



# Protecting and Serving a Resentful Nation

*Dr. Rufus O. Jimerson*

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# Protecting and Serving a Resentful Nation

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## **Protecting and Serving a Resentful Nation** Dr. Rufus O. Jimerson

The purpose of this book is to describe the many heroic sacrifices made by African-Americans in protecting and serving the nation from its enemies. These acts of valor were made for a nation that was structurally resentful against African-Americans until the triumph of the Civil Rights Movement. Black veterans of World War II were integrally involved in the leadership and sacrifices made to end Jim Crow and its functionally “separate and unequal or inferior treatment” of blacks. These veterans of the fight abroad and at home are highlighted, including service medals awarded and those worthy but not yet acknowledged for the highest honors. The road to an inclusive and diverse armed services has taken veterans from humiliation, racial violence, discrimination and resistance to inclusion. This inclusive-ness is not finite as their involvement is now being threatened by disproportionate downsizing and displacement by a private army. Therefore, the struggle that has cost the lives and livelihood of so many black veterans in the past is being challenged along with gains incurred by the Civil Rights Movement, like voters’ rights. Racial resentment has not been erased, it is subtle rather than overt as it was in Jim Crow America. The book begins in Pre-World War I during the resurgence of the Klan, its racial violence and terror. President Woodrow Wilson endorses a film *The Birth of the Nation* that glorifies the Klan as “White Saviors” against the threat of the savage and brutish blacks. Wilson segregates federal employment, services and accommodations. Blacks who have fought valiantly in all of the nation’s wars are relegated to non-combat service at the onset of World War I. This racial demotion is offset by the French who use African-Americans to turn the tide of war. They award these “Hellfighters” with France’s highest honors. After World War I, triumphs overseas and parades in their black communities, these veterans became the targets for “Red Summer of 1919” through 1921. A number were lynched and beaten. Their homes, churches and businesses were ransacked and burnt to the ground in numerous black communities, like Greenwood in Tulsa and Rosewood in Florida. The homecoming became a return to racial animus, resentment, disfranchisement, and subservient treatment. World War II promised an opportunity for fair and equal treatment as sought. The Jim Crow policies and the resentment persisted at the beginning of the war. Most blacks were relegated to non-combat duties. Civil rights leaders like A. Philip Randolph, the Black Press, and Eleanor Roosevelt lobbied for the full participation of African-Americans in combat and as the war dragged on they were included. Once included in combat, black units persisted in turning the tide of the war. The Tuskegee Airmen helped American bombers destroy German bases and its war industry. The “Black Panthers” Tank Battalion role in saving the Allies from the German counterattack at the Battle of the Bulge is highlighted. That role includes their merits in driving the Germans back into their homeland and freeing Jews from concentration camps. Acknowledged is the veterans of World War II that successfully lobbied President Truman to order the integration of the armed services following the war. That order and valor shown in the Korean War ended segregation. Veterans are recognized for taking the lead in the Civil Rights Movement and continued services through the Gulf Wars. The book points out that Presidents of a less resentful nation in the last two decades awarded these veterans with Medals of Honor, Purple Hearts and Distinguished Service Medals that should have been awarded during or immediately after their valor and sacrifices in combat. The book also examines newer and subtle changes to inclusiveness and the benefits of service.

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