



Smithsonian Institution

National Museum of African American History and Culture

Delegate Magazine 1976

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The Long Journey from the Back of the Bus (cont.)

My history traces our advent into politics after the Civil War with the passage of the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments to the Constitution, supposedly passed to protect our rights. Then came the period of Reconstruction, in which Black men served as legislators in the seats of government. This was followed by the end of Reconstruction.

During this time, the Establishment tried all sorts of gimmicks to take our rights back by the formation of the KKK and other repressive groups, as well as chicanery in the legislative chambers.

And then I look at Black Education and the formation of the Negro College. Here, I am deeply indebted to Mr. Chris Edley of the United Negro College Fund and Langston and Dr. Plotski of Bellweather Press for pulling my coat on this phase of our history.

At the beginning of the Twentieth Century, the Negro faced a new era, but with the same old problems. To help solve some of these problems, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the National Urban League came into being. Educated Blacks also worked on our problems by forming Greek lettered Sororities and Fraternities, namely Alpha Kappa Alpha, Delta Sigma Theta, Zeta Phi Beta and Sigma Gamma Rho Sororities, and Alpha Phi Alpha, Omega Psi Phi, Kappa Alpha Psi and Phi Beta Sigma Fraternities.

Blacks marched on Washington during the first Wilson Administration in 1912 fighting for our rights. However, under Wilson we migrated from the South to the North and West to work in the war plants preparing armament for World War I.

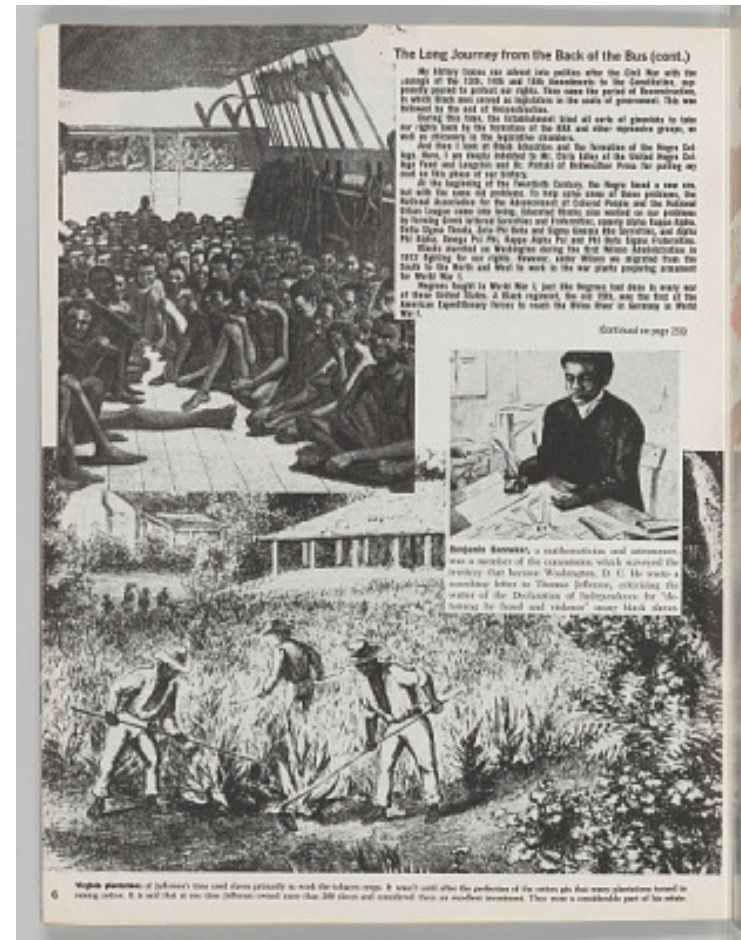
Negroes fought in World War I, just like Negroes had done in every war of these United States. A Black regiment, the old 15th, was the first of the American Expeditionary forces to reach the Rhine River in Germany in World War I.

(Continued on page 250)

[[image - drawing of Africans on a slave ship]]

[[image - drawing of an African-American man seated at a desk, holding quill pen]]
[[caption]] Benjamin Banneker, a mathematician and astronomer, was a member of the commission which surveyed the territory that became Washington, D. C. He wrote a scorching letter to Thomas Jefferson, criticizing the writer of the Declaration of Independence for "detaining by fraud and violence" many black slaves. [[/caption]]

[[image - drawing of slaves working in field]]
[[caption]] Virginia plantations of Jefferson's time used slaves primarily to work the tobacco crops. It wasn't until after the perfection of the cotton gin that many plantations turned to raising cotton. It is said that at one time Jefferson owned more than 200 slaves and considered them an excellent investment. They were a considerable part of his estate. [[/caption]]



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