

57. SHAT, 16N196: 1er CAC, E-M, 3e Bureau, "Rapport sur l'utilisation et le rendement des Sénégalais dans la guerre européen," September 18, 1916.

58. Most recently historian Joe Lunn has argued that in some ways West Africans did indeed suffer a higher proportional casualty rate than did white troops. However, the debate over this issue is fairly inconclusive, as all parties can cite valid statistics in their defense. See Lunn, *Memoirs*, 140–47; Michel, *L'appel*, 405–8; Balesi, *From Adversaries to Comrades*, 101–2; Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts*, 46.

59. Germans shared this belief in the fundamental savagery of West Africans fighting for France. French officers noted that "a nearly irrational fear of our black contingents" afflicted German soldiers in the field, while the kaiser's government made alleged atrocities—ranging from rape to summary execution of prisoners and mutilation of corpses—the primary focus of an international diplomatic and propaganda campaign to protest French violations of the rules of war by introducing such an uncivilized element into civilized Europe. See SHAT, 7N2121: 10e Division Coloniale, Note de Service, "Objet: Utilisation des Sénégalais," October 19, 1916. See also Diallo's description cited above; Michel, *L'appel*, 344–50; and German white paper, "Völkerrechtswidrige Verwendung farbiger Truppen auf dem europäischen kriegsschauplatz durch England und Frankreich," July 30, 1915, Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, G1668.

60. One can judge the popularity and apparently wide diffusion of this poster both from the large number of collections in which it appears and from the frequency with which it has been reproduced since the war. This reproduction is from HIA, FR 642: Lucien Jonas, "Journée de l'Armée de l'Afrique et des Troupes Coloniales" (Paris: Devambe, 1917).

61. Rickards, *Posters of the First World War*, 29.

62. Laurent Gervereau has made a similar observation about the overtly sexualized images of tirailleurs sénégalais that appeared in many illustrations and postcards during the war. The "bestiality" that these men displayed in combat "is converted into superabundant virility, which fascinates," and the African is "supermanly (surmâle), without really being a man." Laurent Gervereau, "La propagande par l'image," 124.

JENNIFER D. KEENE

7

Images of Racial Pride: African American Propaganda Posters in the First World War

During World War I governmental agencies in the United States produced thousands of posters that targeted both the entire country and specific segments of the population, including the African American community. These posters encouraged black citizens to do their part for the war effort by buying war bonds, conserving and producing food, and supporting troops in the field. Official wartime propaganda sought to tap into the patriotism and racial pride of African Americans to secure the enthusiastic support of this vital minority community. To achieve these goals the government successfully enlisted active support from a host of black newspapers, businesses, churches, and fraternal organizations, all of which helped bring the government's message into the black community by reproducing and displaying these posters.

African Americans, however, had additional goals besides winning the war. Many saw the war as a chance to advance the civil rights agenda. Here was an opportunity to prove their mettle in battle and to demonstrate both the key role they played in the economy and their willingness to sacrifice and die to ensure their nation's security. In return for their wartime service African Americans expected to receive long-overdue recognition of their civic and social rights, namely a dismantling

of Jim Crow and an end to disenfranchisement. The African American community did not simply publicize these postwar goals through the printed word. A thriving private poster industry that marketed positive, uplifting images of African American soldiers emerged alongside the official propaganda poster campaign. Many of these privately produced posters expanded the meaning of wartime patriotism and bravery by linking these themes to specific expectations of an improved postwar democracy.

Rather than simply establishing two parallel propaganda campaigns, over the course of the war the government and the African American community used visual imagery to engage in an ongoing conversation over the ultimate significance of valorous wartime service. This dialogue took many forms. Similar images were copied and reused for different purposes, either to contest or reinforce government propaganda. Images allowed private citizens to both show support for and criticize various government campaigns. Through this exchange both the government and its citizenry tried to exercise control over the messages that images of racial pride conveyed. At times the government and blacks appeared in agreement about the need to assert African American economic, military, and physical agency by underscoring the important role that black workers and soldiers played in the war effort. By extension, many in the black community saw this governmental focus on their duty to support the nation in time of crisis as official recognition of their status as citizens. At other moments, however, similar images were employed in drastically different ways, with the army, for instance, turning a privately produced image of a proud black man leaving his sweetheart to go to war into one that emphasized the importance of obedience to army regulations requiring prophylactic treatment after illicit sex. In many privately produced posters, images of heroic black soldiers offered a subversive critique of racial discrimination

within the military, in stark contrast to the official propaganda campaign, which used these same images simply to encourage uncritical support of the nation during a time of war. If governmental propaganda did not go far enough in the eyes of African Americans to address their specific grievances, to southern white newspapers that disseminated this propaganda, it went too far. Their independent dialogue with the government consisted of diluting the generally uplifting tone of wartime propaganda by imbuing it with conventional racial stereotypes to underscore southern whites' resistance to recognizing any kind of black power. Depending on the context, therefore, images of valiant African American soldiers and loyal black workers conveyed quite different messages.

Unlike official posters, commercially produced posters aimed at the black community devoted an equal amount of attention to the present and the future. Winning the peace, they suggested, was every bit as important as winning the war. This contrasted sharply with the intended consequences of similar images reproduced in official propaganda, which aimed merely to stimulate African American support for the war without opening up the Pandora's box of American race relations. African Americans intended to use their contributions, and by extension the posters and images that advertised their involvement, as leverage in an ongoing fight for civil rights and social recognition. The impact of the war on the future of American race relations was contested terrain during the First World War, and propaganda posters formed an important part of this debate.

Official Poster Propaganda: Sacrificing for the Cause

The Committee on Public Information (CPI) distributed the vast majority of governmental propaganda during the war, and over the course of the war, the CPI's Division of Pictorial Publicity designed nearly seven hundred posters for fifty-eight

governmental agencies requesting artwork for their various propaganda campaigns. America's polyglot population forced the CPI to go further than simply creating a one-size-fits-all propaganda program. With one in five soldiers coming from an immigrant family, the CPI immediately recognized the need to disseminate posters, pamphlets, and films in foreign languages or risk ignoring a significant portion of the American population. Early in the war, the CPI sponsored two films that targeted African American audiences, *Our Colored Fighters* and *Colored Americans*, but overall the CPI produced few posters specifically for the black community.¹ The country was at war for nearly a year before the CPI began focusing on ways to mobilize support within an increasingly demoralized black community, shaken by governmental decisions to place the vast majority of black soldiers in noncombatant positions, reports of widespread mistreatment of black soldiers within the armed forces, and a violent race riot in East St. Louis. Emmett J. Scott, the special assistant who advised Secretary of War Newton E. Baker on issues pertaining to black soldiers, lobbied long and hard to convince the CPI that the people giving talks to black audiences on the government's war aims needed speeches that addressed the specific concerns of the black community. (The speakers were called the "Four-Minute Men" for the time it took to change film reels.²) Besides writing talks and pamphlets to distribute to black audiences, the CPI eventually organized a committee of a hundred influential ministers, educators, businessmen, and editors to head patriotic committees in black neighborhoods throughout the country.

