



World War I (1914-1918): African American Medal of Honor Recipients

Materials:

- PowerPoint: **World War I: African American Medal of Honor Recipients**
- **Harlem Hellfighters**
https://video.search.yahoo.com/search/video;_ylt=A0geKeS6ag1hhOwAJDRXNyoA;_ylu=Y29sbwNiZjEEcG9zAzEEdnRpZAMEc2VjA3BpdnM-?p=harlem+hellfighters&fr2=piv-web&type=E210US0G91538&fr=mcafee#id=10&vid=f5a55914a768bff4839578535187712b&action=view
- **371st Infantry**
https://video.search.yahoo.com/search/video;_ylt=AwRJ6OKlQxBhKSAAbpT7w8QF;_ylu=c2VjA3NIYXJjaAR2dGlkAw--;_ylc=X1MDOTY3ODEzMDcEX3IDMgRhY3RuA2NsawRjc3JjcHZpZANLYjhpd3pFd0xqR2Uyc0VFWGI5bFNBS2FNalF1TVFBQUFBQnNOSjNCBGZyA21jYWZlZQRmcjIDc2EtZ3AEZ3ByaWQDOVFtS0xIMXVRMDJqdEtdhkdNkaThJQQRuX3JzbHQDNjAEbl9zdWdnAzAEb3JpZ2luA3ZpZGVvLnNIYXJjaC55YWVhby5jb20EcG9zAzAEcHFzdHIDBHBxc3RybAMEcXN0cmwDMTQEcXVlcnkDMzcxJTlwaW5mYW50cnkEdF9zdG1wAzE2Mjg0NTYyMTQ-?p=371+infantry&ei=UTF-8&fr2=p%3As%2Cv%3Av%2Cm%3Asa&fr=mcafee&type=E210US0G91538#id=1&vid=aabd0980760ce12c8ea52e77ec13b81e&action=view
- **WWI & African American Soldiers**
https://video.search.yahoo.com/search/video;_ylt=A0geKYm.RxBhX1oAWANXNyoA;_ylu=Y29sbwNiZjEEcG9zAzEEdnRpZAMEc2VjA3BpdnM-?p=WWI+black+soldiers&fr2=piv-web&type=E210US0G91538&fr=mcafee#id=17&vid=e93c38847518f156749bb9f6517a816f&action=view

Plan of Instruction:

1. **Introduction:** Blacks have fought valiantly in every major war since the Revolutionary War and gladly served their country in the process. When President Woodrow Wilson announced in April 1917 that the United States was entering the war, more than 380,000 black soldiers would serve their nation. These black soldiers believed this was a potentially transformative chance to improve their lives by serving their country. However, they served in a segregated army, and many were denied full citizenship.

African Americans were relegated to serve in the Services of Supply section of the American Expeditionary Forces as stevedores, laborers, and engineer service battalions. The main job of these battalions was to support troops on the front lines. Even though blacks had proven



themselves as excellent soldiers in the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, and the American-Indian Wars as Buffalo Soldiers, most blacks were held to menial jobs in World War I.

The 369th Infantry Regiment, known as the Harlem Hellfighters, was assigned to the French Army in April 1918, because no division in the American Expeditionary Force wanted them. The French Army was eager to have these them and the 369th proved to be excellent soldiers.

Formed in August 1917, the 371st Infantry Regiment consisted of black draftees mainly from South Carolina. After training, they were sent to France and placed under the command of the French Army, who desperately needed new troops. France was grateful for their willingness to fight and push the Germans out of France.

World War I transformed America and brought the nation together, but blacks were denied the reward that they expected from their service for their country.

2. Lecture:

- a. **Slide 1: Title Slide: World War I, Black Medal of Honor Winners** (Black infantry troops marching northwest of Verdun, France)
- b. **Slide 2: Introduction (Read Slide)**
- c. **Slide 3: 369th Infantry Battlefield (Read Slide)**
- d. **Slide 4: Sergeant Henry Johnson, 369th Infantry to the United States.** When the 369th Infantry landed in France early in 1918, no division in the American Expeditionary Force wanted it because its soldiers were black. The Commander of the 369th, Colonel William Hayward, told a friend, "Our great American general simply put the black orphan in a basket, set it on the door of the French, pulled the bell and went away." (From *African American Recipients of the Medal of Honor* by Charles W. Hanna)

Sergeant Henry Johnson of the 369th Colored Infantry single-handedly routed 36 Huns, killing four and wounded the remainder. When his ammunition ran out, he used a bolo knife. He was the first man in his regiment to win the French War Cross, and in 2015, the White House awarded him the Medal of Honor in a posthumous ceremony.

The 369th served more continuous time fighting than any other regiment in the war.

- e. **Slide 5: Return of the 369th Infantry to New York City after the war.** The photo was taken on board the U.S.S. Stockholm on February 12, 1919, waiting for disembarkation.
- f. **Slide 6: 370th Infantry: The "Black Devils"** was the only infantry unit with black soldiers and black officers. The 370th made history in The Spanish-American War by also being led by



black officers. This infantry unit fought with distinction in the Battle of Argonne and liberated the Belgium Ardennes village of Petite-Chapelle.

The 370th was welcomed home to Chicago with a celebration on February 17, 1919.

- g. Slide 7: Members of the 371st Infantry** were made up of southern draftees mainly from South Carolina. The 371st won several awards for bravery: the Distinguished Service Cross, the Croix de Guerre, the Legion of Honor, Medaille Militaire, and the Medal of Honor won by Corporal Freddie Stowers.

The U.S. Army underutilized blacks and thought the French could better integrate the black troops; they fought valiantly with the French. In the 1918 offensive in Champagne, they captured many German prisoners, 47 machine guns, eight trench engines, 377 mm fieldpieces, and a munitions depot. In addition, they shot down three German planes with a rifle and machine gunfire.

- h. Slide 8: Corporal Freddie Stowers.** Freddie Stowers was born in 1896 in Anderson County, South Carolina. Freddie worked on the family farm growing cotton. In October 1917, Stowers enlisted in the Army at Anderson County, South Carolina. He was assigned to Company C, 1st Battalion, 371st Infantry, an all-black unit organized at Camp Jackson, South Carolina. The regiment became part of the all-black 93rd Infantry Division. (From *African American Recipients of the Medal of Honor*, By Charles W. Hanna)

Freddie Stowers was killed in action on September 28, 1918. Corporal Stowers was mortally wounded but continued to lead his company in battle with extraordinary heroism with supreme devotion to his men. He went well beyond the call of duty and brought the utmost credit on him and the United States Army. He is buried at the A.B.M.C. Meuse-Argonne Cemetery, Meuse, France.

President George H. W. Bush presented the Medal of Honor posthumously to the family of Stowers on April 24, 1991, seventy-three years after he was killed in action.

- i. Slide 9: Summary (Read Slide)**

3. Guiding Questions

Why were blacks excluded from combat service by the U.S. Army in World War I? What jobs were they assigned?

What three black infantry divisions proved that black soldiers were excellent soldiers? Site your evidence.

How did the French treat the black soldiers?

Did the returning black American soldiers find respect after the war?

