

LETTER FROM AN AFRICAN AMERICAN SOLDIER.

This edited letter titled, “And I Fight for Democracy?,” and dated November 5, 1943, was sent to the Secretary of War in Washington, D.C., and was signed, “A Loyal Negro Soldier.”

I was selected by the President and citizens to fight for a “now – existing Democracy.” I am one soldier who waited to be drafted.* I didn’t volunteer out. I am learning to fight to protect whatever cause for which the Allies* are fighting. I am forced to learn to be ready to kill or be killed for “Democracy.” When the fighting time arrives, I will fight for?

I learned early in life that for the Negro* there is no Democracy. Of course, I know the principles set forth in the Amendments of the Bill of Rights.* I learned that I knew nothing of the operation of a true democratic form of government. I found that a Negro in civilian life has a very tough time with segregation* in public places and discrimination in industry. I knew this and I thought that white people would react differently toward a colored* soldier.

I had heard and read of the cruel treatment given colored soldiers and somehow, even among existing conditions of civilian life. I couldn’t understand how white people could be so down on one who wears the uniform of the fighting forces of this country. From civilian life I was drafted, and now I prepare to fight for the continuation of discriminatory practices against me and my people.

I am a soldier; I made no answer but deep down inside I knew when I faced America’s enemies I will fight for the protection of my loved ones at home.

Listen, Negro America, I am writing this article believing that it will act as a stimulant. You need awakening. Many of you have come to realize that your race is fighting on the battlefields of the world but do you know why they fight? I can answer this question.

The fight on the battlefield is for your existence, not for Democracy. It is upon you that each soldier depends. In my fight, my thoughts will invariably return to you who can fight from Democracy. You must do this for the soldiers because Democracy will be, and Democracy must, must be won at home – not on battlefields but through your bringing pressure to bear on Congress.

*Have students research and discuss these terms.

Reproduced in *Phillip McGuire, Taps for a Jim Crow Army: Letters From Black Soldiers in World War II* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 1983), 85, 87.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. Discuss this soldier’s assertion that “for the Negro there is no Democracy.”
2. What were some of the connections, if any, between fighting for democracy on the battlefield and at home?