

# NARRATIVE EYE

## PROPELLING THE WRITTEN WORD

The Empire Needs Men is a Narrative Eye project. Narrative Eye is an organisation dedicated to promoting equality and social change through education. We are dedicated to the production and promotion of creative works that document and challenge the inequalities and injustices faced by African and African Caribbean people in the UK.

We promote the rich cultural and historical contribution made by people of African origin in the UK, through publishing literary works and research, producing plays and films. Our work also includes delivering courses, workshops and seminars on topics such as history, literature, and cultural and social issues.

We are committed to creating new and creative ways that enables African and African Caribbean people to participate fully in society and increase their social mobility, prosperity and employability. We are committed to raising the level of cultural awareness amongst Black Britons to enable them to overcome their social exclusion.

We provide tailor-made workshops to the specific needs of beneficiaries. We have presented work to a wide and diverse range of audiences. The majority of our educational work has been with participants from socially deprived communities across the UK with a high proportion of Black residents.

### **Past Publications and Plays**

We have produced three novels including, *Waiting to Explode*, *The Black Prince*, and *The Phoenix* (which won the 2009 African Achievers award for Communication and Media). In 2013 Narrative Eye published *Blackamoors: Africans in Tudor England, their Presence, Status and Origins*.

### ***About the Empire Needs Men***

Narrative Eye has produced the Empire Needs Men project to commemorate the many forgotten African soldiers who fought in WWI. We have put together this booklet, a touring exhibition and a school pack. If you would like the project to come near you please do not hesitate to contact us using the information provided.

## *Introduction*

28<sup>th</sup> June 1914 is a defining date for world history. The assassination of the heir to the Austria-Hungary throne, Archduke Ferdinand, was shot dead by a Serbian rebel. This led to the mobilisation of troops in four different continents, casualties of over 37 million people worldwide and the disintegration of two empires. But how did the death of one man lead to such a catastrophe, and what has it to do with Africans?

The disagreement between the European powers that led to World War I started well before 1914. In 1885, the Chancellor of Germany Otto Von Bismarck was the chair of the Berlin Conference. At this conference 14 different nations participated, however, none were from Africa or Asia. The purpose of the conference was to carve out the continent of Africa and share the land amongst each European nation present. The shares were not equal. Britain and France managed to snatch away the largest shares leaving Germany, Italy, Spain and Portugal with the crumbs.

The British almost fulfilled their dream of colonising Africa from Cape (South Africa) to Cairo (Egypt), while the French colonised most of West Africa. Not everyone was happy with their share. Germany one of the biggest countries in Europe and with the largest European population, felt aggrieved at only receiving small portions of land in East and West Africa. Similarly, Italy, the ancestors of 'European civilisation' (Rome) felt it was due more than the crumbs it received.

After this conference, alliances were made by different European powers to protect each other's interests. The pacts and treaties that were signed were still in effect in 1914, when war was declared.

Effectively those who had gained the biggest colonies, France, Britain and Belgium were the allied forces and Germany and the Ottoman Empire who felt they lost out at 'the scramble for Africa' were the Central Powers. Italy, who naturally was allied to Germany at the beginning of the war, did not join as expected on Germany's side, but strategically joined the allied side, in assumption that when the allied forces won, Italy would receive war bootie, i.e. German Colonies in Africa.

Essentially the war was about land in Africa. Africans from Europe, the Caribbean Islands, Africa and North America fought in the war and millions of Africans died in the war. Africa contributed massively to the war effort.

## *The British West Indian Regiment*

### *History:*

The 1st West India Regiment was formed in 1795 in Jamaica. By 1799 there were twelve single-battalion West India Regiments - some fought in the fierce Caribbean campaigns of the Napoleonic wars and others in the Ashanti wars in West Africa. In 1892, Lance Corporal (later Sergeant), William James Gordon of the First Battalion, The West India Regiment, received Britain's highest and very rarely awarded gallantry decoration, the Victoria Cross for saving the life of his commanding officer.



### *When War broke out:*

There were different views as to whether the Caribbean islanders should join the war. Some Black people thought the war was a European war and Black people should have nothing to do with it. Marcus Garvey said young men from the islands should fight in order to prove their loyalty and to be treated as equals.

At the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914, the British War Office resisted acting on the numerous requests from men of the West Indies and other colonies to join up. It was not until a year later in 1915 when the casualties of trench warfare led to a shortage of white soldiers, that the War Office began to recruit heavily in the West Indies. It had been previously thought that guns and ammunition in the hands of Black men would be a major mistake.

### *Recruitment:*

To recruit soldiers, coercion was used - the local officials and other recruiting bodies tended to employ moral persuasion in order to attract volunteers as well as the typical 'carrot and stick' measures - medals, glory, discipline, exercise and free land at the cessation of hostilities. The economic advantages of enlisting also constituted a central theme used by recruiters in virtually every territory. In the prevailing conditions of high unemployment, spiraling cost of living, and depressed wages, the groups most susceptible to the economic incentives included plantation workers, artisans and the many unemployed working class in the towns.

