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From Hellfighters to Tuskegee Airmen

Austin Teague

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From Hellfighters to Tuskegee Airmen



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Austin Teague
Senior Capstone
History
Research Essay
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Austin Teague

HCOM Concentration: History

Capstone Project Proposal

- **Focus:** How and why were the Harlem Hellfighters and the Tuskegee Airmen pushed into the background, and how did they affect civil rights in the years after?
- **Alignment with Common Theme and HCOM:** This subject fits perfectly with the idea of “Hidden Histories.” The idea of African American soldiers being shoved into the background after their major contributions to both World Wars aligns exactly to the ideas presented in this capstone.
- **Purpose:** In this Essay I hope to be able to communicate why these soldiers were vastly important to civil rights after the war. I also hope to be able to speak about the soldiers who gave their lives or survived to fight for their country.
- **Capstone Title:** From Hellfighters to Tuskegee Airmen
- **Summary:** I will be delving into the history of African American soldiers of both World Wars, specifically focusing on the Harlem Hellfighters and Tuskegee Airmen. As well, I will speak on the aftermath that the war had on civil rights progression for African Americans and how they affected the civil rights movement after WWII. Their stories help to shed light on the issues which surrounded racism in the early twentieth century, and I want to highlight the effects they had on society due to their exploits.
- **Sources:** I will be utilizing both primary and secondary sources relating to the subject area. I have already found multiple texts relating to the soldier’s stories and the history of the involvement of African Americans in the Great War and the second World War.

- **Next Steps:** The next steps I will take are working on gathering all of the sources I will need. There will likely be more that I will find and use in the process of writing, but getting a good head start will help save time. I will also start to research on how to properly create an online poster for the capstone fair. I have never done one before so it will be a new challenge for me to overcome. I will also be looking at my previously written resume and see if I need to make changes for the project requirements.
- **Timeline:** I hope to have half of the paper written by the draft due date of April 10th. Afterward, I will work on trying to write two or three pages a week afterwards in order to properly have time to finally revise before the final due date of May 1st. It sounds very loose, but I do not try to have specific dates down as other classes might have requirements which might take up a lot of my time during that period. I already have a resume written for my teaching program application, so unless the specifics on the instructions are a part of my resume already, I will edit it to fit in the guidelines. I plan to have that finished at or before the final due date.
 - **April 10:** At least 5-6 pages completed and have Resume completed.
 - **May 1:** Final paper submitted.
 - **May 2-16:** Complete work on digital poster for Capstone Festival

Austin Teague

Professor Lee Ritscher

HCOM 475

April 2, 2023

Senior Capstone

From Hellfighters to Tuskegee Airmen

There have been many conflicts in the world, and all have been instrumental in the development of society. When a single man was assassinated in 1914, the entire continent of Europe erupted into flames and changed the destiny of the entire planet. Of the millions of people who were affected, one group, which is hardly recognized, is African Americans. At this point in history, the Reconstruction Era was still going strong in the United States, but segregation and racist tendencies were commonplace in the country. After the inciting events which brought the U.S. into the war across the Atlantic, the black men who wished to serve were halted at multiple points, but they still felt the desire to serve for their country despite the barricades placed in front of them at almost every turn. The creation of the 369th Infantry Regiment, also known as the Hellfighters, during the first World War was a clear demonstration of the loyalty and service that the African American population had for the United States, yet they are not spoken about nearly as often as they should be in historical circles. This was also the case for the 99th Pursuit Squadron in the second World War, some years after the Hellfighters served in Europe. The strides that these men took in order to try and progress race relations in the United States should be considered favorable. The introduction of the United States into both wars, the actions and barriers the soldiers faced, and the aftermath of the global catastrophes on

the progress of civil rights in the U.S. aids in producing an answer as to how these unspoken heroes are deserving of recognition.

In the years leading towards the first World War, the problem of segregation and the reconstruction of the country was still in progress, causing severe issues between the black and white populations. The Civil War had ended fifty years prior, but the consequences of the war were still raging rampant in the country. The Reconstruction era had seemingly ended by the time the war began in Europe, but the effects it had on the African American population were still extremely detrimental. The Jim Crow era of the South caused the black population to be treated as abnormal citizens and not what they had strived to become after the Emancipation Proclamation and the Civil War Amendments. When the war broke out in Europe, the government and people were in agreement that isolationism was the best course of action (Finley 249). However, when a German U-Boat sank the RMS Lusitania in 1915, claiming 128 American lives in the process, there was extreme uproar from the American public (Gompert 73). The debate about Germany's unrestricted submarine warfare, resulting in an increase in occurrences, as well as their usage of poisonous gasses on the battlefield, led the U.S. to be on the verge of joining the war effort (Gompert 73). By April of 1917, President Woodrow Wilson and the rest of the government believed that it was finally time to join the war (Finley 249).

