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7th grade

African Americans During Wartime

"The privileges of being an American belong to those brave enough to fight for them," states Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., the first African American Air Force general. Throughout history, America has had its ups and downs with wartime. Despite many African Americans fighting for America, the U.S. has, at times, denied African Americans basic rights as citizens, even denying them to serve in the military. For many years, African Americans could not serve in the military. However, regardless of segregation and discrimination, many African Americans still put their life on the line for their country, when the nation called, by serving in America's armed forces.

In 1932, a man named Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. entered West Point. He was from a military family; his dad served as an enlisted soldier in the Army before him. Davis was the only African American in his class, and due to his race, he was shunned throughout his four years at West Point. Not only did Benjamin room alone, but the other cadets never spoke to him and hardly noticed him. Davis said he felt like an "invisible man."

After his graduation, Davis had dreams of going into the Air Force and becoming a pilot. However, the Air Force denied his pilot training due to his race. Davis had to earn his pilot training. In order to be treated as an equal, he had to be more than perfect. Daily, he strove to be the best. Eventually, Davis's resilience paid off. Davis led the Tuskegee Airmen, an all African-American group of pilots who broke racial boundaries when they fought in World War II. Not only were the Tuskegee Airmen fighting racism in America, they were also fighting racism abroad.

In time, the Tuskegee Airmen were called the 332nd Fighter Group and the 477th Bombardment group in America after World War II. Davis became the commander of the 332nd Fighter Group. This earned Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. the title of the first African American to lead a numbered air group. He later became the first African-American general of the Air Force. General Davis contributions to the armed forces left a legacy still alive today, paving the way for soldiers of color to lead.

While equality still needs to continue marching on, General Davis and other African-American soldiers served proudly. They opened doors that others can pass through. They demonstrated that the military thrives when everyone serves equally. Recently, the United States Military Academy opened a new barracks. The Davis Barracks stand near barracks named after Generals Grant and Lee. Today, thousands of future Army leaders prepare to enter the military surrounded by the legacy of African-American service members like General Davis.

Works Cited

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