

The World's War: Forgotten Soldiers of Empire

About the presenter: David Olusoga is a British-Nigerian historian, broadcaster and film-maker. Born in Lagos, Nigeria, David studied history and journalism before joining the BBC. He's an award-winning documentary maker and is also co-author of *The Kaiser's Holocaust: Germany's Forgotten Genocide* and *The Colonial Roots of Nazism*, author of *The World's War* and a contributor to *The Oxford Companion to Black British History*. David's books and television programmes have explored the themes of empire, military-history, race, slavery, and contemporary culture in the UK and USA. He's currently writing a new book on world slavery



Before watching:

This two-part documentary was broadcast in August 2014.

Why do you think this was?

What do you expect to learn from it?

Introduction

Overall, Olusoga estimates that 4 million 'non-European, non-white' troops and auxiliaries (organised groups supporting the war but not fighting) were involved in WW1. Complete the table with the numbers he provides for each group.

	from British India
	from French colonies in Africa and Indochina
	African-Americans
	Chinese labourers

Discussion questions

Olusoga describes these troops as the 'human capital of the European Empires'. What do you think this phrase means?

In what sense are they 'forgotten soldiers'? Why do you think they have been forgotten?

Martial Races

Olusoga says it is impossible to imagine the disorientation of Indian soldiers as they travelled to and arrived in France to fight. Do you agree?

What measures did the British Army take to overcome this?

Olusoga spends some time describing the views of Lt. Col. J.W.B. Merewether on the theory of 'Martial Races'. How did Merewether describe the groups in the table?

Sikhs	
Jats	
Pathans	
Gurkhas	

Discussion questions

Olusoga talks about the officer on the horse in the panorama from the racecourse and wonders if he is projecting a 'haughty...arrogant, and confident' air onto him. Do you think he is?

Why do historians have to be careful of 'projecting' their views and beliefs?

