

LETTER FROM AN AFRICAN AMERICAN MOTHER.

“Georgia,” the mother of a nine-year-old son, wrote this letter in 1943.

This is my problem – keeping alive in him that pride and eagerness to help his country win this war. I have read much about the tasks and duties of mothers in wartime. Mine is a big job – much bigger than that of some mothers, for I am a Negro mother, and first, in order to keep that pride and love of his country alive in the heart of my little boy, I’ve got to fight against the resentment and discouragement that wells up sometimes in my own heart.

The fanatics* in my own race almost cause me to waver at times. They say: “What are we fighting for? If we help win the war, we will continue to be kicked around, discriminated against, denied the right to make a decent living.”

I have faith in the goodness of America, because I’m an American.

Yes, I have faith in America, and I love it. I believe in it in spite of the fanatics. I believe that America will eventually wipe out this challenge to her democracy, and that the time will come when no person need fear that he cannot become a truly great American because of race, color or creed.* I believe that after we win this war, we will emerge as an even greater nation. I will keep this faith alive in my own heart, and in the heart of my little boy.

*Have students define and discuss these terms.

As quoted in *Maureen Honey (ed.), Bitter Fruit: African American Women in World War II* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999).

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. Discuss “Georgia’s” claim, “Mine is a big job – bigger than that of some mothers, for I am a Negro mother.”
2. Has “Georgia’s” belief that America would become truly democratic been fulfilled? (She predicted this in 1943.)