The few extant CPI propaganda posters for the African American community emphasize the importance of supporting black troops in the field by purchasing war bonds or thrift stamps. A National Safety Council poster portrayed an African American railroad man licking a thrift stamp to place in a booklet under

a caption that urged black workers to "do your 'two bits' daily . . . Loan your money to the government" and pay attention to safety on the job.³ This poster aimed at black railroad workers linked together an array of desirable actions: helping out the war effort, ensuring that needed manpower was not lost because of work-related accidents, and maintaining a thrifty lifestyle. Although the poster put the emphasis on loaning private funds to help the war effort, the government primarily devised the thrift and war stamp campaign in the fall of 1917 to dampen demand for increasingly scarce consumer goods and to lessen the competition for raw materials between consumer- and defense-oriented businesses.⁴ The key word in the campaign, therefore, was *thrift*. Taking out of circulation the surplus money that rising wartime wages placed in workers' hands was a way to reduce the consumption of unnecessary luxury goods without reverting to rationing. The government made it easy for even low-paid workers to defer spending any little extra they received as wartime wages rose. A thrift stamp cost twenty-five cents, and when a purchaser had accumulated sixteen stamps on a Thrift Card, he could exchange the four-dollar card for a war stamp that was redeemable for five dollars after five years. Overall, the government collected more than a billion dollars through the sales of thrift and war stamps.

During the Fourth Liberty Loan campaign, the CPI also made a special appeal to the African American community. Like the thrift and war stamp campaigns, the Liberty Loan campaigns had several purposes. One was clearly to pay for the war through voluntary subscriptions rather than relying solely on taxation. Like thrift stamps, war bond campaigns encouraged Americans to save and earn interest on their money rather than using it to fuel inflation in the goods-scarce wartime economy. Liberty Loan campaigns also helped involve ordinary citizens in the war effort. Officials estimated that nearly one third of

the entire population purchased at least one Liberty Bond. The fourth and final Liberty Loan campaign ran in September–October 1918. These bonds paid 4.5 percent interest and matured fully in 1938. This final war bond drive was also the largest of the war, as a record number of subscribers purchased \$6 billion in bonds, a particularly striking result because the drive took place at the height of the influenza pandemic of 1918. In an effort to contain the virus, cities throughout the nation closed the normal public meeting places where patriotic speakers made their most effective sales talks.⁵ With fewer opportunities to pitch war bonds to movie audiences, posters played a particularly important role in inducing Americans to purchase yet another round of war bonds.

These posters reflect the government's effort to design posters that would encourage black citizens to support the war effort. Yet from the very moment that the CPI finally made the decision to reach out to the African American community, the intention of black newspaper editors to open up a dialogue with the government became clear. In 1918, by holding a meeting with black editors in Washington DC, the CPI took its first substantial step to enlist help from black newspapers in delivering the government's message of wartime unity.⁶ The assembled editors pledged to help publicize the ways blacks could aid the war effort, but only after they outlined some of the key grievances circulating among black civilians, notably the failure to prosecute anyone for seventy-one lynchings that had occurred since the beginning of the war, discrimination against skilled blacks trying to secure wartime appointments, and the federal government's failure to eliminate Jim Crow train cars when it took over running the railroads.⁷

In sharp contrast to the rather limited efforts of most government agencies to reach out to African Americans, the Food Administration undertook a substantial campaign to ensure that

its propaganda reached black farmers and consumers. Food Administration propaganda contained a message of sacrifice wrapped in imagery and words that explicitly recognized the key economic role that black citizens played. This was also the only propaganda campaign directed toward African Americans in which black governmental agents played a substantial role. From within the government, these African American administrators tailored a message of conservation and production that showered attention on black America's economic vitality. To disseminate this propaganda, the Food Administration created a productive partnership with privately run black newspapers. For most of the war A. U. Craig headed the Food Administration's Negro Press Section, with Ernest T. Atwell, a business professor at Tuskegee Institute, taking over when the section was reorganized a month before the Armistice. Taking advantage of the government's policy of relying on donated advertising space, Craig urged black newspapers to reproduce Food Administration posters freely in their pages. Many of the Food Administration's most famous propaganda posters urging citizens to conserve sugar, wheat, and meat appeared as advertisements in black newspapers. Among the twenty or so reduced-size posters appearing in a May issue of the *Baptist Leader*, for instance, only one, "Garden Sass' Saves Wheat for Soldier Boys," portrayed an elderly African American woman looking proudly over the victory garden she maintained to feed her family.⁸ The other advertisements contained generic admonitions such as "save a loaf a week," "fats are fuel for fighters: bake, boil and broil more, fry less," "eat more corn," and "Little Americans do your bit: eat corn meal mush . . . leave nothing on your plates." To encourage Americans to substitute corn for wheat products, the Food Administration constantly circulated corn-based recipes and reminded citizens that wheat traveled overseas better than corn. Press releases directed at

the black press specifically addressed the prejudice that some blacks might have against incorporating corn into their daily diet. "Corn, once upon a time, was always on the table either as a cereal, bread, vegetable or desert. . . . As a child we remember the humiliation we felt at having to eat corn bread, but how times have changed! In exclusive tea rooms . . . we find a large demand for corn bread, corn griddle cakes, mush, etc., and little or no call for pastry made of wheat, or wheat bread," proclaimed one press release.⁹

All available surfaces were fair game for spreading the word to conserve food. The Negro Press Section encouraged barbershops and shoe-shine parlors to draw patriotic red, white, and blue slogans on their mirrors. Suggested ways to let "the mirror help win the war" included stenciled warnings that "U-Boats Sink Ships Loaded With Sugar; Slackers Leave Sugar in Their Cups" and "Make One Spoon of Sugar Do the Work of Two, Every Day Until the War is Through."¹⁰ Restaurants posted signs advertising their establishments' compliance with Food Administration guidelines on wheatless Mondays and Wednesdays, meatless Tuesdays, and porkless Saturdays.¹¹ In a similar vein, black fraternal organizations throughout the country placed large signs with key food conservation slogans on their buildings as a show of support for the war effort.¹²

The Food Administration and U.S. Department of Agriculture also developed propaganda to address black farmers' key role as producers, not just consumers, of food. "HOE THE WORLD TO VICTORY! This slogan if placed in large head lines across our papers would carry the message to the readers," advised A. U. Craig in one press release.¹³ In April 1918 black Alabamian demonstration agents for the Department of Agriculture (government employees who offered clinics in effective farm techniques) formed a U.S. Saturday League Club as part of a "Win the War by Working Six Days per Week" campaign.

