

# **Lesson Creation for Legion of Valor Museum Project**

By: Cliff Nitschke, Kastner Intermediate School

## **Topic:**

**The Role of African American soldiers in World War II**

## **Abstract:**

In this lesson, students, working individually, with partners or small groups, will use various websites to investigate the role African American soldiers played during World War II. The student activities are independent of one another and do not need to be completed in order or even by all students. Each activity culminates in a student created product.

Students will read accounts of the African American soldiers, through the documents on the Legion of Valor website and other internet sites. It is to be noted that no Medals of Honor were presented to African American soldiers during World War II. It was not until 1996, that seven African American soldiers were honored by President Clinton with the Medal of Honor.

## **Grade Level:**

11

**Time to Complete:** 4 to 8 hours

## **Standard(s) Covered:**

11.7 Students analyze America's participation in World War II

3. Identify the roles and sacrifices of individual American soldiers, as well as the unique contributions of the special fighting forces (e.g., the Tuskegee Airmen, the 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team, the Navajo Code Talkers).

## **Major Objective(s):**

The major objective of this lesson is to help students to understand that African American soldiers played a major role in World War II. African American soldiers, like the Tuskegee Airmen, fought bravely and suffered great losses even though they did not receive the same pay or respect. Without the African American soldiers, the outcome of the war could have been very different. Also, students need to be made aware of the African American soldiers that received the Medal of Honor for bravery during World War II, in 1996.

## **Major Points To Teach:**

- Over 2.5 million African-American men registered for the draft, and black women also volunteered in large numbers. While serving in the Army, Army Air Forces, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard, they experienced discrimination and segregation but met the challenge and persevered.
- Breaking a 167-year-old barrier, the U.S. Marine Corps started enlisting African-Americans on June 1, 1942.
- Tuskegee Airmen flew 1,500 missions over Europe and never lost any of the bomber pilots they were assigned to protect.
- On July 26, 1948, President Harry Truman signed Executive Order 9981 ending segregation in the United States armed forces.
- No African American soldier was awarded the Medal of Honor during World War II. In 1993 the Army contracted Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina, to research and prepare a study "to determine if there was a racial disparity in the way Medal of Honor recipients were selected." Shaw's team researched the issue and, finding that there was disparity, recommended the Army consider a group of 10 soldiers for the Medal of Honor. Of those 10, seven were recommended to receive the award. In October of 1996 Congress passed the necessary legislation which allowed the President to award these Medals of Honor since the statutory limit for presentation had expired

- January 13, 1997: The nation honored seven African American veterans of World War II with its highest military decoration for heroism, the Medal of Honor. The seven men are the only African American soldiers who have received the Medal of Honor for World War II.

### **Suggested Strategies:**

- Students will be exposed through the three modalities through classroom discussion of the topic, through the use of visuals by using the television or video projector and the researching of assigned internet sites and note taking on their laptops.
- Students will be able to participate throughout the lesson through discussion as a class, individually and in their groups. Since this is a web based activity, the lesson will also be hands on with the students actively participating using their textbooks and the internet.
- Throughout the lesson, questioning will occur and the students will be given the opportunity to express themselves allowing the teacher to monitor their grasp of the material presented.

### **Practices:**

#### Student Activity 1:

Design and create a poster, advertising for recruitment of African American volunteers for the Tuskegee Airmen.

- Begin by drawing, or you may use a computer drawing program and scanned pictures.
- Create or find pictures of doctors, soldiers to use as examples.
- Write descriptions for the pictures (be sure to give details) and incorporate quotes from President Roosevelt and General Eisenhower encouraging volunteers to lend support.
- Design an eye-catching slogan.
- Make as historically accurate as possible.

#### Student Activity 2:

Create a historical newspaper front page, from 1996, which details the awarding of the Medal of Honor to the seven African American soldiers who served in World War II.

