



In September 1954, the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade (VALB) were brought before the Subversive Activities Control Board (SACB) in response to a petition by US Attorney General Herbert Brownell to classify VALB as a subversive organization.

On September 15 and 16, 1954, Crawford Morgan, an African-American veteran of the Spanish Civil War, gave the following testimony:

Crawford Morgan testifies before the Subversive Activities Control Board

SACB: Did you have any understanding, Mr. Morgan, before you went to Spain, of what the issues were connected to that war?

Morgan: I felt that I had a pretty good idea of what fascism was and most of its ramifications. Being aware of what the Fascist Italian government did to the Ethiopians, and also the way that I and all the rest of the Negroes in this country have been treated ever since slavery, I figured I had a pretty good idea of what fascism was.

We have quite a few fascist tendencies in this country. Didn't come to the point of taking up arms and killing a lot of people, but for the longest time Negroes have been getting lynched in this country by mobs, and that was fascism on a small scale.

But over there [in Spain] it was one whole big group against the other. It was the Franco group that didn't like democracy. And they rebelled against the people after the 1936 elections and tried to stick their ideas down the throats of the freedom-loving people of Spain. So I, being a Negro, and all of the stuff that I have had to take in this country, I had a pretty good idea of what fascism was and I didn't want no part of it. I got a chance to fight it there with bullets and I went there and fought it with bullets. If I get a chance to fight it with bullets again, I will fight it with bullets again.

SACB: Mr. Morgan, were those thoughts in your mind before you went to Spain?

Morgan: Ever since I have been big enough to understand things I have rebelled. As a small child of three or four years old I would rebel at human injustice in the way I understood it at that age. And as long as I have been able to remember, up until now, the government and a lot of people have treated me as a second-class citizen. I am 43 years old, and all my life I have been treated as a second-class citizen, and naturally if you always have been treated like one you start feeling it at a very tender age.

With Hitler on the march, and fascism starting the fight in Spain, I felt that it could serve two purposes: I felt that if we could lick the Fascists in Spain, I felt that in the trend of things it would offset a bloodbath later. I felt that if we didn't lick Franco and stop fascism there, it would spread over lots of the world. And it is bad enough for white people to live under fascism, those of the white people that like freedom and democracy. But Negroes couldn't live under it. They would be wiped out.

SACB: Were you aware, at any time, that you were a member of the International Brigades, of receiving any different treatment because of your race?

Morgan: No, from the time I arrived in Spain until after the time I left, for that period of my life, I felt like a human being, like a man. People didn't look at me with hatred in their eyes because I was black, and I wasn't refused this or refused that because I was black. I was treated like all the rest of the people were treated, and when you have been in the world for quite a long time and have been treated worse than people treat their dogs, it is quite a nice feeling to go someplace and feel like a human being.

Crawford Morgan was born November 4, 1910 in Rockingham, North Carolina. While still a child, he moved with his family to Norfolk, Virginia where he attended high school. After graduation, Morgan studied to become a printer. In 1932, he joined the Young Communist League. During the Depression he became involved in organizations of the unemployed in New York and was on one occasion arrested in a demonstration at the Home Relief Bureau. On March 10, 1937 Morgan boarded the Washington bound for France. In Spain he was assigned to the infantry attached to the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion and later transferred to the Lincoln-Washington Battalion. His battalion went into action at the end of August 1937 on the Aragon front and Morgan received a leg wound storming the town of Quinto. After recovery, Morgan rejoined the Lincoln-Washington Battalion's Third Company. This was shortly after the action at Fuentes de Ebro in October 1937. Complications from his leg wound resulted in his transfer to the 15th Brigade's Transport Unit where Morgan remained for the remainder of the war. Morgan returned from Spain, on the *Paris*, on December 15, 1938. In August 1942 Morgan enlisted in the US. Army and served in an all-black unit, until May 1946. After leaving the army Morgan resided in Norfolk, Virginia and worked as a truck driver until 1949. He later returned to New York and became an offset printer. On September 15 and 16, 1954, Morgan testified at length on behalf of VALB in hearings before the Subversive Activities Control Board (SACB) of the US Department of Justice. The SACB was in the process of declaring the VALB to be a subversive organization. VALB (Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade) attorney called Morgan as a defense witness. Morgan remained an active member of the VALB. In the early 1970's, he worked with the group's Historical Commission to gather information on other African American volunteers. Morgan died on August 27, 1976.



Morgan (L) with fellow volunteer Kenneth Brown (R)



(L-R) Morgan, Leo Markowitz, Eric Parker, Langston Hughes