportion of Negroes varied. They were found to be good Indian fighters in the Indian wars. It was said that "the bones of Negro soldiers whiten the plains or are buried beneath them from the Concho Country and Pan Handle of Texas north to the British provinces."<sup>36</sup>

While the Spanish-American War was not directly a war for freedom, it was regarded as a war to "free Cuba." This gave a basis

<sup>29</sup>*The Liberator*, September 20, 1861, quoting the *Charleston Mercury*.

<sup>30</sup>*The Liberator*, May 10, 1861.

<sup>31</sup>*The New York Times*, December 25, 1898.

<sup>32</sup>See Earl Conrad, *Harriet Tubman*. Washington, D. C., 1943; William Wells Brown, *The Rising Son*, p. 536.

<sup>33</sup>*Proceedings of the National Convention of Colored Men*. Syracuse, N. Y., October 4-7, 1864.

<sup>34</sup>See Bell I. Wiley, *Southern Negroes, 1861-1865*. New Haven, 1938.

<sup>35</sup>*Speech of Frederick Douglass at the Annual Meeting of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, Boston, April 17, 1865*, p. 37.

<sup>36</sup>*The New York Times*, December 25, 1898.

gro as a race has passed his probationary period. After the war, he can no longer be put off with the crumbs that fall from the rich man's table. He will have earned his citizenship and he will be entitled to his full share of those advantages which are provided from the public purse for the common good. Whether of public education or of the protection which good government should throw around the health and morals of all its citizens."<sup>54</sup> This was the optimistic point of view which was doomed to disappointment.

Others were determined also to keep up the fight for their rights as citizens. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People with W. E. B. DuBois and James Weldon Johnson, the Equal Rights League with Monroe Trotter courageously fought this battle on the home front. Audiences were sought with President Wilson and Congressional representatives. The Bishops of the A. M. E. Zion Church and the A. M. E. Church formed delegations to visit the White House and present their cause to the President. To the latter group, it was reported that "the responses of the President, though guarded, were very gratifying."<sup>55</sup>

When General Ballou, Commanding Officer of the 92nd Division, in 1918, advised the Negro members of this Division against striving for their legal rights and urged them to "refrain from going where their presence will be resented," a storm of protest greeted the announcement. Soldiers tore down the order at Camp Upton and others in larger numbers ignored it. A newspaper editor wrote, "This is a milk and water policy to preach to the members of an army that is going abroad to fight for the rights of humanity and the extension of a world wide democracy. Common sense should dictate that men cannot be inspired to fight for the widening of democracy abroad by the surrender of the commonest attributes of de-

mocracy at home." Another writer went so far as to say that if the United States wanted "to make effective its glorious program of making the world safe for democracy, there should be a little house cleaning performed at home."<sup>56</sup>

These proposals were met by opposition from the conservative forces of the nation. Race riots were the responses in various parts of the country. Local sentiment developed with such negative power in Southern areas that with the appearance of jobs in war industries, migrations of Negroes became continuous movements. Numbers added confusion to already confused situations and several cities unprepared for such mass movements became the scenes of mob violence against Negro citizens. Social gains were made, however, by the mere transplantation and their entrance into industry.<sup>57</sup>

Thus did the Negro citizens of this day carry on for freedom, and yet their soldiers returned without freedom for themselves. Major Arthur Little described the mustering out of the 15th New York Volunteer Infantry, the 369th United States Infantry with the words, "The work for which we had volunteered was over. The emergency which had made militarism the duty of good citizenship had passed."<sup>58</sup> With the close of the war, they found that their war slogan of freedom was like a child crying in the night with nothing but an empty cry.

And now we find ourselves as Negro citizens of the United States in a war in which freedom is again a major motive. Old events and old issues concerning the Negro are appearing in the new forms. The Negro is again rejected in certain areas of the armed forces. He

is again in the Navy but he is submerged and proscribed. He has a larger number of army officers but equality of opportunity is still absent. Gains have been made but democracy for the Negro is far below democracy for the white man in the armed forces. The Four Freedoms have been designated as objectives to be sought "everywhere in the world," but they miss the mark at home. Unlike charity, they do not begin at home. Pronouncements of allied statesmen have given further substance to our faith in the new war-cry of "freedom."

Shall we be disillusioned after the war? Are we being built up for a let-down? Will history repeat itself in the results of this war as in others? Perhaps, we may find ourselves in a more advanced and favorable position than ever before, but if we do, it will be because the reactionary, conservative forces have been beaten at their old game, for even now they plan. The reply to their plan is partly in our hands, for true it is, that "they who would be free themselves must strike the blow." What shall the future bring forth out of this war for freedom? Are we blindly going forward to serve in another war for freedom with illusive hopes, without thinking of the days of peace when reaction will again be the normal procedure?

In answer to these questions, the historian will not essay the role of prophet, but in the light of "History teaching by example," as Lord Bolingbroke would say, have we as Negro citizens any basis to expect more from this war? Perhaps we have. But we shall not if we fold our hands and acquiesce. Many of us may be subject to disillusionment if we read not the lessons of the past history of freedom's wars and face the future realistically. But with all our frustrations and disappointments, let us here again in this war for freedom pledge our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor to this our country, our native land, and continue to fight for freedom in peace as in war, as a part of the citizen's duty in a great democracy.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, May 18, 1918.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, March 23, 1918.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, April 13, 20, 1918.

<sup>57</sup>Carter G. Woodson, *A Century of Negro Migration*, Chap. IX.

<sup>58</sup>Arthur W. Little, *From Harlem to the Rhine. The Story of New York's Colored Volunteers*, p. 368. See also, Emmett J. Scott, *American Negro in the World War*, Boston, 1919; Charles Williams, *Sidelights on Negro Soldiers*, Boston, 1923; Addie Hunton, *Two Colored Women with the American Expeditionary Forces*, Brooklyn, 1920.