

**Excerpt from “Returning Soldiers” by W. E. B. Du Bois (May 1919)**

[T]oday we return! We return from the slavery of uniform which the world’s madness demanded us to don to the freedom of civil garb. We stand again to look American squarely in the face and call a spade a spade. We sing: This country of ours, despite all its better souls have done and dreamed, is yet a shameful land.

It *lynches*....

It *disfranchises* its own citizens....

It encourages *ignorance*....

It *steals* from us....

It *insults* us....

This is the country to which we Soldiers of Democracy return. This is the fatherland for which we fought! But it is *our* fatherland. It was right for us to fight. The faults of *our* country are *our* faults. Under similar circumstances, we would fight again. But by the God of Heaven, we are cowards and jackasses if now that that war is over, we do not marshal every ounce of our brain and brawn to fight a sterner, longer, more unbending battle against the forces of hell in our own land.

We *return*.

We *return from fighting*.

We *return fighting*.

Make way for Democracy! We saved it in France, and by the Great Jehovah we will save it in the United States of America, or know the reason why.

SOURCE: W. E. B. Du Bois, “Returning Soldiers,” May 1919. In *Let Nobody Turn Us Around: Voices of Resistance, Reform, and Renewal; An African American Anthology*, edited by Manning Marable and Leith Mullings, 244-245. New York: Bowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000.