

“An American Tragedy.”



Mel Tapley, “An American Tragedy.” Cartoon.

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Cartoon Transcript and Description in the order of from top to bottom and left to right

“AN AMERICAN TRAGEDY...Lives Sacrificed to Satisfy the False Pride of Bourbons” By Mel Tapley

Panel 1 illustration description: Background shows an explosion at a distance. Red Cross ambulance is parked and an ambulance worker stands and speaks to a wounded soldier who is looking up at him pleadingly. [Beneath the soldier’s footless bent right leg is a pool of blood.]

AMBULANCE WORKER: “You might as well wait here bud – we ain’t got nothin’ but Negro blood left!!”

Panel 2 illustration description: A doctor stands in front of a table, with raised arms—the palm of his left hand up and right hand on his head in a scratching gesture. On the table, there are two bottles, next to which lay two labels separately. One label reads “NEGRO BLOOD,” and the other “WHITE BLOOD.”

DOCTOR: “What a dilemma!! The labels have come off!... Now how can we tell the White from the Negro Plasma?”

PATIENT “H -, Doc! So what!? I ain’t rankin!”

Panel 3 illustration description: Background shows two soldiers carrying a body in front of a mound with a sign reading “WHITE STIFFS.” In front of these two soldiers, two groups of soldiers are seen by the building labeled, “Red Cross Blood Transfusion Center.” One group enters the building through a door marked “WOUNDED” and “IN” on the left; and the other group comes out through the door marked “WELL” and “OUT” on the right. On the foreground, two soldiers face both the building and the background.]

SOLDIERS IN BACKGROUND: “Geez, looks like the colored lads is the only one-‘ats got round-trip tickets at the ‘hospital’ today!!”

SOLDIERS IN FOREGROUND: “Guess they only got Negro blood! We gotta wait – if we kin last!!”

Panel 4 illustration description: African-American patient is laying on a bed as a doctor lifts his head up slightly while placing a stethoscope on the patient’s chest.]

AFRICAN-AMERICAN PATIENT: “Lissen, Doc! – If I need a transfusion, gimme anybody’s blood so long as I get back to the front!!”