

## FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. How does this editorial attempt to rally African-Americans?
2. Did African-Americans' contributions to war effort result in improved economic and political opportunities? How did the government's response to black activists differ from its reaction to women's suffragists? (Document 18.3) Explain your answers.

**W**e are returning from war! *The Crisis* and tens of thousands of black men were drafted into a great struggle. For bleeding France and what she means and has meant and will mean to us and humanity and against the threat of German race arrogance, we fought gladly and to the last drop of blood; for America and her highest ideals, we fought in far-off hope; for the dominant southern oligarchy entrenched in Washington, we fought in bitter resignation. For the American that represents and gloats in lynching, disfranchisement, caste, brutality, and devilish insult—for this, in the hateful upturning and mixing of things, we were forced by vindictive fate to fight also.

But today we return! We return from the slavery of uniform which the world's madness demanded us to don to the freedom of civil garb. We stand again to look America squarely in the face and call a spade a spade. This country of ours, despite all its better souls have done and dreamed, is yet a shameful land.

It lynchés....

It disfranchises its own citizens....

It encourages ignorance....

It steals from us....

It insults us....

This is the country to which we Soldiers of Democracy return. This is the fatherland for which we fought. But it is *our* fatherland. It was right for us to fight. The faults of *our* country are *our* faults. Under similar circumstances, we would fight again. But by the God of Heaven, we are cowards and jackasses if now that war is over, we do not marshal every ounce of our brain and brawn to fight a sterner, longer, more unbending battle against the hell in our own land.

We return.

We return from fighting.

We return fighting.

Make way for Democracy! We saved it in France, and by the Great Jehovah, we will save it in the United States of America, or know the reason why.

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## THE NAACP CALLS FOR ACTION (1919)

*The war years inspired and dismayed African Americans. Eager to prove their willingness to support the crusade to "make the world safe for democracy," 260,000 African Americans volunteered or were drafted into the American Expeditionary Force (AEF). Military service disappointed many black soldiers. Sometimes racial clashes erupted with whites incensed by the prospect of armed blacks. Although African American soldiers were often assigned menial jobs, a few distinguished themselves in combat. At home, 500,000 blacks fled the South in pursuit of better economic and social opportunities elsewhere. But their financial and psychological gains were sometimes marred by conflicts with white workers and neighbors. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) hoped such incidents would persuade African Americans to demand*