

They Came to Fight

African Americans and the Great World War
6320 Brookside Plaza, 1800
Kansas City, Missouri 64131



www.theycametofight.org

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 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.

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, educational, and social development. Yet, African Americans remained steadfast and continued to strive to define themselves against the degrading 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.

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.

They Came to Fight African Americans and the Great World War

THEY CAME TO FIGHT

African Americans and the Great World War

Exhibit Opening and Reception
6 - 8 p.m., May 21, 2009
African American Culture House, UMKC
5245 Rockhill Road
Kansas City, Missouri 64110

Memorial Day Events
9 a.m. - 3 p.m., May 25, 2009
The National World War I Museum
100 W. 26th Street
Kansas City, MO 64108-4616

11 a.m. Laying of the Ceremonial Wreath
11:30 a.m. Unveiling of WWI Painting
1 p.m. Public Lecture/Roundtable
Dr. Chad Williams
Dr. Pellom McDaniels III

Luncheon/Gallery Lecture
12 - 2 p.m., May 26, 2009
African American Culture House, UMKC
5245 Rockhill Road
Kansas City, Missouri 64110

For more information visit us on the web:
www.theycametofight.org

The exhibition *They Came to Fight: African Americans and the Great World War* will open on UMKC's campus at the African American Culture House on May 21, 2009 from 6-8pm. The exhibit will be on view through June 20, 2009. Regular gallery hours are Tuesday thru Friday 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

On May 25, 2009 the National World War I Museum at Liberty Memorial will sponsor a public lecture featuring Dr. Chad Williams of Hamilton College and Dr. Pellom McDaniels III of the University of Missouri - Kansas City. In a roundtable type format, Dr. Williams and Dr. McDaniels will discuss the significance of African American soldiers to the success of the Allied Forces in Europe and what their efforts suggested to blacks as a whole as it related to their ability to claim their citizenship in the United States.

One of the events planned around this presentation will be the laying of a ceremonial wreath at the Liberty Memorial in honor of African American soldiers who served and died on behalf of their country. In addition, local artist Alexander Austin will present a painting inspired by the memory of African Americans who served during WWI, while commemorating the contributions of black soldiers from the Kansas City region who fought for freedom and democracy. Limited edition prints produced from this painting will be used to generate the funding necessary to continue to educate the public about this important chapter in Kansas City's history.

Finally, on May 26th from 12-2pm at the African American Culture House on the UMKC campus, Dr. McDaniels will host Dr. Williams in a community luncheon and lecture.

All events are free and open to the public.

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African Americans and the Great World War

An Exhibit at the
African American Culture House
University of Missouri-Kansas City
May 21 - June 20, 2009

Opening Reception May 21, 2009 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

**Luncheon and Lecture with Dr. Chad Williams
May 26, 2009 12:00-2:00 p.m.**

All events are free and open to the public

This exhibit was made possible by contributions from the following sponsors:
The Office of the Chancellor at UMKC, UMKC Division of Diversity Access & Equity, UMKC Multicultural Student Affairs, UMKC American Studies Program, The National World War I Museum at Liberty Memorial, KPRS/KPRT, Blue Cross/Blue Shield, Magic 107.3, and Mr. Sam Turner of Shawnee Mission Medical Center