Upon entering the war, there was one major question which was on the mind of the black population: whether or not they were going to fight. With the persistent issues of segregation and treating them as lesser human beings, would they want to fight for a country that had constantly beaten them down and had not made them truly free? President Wilson was considered to be detrimental to southern blacks as he had generated more federal segregation and "believed in democracy for humanity, but not for Mississippi" (Finley 249). In 1916, the NAACP (the

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) stated that, “if thousands of American black men do fight in this world war, then who can hold them the freedom that should be theirs in the end?” (Finley 250). This idea of going off to Europe was heavily debated in both the North and South; however, this did not deter many from enlisting in the war effort. As was shown in previous wars, like the Civil War, the American Revolution, and Spanish-American War, the black population will continue to defend the country, albeit with much harsher conditions (Finley 256-7). It was a constant hope of the people that by putting up with these exceedingly demanding tasks, some new legislation or salvation would come to them if they were to protect the country (Finley 257). All they sought was some form of recognition by the country for their service. When legislation was passed in May of 1917 creating a conscription that included black men, influential figures in the black community were adamant that they assist in the fight (Finley 257). The assistant to the Secretary of War, Emmet J. Scott stated that the first duty of African Americans is to fight, then deal with the issues plaguing the community after (Finley 257). As the country entered the war in Europe, the issues of segregation reared its head, and it required special alterations to the way African Americans would serve overseas.

As the enlisted blacks sailed overseas in search of their anticipated racial freedom, they eventually found that even in Europe, Jim Crow would rear its ugly head. Previously, in the wake of the Civil War, enlisted African American soldiers were segregated into the 24th and 25th infantry, and the 9th and 10th cavalry regiments (Bryan 11). They all saw action during the Spanish-American War, and these regiments were used during World War I, but a week after the declaration of war, the quotas had been filled for Black enlistees, and the government cut off volunteers thusly (Bryan 11). Although this was the case for volunteers, when it came to the draft, it was a different story. The draft boards were composed of all white men; however, they

did not forcibly turn away black enlistees, but instead did all they could to get them into the war (Bryan 11). Although the army was one of the most progressive sections of the military allowing jobs in engineering, infantry, cavalry, medical, artillery, and more, it still relegated a majority of the labor-intensive jobs for African Americans (Bryan 11). A large issue was that though blacks were eligible for these jobs, they were not given apt opportunities to serve in combat roles (Bryan 11-12). It was because of this that many black people were subsequently relegated to battalions used to build trenches and do laborious work (Bryan 12). Ultimately, the divisions specifically assigned for combat were completely segregated (Bryan 12). The four all-black divisions previously created were divided across American held lands and not used in combat in Europe (Bryan 12). This, obviously, caused extreme backlash from the African American population and resulted in the 92nd and 93rd divisions which were primarily black regiments during the war (Bryan 12).

A short while before this occurred, in 1916, the 15th Infantry Regiment of the New York National Guard was created (Ziobro 23). It was formed from 200 Harlem residents as the core members, and others from New York City and other towns joined later (Ziobro 23). When the United States entered the war in 1916, the regiment was officially made a part of the war effort, and would later be redesignated as the 369th Infantry on March 1st of 1918 (Ziobro 23). The 369th initially trained in Poughkeepsie, New York at Camp Whitman as well as in South Carolina (Ziobro 23). Even though the segregation issues in the military made it a slow process to bring black troops into the war, the 369th was one of the initial regiments to go across the Atlantic and into France (Ziobro 23). As well as segregation problems, the issue of blacks being placed into support roles instead of combat ones was overcome by the 369th as well, but there was a cinch for the men (Ziobro 23). When they arrived in France, they were originally

designated to be a part of the 185th Infantry Brigade in the 93rd Division, but the commander of the Expeditionary forces, General John Pershing, assigned them into the French divisions (Ziobro 23). This was apparently due to the issues persisting in the Army with segregation as they wanted to prevent conflicts between the men (Fife 6). When they got to France, the officers were curious as to what to do with the soldiers, as they wanted to use them in the same manner as other African American soldiers, in the labor forces (Fife 6). When the news of this got out to the soldiers, General Pershing was flooded with complaints by leaders in the black community and accusations of him purposefully keeping black soldiers off of the battlefield (Fife 6).

