she could not permanently keep the island, and she minded yielding to the Cubans more than yielding to us. Our own direct interests were great, because of the Cuban tobacco and sugar, and especially because of Cuba’s relation to the projected Isthmian canal. But even greater were our interests from the standpoint of humanity. Cuba was at our very doors. It was a dreadful thing for us to sit supinely and watch her death agony. It was our duty, even more from the standpoint of National honor than from the standpoint of National interest, to stop the devastation and destruction. Because of these considerations I favored war, and to-day, when in retrospect it is easier to see things clearly, there are few humane and honorable men who do not believe that the war was both just and necessary.

Many African Americans supported U.S. intervention to liberate Cuba. They identified the Cuban struggle against Spain as the fight of people of color against white European domination. Some black Americans even viewed Cuba as a racial utopia, especially when compared to the South in the 1890s, and they dreamed of emigrating to a free Cuba. Others, however, questioned whether—in an era of deteriorating race relations in the United States—blacks should fight for a government that seemed unconcerned about their rights as citizens. The Reverend H. H. Proctor delivered this sermon in Atlanta on May 1, 1898, soon after the United States declared war on Spain. He responds to black critics of the war and encourages African Americans to seize the opportunity it might afford to improve their status at home.

Let me state plainly the position I take. In answering the question what attitude the Negro should take in this crisis, I say it should be that of loyalty to the Stars and Stripes.

It is said that this is a white man’s war, and, therefore, let the white fight it out. I reject the conclusion because I cannot accept the premise. This is not a white man’s war, it is the nation’s war. If you say this is a white man’s war, then you are bound to accept the doctrine that this is a white man’s country. If it is a white man’s country, then the black man has no place in it, and consequently no rights that a white man is bound to respect. This is God’s country, and it belongs to the people in it, be they black or white, red or yellow.

It is said that we are wrongly treated and therefore should sulk in our tents. I admit that we are wronged. God knows that. Call over the catalogue of wrongs and which if them are we not heir to? But in my mind this constitutes a reason why we should be loyal. If in this critical hour we should be disloyal, would not that serve as justification in the eyes of our enemies for all the wrongs inflicted upon us? “We told you these people were unworthy of better treatment,” would be the cry. On the other hand, have we not fine opportunity to show the world that we deserve better than we receive? And would not such action tell on public sentiment in the future?

It is said that we have fought for this country, and it treats us no better now, let the white man fight it out themselves. It is true we have fought in every war, but have the motive of our action been beyond cavil? Is it not said that we fought in 1776 with the hope of freedom? In 1812 under the inspiration of the lash? In 1863 under the impulse of emancipation? . . . For the first time in our American experience we should fight, not as slaves, not as freed men, but as freemen.

The real reason why the duty of the hour demands our loyalty is in this. Our country is engaged in a righteous war. It is a war for larger liberty. The freedom of manhood, the purity of womanhood, the future of childhood—these are in the womb of this struggle. It is an appeal to the highest sentiments. Our country is responding to the call. We are a real part of this country, and nothing that concerns her is without interest to us. We are not Afro-Americans, but Americans to the manor born. There should be no hyphen in American citizenship. If we do not co-operate with our country in this humanitarian movement, will it not indicate that we have not caught the American spirit? Will it not show that those finer feelings and nobler instincts that move others, that are moving this whole nation, do not appeal to us? I know there are no people richer in feeling and finer in instincts than the culture of the race I speak to tonight. The remembrance of our sad past and the Mighty Hand that delivered us but adds to our natural fitness to sympathize with the people of Cuba and their struggle to throw off the yoke that galls and dash in pieces the cap that is bitter.

We must not overlook our splendid opportunities in this crisis . . . . Shall we nurse our wrongs, treasure our resentments, exercise our vengeance, and thus lose our venture? I cannot believe that we shall permit our grievance to overshadow our opportunities.

As the United States and Spain negotiated a treaty with Spain in the fall of 1898, Sen. Albert J. Beveridge, along with many