

# Civil Rights: Before, During and After the World Wars

## Should you fight for a country that is fighting against you?

"Our liberties we prize and our rights we will maintain." That is the official motto of the state of Iowa. Liberties and rights refer to our freedoms to pursue our own goals, but they must balance those with the rights and liberties of others. Rights and liberties often deal with restrictions on what the government can do, but they also include what we can or cannot do to others.

### Rights and Restrictions

Both the federal and state constitutions list specific restrictions on the powers of government. These include the freedom of speech, religion, the press and assembly as well as numerous other guarantees against government intrusion into areas of our private lives. However, who enjoys these rights has been a debate. Questions over race have been an ongoing issue. Early Iowa lawmakers placed restrictions on African-Americans' right to live here, to vote, to serve on juries or attend school. Gradually, legal restrictions were removed, but African Americans still face hurdles in reaching full equality. The Iowa Supreme Court issued important rulings against slavery and racial discrimination in public education and in public accommodations, like transportation and housing.

The right to vote was originally restricted to white men only, but first African-American men and then all women gained the right. Women's suffrage was tied politically to the regulation of alcohol with the assumption that women voters would restrict saloons and similar establishments. Those who favored more lenient alcohol laws usually opposed women's suffrage.

Similar debates have surrounded issues of religion, ethnicity and sexual orientation. In 2009, the Iowa Supreme Court ruled that same-sex couples could marry in Iowa because the constitution says that all citizens must be treated equally. The opinion thrust Iowa into the national spotlight as the state became the fifth to grant the right to same-sex couples. Some religious groups pushed back claiming that the Bible forbids such unions and that churches should not be required to engage in activities that violate to practice their religion. Whose rights are more important?

### Catalysts of Change

The expansion of the protection of the law rarely happens without a major political push from the group's advocates. Granting African-American males the right to vote and removing constitution restrictions limiting certain rights to "whites" only was a major issue in the 1868 election following the Civil War.

Women's suffrage advocates almost achieved a victory in the early 1870s but the effort spluttered when the U.S. Supreme Court nullified a referendum on a technicality. Iowa-born Carrie Chapman Catt rose to the leadership of a national women's suffrage organization credited with final passage in Congress submitting the question to the states. The Civil Rights marches in the 1960s had local support in Iowa and were an important political issue. Iowa voters narrowly defeated an Equal Rights Amendment that would have prohibited discrimination based on sex. Three of the seven judges who approved the unanimous Supreme Court decision on same-sex marriage were voted off the bench by a movement led by religious conservatives.

While the trend is to prohibit discrimination against an ever wider circle of citizens, how to balance individual liberties, the common good and the authority of the government remains a source of debate. Through it all, Iowa's motto remains constant: "Our liberties we prize and our rights we will maintain."

## Supporting Questions

What is the story of the disenfranchised Iowans who contributed to Iowa's effort during World War I?

- [Portrait of Army Private Jonas M. Poweshiek, 1917 \(Image\)](#)
- [Graduates and Teachers from the Tuskegee Institute in Army Training Camp, August 10, 1917 \(Image\)](#)
- ["The History and Views of Colored Officers Training Camp at Fort Des Moines for 1917" Advertisement, September 21, 1917 \(Document\)](#)
- [African-American Captains at Ft. Des Moines, October 15, 1917 \(Image\)](#)
- [World War I YMCA Educational Secretaries, 1918 \(Image\)](#)
- [Portrait of Army Private Robert Young Bear, 1918 \(Image\)](#)
- [Private George Stewart Letter from World War I, August 3, 1918 \(Document\)](#)
- [Letter from Private Estle Senter to his Mother During World War I, December 19, 1918 \(Document\)](#)

Did their contribution to the war effort influence society's beliefs about each of these groups of Iowans?

- ["Lieut. Hal Short Visits Iowa City" Newspaper Article, December 27, 1917 \(Document\)](#)
- [American Red Cross Rest Room for African-American Soldiers and Sailors, between 1917 and 1919 \(Image\)](#)
- ["True Sons of Freedom" Poster, 1918 \(Image\)](#)
- [803rd Pioneer Infantry Band on the U.S.S. Philippines, 1919 \(Image\)](#)
- [Women's Army Corps Company Outside Des Moines Theater, September 29, 1943 \(Image\)](#)

Did the public support these disenfranchised groups and their contributions to the war effort, or did they continue to treat these groups poorly?

