



## Tuskegee Airmen of World War II

### Materials:

- Copies of Photos
- Leader profiles
- PowerPoint

### Plan of instruction

#### **1. Introduction**

In 1940, the Republican Party National Convention approved a plank in its platform calling for racial integration of the armed services. However, no bill or order passed to integrate the armed services until President Truman did so on July 26, 1948. Before President Truman's Executive Order 9981, blacks and other minorities were segregated into separate units. The belief that blacks were fundamentally inferior to whites continued to subjugate blacks in the military. The Tuskegee Airmen's impressive efforts to escort bombers on missions were highly influential in the latter half of World War II. These men served through adversity and racial discrimination to proudly serve our country.

#### **2. Lecture: Background Information**

##### **a. Slide 1: Tuskegee Airmen of World War II**

##### **b. Slide 2: Approaching War**

President Franklin Roosevelt announced that he would expand the civilian pilot training program with the Army Expansion Act of 1939. Some interpreted that this act would begin providing training for black pilots. On November 10, 1925, the Army War College study reported that black soldiers were inferior to whites and not fit for combat nor leadership positions. Many military leaders, particularly in the South, did not support a black pilots' training program. Black newspapers like the *Chicago Defender* and the *Pittsburgh Courier* argued that blacks should be included in the U.S. Army Air Corps.

##### **c. Slide 3: Yancy Williams, 1941**

Yancy Williams was a graduate of Booker T. Washington high school in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and a graduate Howard University. On January 15, 1941, Yancy filed a lawsuit with the NAACP's help to pressure the Army Air Force, a precursor to the U.S. Air Force, to accept him for aviation cadet flight-training. "He had applied in November 1940 but was told his application was being held because no suitable units for "colored applicants" were available



to train him.” The lawsuit’s result was the War Department announced the establishment of an all-black aviation cadet flight-training program at Tuskegee, Alabama, home

to the prestigious Tuskegee Institute founded by Booker T. Washington. Known as the “Tuskegee Airmen,” these capable aviators would provide invaluable contributions to the war and force a change in the segregated armed forces.

**d. Slide 4: The Umbrella Name, Tuskegee Airmen** - read the slide to the class

**e. Slide 5: Tuskegee Airmen in Navigator Class**

**f. Slide 6: “Tuskegee Experiment”**

The aviator group was known as the “Tuskegee Experiment” because people believed it would be a failure. Most young black cadets knew they had more to offer their country than menial labor services usually left for minorities. They wanted to demonstrate their abilities and challenge the status quo. Most of the cadets were college-educated or had some college courses and represented locations throughout the United States.

**g. Slide 7: Eleanor Roosevelt’s Support of Civil Rights**

On March 29, 1941, showed her support for the Tuskegee Airmen and flew with a Tuskegee instructor, C. Alfred “Chief” Anderson, Tuskegee Institute’s chief instructor, which gave Tuskegee a publicity boost.

Eleanor Roosevelt was not afraid to take on civil rights and became an activist. She identified other areas that needed her attention and felt that quality education was imperative to living standards. She remarked, “Whenever the standard of education is low, the standard of living is low.”

**h. Slide 8: C. Alfred “Chief” Anderson, postal stamp**

**i. Slide 9: The first five graduates of Tuskegee Flight School**, read from the slide

**j. Slide 10: Short bios of the first five graduates**, read from the slide

**k. Slide 11: Successes of the “Red Tails”** (known for the red paint on the tails of their planes)

There were 996 pilots trained at Tuskegee, with an additional 15,000 that included aircraft mechanics and logistical personnel. The 99<sup>th</sup> Pursuit Squadron was activated on July 19, 1941, six months before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Their job was to escort bombers on missions. Their name “pursuit Squadron” was later changed to “fighter



squadron.” African-Americans in the 99<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron and later with the 332<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Group served in North Africa, Sicily, and Europe. They flew more than 15,000 sorties in Europe and North Africa and was awarded more than 150 Distinguished Flying Crosses.

David L. Haulman, an American Air Force Historian, reports that the Tuskegee Airmen lost 27 Bombers while white escort groups had double the loss rate of bombers. The report contradicts the first report that the Tuskegee Airmen never lost a bomber was incorrectly reported on March 24, 1945, in the black newspaper, *The Chicago Defender*. The headline read, “332<sup>nd</sup> Flies Is 200<sup>th</sup> Mission without Loss.”

- l. Slide 12: Tuskegee Airmen, Col. George Roberts** – read the slide
- m. Slide 13: Lt. Charles Hall** – read the slide
- n. Slide 14: Lt. Col. Donald C. Thomas, Jr.** – read the slide
- o. Slide 15: Charles McGee** - read the slide
  
- p. Slide 16: The historical significance of Tuskegee Airmen-** read the slide
  
- q. Slide 17: Summary** – read the slide

**Sources:**

<https://www.tuskegee.edu/support-tu/tuskegee-airmen/tuskegee-airmen-pilot-listing>

<https://airandspace.si.edu/explore-and-learn/topics/blackwings/tuskegee.cfm>

[http://www.nbcnews.com/id/17908209/ns/us\\_news-life/t/report-tuskegee-airmen-lost-bombers/#.X02ri8hKiUk](http://www.nbcnews.com/id/17908209/ns/us_news-life/t/report-tuskegee-airmen-lost-bombers/#.X02ri8hKiUk)

<https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/tuskegee-airmen>

[http://tuskegeeairmen.org/wp-content/uploads/TUSKEGEE\\_AIRMEN\\_CHRONOLOGY.pdf](http://tuskegeeairmen.org/wp-content/uploads/TUSKEGEE_AIRMEN_CHRONOLOGY.pdf)

<https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/tuskegee-airmen-interview-daniel-haulman>

<https://cafriseabove.org/charles-henry-debow-jr/>

<https://www.nationalbcc.org/news/latest-news/1464-i-got-wings-by-charles-h-debow>