### *The war effort:*

Gifts to the value of several thousand pounds were contributed by the colonies to the war effort; these included sugar, rum, oil, lime, cotton, rice, clothing, logwood, and nine aeroplanes. A total of 11 ambulances and adequate funds for their maintenance were donated, and approximately two million pounds sterling was given to the British government and charities. These donations were made in spite of severe hardships caused by major increases in the cost of living throughout the region which occurred with the proclamation of war. Jamaican women did their part too. They organised Flag Day fundraisers, a War Relief Fund and sewed woolen garments for soldiers. In addition to the women's funds, there were others including the Gleaner Fund and Palace Amusement Co.'s Palace War Fund.

### *Fighting:*

By the end of the war over 15,500 West Indians had joined the BWIR (British West Indian Regiment) and had experienced military service in England, Italy, Egypt, India, France, Belgium, Palestine, Mesopotamia (Iraq) and East Africa. Some were even sent to Scotland as wood cutters. When they arrived, they often found that fighting was to be done by white soldiers only - Black soldiers were assigned the dirty, dangerous jobs of loading ammunition, laying telephone wires and digging trenches. Conditions were appalling.

Yet there is evidence that some Caribbean soldiers were involved in actual combat in France. One account tells how a group fought off a German assault armed only with knives they had brought from home. 81 medals for bravery were awarded, and 49 men were mentioned in dispatches.

### *Racism*

*Halifax incident:* On 6<sup>th</sup> March 1916 the third Jamaican contingent, comprising of 25 officers and 1,115 other ranks, departed for England on board the ship *Verdala*. Due to enemy submarine activity in the region, the Admiralty ordered the ship to make a diversion to Halifax (Canada) but before it could reach its destination it encountered a blizzard. Since the *Verdala* was not adequately heated and the Black soldiers had not been properly equipped with warm clothing, substantial casualties resulted: approximately 600 men suffered from exposure and frostbite and there were five immediate deaths.

## *After the War*

In November 1918, when war ended, all the BWIR were transferred to Toaranto, Italy. Thousands of BWIR were held for close to a year at the end of the war by the British Office due to labour shortages. They were effectively imprisoned. As a result of racism, not only were they assigned to hard labour but also demeaning labour such as cleaning toilets for white troops. They were also refused day passes and recreational time. Some of the Black soldiers were unhappy about this situation, so they mutinied. After four days of mutiny, the entire BWIR were disarmed. Those who participated in the uprising were severely punished. One was shot, one executed by the firing squad and another sentenced to time in prison. After this incident, 60 of the BWIR had meetings discussing the question of Black rights, self-determination and closer union in the West Indies. An organisation called the Caribbean League was formed at the gathering. When BWIR eventually went home, they were denied a hero's welcome.

When the disgruntled BWIR soldiers began arriving back in the West Indies they quickly joined a wave of worker protests resulting from a severe economic crisis produced by the war, and this influenced Black Nationalist ideology espoused by Marcus Garvey (Leader of the UNIA) and others. Disenchanted soldiers and angry workers unleashed a series of protest actions and riots in a number of territories including Jamaica, Grenada and British Honduras.

The Picture below shows the British West Indian Regiment (*Copyright IWM*)



## Winston Churchill Millington: British West Indies Regiment



Winston Churchill Millington was born in Barbados in 1893. In 1897 he moved to Trinidad with his father, who was a teacher. In 1911 Winston started working at a secondary school in Port of Spain, the capital of Trinidad. He was one of the first to volunteer for B Company in Trinidad, which along with soldiers from Guyana, Trinidad, St Vincent, St Lucia, Barbados, Jamaica, the Bahamas and British Honduras would form the British West Indies Regiment. In December 1916 they sailed from England to Alexandria in Egypt, on their way to fight in the Palestine Campaign. It was not long before the machine-gun crews of the West Indian regiment were tested out.

In these battles a number of soldiers were picked out for their bravery. One of them was Winston Millington. When the Ottoman Turks attacked, the rest of his gun crew were killed by enemy fire, but Winston continued to fire his gun for several minutes. He was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for his gallantry and coolness in action.

"The men (in the machine-gun section) worked very well ... showing keen interest in their work, cheerfulness, coolness under fire and the ability to carry it out under difficulties." *The commanding officer of 162 Machine-gun Company praised the work of the West Indian gunners*

## *The British Experience*

### *History*

Many Black British soldiers have served in the army and the navy. This includes service during the American War of Independence (1775-1785), the battle of Trafalgar (1805) and the battle of Waterloo (1815).

