

# NO SUNSHINE PATRIOTS HERE

By Roosevelt Fitzgerald

"To this end, we pledge our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor." With those or similar utterances, soldiers have marched off to war for centuries. The vanquished, those who are and were fortunate, returned to their homelands with bowed heads and shame. There were no reception committees or "ticker tape" parades. It is just as well. What does one say to those who have not won? "Better luck next time," "You did your best," "It's not whether you win or lose, but how you play the game" or some other like trite comment? Such might suffice in little league ball, but as Vince Lombardi once said: "Winning isn't everything — it's the only thing." Thus it is with war. No one comes in second.

Twenty centuries ago a Roman historian wrote of the return of the victors. He recorded that "For over a thousand years, Roman armies returning from the wars were greeted with a triumphant parade. In the parade were strange animals from the captured provinces. There were dancers and trumpeters. The prisoners marched in front of the legions. Roman soldiers, in full garb, marched erectly to the cheers of the throngs. Their tunics lifted by the wind while their shields, spears and breast plates gleamed in the sun. The general rode in a magnificent chariot. His children, dressed in white, stood alongside him or they rode astride the trace horses. Always, standing behind the general and holding above his head a golden crown, could be found a

slave who whispered in the ear of the general a warning — that all glory is fleeting." The United States, like other countries, has had its military involvements. Until the past decade, the returning armies were greeted with triumphant parades. Those who had risked and sacrificed their lives have been afforded the traditional heroes' welcome. Our history has been one in which the soldiers have been held in high esteem. Our first soldiers fought to gain independence. Subsequent armies have fought to maintain it. Those who have risked the most deserve the most. The writers of our histories have been quite selective about those to whom they were willing to bestow such honors. The key to the city, a place of prestige in the community, a position in society acknowledging

the efforts, the gala balls, parades, handshakes, embraces and total adulation have been but small measures of the appreciation the nation has felt compelled to extend to its defenders. A parent might say "I want my son to grow up to be just like him." Such would have been impossible, if Black heroes had been duly recognized. Crispus Attucks was among the first to die in the American Revolution. He was Black and was one of the three slain during the infamous Boston Massacre. Numerous Black slaves were members of the Continental Army and they quite often served with valor. Certainly, there were cowards among them. No race has a monopoly on cowardice or courage. Blacks brought up supplies, served as spies and fought as soldiers. They were at Bunker Hill, Yorktown, and even participated in the retreats. They were there

but not in the history texts. While Lafayette and other Frenchmen volunteered their services along with Polish soldiers such as Kosciuszko and Pulaski, there were also Black Haitians of Fontage's Legion who also fought. Black slaves who fought for independence were promised freedom if the venture

we are here." Today, Haitians cry out for liberty and equality and they wait patiently to hear the same sound coming from America. Black slaves who fought for independence were promised freedom if the venture



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proved successful. It was, but they did not get the freedom they had fought to obtain. Most returned to slavery, some ran away and still others were promised freedom upon the death of their "masters." Most Blacks would have to wait another three-quarters of a century for freedom.

Blacks that supreme reward if they would go fight in their stead. A well known composer probably read of the trials and tribulations of Black slaves before writing his now famous hit song "Promises, Promises." The American Civil War once again found Blacks in the ranks. Over 200,000 served. Though some persist in believing that the war was fought to end slavery, we know it was fought to preserve the Union. At wars end, those soldiers of the Ninth, Tenth, Twenty-Fourth and Twenty-Fifth regiments were assigned to preserving the peace in the western lands. They made up part of the now well known "Buffalo Soldier" outfits of the Southwest. They patrolled the west from the Canadian to the Mexican border and escorted settlers going into those areas. Their commanders were white and they were given the very worst of equipment to do the very best they could. Isalah Dorman rode into history with George Armstrong Custer on June 26, 1876 at the Little Big Horn. He did not get lost on the way to the river: he got lost on the way to the history books.

In spite of the fact that the enemy, especially in the Philippines, was referred to as "niggers," by white soldiers. Blacks were at San Juan Hill, El Caney, Santiago and Manila. Their deeds were not noted. A half dozen years later, in 1906, Black soldiers stationed at an army base near Brownsville, Texas, were reminded that their deeds of valor were forgotten. Following numerous instances of discrimination by the townspeople, a shooting occurred. A local citizen was slain. Black soldiers who were present and involved, returned to base. An investigation was conducted and no suspects were apprehended. Witnesses could not determine which twelve of the 160 Black enlisted men were the culprits. President Theodore Roosevelt solved the problem by dishonorably discharging them all. That action had an adverse effect on both the soldiers and their families.

The war to make the world safe for democracy was fought during the first quarter of the 20th century. It is generally called World War I. When the call to arms were made, Blacks once again answered. Once again they fought in segregated units but their valor was just as great as it had been a hundred and twenty-five years earlier. Numerous of their ranks received commendations from the French government and some even received the U.S. Congressional Medal of Honor.

