



Carlisle Area School District
540 West North Street • Carlisle, Pennsylvania 17013
717-240-6800 • www.carliseschools.org
Christina M. Spielbauer • Acting Superintendent

Owen Andrews – 8th Grade, Wilson Middle School
The Contributions of African Americans during Times of War

African Americans have had and continue to have a large positive impact on the war efforts of the United States. They may not have been doing the same things that White Americans were, but that does not mean they did not have a significant impact. African Americans were enslaved, ignored, and segregated, and they were still willing to fight for their country.

In the Revolutionary War, African Americans fought on both the sides of the war. The British promised the slaves freedom, and over 100,000 slaves escaped to the British front lines. As few as 1,000 men actually served in the army. The British gave leftover slaves other jobs like cooking, cleaning, and mechanics. On the other hand, around 9,000 African Americans fought on the Patriot's side. This was only in the northern part of the United States, because people in the south were afraid to give arms to slaves. In the War of 1812, there were not any legal restrictions on the enlistment of African Americans. This was because there was a shortage of man power on the American's side. Louisiana, because the U.S. permitted it to have its own laws and customs for a short amount of time, had separate black squadrons formed.

In the Spanish-American War, there were a considerable amount more African-American troops than before. The Buffalo Soldiers were a group of soldiers who earned 24 Medals of Honor. They were comprised of the 9th Cavalry Regiment, the 10th Cavalry Regiment, the 24th Infantry Regiment, and the 25th Infantry Regiment. During the American Civil War, African Americans had the largest impact on a war that anyone had ever seen before. The 186,097 African Americans involved in the war fought on the sides of the Union and the Confederacy. It was not until near the end of the war when the South let African Americans fight on their side. Slaves were used for labor before that. The African Americans that fought for the north were both free and runaway slaves. There were 163 black units in the Civil War.

During the World Wars, African Americans were eager to volunteer in the Army and Navy, but most had support roles. Despite the high enlistment rates in the Army, the Army did not treat African Americans equally. 125,000 African Americans were overseas during WWII. Most male African Americans in the Second World War were truck drivers. The U.S. awarded seven African Americans the Medal of Honor.

In the Vietnam War, there were a larger percent of African American soldiers in the war effort that ever before (12.6%). 21 Medals of Honor were rewarded to African Americans.

All in all, African Americans have had a huge impact on America in times of war. African Americans deserve just as much credit as other soldiers, if not more, because White Americans have enslaved them, and they still fight for our country. If it were not for the contributions of African Americans, the United States would not be where it is right now.