### *When war broke out*

There were Black populations in major cities such as London, Liverpool, Bristol, and Cardiff. Just like their white counterparts, Black British soldiers were conscripted in different regiments of the British Army. In "Tyneside Irish" John Sheen quotes a veteran who remembered several Black soldiers serving with his service battalion of the Northumberland Fusiliers. The Black soldiers were nicknamed "smoked Geordies" by some of the soldiers. In one of the Osprey books on the British Army in World War I there is a photo of a recruitment party in Tiger Bay, Cardiff, which shows a number of Black soldiers. The Durham Light Infantry and Shropshire Light Infantry Museums have WWI period photos of Black soldiers serving in their units. There are pictures of some Hampshire Regiment men at Browndown Camp in Gosport 1918. Among the eight or so pictured, there is a Black soldier wearing the Hamps Reg uniform. This evidence shows us the participation of Black Britons was wide spread and they joined various regiments.

We don't have much information about the many Black British soldiers who fought because they were in integrated armies, and had English names; therefore it is really difficult to distinguish who was Black without picture evidence or a rigorous investigation.

### *The war effort*

Caribbean and African sailors came to settle in Britain during the war. Britain needed many merchant seamen to transport goods across the ocean during war time. These were none-combatant. These men settled in port cities, especially Liverpool and Cardiff.

Between October 1915 and March 1916, Seaford in Sussex was used as a training camp for men from the West Indies, in preparation for fighting in Europe. On October 4, 1915 750 men arrived from the West Indies, mainly from Jamaica, Trinidad, Barbados, St. Vincent, St. Lucia, Guyana and British Honduras. Two weeks later 755 men with the 22nd battalion from Jamaica arrived in Seaford. In total 16,000 soldiers were raised

from the West Indies, plus two battalions of regular West Indian regiment, numbering some 4,500 volunteers, who arrived in special contingents from the West Indies. Nineteen West Indians died at the camp in Seaford between October 20, 1915 and January 30, 1916.

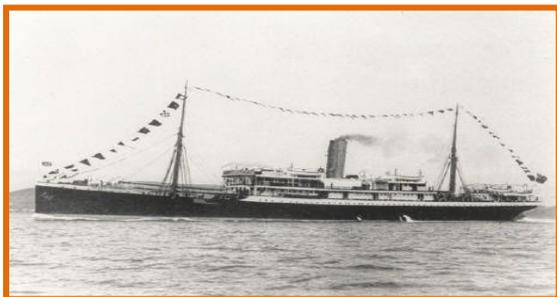
### *Fighting*

The Black British soldiers served mainly on the Western Front. They fought in all the major battles, including the Battle of Somme.

### *Racism*

There was a racist law in the army that said that all officers must be of European decent, therefore Black Britons who did extremely well in serving their country were not allowed to get promoted, although there are some exceptions to this.

### *The SS Mendi*



The SS Mendi was a ship transporting mostly African troops from South Africa to the Western Front. On its way to Plymouth it stopped in Nigeria to be fitted with a gun. On 21<sup>st</sup> February 1917, 20 km from Isle of White, the ship was met with a catastrophic disaster. It was a cold and foggy night when an empty meat transportation vessel, SS Darro runs into the SS Mendi amidships almost cutting it in half. The captain of the SS Darro Henry W Stump did not even stop to help. On that day the lives of 649 men were lost, 607 where African men mostly from the Pondo region in South Africa.

The Reverend Isaac Dyobha pictured above said to have calmed his men by saying "Be quiet and calm, my countrymen. What is happening now is what you came to do...you are going to die, but that is what you came to do. Brothers, we are drilling the death drill. I, a Xhosa, say you are my brothers...Swazis, Pondos, Basotho...so let us die like brothers. We are the sons of Africa. Raise your war-cries, brothers, for though they made us leave our assegais in the kraal, our voices are left with our bodies."

The investigation into the accident found the captain of the *Darro*, Henry W. Stump, to be guilty of "having travelled at a dangerously high speed in thick fog, and of having failed to ensure that his ship emitted the necessary fog sound signals." As a result, the captain of the SS *Darro* had his licence suspended for a year. Effectively he was let off with what appears to be a slap on the wrist, because of racism which valued the lives of African less, even though these men were coming to fight and die for the British Empire.

### *After the war*

Many of the merchant seamen and those Black soldiers returning from the Western front experienced racism. In 1919 there were race riots in port cities such as Liverpool and Cardiff. These were riots where white men were trying to drive out the Africans from their homes and their jobs. Many of the African soldiers joined Marcus Garvey's organisation Universal Negro Improvement Association. There were branches of the UNIA in England and Wales.