The league provided stores and newspapers with posters entreating farmers to "Rest and keep it Holy" on Sunday while devoting the rest of the week to "Work!" In a letter accompanying the posters, Robert R. Moton, the principal of Tuskegee Institute, urged black farmers to consider "what you lose when you stop on Saturday" and how much money was wasted on Saturday entertainments. Self-interest and community responsibility both required producing more food. "May it never be said of any one of us, that our men at the front suffered because we would not feed them," Moton concluded.¹⁴

Both the CPI and Food Administration depended on cooperation from the black press, black businesses, and black fraternal and religious organizations to convey the message of wartime sacrifice to the African American community. This dependence by necessity opened up a dialogue between the government and the African American community over how to construct messages of particular appeal to black citizens, and how to use cooperation in the propaganda campaign as leverage to address other pressing civil rights issues. Both in the images projected and in the key role that African Americans played in constructing and disseminating this propaganda, official propaganda offered more than a portrait of an African American community able and willing to sacrifice for the cause. It also opened up the possibility of parlaying appreciation of that community's economic clout into recognition of social and political equality, a theme addressed directly in privately produced propaganda posters.

In one such poster, "Emancipation Proclamation, September 22, 1862" (created by E. G. Renesch), a portrait of President Lincoln is surrounded by snapshots of African American accomplishment (fig. 29).¹⁵ In this poster a large eagle (the symbol of the United States) and six American flags drape the framed portrait of Lincoln, who holds a speech quoting these



Fig. 29. E. G. Renesch, "Emancipation Proclamation, September 22, 1862." The economic, intellectual, and military contributions of African Americans to the war effort became the basis for demands that the nation fulfill Lincoln's promise to ensure all Americans equal rights. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

words from the Declaration of Independence: "All men are created equal that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Portraits of the writers Paul L. Dunbar and Frederick Douglass flank the image of Lincoln. On the left, Lady Liberty stands with one arm around a white boy and the other around a black boy, telling them "Look forward! There is room enough under the eagle's wings for great achievements by both." To the right of the portrait stands Booker T. Washington, the founder of Tuskegee Institute, who championed the economic contributions that blacks made to the South. Dressed in a suit and holding a speech, Washington points to

a farmer plowing a well-kept field and a steamboat chugging up a river and says: "We have cleared the forests, reclaimed the land and are building cities, railroads, and great institutions." Below Washington, a well-dressed man stands with his fashionably attired wife before a group of children at play near a solid brick schoolhouse, where a couple in an automobile talk to their son. The man tells his wife: "Our children are being educated and will become useful citizens and a power in all affairs of life." The role of black soldiers takes its rightful place alongside these substantial accomplishments. On either side of Lincoln hang portraits of two black officers from the 370th Infantry, Lt. Col. Franklin A. Dennison and Lt. Colonel Otis B. Duncan. The 370th regiment served with the French during the war. Dennison was relieved of his command and replaced by a white officer soon after his arrival in France. Many black soldiers and civilians immediately challenged the official explanation that Dennison lost his command because of ill health. Duncan went on to lead his troops into battle, fighting not just the Germans but General Staff doubts about the ability of black officers to command troops effectively. In the lower left corner of the poster black soldiers carrying the flag advance against a German trench, with comrades falling to the ground as they go. The caption to this scene reads: "The bravest of the brave in defence of his country."

This crowded poster reflects the array of competing strategies for advancement circulating within the black community, an attempt to appeal to all spectrums of political opinion. The poster offers a healthy antidote to the one-size-fits-all governmental approach in appealing to the black community. In marked contrast, this poster portrays both the Talented Tenth, whom W. E. B. Du Bois exhorted to lead the race to full civic and social equality, and Booker T. Washington's emphasis on black

laborers becoming the economic backbone of the South. The poster balances Du Bois's insistence on full academic schooling for African American children with more traditional images of black farmers working in the cotton fields. These various vignettes are all tied together by Lincoln's words. In their economic endeavors, educational abilities, dedication to their country, and ability to produce great men, blacks are every bit the equal of whites. Finally, this poster transforms the Food Administration's emphasis on the black community's economic contributions to the war effort into a demand that African Americans' economic and educational achievements be rewarded with full recognition of their rights as citizens.

Privately produced posters went to great lengths to underscore for viewers the link between the present war and the future of civil rights in the United States. In a poster entitled "Colored Men: The First American Who Planted Our Flag on the Firing Line," black soldiers are advancing victoriously against German troops under the watch of Abraham Lincoln, whose statement "Liberty and justice shall not perish" is inscribed under his portrait. The quote obviously had two meanings for black civilians, one for the present war overseas and another for the struggle against Jim Crow at home.¹⁶ Both this poster and "Emancipation Proclamation, September 22, 1862" suggest that the link between the battlefield and home front encompassed more than economic support from civilians for troops in the field through war bond purchases and food cultivation or production. In addition, the achievements of black soldiers on the battlefield would translate into a stronger case for full recognition as American citizens at home. "Don't cut the rope," urged one Food Administration slogan to underscore the importance of civilian support for troops in the field, an admonition that private posters molded to serve the black community's civil rights agenda by emphasizing how the exploits

of soldiers overseas also served to legitimize civilian demands for greater inclusion in the American polity. In this reformulation civilians and soldiers provided each other with mutual support during the war, each group contributing in their own way both to the greater cause of winning the war and to ending Jim Crow at home. United in these goals, black soldiers and civilians never came close to cutting the ties that created such a strong psychological bond between the home front and battlefield for the duration of the war.

Contested Meanings: Interpreting the Image

Active cooperation with the official governmental propaganda campaign and unofficial responses to the government's emphasis on the economic clout of the black community formed two important aspects of the wartime dialogue between the government and African American citizens. In addition, official governmental posters and propaganda proved open to a myriad of interpretations, revealing yet another way these images served as a medium in the ongoing conversation between the government and its citizenry over the ultimate costs of securing cooperation for wartime fiscal and conservation policies. Considering how these images were consumed, therefore, is as important as tracing how and why they were produced. Black and white communities each viewed governmental propaganda through the prism of their respective opinions about changing the racial status quo. The result was often a dramatically altered meaning for official propaganda. The government, however, proved as willing as private citizens to twist the interpretation given to borrowed images to suit its particular needs. The direct sharing of public and private propaganda images during the war revealed yet another way that the government and the African American community engaged in a thriving cultural exchange during the war.

