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# The Black Press in Minnesota During World War I

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## The Black Press in Minnesota During World War I

Alejandra Galvan  
HIST495W: Senior Seminar: World War I in Minnesota  
May 5, 2016

The black press used President Wilson's words to frame World War I as a struggle for African American rights. "There is far more danger to the republic from race hatred within our borders than from all the Germans put together," quoted the well-known St. Paul African American newspaper, *The Appeal*.<sup>1</sup> Racism in the United States concerned African Americans deeply. The treatment Africans Americans received can be compared to the violence occurring in Europe. African Americans searched for a way to voice their opinions and one way they accomplished this was through newspapers. The expansion of the black press toward the end of the nineteenth century led *The Appeal* to become more involved in politics and racial injustices. African Americans remained loyal to their country during World War I while bringing attention to racial injustices at the same time. They viewed the war as a chance to demonstrate their patriotism in hopes of improving the treatment towards them.

African Americans served their country before World War I. They volunteered to fight in the Revolutionary War, as well as the Civil War. Despite living in a racially segregated society, African Americans continued to volunteer and even helped recruit others to join the United States Army when the United States entered the war. In addition to this, black newspapers such as *The Appeal*, advised its readers to support the war effort by purchasing liberty bonds and conserving food. This type of support continued well throughout the duration of the war. However, if the President declared "we must fight for the liberation of all peoples", why did African Americans continued to be discriminated against?<sup>2</sup> The United States must have freedom at home before it fights for it overseas.

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<sup>1</sup> "Warns Against Racial Hatred", *The Appeal*, August 18, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> "Liberation of all Peoples", *Ibid*.

By 1890, there were 3,683 African Americans living in Minnesota.<sup>3</sup> The black population tended to settle in urban areas. The North did not have harsher laws like the South and because of this, African Americans became prosperous economically and politically. African Americans lived throughout the United States and populations varied greatly. The black population increased in northern cities, which allowed black businesses to flourish. Together, African Americans discussed ways on how to make their lives better. African Americans migrated to the North to pursue better lives for themselves and families. Northern black populations grew tremendously and the North became permanent homes for African Americans. Once black communities established in cities, it was not unusual for African Americans to be forced to move to a certain area. Even though African Americans were free, racial discrimination continued to exist. African Americans worked within their communities to protest their grievances.

Newspapers allowed African Americans to address the social, political, and economic issues of the day.<sup>4</sup> The publishing of African American newspapers began before the Civil War. Many blacks in the United States were enslaved during this time and free black editors used the newspaper to demand black freedom and the abolition of slavery. Additionally, African American journalists viewed newspapers as a way for them to promote anti-slavery, equal rights and end discrimination against free blacks. By the nineteenth century, African Americans produced at least 1,240 newspapers.<sup>5</sup> The issues present in the beginning of the century changed from demanding liberation for blacks to demanding equal rights for all.

African American newspapers were for the black community. Any large city with a large African American population most likely had its own newspaper. It is worth mentioning that the

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<sup>3</sup> Earl Spangler, *The Negro in Minnesota* (Minneapolis: T. S. Denison & Co, 1961), 173.

<sup>4</sup> Arvarh E. Strickland and Robert E. Weems, *African American Experience: An Historiographical and Bibliographical Guide* (California: Greenwood Press, 2000), 219.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 217.

end of the nineteenth century also resulted in the migration of blacks into northern urban areas. African Americans were free and began to establish new lives throughout the country. The emergence of free blacks living within the same community allowed them to stick together. African Americans worked together to advocate black pride, leadership, and an end to white supremacy.<sup>6</sup> Newspapers brought the black community together to promote equal rights and establish discriminatory laws. By working together, African Americans would speak out against injustices and set forth to bring an end to racism.

Scholar William Jordan believes the black press's combination of protest and demonstration of loyalty was remarkably effective. While resisting persistent threats of censorship, the black press consistently worked on informing the nation about the need for racial justice.<sup>7</sup> Throughout his work, Jordan explains how black newspapers encountered a difficult situation. Was the African American community better off showing their patriotism and offering their support or should they assert their demands for the discrimination at home? The black press presented both these concerns. It is important to consider the reasons behind supporting President Wilson as well as the reasoning behind the protests. Historically, the government treated African Americans with disrespect and limited their rights.