Through the years of fighting the French, they had lost millions of soldiers on the battlefield and were dealing with issues of mutinies across their lines (Fife 6). In the eyes of French Commander Marshall Ferdinand Foch, the American soldiers arriving were perfect replacements for their lost men (Fife 6). President Woodrow Wilson and General Fife were adamant that American soldiers would fight in their own army (Fife 6). Pershing eventually relented under the pressure of the French, and agreed to lend the French army some soldiers, and he thought that by offering the African American regiments he would be overcoming both problems (Fife 6).

As opposed to the United States army, the French had no concern whatsoever about the color of a soldier's skin (Fife 6). This was because many black soldiers from the colonies of Sudan and Senegal had been fighting for France since the war began in 1914 (Fife 6). The 15th of New York would be designated as the 369th Regiment d'Infanterie Etats Unis (Fife 6). Joined alongside them would be the 370th, 371st, and 372nd ordered by the French High Command (Fife 6). As soon as they got under the orders of the French, they were put into rigorous training on how to fight with trench warfare, as none had experienced it (Fife 6). Although they were equipped with their American kits, they were exchanged with French gear in order to easily

allow for resupply, but they did keep their American uniforms to distinguish them (Fife 6). It was because of this camaraderie of sharing their items with each other, that the French and the 369th grew incredibly close and formed great bonds with each other, and they continued to look fondly on them for their whole lives (Wolf 9). When they eventually got to fight in the trenches, the men were paired with a French counterpart, which was the French army's idea of forceful bonding (Wolf 9). This would be unthought of in the United States army, especially during this period of time. During the three-week period of the pairings, they trained near the front lines and were susceptible to air attacks by the Germans (Wolf 9). They were able to gain great insight into French tactics and style, which is something that they would likely have not acquired if they were fighting in the U.S. Army (Wolf 9). Even though they were flourishing in this new environment among the French, they were not separated from the racist remarks of white American soldiers (Wolf 9). The Americans were purposefully telling French infantrymen that Black soldiers were useless in combat (Wolf 9). Some members of the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) wrote up pamphlets entitled *Secret Information Concerning Black American Troops* (SICBAT) that they would pass on to French officers (Wolf 9). They would discuss the black soldier's immorality and demand the French army to segregate their troops as they were "[A] depraved race of people who were prone to acts of rape and theft by most Americans" (Wolf 10). The whites believed that the massive increase in the African American population in the U.S., 15,000,000 at the time, would create a massive problem for the whites of the country (Wolf, 10). It was stated that though African Americans are citizens of the country, they are massively inferior to the white man and lack the intellect that they so desire (Wolf 10). Under the pressure of the AEF, the French officers received the SICBAT, and the Tuskegee institute sent Robert Moton, second Dean of the Institute, to France in order to assess the situation (Wolf 10). After

surveying the black soldiers, he found that none of them had been arousing trouble as the pamphlet had said (Wolf 10). It was easy to see that the AEF had been trying to create a rift between the French and black regiments, and the French would continue to treat the men as fairly as they always had (Wolf 10).

After this fiasco occurred, the men were able to finally fight on the front lines against the Germans (Wolf 10). With the French, they were a part of many battles which would lead towards the end of the war. One such battle was in May of 1918, in Northeastern France where two members of the regiment were center stage (Wolf 10). Needham Roberts and Henry Johnson fended off twenty-four German soldiers in the trenches (Wolf 11). Through grenades and gunfire, Johnson defended his wounded comrade and single handedly killed four Germans and injured the other twenty before they all retreated (Wolf 11). The fight to prevent the Germans from advancing became known as ‘The Battle for Henry Johnson’ (Wolf 11). Both Johnson and Roberts received a large ceremony commending their bravery, which was attended by their fellow black regiment members, but also every French soldier stationed in Argonne (Wolf 11). They both received the highest award in the French military, the Croix de Guerre, and because of this, they were the first soldiers from the U.S. to receive medals of that degree (Wolf 11). American officers were obviously distressed at this information, as they questioned why third-class citizens were given such a great award when it was only typically available for white men (Wolf 12). General Pershing admired the 369th’s commendation even though he had to adhere to the regulations of segregation (Wolf 12). Throughout the rest of the war, they continued to be devoted to the war effort, and the French (Wolf 12). The Germans were often quoted as saying “Es sind die Männer aus der Hölle!” meaning “It is the Men from Hell!” (Wolf 12). Although the phrase was originally conceived to taunt and demean the soldiers, the 369th Regiment took to the