African Americans derived a host of meanings from a Fourth Liberty Loan poster that contained a photograph of black troops under review in Alsace above a caption that read: "While their band plays stirring music, these sturdy negro soldiers, who have beaten the Germans every time they have faced them, are lined up for rifle inspection in an Alsatian village. These men are adding fresh laurels to those won by colored troops in the Civil and Spanish Wars."¹⁷ The reference to continuing a soldierly tradition begun in the Civil War was a popular theme in posters targeting the black community. For black audiences this poster contained other important and familiar details concerning the black soldier experience. Black newspapers wrote often about the fame that African American bands, especially the one led by James Europe of the 369th Infantry Regiment, had garnered in France for their skilled playing of ragtime and jazz. Stories about the success of several black regiments in pushing the Germans back in Allied summer counteroffensives and fall offensives also received wide circulation in the black press. The poster then went on to link these well-known particulars to the general message that the Treasury Department was sending to all Americans: "Lend the way they fight. Buy Liberty Bonds to your utmost."

While the poster was clearly intended to arouse pride in the achievements of black soldiers, there was little chance of it convincing black civilians that their troops were being given opportunities to excel within the military. This poster fails to mention a pertinent piece of information likely known to most contemporary viewers, namely that the African American units amassing these honorable combat records were serving under French, not American, command, and the "laurels" these troops had received were mostly the French *croix de guerre*, not American military decorations.¹⁸ To a savvy viewer, therefore, this poster suggested an alternative message beyond Emmett

Scott's exaltation in opening the Fourth Liberty Loan campaign at Howard University that "we who remain at home are in duty bound to lend the limit of our aid to those who have gone abroad to bare their breasts to shot and shell in defense of our flag and the sacred ideals for which it stands."¹⁹ Instead, it reinforced the feeling that prejudice and discrimination within the American army left the vast majority of African American troops digging ditches or unloading ships, while the single black combatant division under American command went without the training and officers it needed to succeed in combat.

Sometimes, however, it was whites rather than blacks who provided an alternative, and by implication more subversive, interpretation of official governmental propaganda. Food Administration propaganda designed to underscore the key economic role that black cooks played in controlling food resources throughout the South provided official recognition of black women's power within the southern economy—recognition that blacks championed and whites dismissed. After conducting a wide-ranging survey of southern town mayors to collect the names and addresses of movie theaters that either catered exclusively to black audiences or accepted them as patrons, the Negro Press Section regularly sent these theaters slide lectures to display at each show.²⁰ One illustrated lecture detailed the deprivation overseas, before discussing what to eat and how to substitute for meat and fat in daily cooking.²¹ In the closing weeks of the war Atwell also prepared speeches for Four-Minute Men to deliver in movie theaters or other public places. "In no vocation, in no activity, can the colored people of this country find opportunity to do their part more than by adopting the program of food conservation," read one script. "This is true not only in their own households but in addition they control the food in the homes of a very large proportion

of other races."²² In addition the Food Administration paid particular attention to churches and fraternal organizations as places where large numbers of blacks could take pledges to conserve food. Craig devoted particular attention encouraging county food administrators to organize patriotic Fourth of July celebrations for black communities throughout the nation, going so far as to prepare acceptable programs of music, lectures, cooking and canning demonstrations, and prayers.

Recognizing that large numbers of African American women were employed as cooks for white families, the Food Administration attempted to channel propaganda intended for black women through their white female employers. White newspapers that publicized the official campaign to conserve food, however, went to great lengths to demean the intelligence of domestic servants to avoid providing any sense of empowerment or importance to black women. In particular, in bringing this message to their white readership, some southern newspapers dramatically shifted the emphasis away from championing black women as linchpins in the conservation effort and instead sought to convey the same message of conservation through conventional racial stereotypes. "Mammy Must Learn to Conserve Food," announced the headline of one newspaper advertising an instructional meeting for waiters, cooks, and butlers in Jacksonville, Florida. This particular meeting included two films, one offering instruction in canning and substitution and the other showing "the troubles of an old darky cook in learning food conservation."²³ For cooking demonstrations organized by Women's Committees of the Council of National Defense, another white newspaper made less inflammatory announcements partly intended to convince black women that they would protect their jobs by following Food Administration recipes and guidelines. This emphasis on white women's role as employers, however, indirectly became another way to



Fig. 30. E. G. Renesch, "True Blue," 1919. This seemingly conservative portrait of a patriotic African American family raised fears among southern whites that material progress and wartime sacrifices were responsible for the new "insolence" and militancy evident in the civil rights movement. Records of the U. S. Post Office Department, #6 28, Entry 40 (Records Relating to the Espionage Act of World War I, 1917-1921), Folder #584, National Archives.

reassure southern whites that the power to direct what went on in their kitchens lay with them.

White commentators also offered alternative readings of propaganda posters privately marketed to the African American community during the war. "True Blue" shows a wife standing with her three children before a portrait of the husband and father in uniform (fig. 30). In the poster a flag with a blue star hangs in the window to signal to passersby that someone from the home is serving in the military.²⁴ The two girls point to their father, while the son sits and contemplates his father's manly demeanor. The soldier's portrait is draped with two American flags and hangs above a mantel that also contains framed pictures of George Washington and Woodrow Wilson. To the right above the father hangs a somewhat larger portrait

of Lincoln. The inclusion of Washington and Lincoln continues the well-established practice in propaganda aimed at the African American community of reminding viewers that the democratic vision of these two leaders remained relevant. Including Wilson in this pantheon of great American presidents suggests the resonance that his rhetoric for democracy had throughout the country. By making this “a war to make the world safe for democracy,” Wilson continued the tradition established by Washington and Lincoln of giving war a transcending purpose that went far beyond specific territorial or political aims. Instead, war became a way to perfect and purify America’s democratic values.

A warm fire burns in the fireplace, and the room is tastefully decorated with typical middle-class wallpaper, furnishings, and ornaments. Two vases filled with fresh flowers and a cat sleeping before the fire complete this scene of domestic bliss. The representation of a middle-class man who has provided well for his family and is now serving his country was standard fare for wartime propaganda, seemingly containing little that would invite controversy. Nonetheless, a postmistress in Melbourne, Florida, sent this poster along with two issues of the *Favorite Magazine* to the postmaster general to ask if he considered these seditious materials banned from the mail by the Espionage Act of 1917. Noting the “considerable insolence from the negro element lately,” this postmistress lumped “True Blue” together with articles in the *Favorite Magazine* titled “‘The White Problem,’ A Discussion of the White Man as a Problem,” and “How Colored Girls are Ruined in Mississippi.”²⁵ Although she left unstated her exact objections to “True Blue,” one could surmise that the pictured family’s material success and the implication that wartime sacrifice entitled them to inclusion in the democratic vision championed by Washington, Lincoln, and Wilson served for this white woman as further



Fig. 31. E. G. Renesch, “Colored Man Is No Slacker.” Official government agencies and private publishers freely shared and exchanged images during the war, attaching captions or placing them within a context that dramatically altered an image’s meaning. This privately produced poster, which initially underscored African Americans’ voluntary contributions to the war effort, was transformed by the government into an image of a venereal disease-free soldier returning home to his family. Courtesy of the author.

evidence of “insolence.” In some respects, official posters that encouraged black workers to save rather than spend their extra wartime earnings, such as the National Safety Council Thrift Stamp poster discussed earlier, served to allay white concerns that a frenzy of war-fueled consumption by African Americans would threaten the racial status quo; “True Blue,” in contrast, raised that threat.

