A recent publication by The New York Times on November 8, 2020 on Dorie Miller may also be of interest to you:

Opinion: A Black Hero in the Jim Crow Navy - Dorie Miller saved lives at Pearl Harbor. He’s finally getting his due.

Gwendolyn Brooks

I had to kick their law into their teeth in order to save them. However I have heard that sometimes you have to deal devilishly with drowning men in order to swim them to shore. Or they will haul themselves and you to the trash and the fish beneath. (When I think of this, I do not worry about a few chipped teeth.)

It is good I gave glory, it is good I put gold on their name. Or there would have been spikes in the afterward hands. But let us speak only of my success and the pictures in the Caucasian dailies as well as the Negro weeklies. For I am a gem. (They are not concerned that it was hardly the enemy my fight was against but them.)

It was a tall time. And of course my blood was boiling about in my head and straining and howling and singing me on. Of course I was rolled on wheels of my boy itch to get at the gun. Of course all the delicate rehearsal shots of my childhood massed in mirage before me. Of course I was child and my first swallow of the liquor of battle bleeding black air dying and demon noise made me wild.

It was kinder than that, though, and I showed like a banner my kindness. I loved. And a man will guard when he loves. Their white-gowned democracy was my fair lady. With her knife lying cold, straight, in the softness of her sweet-flowing sleeve. But for the sake of the dear smiling mouth and the stuttered promise I toyed with my life. I threw back! — I would not remember entirely the knife.
Still–am I good enough to die for them, is my blood bright enough to be spilled,
Was my constant back-question–are they clear
On this? Or do I intrude even now?
Am I clean enough to kill for them, do they wish me to kill
For them or is my place while death licks his lips and strides to them
In the galley still?

(In a southern city a white man said
Indeed, I'd rather be dead;
Indeed, I'd rather be shot in the head
Or ridden to waste on the back of a flood
Than saved by the drop of a black man’s blood.)

Naturally, the important thing is, I helped to save them, them and a part of their democracy.
Even if I had to kick their law into their teeth in order to do that for them.
And I am feeling well and settled in myself because I believe it was a good job,
Despite this possible horror: that they might prefer the Preservation of their law in all its sick dignity and their knives To the continuation of their creed And their lives.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{1}} \text{This poem is included in Gwendolyn Brooks, The World of Gwendolyn Brooks. New York: Harper \\& Row, 1\textsuperscript{st} edition 1971. Available through Open Library: https://openlibrary.org/books/OL5089232M/The_world_of_Gwendolyn_Brooks.}\]