- [Letter from W.E.B. Du Bois to U.S. Secretary of War Newton Baker Praising Ft. Des Moines, October 17, 1917 \(Document\)](#)
- [Letter from W.E.B. Du Bois to President Woodrow Wilson, November 1918 \(Document\)](#)
- [Charles Young Auxiliary at Red Cross Bazaar in Des Moines, Iowa, December 20, 1918 \(Image\)](#)

## [\\*Printable Image and Document Guide](#)

## Additional Resources

["Wartime Illusions and Disillusionment: Camp Dodge and Racial Stereotyping, 1917-1918,"](#) by Bill Douglas in *The Annals of Iowa* (1998): This article was featured in *The Annals of Iowa*, a quarterly, peer-reviewed journal of history published by the State Historical Society of Iowa. This essay, in particular, takes a closer look at the effect of racial stereotyping at Camp Dodge during the last two years of World War I.

## Portrait of Army Private Jonas M. Poweshiek, 1917



Pvt. Jonas M. Poweshiek,  
Aux. Rem. Depot 328, Camp Bowie, Texas.  
Enl. June 6/17 at Tulsa, Okla.  
Hon. Dis. May 1st. - 1919.  
(Tama Indian)

Courtesy of State Historical Society of Iowa, 1917

### Description

This portrait is of Army Private Jonas M. Poweshiek, a Meskwaki soldier during World War I. Poweshiek enlisted in the Army in Tulsa, Oklahoma, on June 6, 1917.

### [Transcript of Portrait of Army Private Jonas M. Poweshiek](#)

### Text-Dependent Questions

- Describe this photograph. What do you notice in particular about this photo that may be surprising or intriguing to you?
- What do you think was going through the mind of Private Poweshiek when this photo was taken? English would have been his second language. How would this have impacted relations with his fellow servicemen? Explain your answer.

## Graduates and Teachers from the Tuskegee Institute in Army Training Camp, August 10, 1917

State Capitol Bldg Hist. & Inst. Room

Don't Pay and read The Bystander

# THE BYSTANDER

The Best advertising medium to reach colored people in the west

XXIV No. 8

DES MOINES, IOWA, FRIDAY, AUGUST 10, 1917.

Price Five Cents

### Graduates And Teachers In Booker Washington's School Now In Army Training Camp, The Great Spirit Of Booker Washington Still Lives.



Here is a remarkable gathering of men in training at Fort Des Moines for commissions in the United States army. All are graduates of, or teachers in Tuskegee Institute, Tuskegee, Ala., the famous school founded and built by the late Dr. Booker T. Washington. It is the more remarkable that these men are by no means exceptional, for the camp is, in large part, made up of college graduates, men who in civil life are engaged in all sorts of business and professional activities. They are the picked men of the race and are taking advantage of what many regard as the greatest opportunity that ever has come to colored men in America.

Left to right, front row—Mathew L. Dawson, Lee J. Hicks, S. J. Willoughby, C. J. A. Paddyfofe, J. C. Banks, Ralph E. Mizell, R. C. Atkins, Benjamin E. Ammons, George J. Austin, Alexander R. Stewart, W. T. McKen-

zie, Cleveland Buchanan, Vanderbilt Brown, Francis Hannon, H. Gow, Grover Hardin, Charles G. Kelley.

Middle row—William A. Harris, E. L. Faulkner, Ernest B. Frazier, Edward A. Simmons, C. R. Richardson, William Kidd Clark, Charles Y. Har-

ris, Charles C. Dawson, Thomas J. Narcisse, Horatio Holder, Edward L. Snyder, William H. Clark, Robert H. McClarky, H. H. Beger, Elmer P. Sawyer, Charles H. Fearling.

Back row—R. L. Campbell, Tacitus E. Caillard, W. Elwood Davis, George E. Lee, O. Bery F. Smith, Charles J. Blackwood, H. H. Hanis, Earl B. Dickinson, C. C. Clayton, Edwin H. Lee, Harold E. Smith, Joseph E. Wiley, W. L. Hutcherson, Frank L. Drye, John W. Orletres, Augustus J. Hunt, Felix J. Washington, Walter S. Ross.