Jordan's analysis of the black press during World War I recognizes a critical point. African American newspapers typically presented information that advocated black pride, leadership and ways to combat racial injustice. The racial injustices however, focused more in the South than in the North.<sup>8</sup> Lynching is terrible act of violence anywhere in country, but since Jordan makes this distinction, it would make more sense if the black press would publish local

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* 218.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* 1.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* 3.

racial injustices rather on ones that are thousands of miles away. *The Appeal* displayed information on injustice that occurred from all over the country during World War I.

Expanding on Jordan's analysis, Dr. Douglass Flamming believes that African American patriotism would not only help them win the war, but also win their freedom at home.<sup>9</sup> Black leaders hoped loyalty from black men would be enough to convince their white compatriots that they deserved equality. At the start of the war, African American men volunteered to sign up and became the highest population of the time to do so.<sup>10</sup> However, the federal government limited black men to enlist in white units. White officers treated black soldiers with disrespect and did not allow them to receive high ranking within their units. The NAACP chairman, Joel Spingarn, created a camp to train African Americans as army officers. This facility trained black soldiers to become officers and leaders within their rank.<sup>11</sup> The opening of this training camp for African Americans opened due to the expressed dissatisfaction from black government officials. If black men willingly chose to serve the United States, they should be given the same opportunity as white men.

The separate black officer training camp established in Des Moines attracted young men from all over the nation. White officers did not want their army units integrated so a separate camp for African Americans became acceptable. Some black newspapers supported the camps while some were against. The African Americans opposing the camps believed it showed white people African Americans agreed with segregation. The camps contradicted on what some black editors believed which was an end to segregation. Opposition to the camp would help legitimize the era of Jim Crow.

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<sup>9</sup> Douglass Flamming, *Bound for Freedom: Black Los Angeles in Jim Crow America* (Berkeley: University of California, 2005), 159.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>11</sup> Mark Ellis, *Race, War and Surveillance: African Americans and the United States Government During World War I*. (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2001). 3.

During the war, other segregated training camps established throughout the country. Since some black editors supported the war, they advertised these camps. Other black editors rejected Spingarn's idea but did not state African Americans opposed the war. The Army did not train African American men along with white men, so Spingarn believed the separate training camps would assist the black men with their military service. Since Spingarn was part of a black civil rights organization, he insisted the editors should publish the separate training camp in their newspapers. The reasoning behind the establishment of the camp was not enough to convince some black citizens white people are willing to put an end to segregation, but it was better than not doing anything at all to help black soldiers. Black citizens viewed the separate training camps as a way to show their loyalty.

To increase the nation's armed forces, the National Guard was called into federal service. In place of the National Guard, Minnesota had the Minnesota Home Guard.<sup>12</sup> The Minnesota Home Guard sought to secure public safety, protect private property and the lives of citizens. Prevented from enlisting into the Minnesota Home Guard, African Americans petitioned the Governor of Minnesota, J. A. A. Burnquist to form a separate battalion of the Minnesota Home Guard for African American citizens.<sup>13</sup> As a member the St. Paul chapter of the NAACP, Burnquist hoped the petition would satisfy both white and black citizens. The establishment of the separate battalion, called the 16<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Minnesota Home Guard,

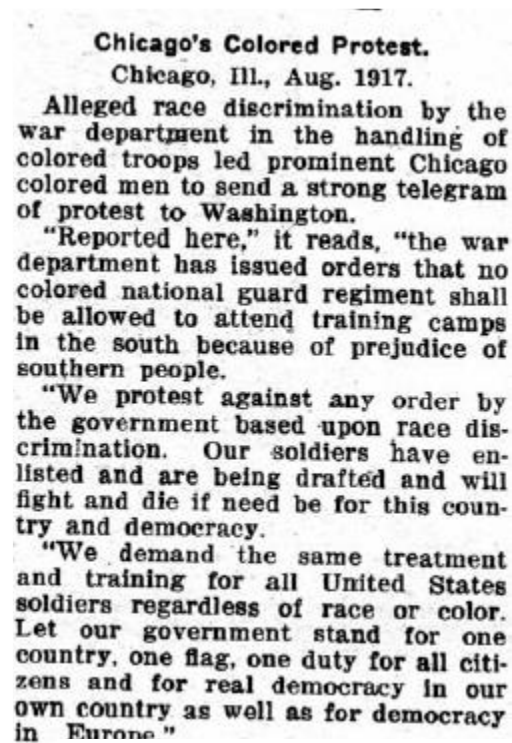


Figure 1. *The Appeal*, Chicago's Colored Protest, August 4, 1917

<sup>12</sup> David V. Taylor and Paul Clifford Larson, *Cap Wigington: An Architectural Legacy in Ice and Stone* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2002). 54

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* 55.



became popular among African Americans. This battalion allowed African American men to participate in the war and gave them a chance to prove their patriotism.

