Call for Essays

Discussion published by Hal Friedman on Tuesday, September 20, 2016

A Call for Essays:

“Marching Forward, Forward Marching: African American Veterans Politics and Civil Rights in Twentieth Century America”

In 1919, black activist and scholar W. E. B. Du Bois rendered a startling observation about the American landscape after World War One. After returning from Europe where he witnessed the employment of black soldiers in Europe, the venerable editor of the NAACP’s Magazine the Crisis published an editorial in which he chronicled the American racial politics and attitudes toward African Americans during the war. His essay closed with a stinging indictment of American racial discrimination but closed with a prescient lament about the demands for democracy that veterans would make in the wake of all of American wars waged throughout the twentieth century. “We return from the slavery of the uniform of which the world’s madness demanded us to don,” Du Bois wrote, to the freedom of civilian garb . . . 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 . . . 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.”

Du Bois’s reflections on the struggles of black veterans of World War One and its immediate aftermath challenge those of us who teach, research, and write about the ways that African Americans in and out of uniform thought about and acted upon ideas regarding civil rights and freedom throughout the twentieth century. Heeding the provocative invocation made by Du Bois and other public intellectuals, this special volume of scholarly essays will explore the ways in which African American ex-GIs have framed, interpreted, expressed, and acted upon ideas about the struggle for equality waged in the wake of America’s wars from World War One through the Gulf Wars on Terror.

The editors are currently seeking one author to contribute an essay on Vietnam War-era African American ex-GIs involved in civil rights activities as well as a second author who can write on African American ex-GIs from the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT).

Reflecting the dynamic interplay of structure and agency, each essay should be approximately 30-35 typed, double-spaced pages in length (12 point font) including end-notes and will examine grassroots struggle waged by veterans and the multi-faceted local-national relationships formed between black ex-servicemen, federal policy, civil rights organizations, and local communities in order to show that veterans’ politics were more complex than black-white, GI-Government relations. Marching Forward, Forward Marching will use the Chicago Manual of Style, 16th Edition (Chicago, IL, 2010) for citations. Draft essays should be submitted by April 1st and will be reviewed by the co-editors with
the final drafts submitted for publication by the Lexington Books of Rowman-Littlefield later next year. In an email, please send a cover letter with your name, postal address, e-mail address, phone number, and fax number along with include the title of your essay and your manuscript to:

Profs. Robert F. Jefferson and Hal Friedman, editors

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Submission Deadline: April 1st