Courtesy of Library of Congress, "Graduates and Teachers in Booker Washington's School Now in Army Training Camp, The Great Spirit of Booker T. Washington Still Lives," *The Iowa Bystander*, 10 August 1917

### Description

This photograph and caption from *The Iowa Bystander* shows a group of African-American soldiers in training at Fort Des Moines. The image was taken Aug. 10, 1917, and the men are graduates and teachers from Tuskegee Institute, which was founded by Booker T. Washington.

### [Transcript of Tuskegee Institute Students and Teachers at Army Training Camp Caption](#)

### Text-Dependent Questions

- What do you notice about this group of African-American soldiers that differs from "[African-American Captains at Ft. Des Moines, October 15, 1917](#)" photo taken in Ft. Des Moines? What is the same?
- Why do you think it is important that the writer of the caption mentioned that these men, in particular, were from the Tuskegee Institute? What does the caption tell you about these men compared to other soldiers training at Ft. Des Moines?

### Citation Information

"Graduates and Teachers in Booker Washington's School Now in Army Training Camp, The Great Spirit of Booker Washington Still Lives," *The Iowa Bystander*, 10 August 1917. Courtesy of Library of Congress



## "The History and Views of Colored Officers Training Camp at Fort Des Moines for 1917" Advertisement, September 21, 1917



Courtesy of Library of Congress, "The History and Views of Colored Officers Training Camp at Fort Des Moines for 1917," *The Iowa Bystander*, 21 September 1917

### Description

This is an advertisement for the book, "The History and Views of Colored Officers Training Camp at Fort Des Moines for 1917." The ad was published in *The Iowa Bystander*, an African-American newspaper in Des Moines, Iowa.

### [Transcript of "The History and Views of Colored Officers Training Camp at Fort Des Moines for 1917" Advertisement](#)

### [Printable Excerpt of "The History and Views of Colored Officers Training Camp at Fort Des Moines for 1917" Advertisement](#)

### Text-Dependent Questions

- What do you learn about Ft. Des Moines by reading this advertisement?
- Why do you think a book like this was written? By reading this ad, what do you think is the significance of having a book like this for African Americans to read?
- What does this ad tell you about the importance of those African Americans who have enlisted into the military and trained at Ft. Des Moines?

### Citation Information

"The History and Views of Colored Officers Training Camp at Fort Des Moines for 1917," *The Iowa Bystander*, 21 September 1917. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

## African-American Captains at Ft. Des Moines, October 15, 1917



Courtesy of State Historical Society of Iowa, Showers, Hebard, 1917 October 15

### Description

The photograph shows African-American captains at the Officer Reserve Training Camp at Ft. Des Moines Army Post in Des Moines, Iowa. The image was taken by Hebard Showers on Oct. 15, 1917.

### Text-Dependent Questions

- Are all of the soldiers in the photograph African American? Why would there be non-African-American soldiers in the photo? What would be their role?
- What do you notice about the uniforms of each soldier, and why do you think that is important to notice?
- Knowing that this was taken during the time of segregation in the United States, how do you think the soldiers of different races were able to get along? Can you see anything in the picture that could support your answer?

## World War I YMCA Educational Secretaries, 1918



Courtesy of State Historical Society of Iowa, 1918

### Description

The photograph is of 10 World War I YMCA Educational Secretaries who are stationed at Camp Dodge in Des Moines, Iowa. The image was taken in 1918, the last year of the war.

### Text-Dependent Questions

- What do you notice about the photograph that seems unusual when you think about photos of military personnel, such as the [African-American Captains at Ft. Des Moines, October 15, 1917](#)? What do you notice about the body language and facial expressions?
- Knowing information about the time period and its history, why do you speculate that there is only one African American in this picture?



## Portrait of Army Private Robert Young Bear, 1918



Pvt. Robert Young Bear,  
50th. Co., Transportation Corps,  
Ind. Toledo, Ia., June 1/18.  
Hon. Dis. July 19/19.  
(Tama Indian)

Courtesy of State Historical Society of Iowa, 1918

### Description

This is a portrait of Army Private Robert Young Bear, a Meskwaki soldier who served with 50th Company of the Transportation Corps. The army private enlisted June 1, 1918, in Toledo, Iowa.