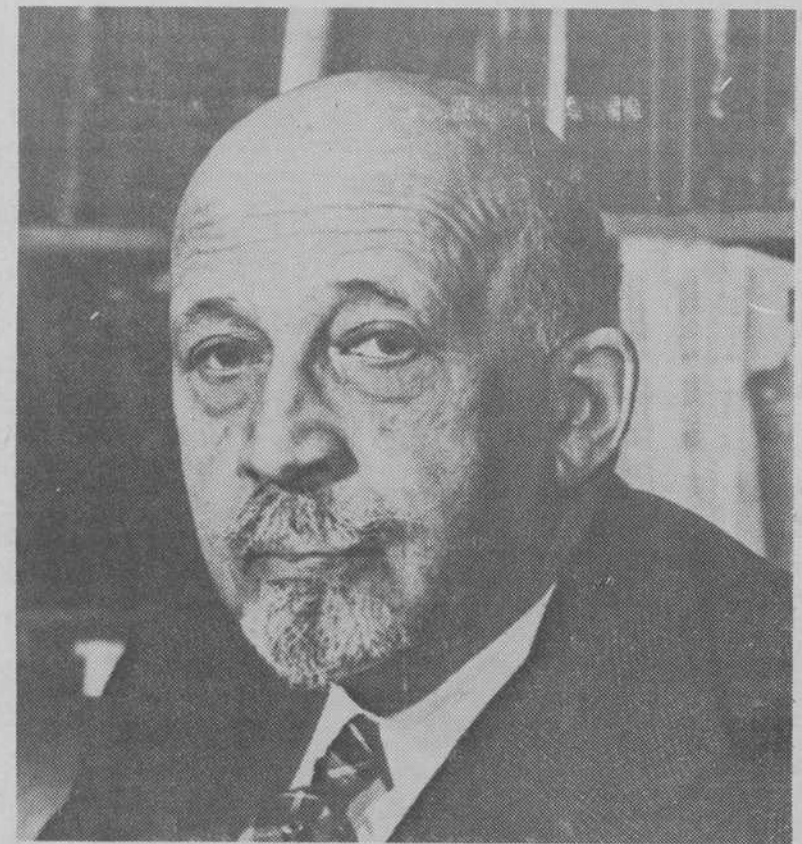
thing except negroes. We will treat them exactly as we treat our resident negroes. This thing is like waving a red flag in the face of a bull, something that can't be done without trouble." After having fought in five wars, Blacks were still not afforded the traditional hero's welcome. Instead, they returned to the U.S. and to discrimination, lynchings, unemployment, ghettos and other forms of social, economical and political abuse. They held fast to their ideals even though the country did not. Conditions did not change radically over the next twenty-five years. When the big war of the 1940s erupted it brought with it the age old racial attitudes and more. Japan, the enemy to the east, brought an additional complexion

to the racial problem. With the exception of the American Revolution, Black soldiers had fought in totally segregated units. All other aspects were equally segregated — barracks, hospital wards, service clubs, foxholes, red light districts and, yes, latrines. The perception of patriotism by peabrain paladins polarized participants and placed them in a pressure packed predicament and then plunged them point blank before persistent panzers who pushed their own peculiar brand of prejudice. It's a wonder that Black

soldiers could distinguish between the two-pronged enemy. We do not need to go to Europe, or Brownsville, or Manila or Spartanburg to see how Black soldiers were treated. We need only look homeward. In recent months there have been reports of a meeting of POW's and the VA here in Las Vegas. Nothing in those reports have said anything of the contributions of Blacks in the military arena. This article is in honor of those Blacks who remain unheralded, though undaunted.

NEVADA'S LARGEST AND MOST COMPLETE BLACK COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

## EBONY'S GALLERY OF FAME



WILLIAM E. B. DuBOIS (b. Great Barrington, Massachusetts, February 23, 1868; d. August 27, 1963). Founder of the Niagara Movement, a forerunner of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, of which he was also one of the founders; sociologist, scholar, author; founder and editor of CRISIS MAGAZINE and PHYLON.

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During the War of 1812, Blacks also participated. In the final battle, fought after the peace settlement, Blacks fought in defense of the city of New Orleans. At a time when the citizens of the city were reluctant to risk their lives, Andrew Jackson was compelled to rely on the pirates of Barataria with Jean Lafitte and Black slaves to help shore up the batteries at Chalmette. Over 600 Blacks fought in defense of the city. Seventy were either killed or wounded. The texts tell us that the Americans suffered no casualties. One might suppose that they did not consider the loss of life by slaves to be noteworthy. Once again, Blacks had been promised freedom. The promise was not lived up to. They returned to slavery in spite of the fact that some of those who owned plantations in the area, who were unwilling to risk their lives in protecting their own property, had promised

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