



Smithsonian Institution

National Museum of African American History and Culture

The Crisis, Vol. 14, No. 2

Extracted on Apr-16-2024 06:35:06

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spite the more timid and complacent souls in our own ranks, we demand and of right ought to demand:

1. The right to serve our country on the battlefield and to receive training for such service;
2. The right of our best men to lead troops of their own race in battle, and to receive officers' training in preparation for such leadership;
3. The immediate stoppage of lynching;
4. The right to vote for both men and women;
5. Universal and free common school training;
6. The abolition of Jim Crow cars;
7. The repeal of segregation ordinances;
8. Equal civil rights in all public institutions and movements.

These are not minor matters. They are not matters that can wait. They are the least that self-respecting, free, modern men can have and live. In asking these rights we pretend to no extraordinary desert. We are ordinary men, trained in ignorance, forced sometimes to crime, kept in poverty. Yet even so, we have blazed a great red trail to freedom, stained with our blood and sweat and a proof of our earnestness. Modern political and social rights are not rewards of merit. They are measures of protection and prerequisites to uplift. The denial of them is death and that our enemies and some of our false friends well know.

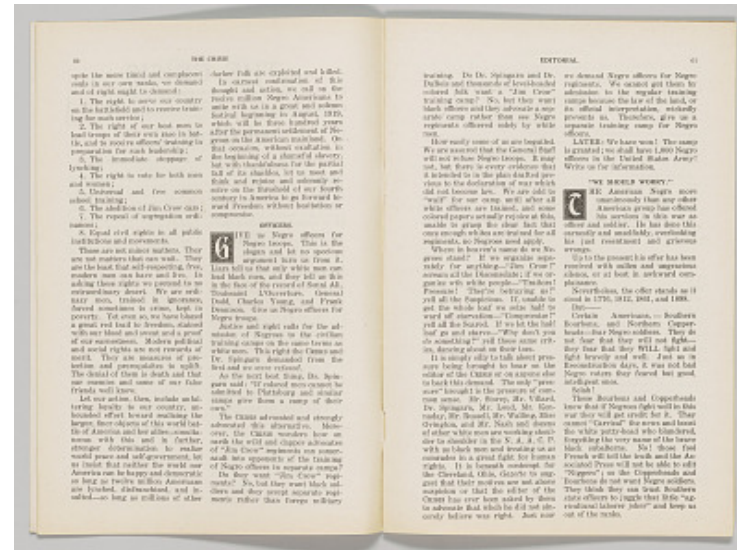
Let our action, then, include unfaltering loyalty to our country, unbounded effort toward realizing the larger, finer objects of this world battle of American and her allies; simultaneous with this and in further, stronger determination to realize world peace and self-government, let us insist that neither the world nor America can be happy and democratic so long as twelve million Americans are lynched, disfranchised, and insulted-- so long as millions of other darker folk are exploited and killed.

In earnest confirmation of this thought and action, we call on the twelve million Negro Americans to unite with us in a great and solemn festival beginning in August, 1919, which will be three hundred years after the permanent settlement of Negroes on the American mainland. ON that occasion, without exultation in the beginning of a shameful slavery, but with the thankfulness for the partial fall of its shackles, let us meet and think and rejoice and solemnly resolve on the threshold of our fourth century in America to go forward toward Freedom without hesitation or compromise.

OFFICERS.

Give us Negro officers for Negro troops. This is the slogan and let no specious argument turn us from it. Liars tell us that only white men can lead black men, and they tell us this in the face of the record of Sonni Ali, Touissant L'Ouverture, General Dodd, Charles Young, and Frank Dennison. Give us Negro officers for Negro troops.

Justice and right calls for the admission of Negroes to the civilian training camps on the same terms as white men. This right the CRISIS and Dr. Spingarn demanded from the first and we were refused.



As the next best thing, Dr. Spingarn said: "If colored men cannot be admitted to Plattsburg and similar camps give them a camp of their own."

The CRISIS advocated and strongly advocated this alternative. Moreover, the CRISIS wonders how on earth the wild and dapper advocates of "Jim Crow" regiments can somersault into opponents of the training of Negro officers in separate camps?

Do they want "Jim Crow" regiments? No, but they want black soldiers and they accept separate regiments rather than forego military

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training. Do Dr. Spingarn and Dr. DuBois and thousands of level-headed colored folk want a "Jim Crow" training camp? No, but they want black officers and they advocate a separate camp rather than see Negro regiments officered solely by white men.

How easily some of us are beguiled. We are assured that the General Staff will not refuse Negro troops. It may not, but there is every evidence that it intended to in the plan drafted previous to the declaration of war which did not become law. We are told to "wait" for our camp until after all white officers are trained, and some colored papers actually rejoice at this, unable to grasp the clear fact that once enough whites are trained for all regiments, no Negroes need apply.

Where in heaven's name do we Negroes stand? If we organize separately for anything-- "Jim Crow!" scream all the Disconsolate; if we organize with white people-- "Traitors! Pressure! They're betraying us!" yell all the Suspicious. If, unable to get the whole loaf we seize half to ward off starvation-- "Compromise!" yell all the Scared. If we let the half loaf go and starve-- "Why don't you do something?" yell those same critics, dancing about on their toes.

It is simply silly to talk about pressure being brought to bear on the editor of the CRISIS or on anyone else to back this demand. The only "pressure" brought is the pressure of common sense. Mr. Storey, Mr. Villard, Dr. Spingarn, Mr. Loud, Mr. Kennaday, Mr. Russell, Mr. Walling, Miss Ovington, and Mr. Nash and dozens of other white men are working shoulder to shoulder in the N.A.A.C.P. with us black men and treating us as comrades in a great fight for human rights. It is beneath contempt for the Cleveland, Ohio, Gazette to suggest that their motives are not above suspicion or that the editor of the CRISIS has ever been asked by them to advocate that which he did not sincerely believe was right. Just now we demand Negro officers for Negro regiments. We cannot get them by admission to the regular training camps because the law of the land, or its official interpretation, wickedly prevents us. Therefore, give us a separate training camp for Negro officers.

LATER: We have won! The camp is granted; we shall have 1,000 Negro officers in the United States Army! Write us for information.

"WE SHOULD WORRY."

THE American Negro more unanimously than any other American group has offered his services in this war as officer and soldier. He has done this earnestly and unselfishly, overlooking his just resentment and grievous wrongs.

Up to the present his offer has been received with sullen and ungracious silence, or at best in awkward complaisance.

Nevertheless, the offer stands as it stood in 1776, 1812, 1861, and 1898.

But--

Certain Americans,-- Southern Bourbons, and Northern Copperheads-- fear Negro soldiers. They do not fear that they will not fight-- they fear that they WILL fight and fight bravely and well. Just as in Reconstruction days, it was not bad Negro voters they feared but good, intelligent ones.

Selah!

These Bourbons and Copperheads know that if Negroes fight well in this war they will get credit for it. They cannot "Carrizal" the news and boost the white putty-head who blundered, forgetting the very name of the brave black subalterns. No! those fool French will tell the truth and the Associated Press will not be able to edit "Niggers"; so the Copperheads and Bourbons do not want Negro soldiers. They think they can trust Southern state officers to juggle that little "agricultural laborer joker" and keep us out of the ranks.

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