Du Bois’s [Use his full name the first time.] Returning Soldiers is about African American soldiers returning home from war to America. [Be specific about what war. This is important to establish context, both then and now.] These African American soldiers were drafted in large numbers to help France against Germany at the time. The main point in this piece is that the soldiers return home only to a country that does not treat them equally among its own citizens. Because of this the returning African American soldiers look upon America as a shameful place full of bigotry. They also look upon it as a chance to continue fighting for the betterment of America. Even though America now is not as racially intolerant as in Du Bois’s Returning Soldiers, the same feelings [Be specific about these feelings. Are they the exact same?] are felt by soldiers coming back from war to our country as it slips into economic down fall. [Good, focused intro.]

In this essay, Du Bois describes African American soldiers that bravely defend France from German hands for “America and her highest ideals”, [What ideals do you think he meant? Are these ideals still ideal?] yet America’s ideals at the time were racist as he points out. He talks about lynching first and how America lynch two African Americans each week. This is an example of the horrors America was performing at the time even to possible African American soldiers. Relating this to present times is difficult because something so horrible doesn’t happen as much and is not accepted in society today. However it can be related to soldiers being injured in war and not being properly taken care of financially by the government which
in itself is an atrocity. Though it is not the same caliber as lynching, it is still very sad. [I think I agree with you that these things are not the same caliber, though unfortunately this is bad news in terms of your analysis because there doesn’t seem to me much of a connection between these things. So, while lynching doesn’t occur anymore, maybe explore the ways in which returning soldiers are mistreated in a modern context. It doesn’t have to be the exact same thing, but maybe it relates to the same ideal, which is why you needed to be specific about them earlier.]

Du Bois also explains serving in war in an interesting way as well, “slavery of the uniform which the world’s madness demanded us...” This statement rings true even today, [Explain how it rings true today.] and says something about all wars and soldiers serving in them; he continues to say that upon return they sing “This country of ours, despite all its better souls have done and dreamed, is yet a shameful land.” This is an acknowledgment that America in its time has had great people within it but at its current state is shameful. Same can be said now, with many good progressive people inside this country there are still lots of bad things that need to be changed.

“It steals from us.” What this quote is trying to explain is that America steals from its own people (not always literally [OK, so in what ways other than literally does American steal from its people?])! Du Bois explains that Americas organized industry cheats many African Americans out of their own land, labor, savings, and wages. In our own present time in America, the same can be said about many middle class Americans that are being hit the hardest right now financially. Even though it’s not exactly the same today, there are still people being stolen
from. [Explain how.] The only difference is Du Bois is talking about racially motivated actions. [Seems like a pretty big difference!] He’s explains that the government keeps them universally poor and feeds them on charity purposely. This is possibly the heaviest reason for change that these soldiers are motivated: it’s their condition of living in this country.

Saving the best quote for last, Du Bois says “We return. We return from fighting. We return fighting. Make way for Democracy!” And so the African American soldiers return to America to become soldiers of civil rights. Today, soldiers are not as much fighting for civil rights for African Americans but for the rights of all people of what all Americans deserve. As our country reaches more difficult times, we can look back at what trials these soldiers went through and remember that it is possible to change a country and even your own country from within.