Along with its black and white citizens, the government also engaged in the practice of reinterpreting images to suit its own purposes. In one instance the army even went as far as explicitly recasting a commercially produced poster to alter its original meaning significantly. The privately produced E. G. Renesch poster “Colored Man Is No Slacker” originally portrayed a black soldier bidding his virginal sweetheart farewell as he

prepares to join the unit marching by the house holding the American flag high (fig. 31).²⁶ The title gives this poster its meaning, suggesting that black men are eager to fight to defend the country and are not “slackers” who are intentionally looking for ways to avoid military service. It conveys a symbolic rather than literal truth, since it was not possible for much of the war for black men to demonstrate this willingness by voluntarily enlisting in the army. During the First World War, the American government implemented an immediate draft to avoid sapping the civilian economy of needed workers and leaders. For a short time the ranks were open to volunteers, but ultimately 72 percent of the army was conscripted. Within this short window of time to enlist, the handful of units reserved for African American soldiers quickly filled. Many eager applicants were turned away and told to wait for the draft to select them.

The importance of a motto in giving a propaganda poster its meaning becomes crystal clear when examining how the government took this same image and incorporated it into an anti-venereal disease lecture designed for black soldiers in stateside training camps. The line between private and public was not hard and fast during the war. Just as newspapers and citizens in the private sector could alter the meanings of official governmental propaganda, in this case the government borrowed a popular commercial image, removed the caption, and placed the scene of a soldier and his sweetheart in a context that dramatically altered the message.

During the war the army instituted a major campaign against venereal disease, designed to curb any unnecessary reduction in troop strength and to reassure the public that military service would not ruin the moral character of the fine, upstanding men eager to join the war effort. Progressive reformers working through the Commission on Training Camp Activities

(CTCA) developed a multilayered campaign that targeted both women in the vicinity of training camps and soldiers themselves.²⁷ For soldiers the CTCA urged abstinence and provided a host of athletic activities to help them burn off excess sexual energy through wholesome pursuits. At the same time the CTCA and medical officers designed vivid sex education programs that informed soldiers about the debilitating effects of venereal disease and the types of prophylactic treatments available. One army lantern-slide lecture developed specifically for black troops by the Instruction Laboratory of the Army Medical Museum reveals the importance of context for understanding the full significance of patriotic images of soldiers.²⁸

Only about half of some fifty slides for this lecture remain, but from them it is possible to piece together a general outline of the themes the lecture covered. The presentation began by posing the question: “Why should a man expect a woman to be decent if he is not?” After considering the double standard that allowed men to sow wild oats but labeled women who engaged in risky sexual behavior as whores, the presentation quickly moved to key mistakes that caused men to contract venereal disease. A parade of “Heeza” vignettes followed. One slide showed a character named “Heeza boozer,” who makes the mistake of going home with a prostitute after a night of drinking, while another told the story of “Heeza wiseguy” about a young man who is crippled from venereal disease after refusing to listen to warnings about the risks of sleeping with prostitutes. Heeza wiseguy learns the hard way that “whiskey makes men weak, whores cause the ‘bad leak.’”

After outlining the lifestyle habits that caused men to fall victim to diseased prostitutes, the lecture then focused on convincing men who indulged in risky sexual encounters to avoid compounding the mistake by turning in desperation to the “cures” sold by disreputable pharmacists. “What Fools These Mortals

Be,” proclaims one lantern slide above the scene of a hobbled venereal disease victim buying “fixisit,” a potion claimed to cure gonorrhea in five days. The images subsequently grew quite graphic to teach soldiers how to identify venereal disease sores and what cleansing treatments were available in army medical facilities immediately after risky intercourse. Some slides even offered a demonstration of how to inject a purifying solution into one’s penis.

Medical officers, however, had no intention of ending the lecture on the positive note that some treatment was available. Instead, the final slides hit hard to lay out all the arguments against sleeping with prostitutes. Where do prostitutes come from, asks one slide? The business constantly requires new recruits—are you willing to sacrifice your sweetheart or sister? Another image shows the devil keeping a scorecard of how many innocent babies were born blind and how many women were infected by men who had had extramarital intercourse with prostitutes. Each soldier, the lecture concluded, owed it to his father, mother, sweetheart, and himself to stay clean for the duration of the war.

For the image of the sweetheart, medical officers slightly cropped the scene portrayed in “Colored Man Is No Slacker” and removed its original caption. Now this poster symbolized a clean-living soldier returning home to his sweetheart disease-free, a man of whom his sweetheart, comrades, and nation can be proud. The image loses its value as a depiction of a man who is willing to serve and becomes one of a man who can be assured of a warm welcome for his exercise of self-discipline during the war. In a similar fashion, the lecture appropriated the ubiquitous “Uncle Sam Wants You” poster. This time Uncle Sam points his finger at the viewer next to a caption that reads, “Uncle Sam wants your pep, punch and patriotism,” to

illustrate the point that soldiers owed it to their country to stay free of venereal disease during the war.

Images of Racial Pride: Challenging the Racial Status Quo

In the case of “Colored Man Is No Slacker,” the government appropriated a privately produced image to construct a message vastly at odds with the one originally intended by the commercial artist. This exchange worked both ways, however. Some commercially produced propaganda adopted the prevailing official propaganda image of the brave and valiant soldier to express distrust of the government and to challenge discrimination within the armed forces. The subversive message contained within these images of a proud and vital race standing up for itself threatened to undo the very unity demanded by official propaganda posters. Whether one’s loyalty was to one’s country or to one’s race became yet another dimension of the wartime debate waged between official and unofficial propaganda posters. Yet for all their radicalism on racial matters, these posters retained an inherently conservative perspective on the actual war. By viewing the war in traditionally romantic terms, privately produced posters never departed from the storyline of official propaganda posters that portrayed the war as one in which individual soldiers could make a difference on the battlefield.

