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Buffalo Soldier, Congressional Medal of Honor Winner, and 1935 TSU Graduate William McBryar

William McBryar

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Sergeant/Lieutenant William McBryar: Buffalo Soldier (Tenth Cavalry), Congressional Medal of Honor Awardee, and 1935 Graduate of Tennessee State University (then Tennessee A&I State College).

The writing by him which follows was transcribed by Fletcher F. Moon on June 12, 2017 from The Bulletin (May, 1935) . This campus publication is included among files on McBryar in the Brown-Daniel Library Special Collections and Archives.

“Justice Discussed In Fine Essay: Scholar Gives Explanation; Declares It as Lifeline of a Nation, While Injustice Means Ruin” (An Essay by Lieutenant William McBryar, '35).

The word justice is one of the most potent in the English tongue. Justice has been thus defined: conformity in conduct or practice to the principles of right or of positive law; regard for or fulfillment of obligations. Two important synonyms are equity and fairness; equity is equal justice and is thus a close synonym for fairness. The chief distinction between the creation of civilization and the brute creation lies in that one word – justice.

Over there in the wilds of nature the little birds have no police force, no national guard, no protection, know nothing of justice, of courts of law, and of jurisprudence. If the birds of prey are stronger than they are and swifter on the wing, the little birds become food for the birds of prey.

Out yonder in the briar patch, the rabbit has no army and no navy, and no protection except his fleetness of foot and his cunning. When these furnish him no escape, he becomes food for the hound and the fox. So on and on throughout the great animal kingdom, we have the rule of force, the consequence of which is bloodletting and suffering. Darwin called this the survival of the fittest.

During the past generation, the great German philosopher Nietzsche proclaimed the doctrine of the super-man. With keen delight, he taught the German manhood to be hard and to be strong, and to rely upon their hardness and to rely upon their strength.

If I were required to explain the German initiation of the World War, were I to attempt to explain the recent substitution of German persecution for that culture for which the German people are renowned, and which produced that supremely excellent music of the generation just past: if I were required to account for those groundless and unseemly actions, which are a discredit to her great leadership. I should explain them in terms of the teaching of the philosopher Nietzsche. He has succeeded in inoculating the German blood with that barbaric spirit, which, in moments of sober thinking, may cause us to tremble for the future of our civilization.

What is the nature of that human weakness which seeks justice for itself and denies it to others? What is it within us which causes us to shudder at cruelty in the brute creation and to accept it with complacency among human beings? Why is justice glorified for one race as the supreme good and denied to another? It is a mental conception of the human which cannot be explained.

The average man in the English race has been fighting for more than a thousand years, trying to extract justice from the English ruling classes and make it secure for himself and his posterity forever. Justice is the life-line of a nation; injustice, the cancer which slowly eats away the heart.

Let us call the roll of a few of the great empires of antiquity: Assyria, Syria, Babylonia, Persia, Greece, and Rome. Where is the Babylonian empire with its great wealth and power? What has become of Persia with her tremendous expanse of territory and might? What remains of the Grecian empire except her literature and her art? And Rome with her mighty armies? All of these mighty nations have perished on the rock of injustice. The world is littered with the remains of other dead empires which went likewise.

But in the hearts of men there is an instinct for justice which causes them to establish governments to protect the weak, to provide for the care of the children and the aged. This might

properly include, justice in commerce in the courts, justice between men and men, justice among races, as well as the recent ambitious national program of social justice. Justice is the heart blood of civilization. Allow this to become stagnant, and the nation languishes and dies.

-From The Message Center March, 1935 issue