### ***Private John Williams: Black Soldiers in the British Army***

Private John Williams, whose picture appeared in the *African Telegraph* in March 1919 with the title 'The Man whom White Soldiers Call "The Black V.C."' The caption then describes Williams as having been awarded the DCM, MM, Russian Cross of St George, French Médaille militaire and Légion d'honneur. He doesn't appear to be wearing quite that many medals in the photo, but is certainly decorated and carrying four wound stripes. His 'many brave deeds' would supposedly have been enough to "earn any European the V.C." It is clear he fought in the trenches with the British army as he was awarded French medals for bravery. Some young men from African and the Caribbean islands had settled in Britain as students before the outbreak of the war.



*"Some of these young men left their studies to join the British Army upon the outbreak of hostilities and rendered a very good account of themselves in the trenches and fields of Flanders, many of them wear coveted distinctions, and one from Oxford University won the M.C. for a particularly daring deed with the Tank Corps."*

## *George Edward Kingsley Bemand: Black Soldiers in the British Army*



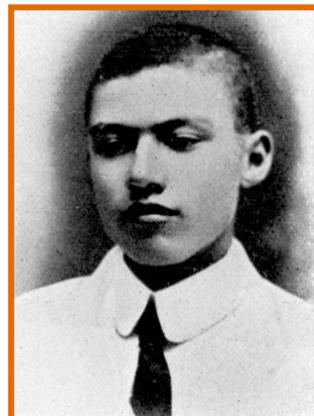
George Edward Kingsley Bemand was born in Jamaica in 1892 and moved to Britain in 1908 on the Lusitania (ship) at the age of 16. Passenger lists for their journey (via the USA) record that Minnie Bemand and her children were going to join George Bemand (senior) at Upper House Farm, near Leominster (Herefordshire). Mrs Bemand, George junior and his siblings are recorded as 'African' in the 'race or people' column.

G.E.K. Bemand went to Dulwich College in South London, then Bemand went to University College, London, to study Engineering in 1913. In the first year of the Great War, though, he joined the army.

Bemand joined the University of London Officers Training Corps in October 1914 and (in May 1915) applied for a commission in the 30th (County Palatine) Divisional Artillery.

In May 1915 Bemand became a Second Lieutenant in the Royal Field Artillery. He went to the Western Front in August 1916. In October 1916, he transferred to "Y" 5 Trench Mortar Battery, attached to 5th Division. On Boxing Day 1916, he was killed by a shell.

His brother also served in the artillery: Harold Leslie Bemand (who had also been at Dulwich) joined in the ranks and also served on the Western Front. He died of his wounds in Belgium in 1917  
Picture of Harold Leslie Bemand (right).



## *The African Experience*

### *History*

By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Africa was colonised by European countries. Britain, France and Germany all had a share. As part of their method of colonisation and expansion they used African soldiers.

### *Recruitment*

The British enlisted the help of African chiefs and left them to find the men however they could. ( I don't understand left them to find the men however they could. Who left who?) Many Africans were forced to sign up. In the Congo the Belgians forced 260,000 men to be porters carrying soldiers, equipment and provisions. In East Africa, the British instituted a compulsory service order in 1915 covering all males aged 18-45. This was extended to Uganda in April 1917.

The recruitment of soldiers in Africa was reminiscent of slave raids and forced quotas on Chiefs. Many of the African soldiers had no rights and no choice.

The British Empire raised the following regiments to make war on German Colonies; The Kings Rifle Regiment, West African Frontier Force (WAFF), Nigerian Regiment, Gold Coast regiment, the Sierra Leone Battalion, The Gambia Company and the West African Regiment and The South African Labour Contingent.

"We came back one night from our yam farm. The chief called us and handed us over to a government messenger. I didn't know where we were going, but the chief and the messenger said that the white man had sent for us and we must go. After three days we reached the white man's compound. Plenty of others had arrived from other villages far away. And the white man wrote our names in a book. And tied a brass numbered ticket round our necks and gave each man a blanket and food.

Then he told us we were going to the Great War to help the king's soldiers who were preventing the Germans coming to our country and burning it. We left and marched far into the bush. The government police led the way and allowed no man to stop behind." - *A first-hand account of what it was like to be recruited. As told by No.1475, a carrier who was recruited in 1914. Quoted in The African Contribution to the Second World War.*

## *The war effort*

There were fund raising events to raise millions to help the Mother Country. There were also donations made in raw materials, such as iron and precious metals. Lots of food was also donated. Commodities such as oil nuts, cocoa, gold, bauxite, manganese (important for munitions production), grains, rubber, cotton, coffee, tobacco, lead and copper were all supplied by the colonies in Africa. The monetary donations from West Africa included, £847,379 from Gold Coast and £247,00 from Nigeria.

## *Fighting*

Over two million people in Africa made huge sacrifices for the European Allies. 100,000 men died in East Africa and 65,000 men from French North Africa and French West Africa lost their lives. Very few were combatant; most of them were used as porters. They were recruited to carry heavy weapons and supplies. They were badly paid and given food which was either of poor quality or entirely foreign to them. While travelling through new territories for them, they often fell sick and were affected by different types of malaria. On the continent of Africa, there was action along the coast. In the West and South, the Allies attacked Germany's African ports. They attacked Lome (in Togo), Douala (in Cameroun), Swakopmund and Luderitz Bay (in South West Africa).