Like the Treasury Department, private philanthropic groups used propaganda posters to raise funds. “German shells draw no color line,” announced one poster for the Crispus Attucks Circle for War Relief, urging contributors to “help the negro people help their own” by building a hospital for wounded troops.²⁹ By naming itself after the first black man killed in the American Revolution, this organization evoked a legacy of heroic service that extended back to the creation of the republic. At the same time, however, the poster’s message that

the black community would have to take care of its own fighting men in a privately funded hospital suggested that African Americans could not count on the government to care for wounded or ill black troops properly. German shells draw no color line, the poster emphasizes, but white Americans certainly do. Realizing that "colored soldiers were apparently unwelcome at places of amusements" in Philadelphia, a group of black citizens decided to form the Crispus Attucks Circle because they believed "the colored soldier would not receive equal treatment with the white soldiers in medical treatment," the group's attorney explained.³⁰ Pursuing their idea to offer black soldiers quality private medical care, the Crispus Attucks Circle agreed to raise \$110,000 to expand Mercy Hospital, a small private facility with twenty-eight beds. To raise funds, the Crispus Attucks Circle placed copies of this poster in storefronts and hired professional fundraisers to visit black businesses and homes. Contributors received a membership card and a button announcing "I am a Member" of the Crispus Attucks Circle for War Relief. At least one white businessman objected to the avowed purpose of the group. In a letter to the American Red Cross Institute, Aldwin Moore charged that the Crispus Attucks Circle was raising money under false pretenses because the government would indeed provide rehabilitation services to all soldiers. "Why not tell these people that they do not need to raise such a fund?" Moore queried.³¹ The hundreds of Philadelphia companies and individuals who made donations totaling more than ten thousand dollars to the Crispus Attucks Circle clearly believed otherwise.

In the spring of 1918 the group found itself under investigation by the Military Intelligence Division (MID) and the Justice Department for possible ties to German saboteurs.³² Many government officials, especially those within MID, stubbornly persisted in attributing black grievances about prejudice and

discrimination to German operatives stirring up trouble within the African American community. MID approached the problem of worrisome morale within the black community by putting nearly every civil rights leader, organization, and publication under surveillance. The government's investigation of the Crispus Attucks Circle failed to find any links to German operatives, but federal agents did conclude that it was both a professional fundraising operation designed to defraud subscribers of their money and a group intent on stirring up race hatred. The Justice Department based this conclusion not on the provocative suggestion that the government would leave wounded black soldiers to their own devices but on one meeting that an agent attended which "started out to explain the merits of the circle, but soon twisted itself into [a] negro suffrage affair."³³ Pressured by the Justice Department, the Mercy Hospital severed its ties with the Crispus Attucks Circle in August 1918.³⁴

The disgraced Crispus Attucks Circle was not alone in suggesting that private charitable donations were needed to ensure adequate care for ill or wounded black troops. "All Together Push!!!" urged a Circle for Negro War Relief poster inviting residents to the Manhattan Casino for a benefit to purchase an ambulance for black troops stationed at Camp Upton, New York.³⁵ The board for the New York-based Circle for Negro War Relief included the leading lights of the civil rights movement, among them National Association for the Advancement of Colored People officials W. E. B. Du Bois, Arthur Spingarn, Moorfield Storey, and James W. Johnson. "Help Our Coloured Solders. Do It Now!" entreated another Circle for Negro War Relief poster, because "one-tenth of our Army are Negroes."³⁶ The Circle for Negro War Relief emphasized the sizable contribution black soldiers were making to the war effort, which was even larger than this poster suggested. African

Americans actually composed 13 percent of the army even though they were only 10 percent of the civilian population. The racism of local draft boards and the limited number of slots for black volunteers contributed to the overdrafting of black men. By the end of the war the army had inducted one third of all black registrants, as compared to one fourth of all white registrants.

Besides offering criticism of army policies, privately produced posters also contained a measure of skepticism about the promises of the Wilson Administration to make this a “war for democracy.” Civil rights leaders already had their doubts about Woodrow Wilson, who had given federal government agencies the option of segregating their offices and refused until late in the war to issue a statement denouncing lynching. Most commercial posters contained a more overt plea that the country adopt Lincoln’s original dream of interracial democracy as part of its wartime mission.

The poster “The Dawn of Hope” (published by B. W. Brittain) was forthright in announcing the war as an opportunity to fulfill Lincoln’s promise of equality for all (fig. 32). This poster shows a grandfather and grandson in a cotton field watching the rising sun together.³⁷ “My Boy!” declares the grandfather, “I waited 50 years for the realization of Father Abraham’s wish, but in vain. Your brethren are now fighting to maintain Uncle Sam’s liberty, and in hopes for equality and justice for the black man.” The willingness of black soldiers to defend the nation takes on the dimension of repaying an old debt in the banner at the bottom, which proclaims, “You fought in 1865 for us, we are fighting now for USA [in] 1918.” At the same time, however, the poster draws a rhetorical link with the Civil War to underscore the need to create a true interracial democracy in the United States. To the left of the pastoral scene of the grandfather and grandson each raising an arm in salutation to greet the rising

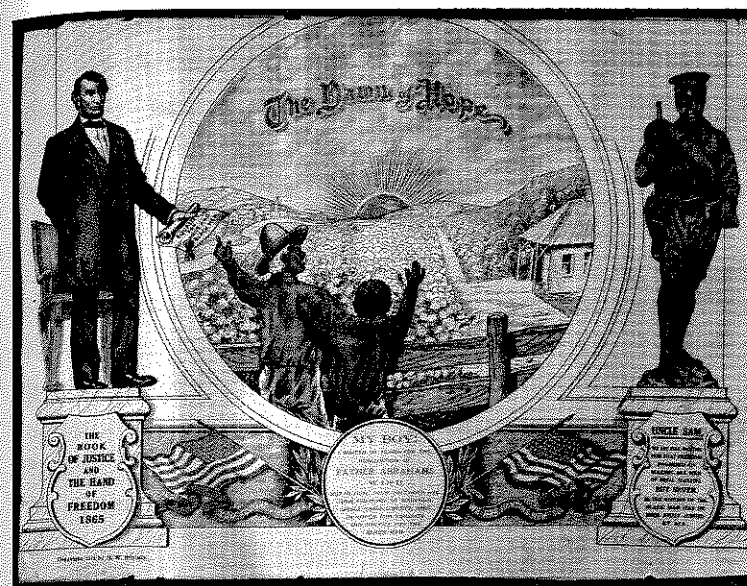


Fig. 32. Anonymous, “The Dawn of Hope,” 1918. Challenging the government to make the war for democracy meaningful for African Americans was a common theme in posters privately marketed to the African American community during the war. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

sun stands a statue of Lincoln with a plaque that reads: “The book of justice and the hand of freedom, 1865.” To the right is a statue of a black soldier with his pistol drawn. The plaque at the base of this statue is more demanding and less hopeful about Lincoln’s words becoming a reality. “Uncle Sam,” the plaque reads, “We are still fighting for that freedom promised us making all men of equal standing. But never in the history of the black man has he been justly judged by all.” Black soldiers are fulfilling their duties as citizens, this poster proclaims, even though the nation refuses to accord them the rights that are their due as men, as citizens, and as patriots.

