

## Tuskegee Airmen Essay

The country has progressed over the last decades. Little by little, African Americans and other people of color have gained more rights. But these rights were not just handed to us, there were strong men and women who worked relentlessly to reach their goal. We have the Tuskegee Airmen to thank for setting a path for future Black leaders! Do you know who the Tuskegee Airmen are? Have you ever wondered what helped the Tuskegee Airmen strive forward and what was their significance in American history? Well let me tell you about their six guiding principles!

The Tuskegee Airmen were the first African American pilots who fought in an American war; they helped fight in WWII. The Tuskegee Airmen were officially named 332nd Fighter group and were deployed in Italy in 1944. They had the role of protecting the bomber planes, which was an important role. Following their Six Guiding Principles, they never gave up in battle, expected to win, believed in themselves, aimed high, were ready to go, and never quit. The Six guiding principles also helped the Tuskegee Airmen face and overcome the racism they had to endure during their training. In this paper I will describe these principles and how they pertain to the Airmen. (1)

The Tuskegee Airmen came to be when the NAACP had pressured President Roosevelt into ordering the Army Air Corp to begin training Black pilots in Alabama. During this time, they had received a college education that was paid by the government. But in the 1940s, segregation was legal. The army was “separate but equal.” During their training, white instructors tried to wash out the black cadets because the white cadets had a wash out rate of 63% and black cadets at 40%. White instructors would call black cadets racial slurs and get attempted to provoke them. By believing in themselves and never giving up, two of their Guiding Principles, the Tuskegee Airmen were able to overcome these obstacles and continue proving that they were reliable. (1)

In 1944, the men of the 99th who were now a part of the 332nd Fighter squadron, had an important role in Italy. They had the role of protecting the white pilots who flew the bomber planes. This role was the riskiest due to the fact that the bomber planes flew slowly and they had to be protected from the German fighters. In order for the American pilots to determine which planes were there to assist them and which weren't, the 332nd Fighter squadron had the tails of their planes painted red. The sight of a red tail meant help was there. (1)

To the surprise of many white pilots, the ones who helped save them were black! The Tuskegee Airmen had expected to win, and with their determination, they brought victory to the United States. After the victory of WWII, the Tuskegee Airmen looked forward to coming back to their home and hoped for it to be no longer segregated. They'd hope that the country they had fought for to realize that the same people who brought victory in the war deserve equal rights. To their disappointment, when the Tuskegee Airmen returned home, not only was the military still segregated but so was everywhere else. Many of the Tuskegee Airmen decided to continue to

fight for their freedom in their towns and the others decided to fight for the end of segregation in the military. Even after the war, they continued to aim high. (1)

The Tuskegee Airmen had made a strong impact then and it still affects us to this day. Their success and strength had inspired many black leaders to rise up and to continue down the path the Tuskegee Airmen had paved. It is also important to remember that there were women who had also gone through the Tuskegee program, but they couldn't fly during that time. Instead they had supporting roles. General Clark, the first African American superintendent, had said “We are becoming an Air Force more and more where it doesn't matter what your skin color is, what your ethnicity is, your religion, your gender— you can achieve your dreams.” The Tuskegee Airmen laid a foundation for all future black people and their legacy continues to live on even after decades later. (1)

#### Work Cited

<https://play.history.com/specials/tuskegee-airmen-legacy-of-courage/full-special>