The distress expressed from African Americans between one another led to the publication of newspapers. Credit is given to Samuel Cornish and John Brown Russwurm for starting the first African American newspaper, *Freedom's Journal* in 1827.<sup>14</sup> This newspaper targeted the African American population throughout the nation. The publication of *Freedom's Journal* allowed more African American newspapers to emerge. African American newspapers in the nineteenth century published editorials about the opposition of slavery and other injustices. Early African American newspapers also struggled to preserve their business because the black population had low rates of literacy and low income. Many African American newspapers went on into the twentieth century while some only lasted a few years. Slave holders as well as other powerful white people prohibited black newspapers, especially in the South. It became risky for a slave to be reading and to be caught could result in extreme punishments, including death. Not only were readers of these newspapers threatened, but African American journalists also risked their lives.<sup>15</sup>

One newspaper, the *Western Appeal*, became quite successful in Chicago and in St. Paul, Minnesota. Founded in 1885, the *Western Appeal* was started by Samuel E. Hardy and John T. Burgett with Frederick Douglass Parker as the newspaper's first editor.<sup>16</sup> The city of St. Paul had a stable African American community during the first few years of the newspaper's publication. African Americans living in the city were literate and several successful businessmen resided in the capital. African Americans in St. Paul supported the *Western Appeal* because it displayed an

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 217.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 225.

<sup>16</sup> David Vassar Taylor, "John Quincy Adams: St. Paul Editor and Black Leader," St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, *Minnesota History* 43, no. 8 (1973): 283.

avid interest in the affairs of the nation.<sup>17</sup> Isolated from the white community, African Americans felt a need to make their complaints heard.

The *Western Appeal* allowed African Americans to publish and protest issues the white press ignored. The *Western Appeal* contained national and local news on racial issues and injustices. Two businessmen, Thomas H. Lyles and James Kidd Hilyard, were put in charge of the newspaper in 1887.<sup>18</sup> Under new management, Hilyard invited the young editor of the *Louisville Bulletin* in Kentucky, John Quincy Adams, to become an associate of the paper. Adams accepted the position, moved to St. Paul and became the driving force behind the paper.<sup>19</sup> The *Western Appeal* became successful in St. Paul and eventually, Adams became owner of the newspaper. It did not face any local competition but Adams felt the paper needed to expand. Thus, the *Western Appeal* office moved to Minneapolis then Chicago. Adams hoped the black population in Chicago would welcome his newspaper.



Figure 2. Taylor, David V, *John Quincy Adams, St. Paul Editor and Black Leader*. St Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, Minnesota History, 1973.

Educated in private schools in Wisconsin and Ohio, Adams made teaching his career in Kentucky. Adams attended Oberlin College in Ohio and upon graduating, returned and taught at schools throughout the state.<sup>20</sup> Adams then sought a political career and moved to Arkansas. He served in the councils of the local Republican party and served in city and state committees. In 1879, Adams and his brother contributed their resources into the publication of their

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid 284.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 285.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

newspaper.<sup>21</sup> The *Louisville Bulletin* published weekly and allowed Adams to discuss his views on politics. His editorials became well known around Louisville and his creativity allowed the newspaper to thrive for seven years.<sup>22</sup> It is not known how or why the *Louisville Bulletin* began to decline but it could have been due to Adam's political fortunes and his brother's decision to move to Europe. Adams continued to published the *Louisville Bulletin* until 1886 and eventually sold it to a different company.<sup>23</sup>