Yet for all the radicalism inherent in these critiques of the government, it is also crucial to appreciate how conservatively

they depicted warfare along the Western Front. The overall acceptance of the official emphasis on individual heroism and the romantic glory associated with victorious warriors unmasked the limits of the criticism offered in these privately produced posters. "Our Colored Heroes" depicts the well-circulated story of Henry Johnson and Needham Roberts, whose feats the poster portrays in a broad romantic style.³⁸ The poster shows two young men, each surrounded by hordes of German soldiers. In the back, Roberts bayonets a German assailant, while in the foreground Johnson stabs a German soldier with a dagger. Wounded German soldiers whom the two Americans have already dispatched writhe on the ground, while in the distance a rescue party carrying a large American flag hurries to save them. The encounter occurs on a moonlit night in the middle of the woods, with nary a hint of No Man's Land or artillery in sight. In conceiving of this scene, the illustrator took tremendous liberty with the facts. Sitting in an isolated listening post in No Man's Land on the night of May 14, 1918, Roberts and Johnson were part of a party of five on the lookout for an enemy attack. Noticing movement outside their post, the two discovered an enemy patrol and gave the alert. "The Germans cut us off from retreating and we had to fight. It was 25 against us 2," Roberts wrote in a letter home. "Having thrown all my grenades, I was wounded and put out of the fight. But my comrade Johnson resisted and drove them away all alone."³⁹ Johnson fired his rifle at the first German attempting to enter their shelter and, with his rifle empty, then had no choice but to club down the second German with his rifle butt. Glancing behind him, Johnson saw another two Germans carrying a heavily wounded Roberts off as a prisoner. Johnson sprang up and stuck his bolo knife so hard into the shoulder "of that ill-fated Boche, the blade of the knife was buried to the hilt through the crown of the German's head," attested his commanding

officer, Captain Arthur Little.⁴⁰ Another charging German soldier wounded Johnson, who nonetheless managed to bring this enemy soldier down with his knife as well. "The enemy patrol was in a panic. The dead and wounded were piled upon stretchers and carried away," Little reported.⁴¹ A critically injured Johnson harassed the retreating Germans by lobbing grenades after them. The official investigation concluded that the two had killed four German soldiers and driven off five times as many. "I saw them when they brought them back. Neither one of them could walk . . . they had two guys carrying Johnson, and Johnson, his legs was gone, his legs was hanging," James Jones later recalled.⁴²

"Our Colored Heroes" celebrated the bravery of Johnson and Roberts by placing them in a scene that did not exist along the Western Front. The uniqueness of their story suggests the limited possibilities for individual feats of heroism in the industrial slaughter taking place across No Man's Land. It takes nothing away from the scale of their accomplishment in fighting off this raiding party to point out that the military value of their actions was quite small, as was nearly every other act of individual heroism in a war dominated by heavy artillery. To remind viewers of this reality by accurately depicting front-line conditions would rob the story of its ability to evoke the romance of past pivotal encounters on the battlefield where individuals truly made a difference. By placing these two in a pastoral scene that viewers would immediately associate with heroic possibilities, this poster avoided challenging viewers to reconsider what warfare entailed in the twentieth century. This poster had other things for viewers to reflect upon. To a society and military doubting black men's ability to fight and placing most of them in noncombatant laboring positions, this poster offered a strong retort. In this respect the poster

presented a truth that many white Americans would rather have ignored.

Conclusion

In the United States during the First World War, both the government and private publishing companies designed and distributed propaganda posters intended to influence wartime behavior and shape popular perceptions about the meaning of black participation in the war effort. The basic themes of duty, bravery, and patriotism were present in both official and private posters aimed at the black community. Privately produced ones, however, often incorporated an undercurrent of doubt and concern that the contributions of black citizens and soldiers were not receiving the full recognition they deserved. Unlike official posters, these unofficial propaganda posters linked the nation's struggle against Germany to the campaign for improved civil rights at home.

All wartime propaganda emphasized the key role that blacks played in the domestic economy and highlighted their heroism on the battlefield. The ultimate significance of these wartime contributions for the future hopes and aspirations of African Americans remained contested terrain during the war, a debate evident through the steady exchanges between the various branches of the government (the CPI, Food Administration, Treasury Department, army) and black and white citizens who played a pivotal role in the creation, dissemination, and consumption of wartime propaganda. A dialogue that encompassed contested interpretations, the sharing of specific images, a white press that muted some parts of the government's message, and a black press that attached specific conditions to secure its cooperation all revealed the give and take that shaped the wartime propaganda campaign aimed at African Americans.

In the end the government received the support it desired from the African American community with African Americans seemingly receiving little in return. Rather than ushering in an era of improved racial justice, the postwar years developed into one of the worst periods of racial violence in American history. Yet images of racial pride and the explicit critique of the government within privately produced posters helped lay the foundation for the more militant and racially conscious spirit that infused the civil rights movement in the postwar era, a new attitude encapsulated by W. E. B. Du Bois's call for African American soldiers to "return fighting."⁴³ Refusing to see themselves solely through the eyes of others represented an important component of this new determination to fight back against white supremacy. Controlling the image became a way to begin shaping their own futures as proud black Americans with fully recognized civic and social rights.

Notes

1. Walton H. Rawls, *Wake Up, America! World War I and the American Poster* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1988), 167.
2. Emmett J. Scott to Dr. Robert R. Moton, Tuskegee Institute, June 7, 1918, folder "M," box 1, Entry 96, Record Group 470, National Archives, College Park MD (hereafter NA).
3. National Safety Council poster, call no. ppc 70121B, Princeton University Poster Collection, 1863-1948, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC (hereafter cited as Princeton Poster Collection, Smithsonian Institution).
4. Rawls, *Wake Up, America!* 215-22.
5. Rawls, *Wake Up, America!* 195-226.
6. Mark Ellis, *Race, War, and Surveillance: African Americans and the United States Government during World War I* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 72.
7. "Address to the Committee on Public Information," folder "Misc.—unidentified," box 2, Entry 96, Record Group 470, NA.
8. *Baptist Leader*, May 31, 1918, unlabeled folder, box 589, Record Group 4, NA.

