

The Negro American in the War

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THE war has transformed the American negro into the negro American. Because he has been doing big things for his country his sense of nationality has grown—his citizenship become a living reality.

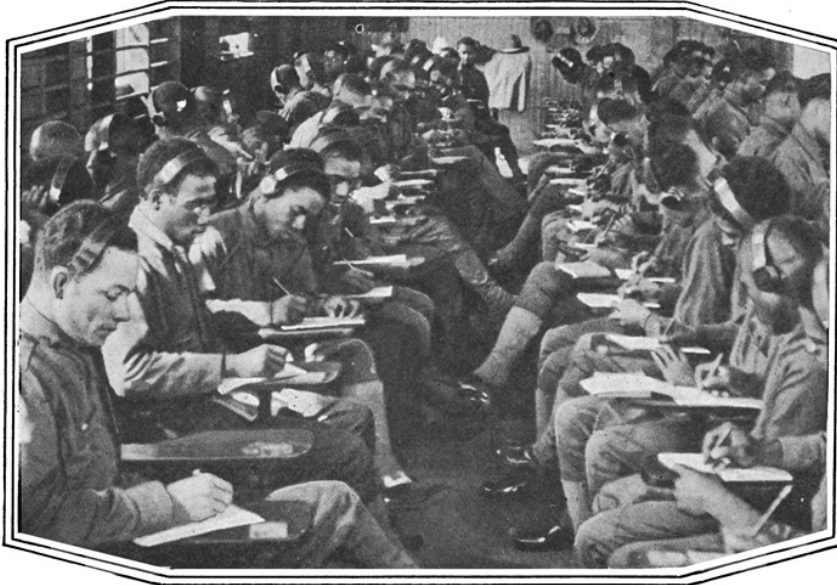
It is inspiring to see the strange and splendid things that the 12,000,000 colored Americans have been doing for the cause of liberty. They have, for example, contributed 300,000 of their young men to the American army. Of these nearly 1,000 are commissioned officers of the line. There are negro colonels, and many of every rank below this in increasing ratio.

A large proportion of these troops are already abroad and have, as all the world knows, been in action against the Germans and proved themselves magnificent fighters. One entire regiment was decorated for bravery and several individual soldiers have been cited for deeds of great valor.

But the negro Americans have been doing more than fighting abroad. Less is known of the faithful work that the folks at home have been carrying on to back up their boys, but it is not less excellent or less a revelation of the real heart of the race.

Many important war posts are held by negroes, besides those in the active forces. Secretary of War Baker, for example, has a special assistant, Emmett J. Scott, who is, in normal times, Secretary of Tuskegee Institute, and who has an office and corps of assistants and wide powers in the adjustment of questions affecting his people. Dr. George E. Haynes is similarly a special assistant to the Secretary of Labor. Ernest T. Atwell is food administrator for the negro people and has

A radio class of negro soldiers. Over 20,000 negroes, unskilled laborers before the war, have been educated in technical schools in branches of army work requiring trained specialists.



organized them for united cooperation in most of the States. In the army there are 250 negro medical officers and 40 chaplains. In Y. M. C. A. work the colored folks have been exceedingly active and have contributed 150 well-equipped secretaries, among them many such men as George W. Cabaniss, who left a medical practice of many thousands a year to contribute his services to the good of his people.

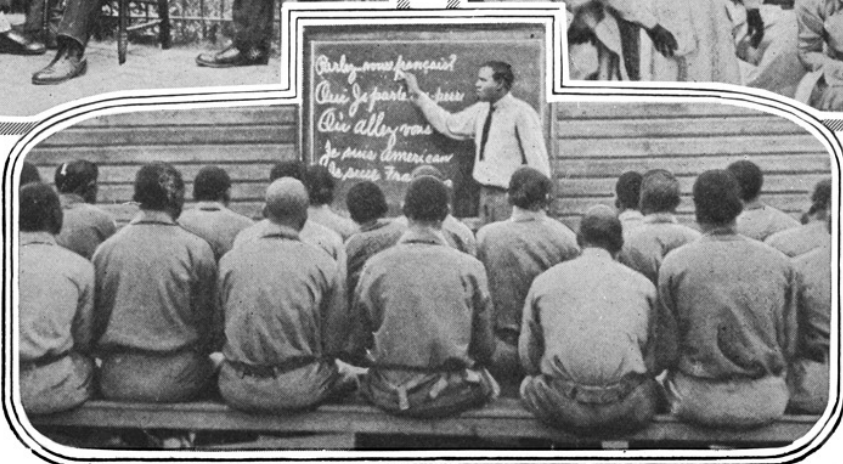
But the women of the race have not been behindhand.

They have organized Red Cross chapters; have equipped and sent over scores of nurses, and have been highly successful in the managing of recreational activities in the training camps. It all sounds rather like a catalogue, yet this is inevitable, for the story is a long chapter of group and individual achievements. The results as yet can be felt rather than seen, except in such signal achievements as the negro contributions to the Liberty Loans and the work of the negro technical schools in training 20,000 boys in skilled trades that form part of the army's work. Most of these boys started as unskilled workers and under the stimulus of intensive courses have become radio operators, carpenters, electricians and machinists. In such capacities they are going to France for the nation's service, and when they return will be fitted for useful employment that will earn them far more than they have ever earned before.

But far greater than all this is the negroes' awakened sense of citizenship. They have been serving under the American flag in a foreign land and that flag, perhaps for the first time, has become wholly and richly theirs. They will come home realizing that their country is a truly great one, proud of them and a fitting object of their pride. They have sat in on the greatest game in our history and learned to serve honorably in a great and unselfish cause, one in spirit with all of us. The reaction of this point of view on the folks at home will be profound, and it will inevitably go a long way toward healing old wounds and creating a better understanding and cooperation in this democracy.



One of the greatest benefits to the negro and the country growing out of the war is the increased interest of the negro in his citizenship. The daily and periodical press is followed more closely than before.



Negro soldiers learning French at an army cantonment.

The colored chapters of the Red Cross have been particularly active, and the women have entered the war with the same enthusiasm and resolve to see the struggle through that the negro soldiers have shown.