In 1888, Chicago officially became the center for the *Western Appeal's* editorial page.<sup>24</sup> Within the first months in Chicago, the *Western Appeal* faced competition but soon became city's leading African American newspaper. The office established in Chicago and its success led Adams to additional offices throughout the Midwest. Several offices formed in St. Louis, Dallas, Washington D.C, Milwaukee and Des Moines.<sup>25</sup> The *Western Appeal* became a national African American newspaper. Once it became nationally known, the *Western Appeal* dropped the word "western" from its title and became *The Appeal*.<sup>26</sup>

By the end of the nineteenth century, *The Appeal* became the people's paper and published what thousands of African Americans desired to read about their community.<sup>27</sup> *The Appeal* brought the African American community together. The paper protested disfranchisement and discrimination. It defended black Americans and helped restore their dignity that was stripped from them. It also allowed African Americans to express their frustrations and find a common ground. Adams wrote to his readers to be proud of themselves and their race. He demanded equality and respect for all people. *The Appeal* expressed black

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 286.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 288.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. 288.

pride. Its columns constantly recognized people for their achievements, talents and leadership. *The Appeal* also allowed local black businessmen to advertise their business. Adams became known as of the most influential African American in the Midwest.<sup>28</sup> His passion for journalism and determination enabled him to make *The Appeal* succeed.

*The Appeal* declared that African Americans were Americans. They were born in the United States and should be treated as citizens. When the President Wilson declared U.S. involvement in the war, African Americans volunteered and supported the war effort. Black citizens remained loyal and willing to serve their duty. Along with these positive attributes, *The Appeal* displayed their patriotism in several issues. In the May 1917 issue, *The Appeal* dedicated a whole column to liberty bonds on the first page. The column boldly stated to its readers that it was their patriotic duty to buy liberty bonds. *The Appeal* names the column “Public Bureau Liberty Loan of 1917.” It defined a liberty

loan as a loan for and by the citizens of the United States.<sup>29</sup> By purchasing liberty loans, *The Appeal* urged Americans to stand behind their country and support the war. According to *The Appeal*, a “liberty loan bond is a mortgage on all the resources and taxing powers of the government and all of the resources of the American people.” The bottom of the column additionally asks the reader to remember the Lusitania and to buy a liberty loan today.<sup>30</sup> By making this column appear in the front page, it

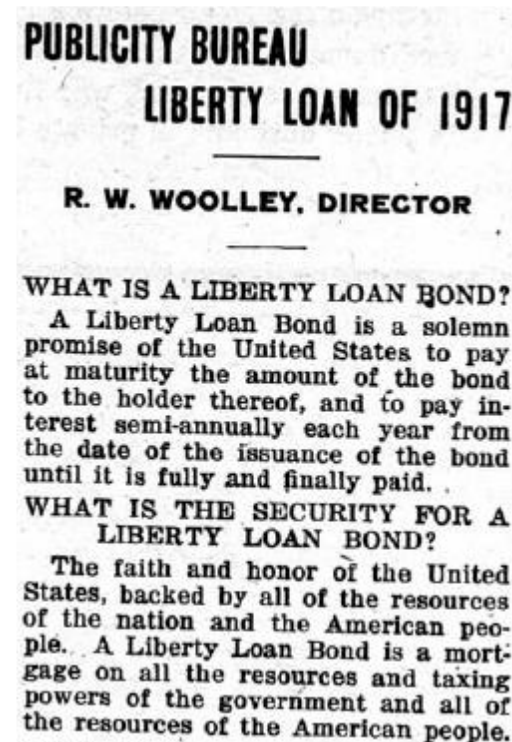


Figure 3. *The Appeal*. Publicity Bureau Liberty Loan September 7, 1917.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.289.

<sup>29</sup> “Public Bureau Liberty Loan of 1917.” Ibid. June 16, 1917.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

showed the reader that *The Appeal* supported the war and convinced its audience to support it as well.

According to *The Appeal*, it was the duty of every African American to save and buy liberty bonds. In addition to advertising liberty loans, *The Appeal* presented a column in each issue displaying where the money goes. It describes how the money fed a soldier for several months and gave him enough clothing for the winter.<sup>31</sup> Providing simple necessities such as food, blankets and clothing is enough to convince someone to purchase a liberty loan. The editors of *The Appeal* made sure this column is present in each issue for the remainder of the war.