In the East, German-held Dar-Es-Salaam was bombarded. In the North, the main concern of the British was to safeguard the Suez Canal. German South West Africa was brought under allied control in the first few months. Cameroon took longer to capture. The East Africa campaign took even longer.

Participants came from Nigeria, the Gambia, Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), South Africa, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Nyasaland (now Malawi), Kenya and the Gold Coast (now Ghana) Many saw active service in their home continent, taking part in the campaigns to capture the German-controlled territories of Togo, Cameroon, German South West Africa (now Namibia) and German East Africa (now Tanzania).

166 decorations were awarded to Africans including 39 DCM's (Distinguished Conduct Medal) and 24 Military Medals.

## *Racism*

All African troops were led by a white officer. The African troops most of the time lacked the right equipment to carry out the war effectively.



## *After the War*

Many African troops were left without pensions or provisions after the war. Many had to return to their country by themselves. This made a lot of the African troops angry and begin to agitate for independence.

### ***Sergeant George Williams: Kings African Rifles, African Troops***

Colour Sergeant George Williams, 1/3rd Regiment Kings African Rifles, was a Sudanese soldier. He was awarded the KAR Distinguished Conduct Medal for reconnaissance work at Tsavo, East Africa in September 1914. The next year in January 1915 at Jassin in the Uмба Valley, Colour (? Is this his name?) Sergeant Williams under a heavy enemy fire extricated the remainder of his platoon after one officer had been killed and the other seriously wounded.



Colour Sergeant Williams also managed to personally carry away the platoon machine gun after the crew and supporting carriers had all been killed or wounded. For this deed, the Divisional Commander Major MJ General Tighe, recommended him the Victoria Cross. He did not receive the VC, but he was eventually awarded a bar to his DCM before he was killed later in July 1918. The main reason that the VC was not confirmed would seem to be inter-departmental politics. The War Office was not going to have the Colonial Office handing out their highest military decoration for a Black man.

## *African American Troops*

### *History*

Since America became a nation in 1775, there have always been African soldiers in the Army. There were African soldiers in the American War of Independence and the American Civil War. During the American Civil War the African American soldiers were known as 'Buffalo Soldiers'.

### *Recruitment*

When the United States declared war against Germany in April 1917, The U.S War Department realised that they desperately needed more men to ensure victory. The decision was made to allow African Americans to sign up. In some states African Americans were forced to sign up and even fraudulently arrested as draft dodgers. By the end of World War I, African Americans served in cavalry, infantry, signal, medical, engineer, and artillery units, as well as serving as chaplains, surveyors, truck drivers, chemists, and intelligence officers. Over 400,000 African Americans would serve in this conflict.



### *Fighting*

The African American soldiers fought in the Western Front in France. The 369th Infantry, 'The Harlem Hell Fighters', became one of the most decorated units in WWI.

## *Racism*

America was a racially segregated society and the army was also segregated. Initially they were going to join the British Army, however due to racism, the British Army rejected them. They then joined the French army.

## *After the war*

Many of the war heroes when they returned home still had to live like second class citizens and went back to living in segregated communities. Many of the ex-servicemen joined Marcus Garvey's organisation the UNIA, to campaign for equality.

## **Henry Johnson: Harlem Hellfighters African American Troops**



Henry Johnson was the most famous member of the 'Harlem Hellfighters' an all-Black National Guard unit that was among the first American forces to arrive in Europe during World War I. Johnson and his fellow African American soldiers spent their early days in the war performing unskilled manual labour before being sent to reinforce the depleted ranks of the French army.

On May 14, 1918, Johnson and another "Hellfighter" named Needham Roberts were serving sentry duty in the Argonne Forest. Just after 2 a.m. the duo was attacked by a detachment of some 20 German troops. Both men had soon been wounded – Roberts so severely that he was unable to stand or shoot – but Johnson held fast and fought back with hand grenades and his rifle. Despite being shot several times, he returned fire until his weapon jammed, and then used it as a club and fought hand to hand until it broke into pieces. When Johnson saw that the Germans were trying to take Roberts prisoner, he drew his one remaining weapon – a bolo knife – and slashed and stabbed several men until the raiding party finally fell back. When the dust cleared, Johnson had inflicted at least a dozen casualties on the Germans and suffered 21 wounds from gunfire and bayonets. Both he and Roberts were later given the Croix de Guerre – one of France's highest military honours – but Johnson's heroic stand went unrewarded in the United States until 1996, when he was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart. He later received the Distinguished Service Cross in 2003.

