

Inquiry: How successful were the Progressive Era reformers at bringing about change at the national level?

Source: National Archives, Photograph, 1918.



Source: W.E.B. DuBois, *The Crisis*, May 1919.

We are returning from war! The *Crisis* and tens of thousands of black men were drafted into a great struggle. For bleeding France and what she means and has meant and will mean to us and humanity and against the threat of German race arrogance, we fought gladly and to the last drop of blood; for America and her highest ideals, we fought in far-off hope; for the dominant Southern oligarchy entrenched in Washington, we fought in bitter resignation. For the America that represents and gloats in lynching, disfranchisement, caste, brutality and devilish insult - for this, in the hateful upturning and mixing of things, we were forced by vindictive fate to fight also. But today we return! . . . This country of ours, despite all its better souls have done and dreamed, is yet a shameful land.

Source: *The Literary Digest*, May 7, 1921

The Only Way to Handle It



Library of Congress

Source: *The Shaping of the Twentieth Century*. Richard M. Abrams. 1971.

Progressivism sought to save the old view, and the old values and modes, by educating the immigrants and the poor so as to facilitate their acceptance of and absorption into the Anglo-American mode of life, or by excluding the “unassimilable” altogether; by making accommodations to the newly important wage-earning class - accommodations that might provide some measure of wealth and income redistribution - so as to forestall a forcible transfer of policy-making power away from the groups that had conventionally exercised that power. When the economic and political reforms failed to restore the consensus by giving the previously unprivileged an ostensible stake in it, progressive energies turned increasingly toward using the force of the state to proscribe or restrict specific modes of social behavior, such as sexual behavior and drinking habits. In the ultimate resort, it sought to constrict political discourse itself. And *that* failed, too.