Displaying the ways how liberty loans were distributed helped increase the sales and the support. As the war continued, *The Appeal* enhanced its support for the soldiers fighting overseas. Throughout the September and October issues in 1918, the front page consisted of cartoons presenting liberty bonds in different ways. Even though the cartoons differed from one another, the message is the same: lend money for the soldiers to survive. In addition to liberty bonds, *The Appeal* also advertised war saving and thrift stamps. These stamps were also used help pay for the war. *The Appeal* urged its readers to send more money than before and commented on how purchasing liberty bonds and stamps can show pride and patriotism. *The Appeal* encouraged citizens to hold on to their liberty bonds and to not sell or trade them. The selling and trading of liberty bonds were compared to something Germans spies would do.<sup>32</sup> Comparing disloyalty to Germans is commonly seen throughout *The Appeal* since they were the enemy. This only encouraged black citizens to be loyal and support the war effort.

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<sup>31</sup> "Hold Your Liberty Bonds". Ibid. September 7, 1918.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

In addition to the liberty loans, *The Appeal* also discussed about the state's participation with the war, particularly with food. Throughout the first several issues of the paper following the war, *The Appeal* had at least one column dedicated to the topic of food. The war called out for help from all Americans. Food was necessary to feed the soldiers overseas as well as the nation's allies. Citizens were asked to grow their own gardens, change their eating habits and cooking habits. Food conservation was important during the war. Advertisements displayed in *The Appeal* sent a message to its readers to avoid buying groceries and to eat more fruit and vegetables. *The Appeal* also included how women can help with the food scarce by explaining how to avoid wasting money on food and what foods can be replaced with meat.<sup>33</sup>

Everyone, from college students and prisoners, helped in some way. *The Appeal* mentioned how students from the University of Pennsylvania were sent out to assist farmers in planting and preparing crops around the country.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, a state prison in Joliet, Illinois released 110 convicts to help the farmers in Cook county.<sup>35</sup> The convicts were employed by the farmers and resulted in the parole board to grant many other paroles that would not have been obtained.

*The Appeal* revealed its support by showing African American men how eager men were to participate in the war. *The Appeal* encouraged young men to sign up and displayed advertisements on any recruitment sites around the Twin Cities. *The Appeal* made it perfectly clear how much help the U.S. required by displaying the payroll of the army in one of its front pages. According to the article, it reads that the highest pay is awarded to Lieutenant Generals. It then continues to list the annual pay of other positions in the army such as the major general,

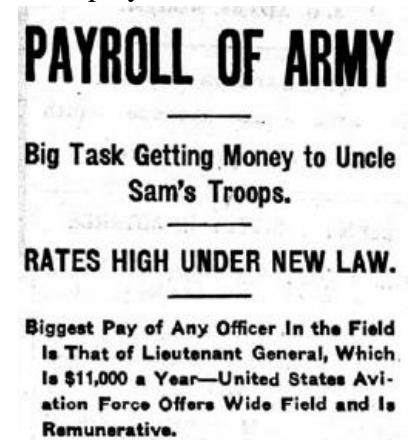


Figure 4. *The Appeal*. Payroll of the Army. May 19, 1917.

<sup>33</sup> "Women Can Help Win War in the Kitchen." Ibid. June 9, 1917.

<sup>34</sup> "College to Send Out Men to Aid Farmers." Ibid. May 12, 1917.

<sup>35</sup> "Convicts to Help Farmers." Ibid.

lieutenant colonel and so forth.<sup>36</sup> By presenting this article on *The Appeal*, it encouraged young men that fighting in the war will not only show patriotism, but they will also receive incentives.

Along with its support, the newspaper also presented news on disloyalty among their own community. In one issue of *The Appeal*, it published a column describing an incident where an African American was caught being a traitor. The “colored traitor” acted out as a result of a black man burned at the stake. The man grabbed his American flag from his vehicle and screamed at black men near him to join the Germans. Following this outburst, he ripped up the flag and was taken into custody by federal authorities<sup>37</sup>. It makes sense to publish an article like this on an African Americans newspaper. *The Appeal* encouraged black citizens to remain loyal. The purpose of displaying patriotism in *The Appeal* is to convince the United States black citizens possessed enough loyalty to their country despite the racism and maltreatment.