### [Transcript from Portrait of Pvt. Robert Young Bear](#)

### Text-Dependent Questions

- Describe this photograph. What do you notice in photo about this picture that is surprising or intriguing?
- Comparing this photo to the other photos from this text set, ([Pvt. Poweshiek](#), [Education Secretaries](#), [Ft. Des Moines Captains](#), [Tuskegee Institute Graduates](#)) how do you think these soldiers felt about serving in the U.S. military? Other than their race/ethnicity, do these soldiers appear any different than white soldiers? How might a Caucasian soldier from that time period respond to that question?



## Private George Stewart Letter from World War I, August 3, 1918



Courtesy of State Historical Society of Iowa, 3 August 1918

### Description

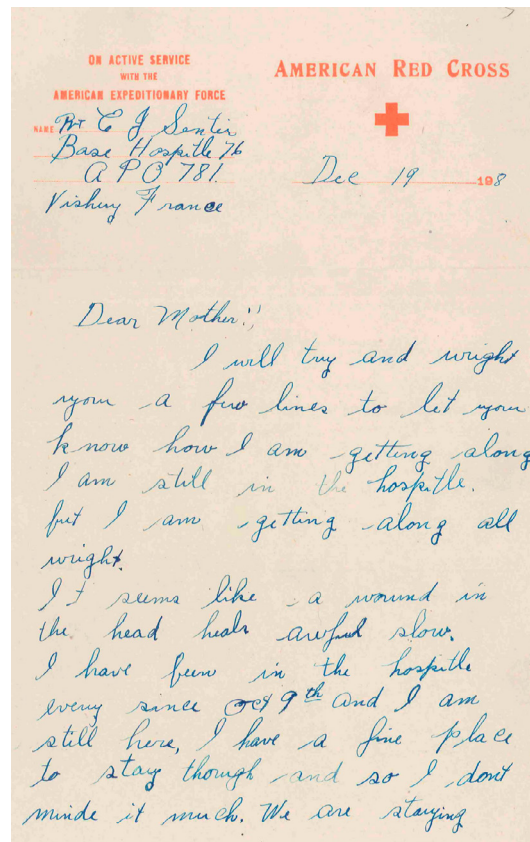
This handwritten letter was from Army Private George Stewart during World War I. The letter was sent to his grandfather, A.J. Jones, who lived in Algona, Iowa, and was written August 3, 1918.

### [Transcript of Private George Stewart's Letter from World War I](#)

### Text-Dependent Questions

- How does George describe to his grandfather his experiences so far while serving in France? What details does he point out that relate to how he feels about his experience?
- How does he compare his time in France to living in the United States? Why do you think he brings this up to his grandfather?
- How is George's letter similar to the [letter written by Estle Senter](#)? What are some differences? Do you think they both share a common view of serving their country? Why or why not?

## Letter from Private Estle Senter to his Mother During World War I, December 19, 1918



Courtesy of State Historical Society of Iowa, 19 December 1918

### Description

This handwritten letter is from Army Private Estle Senter to his mother, L.A. Senter, who lives in Rippey, Iowa. The letter was written December 19, 1918, a month after World War I officially ended.

### [Transcript of Private Estle Senter's Letter to his Mother During World War I](#)

### Text-Dependent Questions

- From the letter, how do you think Estle feels he has been treated? What text evidence supports your thoughts?
- Describe what Estle has seen or experienced while serving as a soldier in France. How do you think he feels about his service so far?
- How is Estle's letter similar to the letter written by [George Stewart](#)? What are some differences? Do you think they both share a common view of serving their country? Why or why not?

## "Lieut. Hal Short Visits Iowa City" Newspaper Article, December 27, 1917



Courtesy of State Historical Society of Iowa, 27 December 1917

### Description

This brief newspaper article details Lieutenant Hal Short's experiences while training at Camp Dodge during his visit to Iowa City in 1917.

