

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



# The Tuskegee Airmen

Who are we? The Tuskegee Airmen. Believe me,  
It wasn't easy, first Black American pilots in the military.  
We served during World War II at a time the danger was escalated.  
At the time, like most things in the US, it was segregated.  
Many thought Black soldiers like us weren't courageous,  
As physically fit, or intelligent as white peers, outrageous.  
Black people weren't allowed to join what was then called the Air Corps,  
But after World War II began in Europe, things began to change course.  
They started a program where Black pilots could train at Tuskegee Institute,  
A Black college founded by Booker T. Washington, this is true.  
The military wasn't planning on sending Black pilots to combat,  
But after Pearl Harbor was bombed, the USA, they changed that.  
The need increased, we filled the void. In  
1942, the first class graduated. In '43, we got deployed.  
We escorted white bombers. Some thought that we would fail,  
But we proved our worth in the skies and became known as the Red Tails.

Fighting two fights: one at home, one overseas, for democracy,  
Hitler in Germany, and Jim Crow in my society.  
America, I'm in the air, willing to sacrifice my life,  
But come home, and you condone not giving me equal rights.  
(x2)

From 1941 to '46, here's the deal:  
Almost 1,000 Black pilots graduated Tuskegee Air Field,  
And 10,000-plus more Black Americans also worked,  
Plane mechanics, doctors, nurses, cooks, supply clerks.

Despite all of the success of the Tuskegee Airmen,  
They still faced discrimination and racism, not fair, man.  
When the program first launched, it was met  
With feedback from civil rights leaders who thought it was too small a step.  
They had hoped for full integration, not another unit with segregation.  
They pointed out the disconnect and how Blacks were getting no love from the nation,  
Putting their life on the line, helping defend our democracy,  
But still not treated like equal citizens, what a hypocrisy.  
Many airmen stayed in the military, made a career, of course.  
Benjamin Davis, Jr. became the first Black general in the Air Force.  
In '07, surviving airmen got a Congressional Gold Medal,  
But the great win was fighting institutional racism. They wouldn't settle.

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