- Using the descriptions provided by the documents on the Legion of Valor site and other sources, write a newspaper story detailing the awarding of the Medal of Honor to the seven men, by President Clinton. Using a sheet of paper mock up the front page of a newspaper, including the Banner: name of paper, date, city published; Headline
- Try to make the newspaper as realistic looking as possible.

#### Student Activity 3:

Write a report that details why no African American soldiers received Medals of Honor during World War II.

- Research and write a report that would have appeared in a 1996 publication, at the time of the awarding of medals.
- The report should be 1-2 pages long and include pictures.
- It should tell something about the soldiers, that won the Medal of Honor, and why it took so long for them to receive it.
- When you have edited and rewritten it, turn it in to your teacher in the form that he or she has requested.

### **RESOURCES:**

### **Legion of Valor Archives Materials:**

The names listed below are the African American World War II veterans that received the Medal of Honor, in 1996, and documents relating to receiving this honor as well as military records can be found at the links listed in the Legion of Valor Archives for six of the seven recipients.

#### **Vernon Baker, St. Maries, ID.**

<http://lovarchive.fcoe.net/weblink/index.asp?DocumentID=7891&FolderID=3841&SearchHandle=0&DocViewType=ShowImage&LeftPaneType=Hidden&dbid=0&page=1>

#### **Edward A. Carter, Jr. (Deceased) Home of record, Los Angeles, CA; Family lives in Cerritos, CA**

<http://lovarchive.fcoe.net/weblink/index.asp?DocumentID=8236&FolderID=3841&SearchHandle=0&DocViewType=ShowImage&LeftPaneType=Hidden&dbid=0&page=1>

#### **John R. Fox (Deceased) Home of record, Cincinnati, OH; Family lives in Houston, TX**

<http://lovarchive.fcoe.net/weblink/index.asp?DocumentID=8014&FolderID=3841&SearchHandle=0&DocViewType=ShowImage&LeftPaneType=Hidden&dbid=0&page=1>

#### **Willy F. James, Jr. (Deceased) Home of record, Kansas City, MO**

(information not available in the archives).

#### **Ruben Rivers, (Deceased) Home of record, Oklahoma City, OK; Family lives in Oakland, CA**

<http://lovarchive.fcoe.net/weblink/index.asp?DocumentID=8867&FolderID=3841&SearchHandle=0&DocViewType=ShowImage&LeftPaneType=Hidden&dbid=0&page=1>

#### **Charles L. Thomas (Deceased), Home of record and family, Detroit, MI**

<http://lovarchive.fcoe.net/weblink/index.asp?DocumentID=9135&FolderID=3841&SearchHandle=0&DocViewType=ShowImage&LeftPaneType=Hidden&dbid=0&page=1>

#### **George Watson, (Deceased), Home of record, Birmingham, AL**

<http://lovarchive.fcoe.net/weblink/index.asp?DocumentID=9135&FolderID=3841&SearchHandle=0&DocViewType=ShowImage&LeftPaneType=Hidden&dbid=0&page=1>

### **Internet Links:**

**Lest We Forget: African-Americans in World War II**

collection of resources, including profiles of notable veterans.

<http://www.coax.net/people/lwf/ww2.htm>

**The History Place: African-Americans in WWII**

explores the experiences of the African-American men and women who served in Europe, the Pacific, and on the home front.

<http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/aframerwar/>

**Tuskegee Airmen, Inc.**

national site

<http://tuskegeearmen.org/>

**Tuskegee**

Tuskegee Airmen of World War II. During WWII there were many men that were forgotten. The Tuskegee Airmen made a major contribution. Where did they come from?

<http://history.acusd.edu/gen/WW2Timeline/Tuskegee.html>

**Tuskegee Air National Museum**

The National Museum of the **Tuskegee Airmen**

<http://pw1.netcom.com/~chehaw/taimuseum.htm>

**The Tuskegee Airmen**

short history with links to related topics.

<http://www.afro.com/history/tusk/tuskmain.html>