



Soldier and Wife, circa, 1917-19. Image courtesy of Dr. Felton McDaniel III

Any historical representation of the First World War must account for the participation of African Americans and their direct contribution to the victory that the “associated forces” achieved by the war’s end. Unfortunately, however, this is not always the case. There are relatively few museums or permanent exhibitions dedicated to the memories of those African American men and women who served and fought and died in defense of democracy, while simultaneously seeking to satisfy their desires for full-citizenship within the imagined borders of the United States.

Indeed, by the beginning of the twentieth century, African Americans had been forced to live under the harsh conditions of segregation after the advances made during Reconstruction were annulled by those committed to continuing the subjugation of the “race” by turning back opportunities for economic,

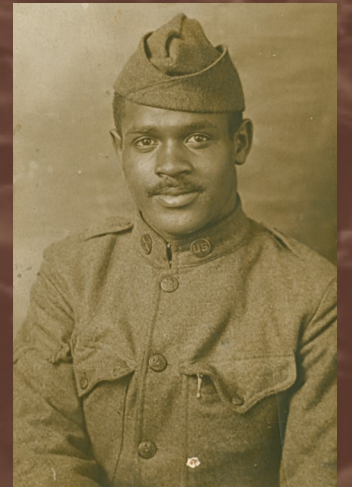


General Hospital in Kansas City, Missouri, from *The Crisis*, Sept. 1914

educational, and social development. Yet, African Americans remained steadfast and continued to strive to define themselves against the debasing images projected to signify their position in American society as inferior second-class citizens. From *Plessy v. Ferguson* to the founding of the Niagara movement, and

the first Great Migration, African Americans challenged notions related to their so-called inferiority by choosing to pursue that which had traditionally eluded them: true freedom.

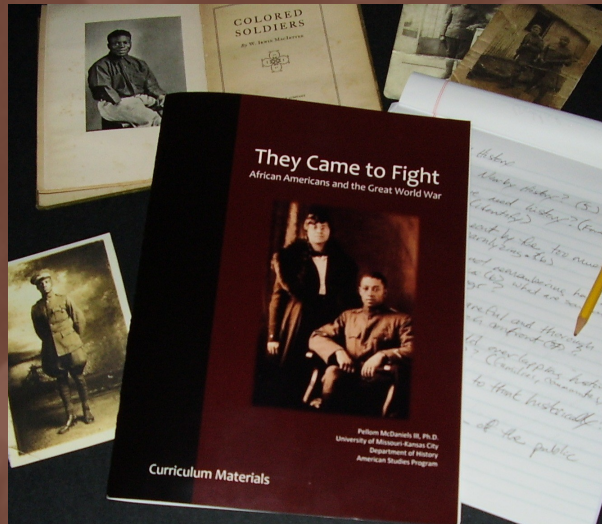
This exhibition serves as an account of the intersecting historical, social, political and economic contexts that African Americans found themselves in leading up to World War I. As soldiers, administrators, officers and volunteers in the



Vernon Coffey, circa, 1919. Image courtesy of the National World War I Museum.

defense of the United States and its claims to democracy, African Americans served with pride and dignity. What is more, this exhibition accounts for the contribution that black Kansas Citians made to the outcome of the Great World War. Indeed, these men and women served with honor and purpose to achieve the designated outcomes that their country sought to secure, and in doing so claimed the citizenship of an entire race.

Visit our website
www.theycametofight.org



For information about the curriculum materials contact
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THEY CAME TO FIGHT

African Americans and the Great World War

An Exhibit at the
**FORT DES MOINES MUSEUM
AND EDUCATIONAL CENTER**
September 10 - October 10, 2011

Opening Reception September 10, 2011
Saturday, 10 AM - 4 PM

Lecture with Dr. Pellom McDaniels III
Saturday, September 17, 2011 2 PM

Exhibit Hours
Monday - Saturday, 10 AM - 4 PM