9. Press Release No. 9, unlabeled folder, box 589, Record Group 4, NA.
10. "Let the Mirror Win the War" promotional literature, unlabeled folder, box 589, Record Group 4, NA.
11. Negro Press Section to J. H. Bowman, Bowman's Café, Vicksburg, Mississippi, March 15, 1918, unlabeled folder, box 588, Record Group 4, NA.
12. Negro Press Section to George M. Cook, Washington DC, April 17, 1918, "Administration" folder, box 588, Record Group 4, NA.
13. Press Release No. 12, March 4, 1918, unlabeled folder, box 589, Record Group 4, NA.
14. "Win the War by Working Six Days per Week" literature and posters, folder 12HMA3, box 589, Record Group 4, NA.
15. E. G. Renesch, Chicago, "Emancipation Proclamation, September 22, 1862," #1718, Randolph Linsly Simpson African-American collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.
16. Chas. Gustrine, Chicago, 1918, reproduction number LC-USZC4-2426, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington DC.
17. "Inspection of Our Negro Troops in Alsace" poster, call no. 043.09633, Princeton Poster Collection, Smithsonian Institution.
18. For a description of these troops' service with the French, see Stephen L. Harris, *Harlem's Hellfighters: The African-American 369th Infantry in World War I* (Dulles VA: Brassey's, 2003), and Arthur E. Barbeau and Florette Henri, *The Unknown Soldiers: African-American Troops in World War I* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1996).
19. Emmett J. Scott, *Scott's Official History of the American Negro in the World War* (Chicago: Homewood Press, 1919), chap. 25.
20. For letters to southern mayors asking for theaters that blacks could attend, see "Negro State Directors, Theaters" folders, arranged by state, box 590, Record Group 4, NA.
21. All the following are in Record Group 4, NA: Illustrated Lecture on Food Conservation, in "Associations, Conventions, etc." folder, box 590; Letter to theater owners, unlabeled folder, box 589; "Organizing the Church for Food Conservation," in "Administration" folder, and "Negroes Offer Assistance to Food Administrator," unmarked folder, both in box 588; for sample Fourth of July programs and lectures, see "Program and Promo Material" folder, box 591.
22. "Don't Cut the Rope" lecture, "Negro State Directors—Division of Four Minute Men" folder, box 590, Record Group 4, NA.
23. "Mammy Must Learn to Conserve Food," unmarked clipping, "H. Q. Organization, Education Division, Negro Press Section, Press Clips" folder, box 590, Record Group 4, NA. This file includes other articles announcing meetings for cooks.
24. "True Blue," E. G. Renesch, Chicago, file B-584, box 80, Entry 40, Record

- Group 28, NA. Walter S. Bodle, "The Black Soldier in World War I," *Social Education* 49, no. 2 (1985): 129-32.
25. Alma P. Carmichael, Postmaster, Melbourne, Florida, to Postmaster General, August 5, 1919, file B-584, box 80, Entry 40, Record Group 28, NA.
26. E. G. Renesch, Chicago, "Colored Man Is No Slacker," poster in author's possession. A copy is also available in the Military poster collection, Art and Artifacts Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York City Public Library.
27. For an overview of the CTCA program see Nancy K. Bristow, *Making Men Moral: Social Engineering during the Great War* (New York: New York University Press, 1996).
28. A basic history of the Instruction Laboratory's development of instructional materials is provided in Robert S. Henry, *The Armed Forces Institute of Pathology: Its First Century 1862-1962* (Washington DC: Office of the Surgeon General, 1964), 170-87. The venereal disease instructional lantern slide lecture is located in World War I Lantern Slide Training Sets, Set F-C3, Otis Historical Archives, National Museum of Health and Medicine, Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Washington DC.
29. "Help the negro people help their own" poster, call no. ppc 65234B, Princeton Poster Collection, Smithsonian Institution.
30. Crispus Attucks Circle for War Relief Investigation, June 12, 1918, file #0G 98505, roll 475, Record Group 65, NA.
31. Aldwin N. Moore, Colonial Trust Building, to William M. Russie, American Red Cross Institute, July 13, 1918, file #0G 98505, roll 475, Record Group 65, NA.
32. Ellis, *Race, War, and Surveillance*, 267.
33. Report filed by agent W. S. Carman, June 11, 1918, file #0G 98505, roll 475, Record Group 65, NA.
34. Crispus Attucks Circle for War Relief report, August 1, 1918, file #0G 98505, roll 475, Record Group 65, NA.
35. Circle for Negro War Relief poster, pamphlets, and stationary. Unmarked folders, box 589, Record Group 4, NA.
36. "Help Our Coloured Soldiers" poster, call no. ppc 76529B, Princeton Poster Collection, Smithsonian Institution.
37. B. W. Brittain, "The Dawn of Hope," #1717, Randolph Linsly Simpson African-American collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.
38. "Our Colored Heroes," Military poster collection, Art and Artifacts Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York City Public Library.
39. Controle postal, IV armée, Rapport de la Correspondance de ou pour

l'étranger du 26 Mai au 1 juin 1918, 16N 1409, Service historique de l'Armée de terre, Château de Vincennes, Paris.

40. Arthur W. Little, *From Harlem to the Rhine: The Story of New York's Colored Volunteers* (New York: Covici, Friede, 1936), 195.

41. Little, *From Harlem to the Rhine*, 196.

42. James Jones interview in *Harlem Hellfighters*, film by George Merlis and Roscoe Lee Browne (New Video Group; A&E Home Video, History Channel, 1997).

43. W. E. B. DuBois, "Returning Soldiers," *Crisis* 18 (May 1919): 13-14.

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8

Segodniashnii Lubok: Art, War, and National Identity

Soon after the outbreak of war in 1914, Russia's imperial government organized an exhibition of patriotic posters called "War and Publishing," which was held in Petrograd in 1914. Many publishers were represented in this exhibition, but the series put out by a company called Segodniashnii Lubok (Today's Lubok) was singled out by critics as, in the word of one commentator, "the most amusing and probably the most ingenious."¹ The Moscow publisher Mikhail Gordetskii had established the Segodniashnii Lubok to produce propagandistic anti-German posters and postcards in support of Russia's war effort. The artists of Segodniashnii Lubok appropriated the formal properties of the *lubok* (plural *lubki*), or the Russian popular print, which at that time was considered the most uniquely Russian form of "folk" art. Today these artists are identified as leaders in the prerevolutionary Russian "avant-garde": Kazimir Malevich, Vladimir Maia-kovskii, Artistakh Lentulov, Ilia Mashkov, David Burliuk, and Vasilli Chekrugin.

In this essay I examine the posters designed by the artists of Segodniashnii Lubok, asking how Russian folk art forms, particularly the *lubok*, were used by both artistic and social elites as part of a nationalist discourse that defined "Russianness"