

Module 5: The Civil War and Reconstruction - 1860 to 1877

Topic 5 Content: African American Soldiers Notes

Introduction

African American Soldiers

MEN OF COLOR
To Arms! To Arms!
NOW OR NEVER
THREE YEARS' SERVICE!
BATTLES OF LIBERTY AND THE UNION
FAIL NOW, & OUR RACE IS DOOMED
SILENCE THE TONGUE OF CALUMNY
VAI O R A N T I P E D O T C M
African Americans in the
Military LESS BRAVE THAN SLAVES



Discrimination



Roles in the Military

African Americans made significant contributions to the Union winning the Civil War. Around ten percent of the Union Army was made up of African American soldiers. Those soldiers did many jobs in the military, including fighting on the front lines. Even though they were contributing to the fight, they still faced discrimination.

Click each of the images to learn about the impact of African American soldiers in the Civil War.

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African Americans in the Military



African Americans in the Military

- African American soldiers fought for the Union and Confederacy after the Emancipation Proclamation.
- 10% of the Union Army was composed of African American soldiers.
- African Americans joined the Confederate Army in 1865.



After the Emancipation Proclamation was issued, African Americans were allowed to join the military. According to the National Archives, around 179,000 black men served in the U.S. Army during the Civil War. This was almost ten percent of the Union Army soldiers. Another 19,000 men served in the U.S. Navy, working aboard Union naval ships. Many African American soldiers and sailors were given labor duties that exposed those soldiers to disease. When African American soldiers did get a chance to fight, they fought with distinction. They even had to face additional perils. If soldiers were captured by the Confederacy, they were not always treated as prisoners of war. Instead, some African Americans were executed on the spot, highlighting how poorly many members of the Confederacy viewed African Americans.

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Discrimination in the Military



Discrimination

- African Americans would not achieve full equality for another 100 years.
- African American soldiers could not achieve high ranks in the military.
- African Americans fought in separate regiments commanded by white officers for lower pay.



Although slavery had ended, African Americans would not gain full equality during the next one hundred years. Discrimination even occurred in the Union military. African Americans were commanded by white officers, and could not achieve high ranks. Moreover, African Americans generally fought in separate regiments. The Union army had one hundred sixty-three African American regiments during the Civil War. African American soldiers were paid less than white soldiers at the start of the war. It was not until 1864, after fighting with great distinction, that they were paid equally.