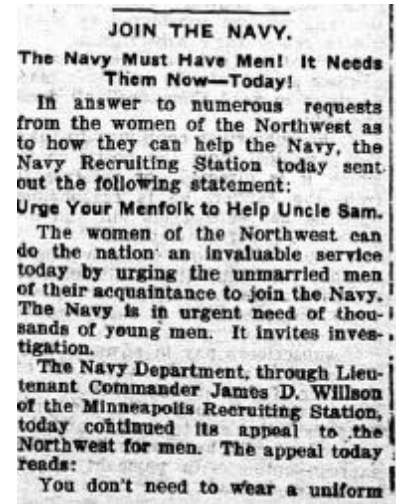


Figure 5. *The Appeal*. Join the Navy. May 5, 1917.

Racism and hatred towards African Americans continued to occur during World War I. African Americans believed by voluntarily signing up for the draft and supporting the war, they would receive equal treatment. However, registering for the draft did not result in the treatment they hoped for. *The Appeal* discussed all sorts racial issues that occurred over the nation. Additionally, it was their purpose to deliver news on social injustices regarding the war. African Americans became a target for the federal government. Despite offering their lives voluntarily, they experienced harsh treatments. Upon finishing their registration cards, African Americans were required to tear off the lower left hand corner of their draft card. This way of classifying individuals was not offered to any other race. Even German Americans did not experience this

<sup>36</sup> “Payroll of Army.” Ibid., May 19, 1917.

<sup>37</sup> “Yes, there is a traitor.” Ibid. June 16, 1917.

whom, according to *The Appeal* “are at heart traitors to their chosen country and many of whom would not hesitate to strike.”<sup>38</sup> The United States is at war to fight for democracy. It is necessary for racism to end before soldiers travel overseas to fight for democracy.

It is safe to say writing one’s own name on the registration card signified they are signing away their life. This simple action is enough to show determination and patriotism but not enough to convince white people. The registration card immediately made a distinction of color.<sup>39</sup> No matter what they try to do, no matter how much they were willing to sacrifice their life

**Now a Jim-Crow Registration.**  
**And here, when we come to fight for democracy, we find distinctions drawn according to the color of a man’s skin.**  
**Negroes have not fared well during the present national administration. They have disappeared from public offices, and Jim Crow grip of the South has grown firmer. And NOW A JIM CROW REGISTRATION.**

for a country who treats them like second class citizens, African Americans continued to be hated on during a time of war. As a democracy, the United

Figure 6. *The Appeal*. Now A Jim-Crow Registration, October 21, 1917.

States should picture men from all races to fight together. *The Appeal* stated this kind of treatment needs to come to an end before Germans come across it and use it to justify their atrocities.<sup>40</sup> Loyal citizens ought to be allowed to fight for their country. Loyal black citizens were not safe from experiencing racism.

Two months after United States entered World War I, race riots in East St. Louis, Illinois emerged. The riots supposedly started when a white man was robbed by an armed black man. As a result, white mobs formed downtown and began to beat every African American in sight. The mob grabbed people from sidewalks, cars, and trolleys and began attacking them. Black men, women, and children were beaten and killed. The violence worsened as white people started to burn the homes of black residents, which led African Americans to leave their homes. They

<sup>38</sup> “An Insult to Patriots”. Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> “With Marked Cards.” Ibid. June 9, 1917.

<sup>40</sup> “An Insult”. Ibid.



could leave their home and risk getting shot or get burned alive inside.<sup>41</sup> This type of violence had no place during a time of war. Black men willingly served in the military and did not receive respect along with other black citizens. The atrocities of this event led *The Appeal* to publish an editorial questioning the United States involvement of the war. “No serious effort to apprehend and punish the guilty has been made. The President of the United States, commander in chief of the army, has uttered no word”.<sup>42</sup> If the country was going to fight for liberation, justice must first be served at home. There cannot be better time to combat these issues when the country just declared the world safe for democracy.

Another incident regarding race violence towards African Americans occurred in Houston, Texas. The Houston Riot in 1917 started off with the presence of black soldiers causing white people to become uncomfortable.