### [Transcript of "Lieut. Hal Short Visits Iowa City" Newspaper Article](#)

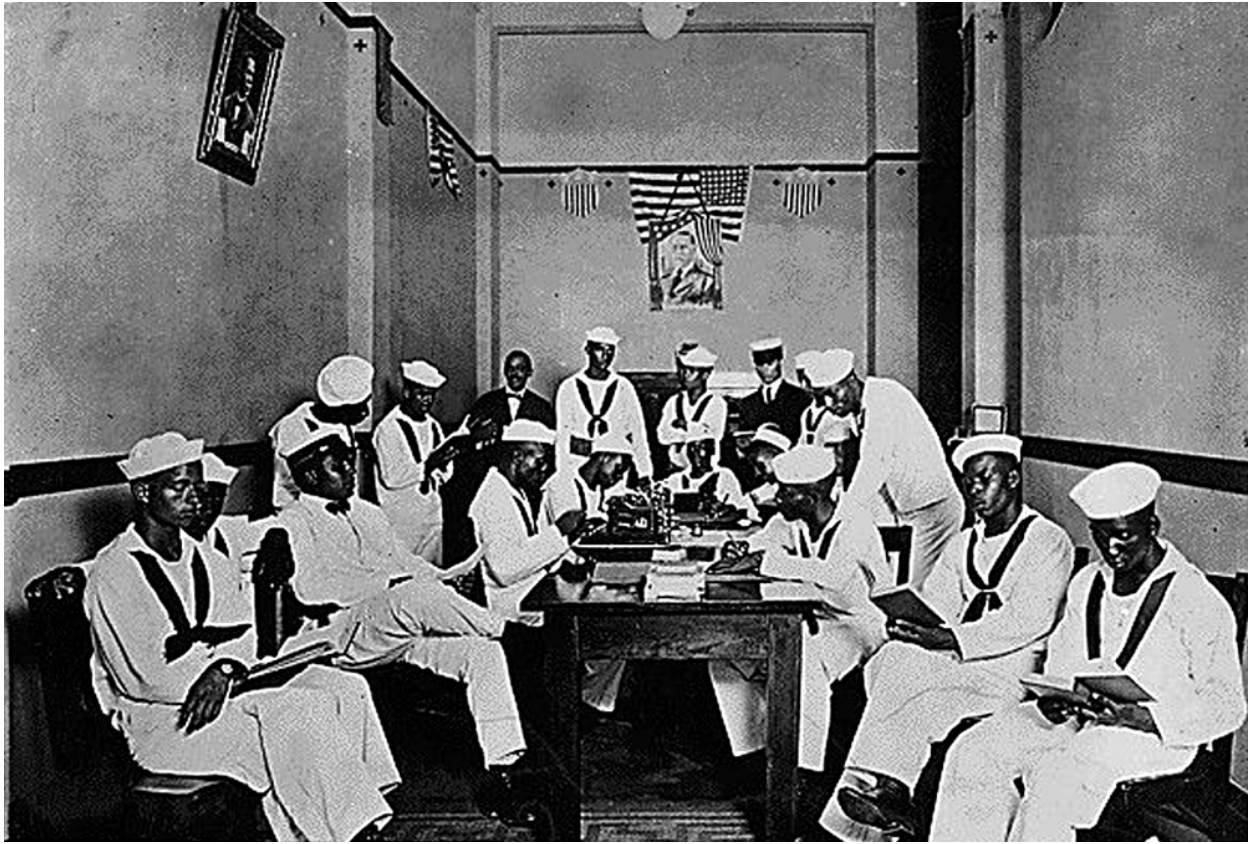
### [Printable Excerpt of "Lieut. Hal Short Visits Iowa City" Newspaper Article](#)

### Text-Dependent Questions

- What does Lieutenant Hal Short report are the conditions for African Americans at Camp Dodge? Using your background knowledge, does this report support or contradict your perceptions of Camp Dodge and/or the treatment of African-American cadets in training?
- Why do you think this eyewitness account would be worthy of printing in the newspaper for readers to see?



## American Red Cross Rest Room for African-American Soldiers and Sailors, between 1917 and 1919



Courtesy of National Archives, "American Red Cross Rest Room for [African American] soldiers and sailors," between 1917 and 1919

### Description

This photograph shows African-American soldiers and sailors sitting and standing around a table in an American Red Cross Rest Room specifically outfitted for only African Americans during World War I. This photo was taken at the Red Cross headquarters, Branch No. 6, of the New Orleans Chapter.

### Text-Dependent Questions

- What do you think these soldiers and sailors are doing in this room? What questions do you have about their activity or why they are in this room?
- Why do you think these African-American soldiers and sailors are outfitted with their own rest room?
- What do you believe those individuals who created this room and assigned only African Americans to use this room think about African Americans? If all American soldiers were fighting the same enemy while serving in the same military, why would African Americans be separated into this rest room?

