

Fighting Rebels With Only One Hand

(by Frederick Douglass, from Douglass' Monthly, September 1861)

What on earth is the matter with the American Government and people?...Washington, the seat of Government...is now positively in danger of falling before the rebel army...Generals are calling...for men. "Men! men! send us men!" they scream, or the cause of the Union is gone...and yet these very officers...refuse to receive the class of men which have a deeper interest in the defeat of the rebels, than all others.

Men are wanted in Missouri--in Western Virginia...in Texas, and all along the sea coast, and though the Government has at its command a class... deeply interested in suppressing the insurrection, it sternly refuses to summon...a single man, and...insults the whole class by refusing to allow any of their number to defend with their strong arms and brave hearts the national cause.

Why does the Government reject the Negro? Is he not a man? Can he not wield a sword, fire a gun, march...and obey orders like any other?

If...we can be allowed to speak to the President of the United States, we should ask him if this...is a time for...prejudice? ...We would tell him that General Jackson...fought side by side with Negroes at New Orleans, and he bore testimony to their bravery at the close of the war. We would tell him that colored men in Rhode Island and Connecticut performed their full share in the war of the Revolution. We would tell him that this is no time to fight with one hand, when both are needed; this is no time to fight only with your white hand, and allow your black hand to remain tie. It is now pretty well established, that there are many colored men in the Confederate army doing duty not only as cooks, servants and laborers, but as real soldiers. That the Negroes are numerous in the rebel army, and do for that army its heaviest work, is beyond question...Negroes helped to build the batteries at Charleston. They relieve their...military masters from the drudgery of the camp, and devote them to the...use of arms...the slaveholding rebel accepts the aid of the black man as readily as that of any other. If a bad cause can do this, why should a good cause be less wisely conducted? We insist upon it, that one black regiment...would be worth to the Government more than two of any other. Men in earnest don't fight with one hand, when they might fight with two, and a man drowning would not refuse to be saved even by a colored hand.



- a. *What serious problem did the Union have according to this article?*
- b. *What argument was Douglass trying to make to solve the problem?*
- c. *Why did he believe African Americans would make good soldiers?*