nickname Hellfighters and eventually came to appreciate it as they knew they were fighting for democracy (Wolf 12). Over the coming months until September 26th, 1918, the 369th succeeded alongside their French and American allies in the Argonne region (Wolf 12). They recaptured a town and railroad junction from the Germans and reduced their occupation in the region by hundreds by the end of September (Wolf 12). The Hellfighters were eventually the first Allied group to reach the Rhine River in November (Wolf 13). They had also spent the longest time on the front and had lost the largest number of soldiers of all American regiments, at around 1,400 casualties (Wolf 13).

When the war finally ended in November of 1918, the Hellfighters were finally on their way back to the states. When the Hellfighters returned home in February of 1919, the parade held in their honor was attended by many (Ziobro 24). As the men marched along New York City's Fifth Avenue, the jazz music of James Reese Europe, the regimental jazz band leader, played throughout the parade (Ziobro 24). As wartime wended down, the 369th officially demobilized on February 28th, 1919, in New York at Camp Upton (Ziobro 24). To their dismay, whites feared that their return to the States would herald in a newly lit flame of demand for civil rights (Bryan 14). From summer through the fall of 1919, twenty-six cities across the country held anti-black race riots (Bryan 14). Sadly, there was an increase of lynchings from fifty-eight in 1918 to seventy-seven in 1919, and more than ten were veterans from the war, some hung in their military uniforms (Bryan 14). Although racial tensions increased dramatically in the wake of the war, blacks still enlisted in droves into the military, including veterans from the Great War (Bryan 14). Due to labor shortages in the North, many southerners moved North in search of jobs (Davis 478). It was also during this period when the Ku Klux Klan was revitalized in the wake of the release of *The Birth of a Nation*, which glorified the KKK (Davis 478). When they would be

beaten or killed, there was an increase in retaliation among blacks, which showed the public of a new assertiveness against white supremacy (Davis 478). Nell Irvin Painter, an American historian, described this period of civil rights activism saying, “the senseless carnage of the First World War dealt white supremacy a tremendous blow” (Davis 478). This was due to the African American community showing how democracy and liberty were ideals worth sacrificing for (Davis 478). During this period, the new movement took many strides to progress rights and bills like the Dyer Anti-Lynching bill which spurred public discussion about lynching, ousting the defenders (Davis 478). To the community, the visage of an African American wearing a uniform demonstrated why social equality was a necessity (Davis 479).

It was during this period as well when segregation rejected blacks from joining any combat units after the war (Percy 775). One example, which was even more strict on segregation, was the Army Air Corps (Percy 775). They stated in their applications that blacks and whites could not be mixed together (Percy 775). A study taken in 1925 by the Army War College showed a response to African American participation in the war as “inefficient and counterproductive” (Percy 775). It was due to the beliefs of the whites, by viewing them as inferior, that jobs for blacks in the military were relegated to maintenance and services between the wars (Percy 776). In the late 30’s, many black outlets advocated for integration into the Air Corps (Percy 776). Roosevelt viewed the pressure amounting and started changing the rules, such as Congress passing the Civilian Pilot Training Act (Percy 776). This would allow blacks to gain their pilot’s licenses, although the program still segregated whites and blacks into their own programs (Percy 776). Another progressive step happened in 1940 under the Roosevelt Administration when Congress passed the Selective Service and Training Act (Percy 776). This allowed blacks to be admitted into combat units, albeit it would be segregated (Percy 776). When

it came time for the Air Force to start integration, they were reluctant to do so, but were obligated due to the act (Percy 776). Throughout the conflict, the War Department struggled with the issues of not antagonizing the black community, but also not creating a large rift in the military by generating more interracial problems (Percy 777). Many black activists were still incredibly pleased with more integration into the military, yet some were cautious about this leading to segregation becoming worsened (Percy 777). When setting up the facility for black pilots, they decided upon Tuskegee, Alabama, as it was already a location allowing black student pilots (Percy 777).