## French Army

Like Britain, France was a major colonial power. France drew troops from all over "Francophone Africa". Some of the most distinguished African Soldiers serving in the French Army were the Tirailleurs Senegalais. The German troops nicknamed the Tirailleurs Senegalais 'Black devils', when, fighting like demons, they had forced the Kaiser's shock troops to retreat before them.

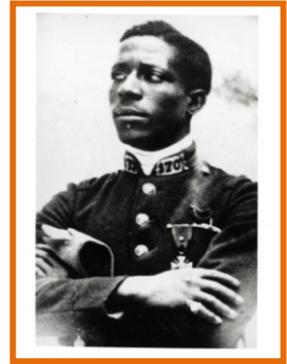
Men were also conscripted. In 1912, the French set about creating a permanent Black army. There was compulsory military service for all African males. After the outbreak of the war, 14,785 troops were signed up in West Africa. Then in 1915-16, 50,000 more were recruited through chiefs.

African troops under French command were combatant. The 'tirailleurs' in charge of artillery, with their distinctive red fezes, were famous. The Senegalese troops of the French were very different. These battalions served on the Western Front in the summer and went to the South for labouring duties and training in the winter.



## *Eugene Bullard: African American pilot in the French Army*

Bullard, who grew up in the Southern states of America, as one of 10 children of a former slave, left his hometown as a teenager. Before the war began, Bullard moved to Paris where he made a reputation for himself as a professional boxer. At the start of the war in 1914, Bullard enlisted in the French Foreign Legion where he was assigned to the 170th Infantry Regiment. Nicknamed the “Swallows of Death,” he and his unit would see heavy action, and during the battle of Verdun, Bullard was wounded twice. He was then sent to a Parisian hospital to recuperate for the next six months.



Bullard was promoted to the rank of corporal and was awarded the Croix de Guerre, and other war-time medals, for his bravery during combat. While still in the hospital, Bullard accepted a bet that he couldn't get into the flying corps and in October of 1916 arrived at a French gunnery school. A month later he talked his way into pilot training and earned his pilot's license to become the first African-American aviator. He reached the front lines as a pilot in August of 1917. After a disagreement with a French officer he was eventually removed from the French air force and spent the remainder of the war back with his infantry regiment.

After the war, Bullard remained in France, got married, had two daughters, and purchased a bar on the north side of Paris. He was still living in Paris at the outbreak of World War II, and worked with French Resistance forces to spy on German troops who would patronize his bar. Considered too old to join the French army, Bullard found a way to escape from occupied France, and returned to the U.S. aboard a Red Cross ship in 1940.

In 1954, Bullard, along with two other French veterans, were invited by then French President Charles De Gaulle to light the flame of the Unknown Soldier at the Arc de Triomphe in Paris. In 1959, he was honored with the Knight of the Legion of Honor.

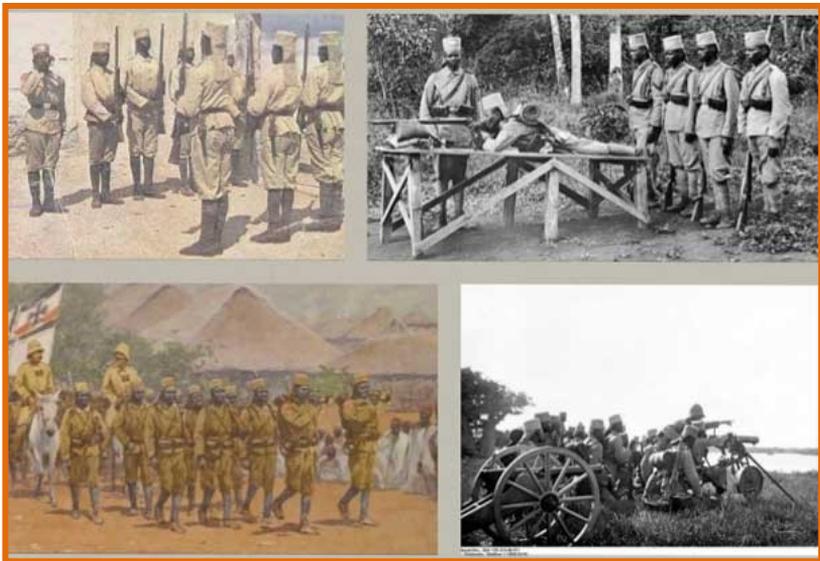
When he returned to the U.S., he was never recognized as a war hero, and died in relative obscurity and poverty in New York in 1961.

## German Army

There may have been up to 24,000 Africans living in Germany by 1930's. Little is known about how many of Germany's Pre WW1 war Black population served in the Armed forces. Some certainly did serve in WW1. All we can know for certain is that about 200 Black people who had attained SNCO/Warrant Officer status in the Schutztruppe or Police or equivalent grades in the Civil Service (and their dependants) settled in Germany after WW1.

