

Soldiers of the Sixth United States Infantry: I have been selected as the representative of those who have procured for you this beautiful banner, to transfer it unto your charge; and on their behalf this splendid guerdon, this glorious emblem of freedom, I present, through the commanding officer of the post, to you. You will prove yourselves worthy of the gift; you will see that the flag of your country suffers no dishonor at your hands. I am fully satisfied that the loyalty, prowess and devotion of the colored soldiers will take care of the interests committed to them by the country. What are the facts? Let Milliken's Bend answer. Said Adjutant Gen. Thomas, "The negro soldiers repulsed the enemy; to the brave black men we are indebted for the possession of that important post." Let Fort Wagner answer! Led by the noble and heroic Colonel Robert G. Shaw, no men fought more bravely, no soldiers bore in hospitals their wounds more patiently. Let Port Hudson answer! Let no one who reads the official report of Major-General Banks, bearing testimony to the valor of colored soldiers, dare to scruple and say the black men will not fight, unless he belong to that tribe of the meanest of all God's creeping things, the copperhead.

Soldiers, in this momentous struggle between freedom and slavery, in other words, between a true democracy and a tyrannical despotism, I thank God that the Government, from a sense of duty, and therefore in the exercise of its highest wisdom, recognized your manhood, and evidences it by calling on you to share the sacrifices necessary to establish the doctrine of equal rights.

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“Stand to your faith, America!  
Sad Europe, listen to our call!  
Up to your manhood, Africa,  
This flag floats over all.  
Pure as its white our future see,  
Bright as its red is now our sky,  
Fixed as its stars is now our faith  
That nerves our hearts to do or die.”

Taking the flag in his hand, Mr. Purvis extended it  
to Col. Wagner, saying, “Receive this standard,”  
and then, turning to the troops, concluded with—

Soldiers, under this flag let your rallying cry be for  
God, for freedom and our country. If for this you  
fall, you fall the country’s patriots, heroes and  
martyrs.

