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Good Hope 8th Grade

African American Observance Ceremony

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The 54th Regiment of the Civil War

Every country has some dark history. Our racist past includes the cruel, torturous labor of African Americans, as well as the segregation and violence directed at innocent blacks, but America has come a long way, and there are remarkable events that changed the way people in this country view African Americans.

The point of the Civil War was to take back the southern states that seceded because they wanted to keep slavery, but during the War Between the States (September 22, 1862) the Emancipation Proclamation was passed and abolished slavery in the slave states, as stated on the National Archives website. Not only that, but African Americans began getting more rights. They knew if the United States, also known as the Union, won, they would eliminate slavery forever. There were some mixed opinions on white and black troops fighting together, but on January 1, 1863, they finally were allowed. There were more than 1,000 men who volunteered, and on May 28, 1863, the 54th Regiment, including 1,007 black soldiers and 37 white officers, got together ready to fight in the battlefields in the south, as stated on the article " The 54th Massachusetts Infantry " on History.com.

On July 18, 1863, Colonel Shaw led 600 men, of the 54th Regiment to charge straight toward Confederate soldiers in South Carolina. Many white Americans weren't sure if black soldiers can fight as well or courageously as white ones. They planned to attack the men at Fort

Wagner; this was important because it guarded the Port of Charleston. The officers underestimated the number of troops and were outnumbered by 1,000. Sadly, 281 men from the 54th Regiment were either wounded, captured, or killed, including Colonel Shaw. At the conclusion of the battle, Confederates threw the bodies in the same trench. They thought it would be such an insult and disrespectful to be buried with blacks, but Shaw's parents stated, "No holier place (to be buried then) surrounded by brave and devoted soldiers.", as stated in the article " Robert Gould Shaw" on the Civil War Trust website. This showed that the respect for African Americans rose. Although the regiment had lost the battle at Fort Wagner, they still portrayed great heroism, and for the rest of the war they successfully fought in South Carolina, Florida, and Georgia.

Pays were also increased by three dollars a week which was equal to a white man. On May 31, 1897, a memorial, located in Boston, Massachusetts, of the regiment marching off to battle was made. In 1900, William Carney was awarded the Medal of Honor for saving the regimental colors during the Battle of Fort Wagner, and was the first black to receive one.

African Americans were fighting for their freedom during the Civil war and they proved themselves worthy of respect, the 54th Regiment will never be forgotten for the bravery and courage they showed.