In East Africa, The Germans used Askari troops called "Schutztruppe". They fought bravely and were never defeated even after Armistice. One African German soldier's name was Sambo. Vize-Wachtmeister Elo Sambo of the Guard Hussars of Potsdam (born 1885 died 1933). He continued to serve in the 4th Cavalry Regiment of the Reichswehr, also at Potsdam. He was well known as the kettle drummer in the mounted band.

There was also Gefrieter Josef Mambow who was a kettledrummer in the Horse Grenadiers (3rd Dragoons) who joined the army in 1909.



*African Schutztruppe Serving in East African Campaign WW1*

## *After the War Africans in 1919*

Tensions were very high in the United Kingdom after WWI. Black-British soldiers who had fought side by side with their white countrymen had assumed that they had secured their statuses of which would give them respects and dignity in their Empire's capital. This tension was heightened by the re-introduction of the Aliens Restriction (Amendment) Act 1919, which created further restriction on Africans coming to the British colonies.

Work was needed by all and Black men returning from the war found it difficult to gain employment. This was due to the high levels of racism they received. Many of the Unions including the Seaman, Sailors and Fireman's, were opposed to employing Black seaman when white crews, domestic or foreign, were available.

The Ministry of Labour's Employment Department sent secret instructions to labour exchange managers that unemployed Black seamen of British nationality should be left ignorant to their rights. This aided in the increase of tension which was already being fuelled by black men being beaten up, robbed, stabbed, killed, turned from their lodgings, their homes vandalised and set on fire, living on credit day-to-day, being arrested on trivial charges and incarcerated. This treatment was occurring all over the country.

White workers in economic competition with Black workers were mobilised into lynch mobs led by armed group in Cardiff & Liverpool. Publications blamed the Black seaman for defending themselves against all the atrocities that they faced. Riots occurred in 1919: London: 16<sup>th</sup> April Cable Street, Liverpool: 4<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> June, Toxteth, Cardiff: 11<sup>th</sup> June, Canal Parade Bridge, Newport: 6<sup>th</sup> June, Barry : 11<sup>th</sup> June, Cadoxton. Riots also took place in: Salford, Hull and South Shields.



## *African American Soldiers & The UNIA*

African Americans thought that through dedicated service in the armed forces, they could prove their worth and show they deserved the same rights as whites.

In World War I, a higher proportion of black soldiers than white soldiers had lost their lives: 14.4 percent African American compared to 6.3 percent white. The federal government denied African American soldiers the right to participate in the victory march down Paris's Champs-Élysées boulevard; even though other African troops from European colonies marched.

Many African Americans believed that this sacrifice would be repaid when the war was over. In the words of one Texan, "Our second emancipation will be the outcome of this war." However, as African American soldiers returned from the war, and more and more African Americans moved into the urban areas, racial tensions grew. Between 1917 and 1919 race riots erupted in East St. Louis, Chicago, Tulsa, and other cities, demonstrating that whites did not intend to treat African Americans any differently than they had before the war. Ten African American soldiers (whilst in their uniforms) were among the 70 African Americans lynched in 1919, in America.

In 1914 Marcus Mosiah Garvey created the Universal Negro Improvement Association & African Communities (Imperial) League with a purpose: to unite all people of African ancestry of the world to one great body to establish a country and absolute government of their own. Marcus Garvey understood the importance of a people having their own army so when the African-American soldiers returned home he recruited them and developed:

- Universal African Legion: Studied military discipline & geography of Africa & the world.
- Universal African Motor Corporation: Studied engineering & mechanics
- Black Eagle Flying Corporation: Trained as airplane pilots (many pilots from War where enlisted)

Black Cross Nurses: Modelled after the Red Cross nurses. They were Medical trained, First Aid trained and trained in Nutrition.

- Auxiliary groups:
  - Community workers
  - Public health
  - Service to Black neighbourhoods
  - Infant health & home care

## *The Growth of Pan-Africanism after WWI*

The Treaty of Versailles was the peace settlement signed after World War I. The treaty was signed at the vast Versailles Palace near Paris between Germany and the Allies. Marcus Garvey had sent representatives from the UNIA to the meeting in an attempt to return the German territories occupied in Africa back over to Africans. These requests were dismissed and the League of Nations took control of Germany's overseas colonies.

Not too long after the 1919 Treaty of Versailles the Pan African Congress took place from the 19<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> February in the Grand Hotel in Paris. This meeting was to discuss the affects of World War I. Attendees of the congress:

- USA: WEB Dubois – Head of NAACP
- UK: John Archer - The African Progress Union
- FRANCE: Blaise Diagne – French Parliament from the West African colony of Senegal & French Commissioner General (funded the 1919 Congress)
- 60 representatives
- 16 Nations, protectorates and colonies also were present at this meeting.

