

Peyton Weekly  
Mr. Nerone  
Black History Month Writing Contest

During times of war African Americans have impacted America in some very big ways. This impact is still felt today by the many African Americans in the armed forces.

For example in the civil war the Union would not have won without the 179,000 free African Americans. In the first World War a over one million blacks enlisted themselves for the war but few of them saw combat because of the strong racial barriers. One of the men who saw combat was Freddie Stowers. He was a black Colonel who won the medal of honor. It took 73 years after his death for his family to receive his medal. There are also many other stories out in the world where blacks did not get their recognition for the heroic actions until many years after their deaths but still fought for their country while battling all the racial barriers at home and in the war. Along with black servicemen there were also some entirely African American regiments.

One of these regiments was the 369th regiment. This unit was federalized and/or joined the military in 1917 and was under the command of Colonel William Howard. Col. Howard and his nicknamed Harlem Hellfighters were sent to fight on the French lines and became the first American regiment to cross over into Germany. After their six months in the front lines of World War One, they were awarded with the French *Croix de Guerre*. This regiment started the dirt road for equal respect for all service men that would later be paved by the Tuskegee Airmen.

The Tuskegee Airmen was the first all black group in the United states Air forces. Although they are mostly known as the Tuskegee Airmen they also had other names like the Red Tails or Red-Tail Angels. The airmen had a motto that put fear into their enemies. This motto was, "Spit Fire." The Tuskegee Airmen were made up of more than 990 pilots and over 15,000 ground personnel. The Tuskegee Airmen were not just one regiment but were made up by the 332nd Fighter Group, 100th Pursuit Squadron, 301st Pursuit Squadron, 302nd Pursuit Squadron, 477th Medium Bombardment Group, 616th, 617th, 618th, 619th Bombardment Squadrons. In total they have over 15,500 combat stories and have earned 150 Distinguished Flying crosses.

After the Second World War President Harry S. Truman executed executive order 9981 ending segregation in the Armed Forces. This move started the steady increase of African Americans in the military. For example in Vietnam, over 25% of the armed forces was made up of African Americans even though they made up for about 13% of the country's population. Overall even though only 90 African Americans were awarded the Medal of Honor, battled racial borders overseas and at home, they still overcame it and paved the road for the big impact on the African Americans in United States Armed Forces during times of war.

Works Cited

## Works Cited

- "Harlem Hellfighters." *369th Infantry Regiment "Harlem Hellfighters" | The Black Past: Remembered and Reclaimed*, [www.blackpast.org/aah/369th-infantry-regiment-harlem-hellfighters](http://www.blackpast.org/aah/369th-infantry-regiment-harlem-hellfighters).
- History.com Staff. "Tuskegee Airmen." *History.com*, A&E Television Networks, 2009, [www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/tuskegee-airmen#](http://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/tuskegee-airmen#).
- History.com Staff. "Tuskegee Airmen." *History.com*, A&E Television Networks, 2009, [www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/tuskegee-airmen#](http://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/tuskegee-airmen#).
- "Medal of Honor Recognition Long Overdue." *Www.army.mil*, [www.army.mil/article/9075/medal\\_of\\_honor\\_recognition\\_long\\_overdue](http://www.army.mil/article/9075/medal_of_honor_recognition_long_overdue).
- "Tuskegee Airmen." *HistoryNet*, [www.historynet.com/tuskegee-airmen](http://www.historynet.com/tuskegee-airmen).