Houston was a segregated city and demanded black soldiers to follow local segregation laws. The men in the Twenty-Fourth Infantry were ridiculed and mocked by the citizens of Houston.<sup>43</sup> The black soldiers should have received the same treatment as white soldiers. The citizens of Houston viewed the black soldiers as a threat.<sup>44</sup> If they treated the black soldiers with respect, other black citizens would begin to desire the same treatment. Willingly, black soldiers obeyed the segregation laws. The treatment they received proved to be difficult. Black soldiers expressed their resentment and questioned each other

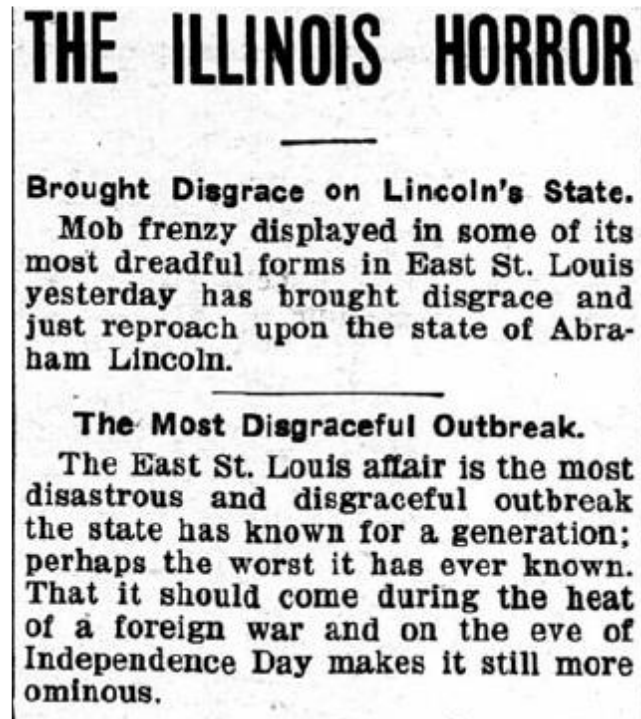


Figure 7. *The Appeal*, The Illinois Horror, July 7, 1917

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>42</sup> *Liberation of all Peoples*, Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> “*Why Did They Prefer Colored?*”. Ibid. November, 10 1917.

<sup>44</sup> Robert V. Hayes, “The Houston Munity and Riot of 1917”, *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 76, no. 4 (April 1973): 438.

whether to accept these conditions. The Houston Riot occurred out of retaliation the police who enforced the segregation laws. The Riot ended with nineteen executed soldiers and sixty-three received prison life sentences.<sup>45</sup> The black soldiers' retaliation became a national tragedy.

These two significant events provided African Americans the strength to show the rest of the country why the need for equality was important. As patriotic citizens, they demanded an end to the lynchings and punishment for the lynchers. *The Appeal* demanded the government to punish citizens who "are defying the law and making a mockery of democracy."<sup>46</sup> Newspapers all over the country displayed lynchings. This type of publicity is not necessary during wartime, therefore should be eliminated. Participants of lynchings should be punished appropriately in order to bring them to an end.

Although resentment became common among many black editors during World War I, it did not stop them from embracing the fight for democracy. *The Appeal* began to include pictures of the American flag as front page covers.<sup>47</sup> Black editors instructed their

readers to support the war and to become loyal. African Americans were proud of their country. The United States is their home and the black press highlighted this. The black press believed fighting a war for democracy may force the United States to confront their own issues at home.

Themes of loyalty and injustice is seen with other black newspapers in the United States. For example, *The Chicago Defender* scolded Wilson for pledging democracy to foreign land



Figure 8. *The Appeal*. Dollars that Fight, October 18, 1918.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> "A Needed War Measure." Ibid. June 2, 1917.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. 77.

instead of applying it at home.<sup>48</sup> When the United States first became involved, black editors published columns regarding their concerns. For African Americans, it became difficult to understand how President Wilson can support the fight for democracy overseas while not supporting their fight for racial equality. African American recruits became threats in the Southern states. Despite their loyalty to fight overseas, black soldiers continued to be threatened and lynched. The black press became doubtful in President Wilson's message and expressed feelings of distrust.