### Citation Information

"American Red Cross Rest Room for [African American] soldiers and sailors," between 1917 and 1919. [Courtesy of National Archives](#)



## “True Sons of Freedom” Poster, 1918



Courtesy of Library of Congress, Gustrine, Charles, “True Sons of Freedom,” 1918

### Description

This poster from World War I shows African-American soldiers fighting German soldiers, with an image of Abraham Lincoln above the battlefield.

### [Transcript of “True Sons of Freedom” Poster](#)

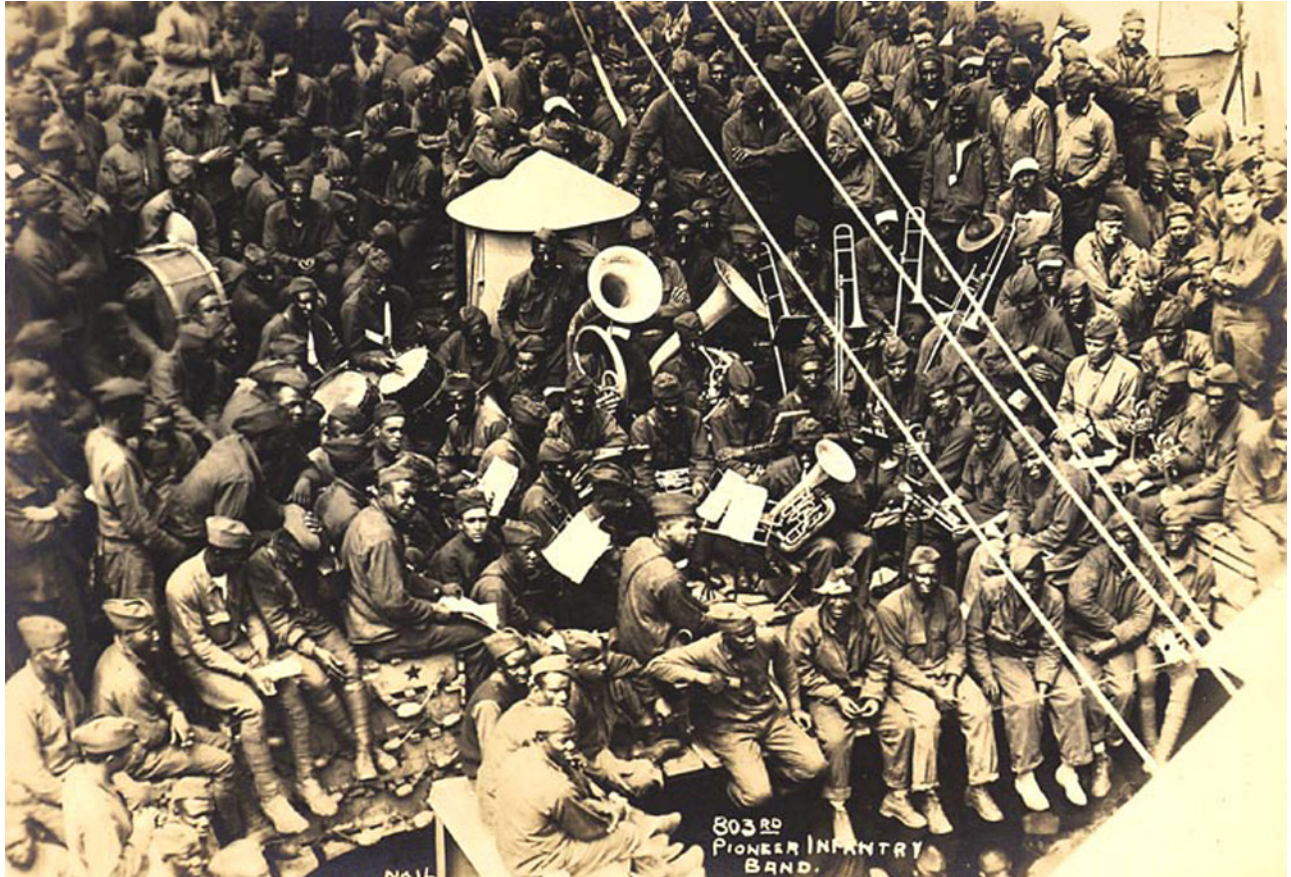
### Text-Dependent Questions

- Describe what you see in the poster. What do you notice about the American soldiers and the German soldiers?
- Why do you think the artist of this poster put Abraham Lincoln and his quote on this poster?
- What do you think is the artist’s viewpoint on the contributions of African Americans to the war effort?