The camp was completed in July of 1941, and the cadets began their training and would form into the 99th Pursuit Squadron, sometimes referred to as the Tuskegee Airmen, which would be the first all-black fighter squadron in the United States (Percy 777). The training was extreme, and the pilots gained experience flying the P-40 Warhawk, the primary plane the 99th would use, and other military aircraft (Percy 777). Many officers were, unsurprisingly, expecting incompetence from these men, and argued that advocating for this program would be detrimental to African Americans (Percy 777). Although the cadets were provided with high quality training equipment, and good instructors, all of whom were white, there were still commanding officers who did not take kindly to their trainees (Percy 778). For instance, Colonel Frederick Kimble went out of his way to antagonize the black cadets by not allowing them to achieve a rank higher than Captain while he was the Base Commander (Percy 778). He also would not allow black high-ranking officers to apply for jobs which they were already qualified for (Percy 778). The War Department realized the issue they created, so they imminently replaced Kimble with Major Noel Parrish (Percy 778). Fortunately, Parrish was much more sympathetic to the black trainees, and treated them in a much more equal manner than they had been before (Percy 778). Along

with Parrish, Captain Benjamin O. Davis Jr. was also a major factor in the success of the 99th, as he told the cadets to ignore the effects of Jim Crow as much as possible while in training (Percy 778). He was able to keep a level head while commanding the men, as he knew they needed to get their jobs done before dealing with the issues of segregation (Percy 778).

While this was occurring, the second world war erupted in Europe, and President Franklin Delano Roosevelt issued a stance of neutrality for the United States. However, with the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the demand for joining the Allies forced Roosevelt to bring the country into the war. The 99th had been training for months and had felt like they were waiting a lifetime to go across the Atlantic, just as the Hellfighters did (Percy 778). Captain Davis and the 99th claimed their wings to fly in March of 1942 and fulfilled 30 required pilot spots to form a squadron, effectively joining the war effort (Percy 779). Although they were ready and willing to fight, they impatiently waited for months for their orders to begin the fight (Percy 779). The Army Air Forces eventually assigned the 99th to defend Liberia; however, it would prove to be unnecessary as it was no longer threatened by January of 1943 (Percy 779). Their time would thankfully come on April 3, 1943, when they were assigned to the North African campaign and flew to the Mediterranean (Percy 779-80). When they arrived at the French occupied Morocco, they were assigned to the Twelfth Tactical Air Force (Percy 780). They were ordered to help resupply the British Army as well as other Allied forces on the ground (Percy 780). They would complete this task with the aid of the 33rd Fighter Group, which was the parent company of the 99th (Percy 780). Both groups generally got along, which was surprising at the time, as the 33rd was composed of whites (Percy 780). Black officers, such as Colonel Philip Cochran, gave the 99th some very important instructions, like specific dive-bombing techniques (Percy 781). When Cochran was asked about the 99th, he told the *Pittsburgh Courier*, “[T]hose Nazis had better

look out. For those Negro officers and men are on a keen edge. They are the racehorses champing at the bit” (Percy 781). Although the 33rd and the 99th never had any specific altercations between themselves, the 33rd, and their commanding officer specifically, treated the 99th as a handicap more than anything (Percy 781). The 33rd’s commanding officer, Momyer, was not openly antagonistic towards the 99th, but he treated them with indifference, and the 33rd followed his example (Percy 781). When they got to their new air base, the 99th were almost three miles away from the other bases, completely isolated from the 33rd’s (Percy 781). This act of segregation of the AAF demonstrated that the 33rd wanted nothing to do with the men from Tuskegee, and aside from training and on missions, the two never interacted with each other (Percy 782).

The 33rd were considerate when training the 99th, but the 99th were typically sidelined into being the wingman position, unsurprisingly (Percy 782). When both units took part in a mission or training exercise, black pilots never served as squadron leaders (Percy 782). When it came time to defend the Allied stronghold on Pantelleria, the 99th gave it all they could in order to start the invasion of Sicily (Percy 782). The mission to support the infantry on the ground would be designated as Operation Corkscrew and began in June of 1943 (Percy 782). The Tuskegee Airmen would serve in multiple positions escorting bombers over the island and getting into tussles with the Germans in the air, resulting in no losses (Percy 783). Lieutenant Charles Dryden, who led the 99th in the sky, stated that the fight was what the men needed to grow as soldiers (Percy 783). After they drove the Germans out of the island, they received great praise from the commanding general stating how their training was paying off exceedingly well (Percy 783). They then moved to Tunisia where they were relieved that their relations with the 33rd had finished and moved on to working with the 324th Fighter Group who recognized the

talents of the 99th for the short time they were together (Percy 784). It was around this time when the commander of the 33rd, Colonel Momyer, wrote up a report about their performance from their time together (Percy 786). He criticized their lack of fighting spirit and desire for combat necessary for being in the Air Force (Percy 786). Although the events he described happened months beforehand, it was still sent through the chain of command and would have damned the Tuskegee Airmen (Percy 786). It was halted by Army Chief of Staff George Marshall who wanted an inquiry before any changes were to be made (Percy 787). Colonel Davis reported to Marshall that the men were understaffed, and thus should not be subject to the same study as others, as their supply roles prevented them from achieving victories (Percy 787). Davis' points swayed Marshall and his committee, who in return recommended the 99th to not be taken out of combat (Percy 788).

