

TEACHER'S GUIDE **Grades 5 to 12**

America's Black Soldiers

Subject Areas: Social Studies, U.S. History, Military History, African American History

Synopsis: Archival footage chronicles African Americans' long battle for the right to serve as equals in the US military. Chronicles their contributions to the Revolutionary War, War of 1812, Civil War, Indians Wars, Spanish-American War, World War I, World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam War and Persian Gulf War.

Learning Objectives:

- Objective 1)** Students will be able to recall African American participation in the American military, from the Revolutionary War through the Persian Gulf War
- Objective 2)** Students will be able to describe the challenges Black soldiers faced in military service, including discrimination, segregation, and lack of recognition
- Objective 3)** Students will be able to discuss the integration of the armed forces and explain why integrated units are more efficient than segregated units
- Objective 4)** Students will be able to associate the African American fight for equality in the military with the struggle for civil rights in the larger society

Vocabulary:

racism, ragtag, freemen, abolitionists, regiment, Buffalo soldiers, veterans, integration, bastions, Jim Crow laws, cadre, segregated units, Tuskegee Airmen, segregation, draft, enlist, civil rights

Pre-Viewing Questions and Activities:

Explore students' previous knowledge of African American participation in the U.S. military. In which wars did African Americans fight? What types of assignments were they given? When were military units first integrated?

Post-Viewing Questions and Discussion:

- 1) Why were colonists wary of allowing African Americans to fight in the Revolutionary War? Why did George Washington eventually allow Blacks to enlist? Why did Black soldiers want to participate in the war?
- 2) Describe the participation of African Americans in the Battle of New Orleans during the War of 1812. Were the soldiers slaves or freemen?
- 3) Why were African Americans allowed to serve in integrated units in the Navy during the 1860s?
- 4) At what point of the Civil War were Black regiments formed? Who led these regiments? How did Southern authorities react to the formation of Black regiments? Describe the discrimination Black soldiers faced in the Union military.
- 5) Why did William Tecumseh Sherman want to eliminate the Black regiments?

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- 6) Describe the role of African American units in the Spanish-American War. Why didn't the public learn of the Black regiments' contributions?
- 7) How did Jim Crow legislation affect the military? What kind of work were most Black soldiers assigned while in service? What problems did African American military leaders face? How were segregated units inefficient, militarily speaking?
- 8) Why did the 93rd division fight for the French during World War I? How was their experience in the French military different from their experience in the U.S. military?
- 9) Describe African American participation in World War II. What kinds of assignments did Black units receive in the Pacific? In what major construction projects did African American units participate? What challenges did the Tuskegee Airmen overcome? What contributions did Black women make in the military? Why was the Battle of the Bulge significant in the struggle for equality in the military?
- 10) What action did President Harry Truman take regarding African American soldiers during the Korean War period? Why did he do it?
- 11) Why were there a disproportionate number of African Americans serving in the Vietnam War? How did the U.S. government solve this problem?
- 12) How has the African American soldiers' fight for equality in the military affected race relations in the United States?

Additional Activities:

- 1) Crispus Attucks became the first casualty of the American Revolution when a British soldier killed him during the Boston Massacre. Investigate the life of Crispus Attucks and the events of the Boston Massacre. Also look for pictures of him or the Crispus Attucks Monument in the Boston Common.
- 2) Invite an African American soldier to class to discuss his or her experiences in the military.
- 3) View the National Park Service's online museum about the Tuskegee Airmen at <http://www.cr.nps.gov/museum/exhibits/tuskegee/airoverview.htm>.
- 4) Have students write journal entries as African American soldiers in one of the wars covered in the program. Encourage students to consider the type of unit they are in, their assignments, how they are treated, and their relationships to their officers and fellow servicemen and women.
- 5) General Colin Powell became the first African American Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Research his life as an example of the progress of African Americans in the U.S. military services. Research further the status of African Americans in the U.S. military services and compare it with the situation for Blacks in civilian society.

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