### Citation Information

Gustrine, Charles, “True Sons of Freedom,” 1918. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

## 803rd Pioneer Infantry Band on the U.S.S. Philippines, 1919



Courtesy of Library of Congress, "803rd Pioneer Infantry Band, No. 16," 1919

### Description

This 1919 photograph is of the 803rd Pioneer Infantry Band onboard the U.S.S. Philippines in Brest Harbor, France. This was an African-American band who played for French and American troops during their military service overseas.

### Text-Dependent Questions

- What do you notice in this photograph that demonstrates how some African Americans contributed to the war effort?
- Do you feel this is a worthwhile contribution to the war effort, or was this a way to allow African Americans to "serve their country" but not fight with the rest of the Armed Forces?

### Citation Information

"803rd Pioneer Infantry Band, No. 16," 1919. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)



## Women's Army Corps Company Outside Des Moines Theater, September 29, 1943



Courtesy of State Historical Society of Iowa, 29 September 1943

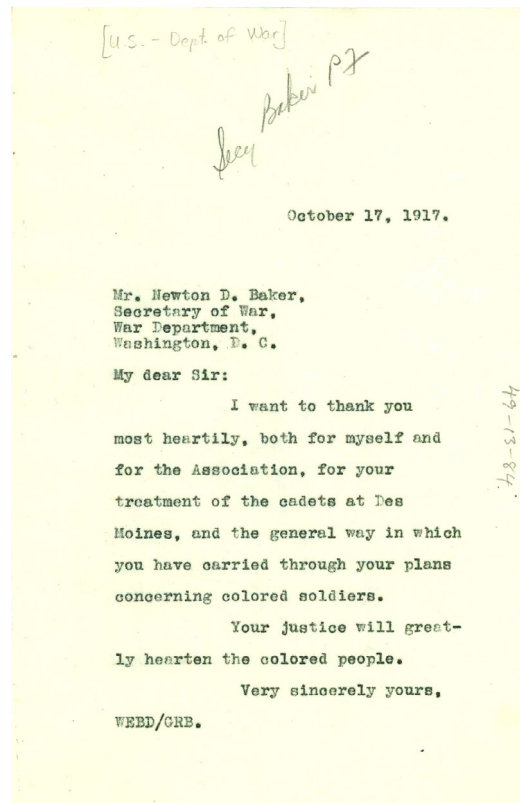
### Description

This photograph shows the Women's Army Corps Company from the Ft. Des Moines training center at the premiere of the motion picture film "Women at War" at the Des Moines Theater in September of 1943.

### Text-Dependent Questions

- Using the text you see as well as the context clues, what do you believe was taking place when this photo was taken? Why do you think the photographer felt it was important to capture on film?
- Why would there be such an organized military salute to the premiere of this movie?
- By studying this picture, do you feel society was supportive of women joining the war effort beyond what they did on the homefront?

## Letter from W.E.B. Du Bois to U.S. Secretary of War Newton Baker Praising Ft. Des Moines, October, 17, 1917



Courtesy of UMass Amherst Libraries, Du Bois, W.E.B. "Letter from W.E.B. Du Bois to Secretary of War," 17 October 1917

### Description

This letter is from W.E.B. Du Bois, an African-American sociologist, historian and civil rights activist. In the letter, Du Bois thanks the then-U.S. Secretary of War Newton Baker for his treatment of the cadets at Ft. Des Moines and the way he has carried out his plans concerning "colored soldiers."