They discussed many issues around Africans in Africa and the Diaspora, these included:

- A code of law “For the international protection of the natives of Africa.”
- Direct supervision of colonies by the League of Nations to prevent economies exploitation by foreign nations.
- To abolish slavery & capital punishment of colonial subjects who worked on the plantations of European colonial powers in Africa especially in the Belgian Congo.
- To insist on colonial peoples’ right to education.

The recommendation of the meeting was not as strong as Marcus Garvey’s slogan, “Africa for the Africans” immediately. However this Pan African meeting taking place in the same city as the conference of Paris, recommended that Africans should take part in governing the territories previously owned by Germany, and move towards self government “as fast as their development permits until at some specified time in the future, where they can govern by themselves”. The problem was that colonial powers offered no end in sight.

## *Why we need to remember?*

'A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots'. This powerful quote by the Honourable Marcus Garvey, affirms the fact that greatness and heroism should never be lost or forgotten.

If it were not for the writings inside the walls of the pyramids, we would not be aware of the greatness of our Kemetian/ Ancient Egyptian ancestors. Had it not been for the excavation discoveries of the terracotta statues of Nok, would we know of the innovation in technology, intricate craftsmanship the sculptor's possessed? My point is that we would never know these great civilisations ever existed if there was no evidence to remember them by.

Now let us put things into perspective. I remember as a child on the 11th November at 11am every year, everything would come to a standstill in a unified one minute silence. Whether you were at school, on the train, in the workplace or in the street, the importance this very exact moment commanded was enormous. I remember sitting at my table and thinking "Why are we doing this? I didn't understand how it related to me.

Let me tell you why it did and continues to relate to me. Over 2 million African and Caribbean Soldiers fought in WW1. These men and women were caught in the wrath of colonialism and knew not their catastrophic fate. The war was not our fight, but the propaganda of that time was designed to entice and promises rewards that did not come to bear fruit. Racism was rife and the sub-human conditions these men and women were subjected to, was beyond belief. But still they fought fearlessly with pride and dignity.

That is why every year for the past 3 years I have been part of a commemoration service and part of the BlackPoppyRose project to remember specifically those Africans who fought in World War I.

By Sheraine Williams

## *The BlackPoppyRose*

The BlackPoppyRose is a symbol that has been created to remember ALL our African ancestors who contributed in many ways towards the war effort.

*What is the BlackPoppyRose?* The BlackPoppyRose has been created for Africans everywhere to hold pride, honour and glory for the tales and legends left behind by our ancestors and for the future generations to be empowered by their history. Black – Is for the People, Poppy – is for Remembrance, Rose – is for Honour & Respect.

I started this project three years ago as I felt that in the country that I call home the history that represents me is missing. For a country (England) that documents their history, raises monuments, statues & plaques, produces documentaries, books, articles & magazines etc there was a severe lack in representing a 'full' picture of World War I on all fronts. Africans all over acknowledged their sense of duty to their Motherland; even when treated as three fifths of a human being, our ancestors gave so much. When Britain was an Empire they benefited from the colonies which were part of the empire. I am a result of those contributions.

*How I embarked on this journey?* I was invited to a Black Poppy Event which highlighted names, pictures and accounts of Africans who served in World War I all over the world as well as right here in my home, England, all of which I had no idea about. This sparked me to find a way to encompass the feeling I was left with into a physical representation. This has led me to work in collaboration with others to create the BlackPoppyRose. The atrocities of slavery has scattered us all over the world and this symbol is to honour and remember we are Africans regardless of where we are in this world. The BlackPoppyRose is different to the Red Poppy as it a symbol to honour African history.

*What's next for the BlackPoppyRose?* My vision for the BlackPoppyRose is for EVERY African child to be filled with great self-worth. When November 11<sup>th</sup> (Remembrance Day) comes around they too should be able remember the legacies left for them. Since the start of BlackPoppyRose in 2009, we have worked in collaboration with Narrative Eye's The Black Poppy, The Empire Needs Men as well as The West Indian Ex-Servicemen & Women association in Clapham Junction. The Blackpoppyrose will keep the memory of our ancestors' contributions, sacrifices and efforts alive in our minds, hearts and spirits for the foreseeable future.

By Selena Carty

## *Test & Will*

Red: Hot, Blood, Fire

Green: Lush, Land, Scene

Black: Man, War

Labour is the test of our History

Service is the test of our Pride

Honour is the test of our Spirits

Devotion is the test of our Loyalty

Love is the test of our Humanity

All these tests are measured by another

All these efforts are valued by another

All these attributes are remembered by whom?

Time has passed for too long to have our history controlled by the same people who have undervalued & under measured our contributions as a whole.

We will Research to Remember

We will Document to Remember

We will tell stories to Remember

We will Cherish, Honour, Love & Remember ALL who have come before us.

May them and us never be forgotten, may our memories never be forgotten.  
Ase.

By Selena Carty