

I first learned of the heroic Tuskegee airmen this fall in my homeschool history lessons. One of my favorite accounts was of these valiant and skilled aviators winning the first Top Gun gunnery competition. Even after being expected to fail because of their skin color, having just returned home from the war and being given bomber escort positions instead of the combat positions they were trained for and being given an obsolete aircraft to compete, they still rose above adversity and won the competition! I wondered how they could accomplish such a feat with the constant racism and the odds always stacked against them, then I learned their six guiding principles and understood their mindset.

These fierce fighters (1) aimed high and learned an advanced new skill for that time, one that they were not seen as competent to learn; (2) they'd used their brains to learn and demonstrate aviation maneuvers and techniques in war and in the competition. (3, 4)

They believed in themselves and expected to win because they were just as competent as the white pilots and just needed the chance to prove themselves. (5,6) Lastly, they were dedicated to the war cause and knew what their success would mean for other black people and were ready to go and never quit until they'd achieved excellence. In the end, they did more than accomplish their goals, their actions forced our government to live up to its principles of freedom and equality that it had fought for abroad.

Citations

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