

*penul note*  
A Memorial to The President

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Ref. J. J. J. J.  
Boston*

*over to  
Ref. J. J. J. J.  
5/3/17*

Memorial to the President of the United States and the People thereof.  
To the President, Woodrow Wilson,  
White House, Washington, D. C.

Sir,

*Boston, Mass. April 20, 1917.*

When this European war began the world involuntarily speculated whether the Irish would be loyal and the Russian Jews, because of the denial of home rule by England, and of civil and political rights by Russia. As the United States of America enters this awful war the world speculates whether Americans of color will be loyal because of the denial of rights to a majority of them.

Since Colored Americans in the past have offered their lives in every way for the country, if Germany is seeking to induce them to revolt, it but proves how notorious is their proscription. If this nation, knowing the active loyalty of the Americans in the past, believes this alleged plotting could succeed, it shows that the government and people believe that Colored Americans are most unjustly treated.

The Boston Branch of the National Equal Rights League, meeting when the country is at war, realizing its responsibility as a branch of the only nation-wide organization formed by and of and led by Colored citizens to oppose race and color discrimination, declares false all charges of disloyalty.

Colored Americans would be less than human if they did not feel bitterly every bar from employment, from public accommodation because of our race and color. Deep is the resentment against enforced segregation by city, state, or the federal government



whether in the civil or military service. But we have no thought of taking up arms against this country. Ours it has been to save the government from rebellion. This work of our fathers we shall not destroy. There is not gold enough in all the treasuries of the nation of the earth to corrupt us, for it is not a question of money, but of equality of rights.

Let neither white nor Colored Americans seek to deny the truths of human nature. Soldiers of democracies fight better than soldiers of autocracies. The same men fight better if in time of peace they can sell their labor in the open market than if denied work because of race; fight better if public accommodation in peace depends on conduct and the price, than if it is denied for color; fight more eagerly if in peace encouraged by possession of a free man's ballot, than if repressed by its denial; fight with more heart if in peace they have court protection than if their very race means possible murder by the mob.

To the national government which calls us all to war, to our fellow Americans of every race variety we would appeal in the name of fairplay, of justice and humanity. We are all citizens of a common country.

There is need no longer of subjection of Americans to the race prejudices of fellow Americans. In the presence of a common danger and a common obligation, with a war devastating Europe caused by racial clanishness and racial hatred, under Almighty God, let the United States of America and the people thereof give up race proscription and persecution at home. Let the door of the workshop, the school, the college, the civil service, the army, the navy, the military school, the naval school, now and henceforth open alike to every citizen of the Republic without regard to race and without distinction of color. Let the right to travel, to vote,



3.  
to have court protection be free, without barrier or denial.

Give , Mr. President and all our Governors, the same encouragement for volunteering or enlisting to white , to brown, to yellow, to black, Americans all, by vouchsafing the same free chance to enlist, to rise by merit, and on return home, the same right to civil service, and to civil rights without bar or segregation.


With our great Republic entering a world war for humanity, remove the need for the Colored mother and father to suffer under the feeling that their son will return to find the color line drawn at factory, eating place, playhouse, and ballot-box; make it not necessary for the Colored soldier in the trenches to suffer with the thought that as he bares his breast to the bullet his sister is segregated in the government service at Washington and his mother in danger of the lynching mob.

Recognizing the world honored ethics of national defense, as England promised home-rule to the Irish and Russia abolition of restriction and the ghetto to her Jews, the United States of America is now called upon to grant the abolition of federal segregation and of disfranchisement to her Colored citizens.

As this nation goes forth to fight the "natural foe of liberty", let Americans highly resolve that all shall have liberty within her borders. As she fights for democracy as against autocracy let there be a democracy at home 100%, not 90% strong. As our President declares we "fight for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own government", let us all resolve that when the war is over such shall be the privilege of 100% of our people, not 90%.

Now is the time for all in authority to declare for the aboli-



tion of all racial discriminations and proscriptions and for  
all to join in our unhyphenated Americanism for victory under  
the favor of the God of all mankind. 

Boston, Mass. April 20, 1917.

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