### [Transcript of W.E.B. Du Bois Letter to U.S. Secretary of War Newton Baker](#)

### Text-Dependent Questions

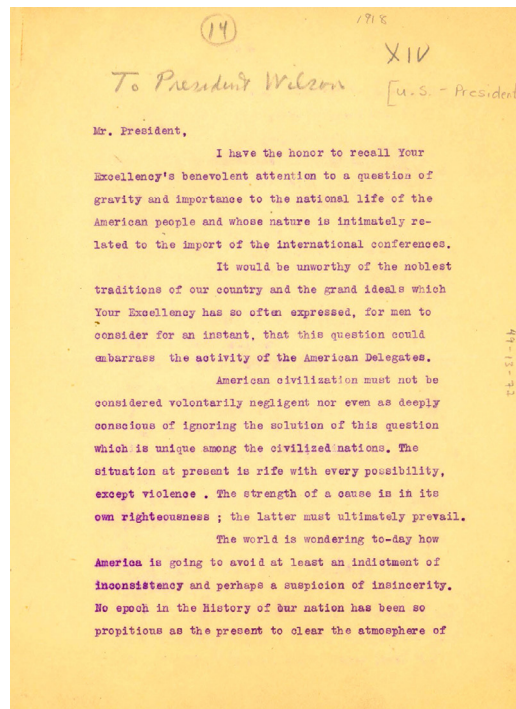
- W.E.B. Du Bois was one of the best known spokesperson and African-American activists during the first half of the 20th century. He co-founded the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1909. With that knowledge, what is the main purpose of this letter from Du Bois to Baker?
- Given the context of the time period, why might Du Bois think it is important to thank Baker for the treatment of African Americans? Provide text evidence to support your answer.

### Citation Information

Du Bois, W.E.B. "Letter from W.E.B. Du Bois to Secretary of War," 17 October 1917. Courtesy of UMass Amherst Libraries, permission of use granted by the David Graham Du Bois Trust



## Letter from W.E.B. Du Bois to President Woodrow Wilson, November 1918



Courtesy of UMass Amherst Libraries, Du Bois, W.E.B. "Letter from W. E. B. Du Bois to President Woodrow Wilson," November 1918

### Description

This letter was sent from African-American activist and scholar W.E.B. Du Bois to President Woodrow Wilson in November 1918. The letter discusses the need to address the "race problem" both abroad and within the United States after World War I.

### [Full Transcript of W.E.B. Du Bois' Letter to President Woodrow Wilson](#)

### [Transcribed Excerpts of W.E.B. Du Bois' Letter to President Woodrow Wilson](#)

### Text-Dependent Questions

- What do you think Du Bois' intent is by bringing up to the president what he wrote in [excerpt 1](#), the 4th and 5th paragraphs of the letter?
- When you read [excerpt 2](#), which includes the 10th and 11th paragraphs of the letter, what do you think is Du Bois' belief about how America supports the disenfranchised African Americans who have served their country?
- How does this letter compare to Du Bois' other [letter to U.S. Secretary of War Newton Baker](#)? Do you think he has a consistent message, or does he contradict himself? Use textual evidence to support your claim.

### Citation Information

Du Bois, W.E.B. "Letter from W. E. B. Du Bois to President Woodrow Wilson," November 1918. Courtesy of UMass Amherst Libraries, permission of use granted by the David Graham Du Bois Trust

## Charles Young Auxiliary at Red Cross Bazaar in Des Moines, Iowa, December 20, 1918



Courtesy of Library of Congress, "Chas. Young Auxiliary, American Red Cross, Des Moines, Iowa," *The Iowa Bystander*, 20 December 1918

### Description

This photo from *The Iowa Bystander* was published Dec. 20, 1918, of the Charles Young Auxillary at the American Red Cross in Des Moines, Iowa. The caption talks about a the members of the auxiliary holding a bazaar to raise funds for "carrying Christmas cheer to the sick and wounded soldiers at Camp Dodge and Fort Des Moines."

### [Transcript of Caption for "Chas. Young Auxiliary, American Red Cross" Photograph](#)

### [Printable Excerpt of "Chas. Young Auxiliary, American Red Cross" Photograph and Caption](#)

### Text-Dependent Questions

- What do you notice in this photo? Who do you see, and what are they doing?
- What types of activities were included in this Red Cross Bazaar to help raise funds?
- After studying this photo, do you think it shows support for disenfranchised groups (in this case African Americans at [Camp Dodge](#) and [Ft. Des Moines](#))? Support your answer with evidence from the photo and/or caption.

### Citation Information

"Chas. Young Auxiliary, American Red Cross, Des Moines, Iowa," *The Iowa Bystander*, 20 December 1918. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)