In late 1943, the Tuskegee Airmen moved to Italy and joined up with the 79th Fighter Group (Percy 789). When they initially met with the commander of the 79th, there was an immediate, noticeable difference between him and the last one they fought with (Percy 789). Colonel Bates, their commander, told them how racial tensions would not halt their objectives, and he cared about all his men's livelihoods (Percy 789). Within the next few months, Bates would completely integrate all squadrons and the men would serve the same roles interchangeably, and the 99th were sometimes allowed to lead formations (Percy 789). The 99th would eventually succeed in bombing German regions in Orsogna and the black men were congratulated by Bates personally (Percy 790). When the men were scouting around the south of Rome in January 1944, they engaged with fifteen German bombers, and within five minutes, they had destroyed five and damaged another five (Percy 792). But even before the day was done, they had killed three more, and they managed to take out four more the day after (Percy

792). In the States, multiple news publications would commend the Tuskegee Airmen for their accomplishments during this period, including the *Atlanta Journal* and *Time* (Percy 792). With this event and its victories later in February claiming more tallies on their kill list, they had certainly proven that they were as capable as any other white squadron (Percy 792). In April, the 79th would receive a Distinguished Unit Citation, and the 99th would come to share in this award as they knew how much they had contributed to the campaign (Percy 792). Unfortunately, it would come time for the 79th and the 99th to go their separate ways, even though there was a considerable backlash from both squadrons (Percy 792). They were devastated by the news, and what could be considered the best-integrated relationship in the US military was then separated (Percy 792).

By the end of the war, the 99th had created a grand war record, and it was mainly attributed to Davis' leadership skills (Percy 808). He gave the men inspiration and the courage to persevere and grow as pilots (Percy 808). Many high ranking AAF officers would state that there would be no more need for black pilots as the war was coming to an end, and they would continue to push segregation in the military (Percy 808). When the soldiers arrived back in the States, they were immediately hit with the realization that they were returning to a country which was not as compassionate as their comrades (Percy 808). Soldiers, including Colonel Harry Sheppard, would wonder why they would have just gambled with their lives for a free country which adhered to racist laws (Percy 808). When President Harry Truman's Civil Rights Commission wrote their report in 1947, *To Secure These Rights*, it brought up the relationships made between the black and white soldiers (Percy 809). This was a direct reference to the Tuskegee Airmen, as it specifically mentioned integrated training and cooperation (Percy 809). As a result of this report, the AAF and the US Air Forces would begin to create integrated

squadrons in the late 1940s and into the Korean War (Percy 809). This demonstrates the incredible impact of the 99th with their ability to complete their objectives and cooperate with other non-black squadrons (Percy 809). Within a semi-integrated environment, the men were able to flourish and made achievements which had never been accomplished by African Americans in the military before (Percy 809). If it were not for the efforts of the pilots from Tuskegee, Alabama, there would likely not have been such a quick indoctrination of integrated squadrons in the air force.

The issue of race relations is one of the main problems that the United States has had to face over the course of its nearly 250-year existence. Through the buying and selling of African people, the stain of slavery has been left on the United States, and its people. The repercussions of this terrible system have left the African American population in a massive pit of inferiority in the eyes of the government and white citizens. Although this was a major problem affecting all African Americans, they still felt the desire to fight to defend democracy for a country which shunned them. In both major world conflicts, large groups of black soldiers exceeded the expectations of the army officials and achieved as good, if not better, than their white counterparts. Both the 369th Infantry Regiment and the 99th Pursuit Squadron went above and beyond in proving to the white public that there was a need for integration in the armed forces. Segregation in the military during the early twentieth century was a hurdle that both units had to cross. But the men in the armed forces were able to fight through the racism present in the system and become some of the most awarded soldiers in the United States army at the time. Their influence has been demonstrated through the recognition that black soldiers deserved to be in the military after the second world war had been concluded. Their honorable sacrifices were

exceedingly beneficial for the racial integration of the military and demonstrated to the army that black people were just as capable of fighting as the whites were.

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