



African American Medal of Honor Recipients: The Civil War

Materials:

- PowerPoint: African American Medal of Honor Recipients

Plan of Instruction:

1. Introduction:

On December 21, 1861, Congress authorized the Medal of Honor, one of the most prestigious military awards, to honor soldiers in the Civil War. One hundred eighty thousand blacks took up the call to fight for the Union. Approximately Twenty-six blacks received the Medal of Honor for valor in combat during the Civil War.

2. Lecture: Background Information

a. Slide 1: African American Medal of Honor Recipients – The Civil War

b. Slide 2: Introduction:

Frederick Douglass was a strong proponent to use blacks in the Union Army. On March 2, 1863, he sent out a powerful message in his newspaper, *Douglass Monthly*, titled “Men of Color, to Arms!” The Article stated: *“There is no time to delay. The tide is at its flood that leads on to fortune. From East to West, from North to South, the sky is written all over, ‘Now or never.’ Liberty won by white men would lose half its luster. ‘Who would be free themselves must strike a blow. Better even die free than to live slaves.’ This is the sentiment of every brave colored man amongst us.”*

One hundred eighty blacks followed the Frederick Douglass call to arms. After Congress authorized the Medal of Honor Award, twenty-six black soldiers received this most prestigious military award.

c. Slide 3: First Sergeant Powhatan Beaty (1837-1916) 5th USCT

This former slave enlisted as a private at Cincinnati, Ohio, when only twenty-four years of age. Sergeant Beaty was one of thirteen blacks who received the Medal of Honor for his efforts at the Battle of New Market Heights (Chapin’s Farm). This battle was one of the bloodiest and most difficult brutal of the Civil War. Beaty took charge of his division when white officers were killed and led his 5th USCT to victory.



d. Slide 4: Landsman John Henry Lawson, (1837-1919) USN

When the call went out to serve in the Union Navy, Lawson quickly became one of the first to volunteer from Pennsylvania. He was given the rank of Landsman, which meant that he was new and an inexperienced sailor. His short stature and stocky build made him ideal for work on the shell whip. The shell whip was a device to raise powder boxes to the gun deck and lower empty boxes to the deck below. Landsman Lawson received his Medal of Honor for the battle of Mobile Bay. A shell exploded, killing four sailors. When Lawson regained consciousness, he returned to his duties on the shell whip supplying the ship with the needed ammunition for the battle.

e. Slide 5: Union Navy Sailors (Read list of names)

There were over 18,000 enlisted Union sailors during the Civil War. They were formerly enslaved blacks from the South and black Unionists from the North. They served in an integrated Union Navy. Some served as cooks, Landsman, Seaman, or were contraband sailors. Contraband was an escaped slave that reached Union protection and were formerly used as forced labor by the Confederate war effort.

f. Slide 6: Come and Join Us Brothers (Read the content of slide)

g. Slide 7: United States Colored Troops (USCT)

Private James Gardiner (1839 – 1905) – Private Gardiner also received his Medal of Honor at the Battle of New Market Heights (Chapin's Farm). Gardiner demonstrated great bravery, and after white officers were killed, he led the black troops in hand-to-hand combat and took command of the troops. He was promoted to sergeant a day after the battle.

Sergeant James H. Harris (1828-1898) – Harris also was awarded the Medal of Honor for his heroic efforts at the Battle of New Market Heights (Chapin's Farm).

h. Slide 8: United States Colored Troops (USCT)

1st Sergeant Alexander R. Kelly (1840 – 1907) – Kelly is one of thirteen soldiers who received their Medal of Honor for heroics at New Market Heights (Chapin's Farm). He was a member of the 6th U.S. Colored Troops.

Sergeant Milton M. Holland (1844 – 1910) – Holland was another of the thirteen soldiers who received a Medal of Honor for heroics at the Battle of New Market Heights (Chapin's farm). A 20-year-old former slave also took charge of Company C of the 5th USCT in the attacks on the rebels.



i. Slide 9: United States Colored Troops (USCT)

Sergeant Alfred Hilton (1842-1864) of the 4th U.S. Colored Troops and **1st Sergeant Robert A Pinn** (1843-1911) of the 5th U.S. Colored Troops were both heroes at the Battle of New Market Heights (Chapin's farm). Sergeant Hilton died twenty days of his wounds after the battle at New Market Heights.

k. Slide 10: More Medal of Honor Recipients (Read Content of slide)

l. Slide 11: Sergeant Christian A. Fleetwood (1840-1914) (Read content of slide)

m. Slide 12: Sergeant William Harvey Carney, 54th Massachusetts Infantry

Sergeant Carney was born a slave in 1840; when his master died, Carney, age fourteen, was manumitted. He enlisted in the 54th Massachusetts Infantry. He was the first black to receive the Medal of Honor in the Civil War. He and others proved that black troops could be trusted to fight alongside their white brothers. When Carney died in 1908, the flags at the Massachusetts State House were flown at half-staff.

n. Slide 13: Summary (Read Content of Slide with Class Discussion)

3. Citations:

African American Recipients of the Medal of Honor, Charles W. Hanna, 2002

<https://coffeeordie.com/black-medal-of-honor-recipients/>

Black Rifle Coffee Company

https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_African-American_Medal_of_Honor_recipients

<https://www.cmozs.org/recipients/lists/black-african-american-recipients>