

## A Soldier in de Colored Brigade

- Old Uncle Abram<sup>1</sup> wants us,  
And we're coming right along  
I tell you what it is, we're gwine to muster might strong.  
Then fare you well my honey dear! now don't you be afraid  
I's bound to be a soldier in de colored brigade<sup>2</sup>.
- *chorus:*  
A soldier! a soldier, in de darkey<sup>3</sup> brigade!  
I's bound to be a soldier in de colored brigade!
- O! when we meet de enemy I 'spec we make 'em stare,  
I tink he'll catch a tartar<sup>4</sup> when he meets de woolly hair<sup>5</sup>.  
We'll fight while we are above and in greenbacks<sup>6</sup> we'll be paid,  
And soon I'll be a Colonel<sup>7</sup> in de Colored Brigade  
A colonel! A colonel in de darkey Brigade,  
And soon I'll be a Colonel in de Colored Brigade!
- Wid musket<sup>8</sup> on my shoulder and wid banjo in my hand,  
For Union, and de Constitution as it was I stand.  
Now some folks tink de darkey for dis fighting was'nt made,  
We'll show dem what's de matter in de Colored Brigade.  
De matter! De matter in de darkey Brigade!  
We'll show dem what's de matter in de colored brigade!
- In days ob Gen'ral Washington<sup>9</sup> we fought de British well,  
Behind de bales wid "Hickory"<sup>10</sup> I tink we made 'em yell.  
I tell you we're de chickens dat can handle gun or spade,  
And Greeley<sup>11</sup> he'll go wid us in de Colored Brigade.  
Go wid us! Go wid us in de darkey Brigade,  
And Greeley he'll go wid us in de Colored Brigade!
- Some say dey lub de darket and dey want him to be free,  
I spec dey only fooling and dey better let him be.  
For him dey'd brake dis Union which de're forefadders hab made,  
Worth more dan twenty millions ob de Colored Brigade.  
Dan millions! Dan millions of de darkey Brigade,  
Worth more dan twenty millions ob de Colored Brigade!
- Den cheer up now my honey dear I hear de trumpets play,  
And gib me just a little buss<sup>12</sup> before I go away.  
I'll marry you when I come back so dont you be afraid,  
We'll raise up picanninnies<sup>13</sup> for de colored Brigade,  
We'll raise up picanninnies for de colored brigade!

Notes:

- <sup>1</sup> Old Uncle Abram – President Abraham Lincoln
- <sup>2</sup> Brigade – A military unit composed of from 3,000 to 5,000 men
- <sup>3</sup> Darkey – Darkey or darky was a disparaging term for a Black person
- <sup>4</sup> tartar – A reference to the fierce tartars that founded the Mongol Empire under Genghis Khan
- <sup>5</sup> wooly hair – The term refer to the texture of African hair which has not been altered chemically and as a term for an African American. Adjectives such as "hard", "kinky", "nappy", or "woolly" are also used to describe natural hair. This hair is typically tightly coiled and soft to the touch.
- <sup>6</sup> greenbacks – A slang term used for a U.S. dollar
- <sup>7</sup> Colonel - Colonel is usually a military title rated as the highest, or the second-highest field rank below a general.
- <sup>8</sup> musket - A musket is a muzzle-loaded, smoothbore long gun.
- <sup>9</sup> Gen'rl Washington – Refers to service by African Americans in the Revolutionary War under General George Washington.
- <sup>10</sup> "Hickory" – refers to service by African Americans in the War of 1812 under "Old Hickory" a nickname given to General Andrew Jackson
- <sup>11</sup> Greeley - Horace Greeley was editor of a leading newspaper, a founder of the Republican party, reformer and politician. His *New York Tribune* was America's most influential newspaper from the 1840s to the 1870s and "established Greeley's reputation as the greatest editor of his day." Greeley used it to promote the Whig and Republican parties, as well as antislavery and a host of reforms.
- <sup>12</sup> buss – A word meaning to kiss
- <sup>13</sup> picanninnies – This is an ethnic slur for a Black child. It is also used as degrading term for adult Blacks by labeling them as children. Blacks have used the term in a more affectionate manner when referring to their children and grandchildren.