The black press published their opinions on World War I whether it was news on disloyalty or on how to support the war. The publication of African American newspapers also meant anyone could read them, including white people. Black editors knew they had a broad audience and came to realize their newspapers could get in the hands of the federal government.<sup>49</sup> Even fifty years after slavery was abolished, the government still found ways to limit the rights of African Americans. White people viewed African Americans as weak and a nuisance to society. Once they were freed, white people did not adjust well to living among free blacks. This adjustment resulted in more violence and oppression. White people continued to view African Americans as inferior, which led the federal government to declare constant surveillance on the lives of African Americans.<sup>50</sup>

When the United States entered the war in 1917, the white press claimed that Germans spies were spreading anti-war propaganda to Southern Blacks.<sup>51</sup> This type of publication led the Wilson administration to monitor African Americans all over the United States. The federal

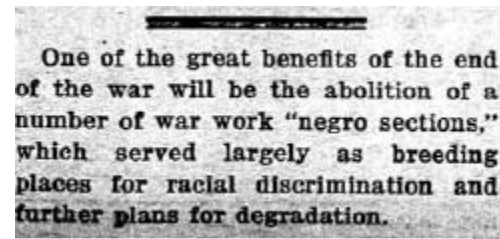


Figure 9. *The Appeal*. The Power of Unity. November 3, 1918.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. 75.

<sup>49</sup> Jordan, *Black Newspapers*, 4.

<sup>50</sup> Mark, *Race, War and Surveillance*, xvii.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. xvi.

government believed the protests done by African Americans against lynching and racial injustice were part of the anti-war campaign. According to the federal government, these outbursts were deemed as disloyal. White citizens living among African Americans also falsely accused African Americans of anti-war propaganda.<sup>52</sup> The concern of pro-German African Americans frightened the Wilson administration and white citizens which led the development of investigations done by white federal agents to target black citizens.

Black leaders and editors viewed World War I as a way for African Americans to demonstrate their patriotism. The black press argued that despite President Wilson's decision to ignore racial discrimination, the United States still required support. Their hope was to convince the rest of the nation if African Americans were willing to sacrifice their lives for a country that treated them as second class citizens, it would lead to equality. This vision of equality was not fulfilled and African Americans continued to be discriminated against during the war. The black press published news on racial discrimination while still urging its readers to purchase liberty bonds. The commitment to fight portrayed by the black soldiers was not enough to convince the United States.

When World War I ended, the black press celebrated with the rest of the country. *The Appeal* stated "America will give freedom to Europe and when the colored troops return after the triumphal entry into Berlin, things will begin to change in this country."<sup>53</sup> Although the nation's involvement was only a year, it was a relief to see it come to an end. Soldiers returned home with pride and Americans prevailed. The ending of the war called for an end to segregation in the Army and black citizens hoped President Wilson

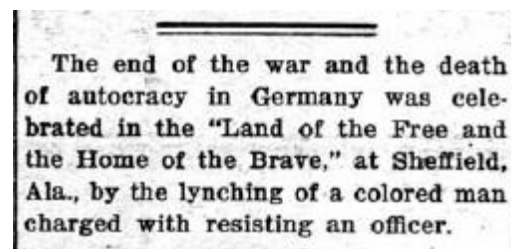


Figure 10. *The Appeal*. And the War is Over! November 16, 1918.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. xviii.

<sup>53</sup> "Not on Your Life!".Ibid, November, 16 1918

would now turn his attention to the racial injustice. African Americans suffered and sacrificed too much to not deserve equal treatment.

The end of World War I resulted in bitter sweetness. *The Appeal* presented an article demanding President Wilson to pass anti-lynching laws and an end to discrimination.<sup>54</sup> The black press provided national news on celebrations while providing news on lynchings occurring in the South. For example, Alabama celebrated the end of the war by lynching a black man.<sup>55</sup> The war in Europe may have been over, but essential work needed to be done in the United States. *The Appeal* decided to use quotation marks when referring to America as the land of free and the home of the brave to show its irony. If America truly was the land of free, the racial discrimination toward African Americans would cease to exist.

Newspapers allowed African Americans to voice their opinions on World War I and to publish the atrocities arising around the nation involving their own people. According to black citizens, America must have democracy at home before it fights for it overseas. They believed the United States must commit to the liberation of all people. The expansion of the black press toward the end of the nineteenth century led African Americans in Minnesota to become more involved in politics and in racial injustices. African Americans remained loyal to their country during World War I while bringing attention to the racism and discrimination occurring within the United States Army as well as at the home front.

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<sup>54</sup> "Ask President to End Lynching." Ibid. November, 23 1918.

<sup>55</sup> "And the War Is Over!". Ibid.

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