



Freedom Flyers: The Tuskegee Airmen of World War II (Oxford Oral History Series)

By J. Todd Moye

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In this inspiring account of the Tuskegee Airmen--the country's first African American military pilots--historian J. Todd Moye captures the challenges and triumphs of these brave aviators in their own words, drawing on more than 800 interviews recorded for the National Park Service's Tuskegee Airmen Oral History Project.

Denied the right to fully participate in the U.S. war effort alongside whites at the beginning of World War II, African Americans--spurred on by black newspapers and civil rights organizations such as the NAACP--compelled the prestigious Army Air Corps to open its training programs to black pilots, despite the objections of its top generals. Thousands of young men came from every part of the country to Tuskegee, Alabama, in the heart of the segregated South, to enter the program, which expanded in 1943 to train multi-engine bomber pilots in addition to fighter pilots. By the end of the war, Tuskegee Airfield had become a small city populated by black mechanics, parachute packers, doctors, and nurses. Together, they helped prove that racial segregation of the fighting forces was so inefficient as to be counterproductive to the nation's defense.

Freedom Flyers brings to life the legacy of a determined, visionary cadre of African American airmen who proved their capabilities and patriotism beyond question, transformed the armed forces--formerly the nation's most racially polarized institution--and jump-started the modern struggle for racial equality.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Product Description

As the country's first African American military pilots, the Tuskegee Airmen fought in World War II on two fronts: against the Axis powers in the skies over Europe and against Jim Crow racism and segregation at home. Although the pilots flew more than 15,000 sorties and destroyed more than 200 German aircraft, their most far-reaching achievement defies quantification: delivering a powerful blow to racial inequality and discrimination in American life.

In this inspiring account of the Tuskegee Airmen, historian J. Todd Moye captures the challenges and triumphs of these brave pilots in their own words, drawing on more than 800 interviews recorded for the National Park Service's Tuskegee Airmen Oral History Project. Denied the right to fully participate in the U.S. war effort alongside whites at the beginning of World War II, African Americans--spurred on by black newspapers and civil rights organizations such as the NAACP--compelled the prestigious Army Air Corps to open its training programs to black pilots, despite the objections of its top generals. Thousands of young men came from every part of the country to Tuskegee, Alabama, in the heart of the segregated South, to enter the program, which expanded in 1943 to train multi-engine bomber pilots in addition to fighter pilots. By the end of the war, Tuskegee Airfield had become a small city populated by black mechanics, parachute packers, doctors, and nurses. Together, they helped prove that racial segregation of the fighting forces was so inefficient as to be counterproductive to the nation's defense.

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**Take a look at pictures from *Freedom Flyers*
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By the end of World War II, experienced black officers had fully assumed leadership of the 477th Composite Group of Tuskegee-trained fighter and bomber pilots.

NAACP Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.



By the end of the war the pool of civilian instructors at Moton Field had grown to more than two dozen.

U.S. Air Force Historical Agency.



Left to right: Brig. Gen. Benjamin O. Davis Sr., Col. Noel F. Parrish, and Lt. Col. Benjamin O. Davis Jr. Parrish and Davis Jr. were fortuitous choices for the leadership of the Tuskegee military flight program.

U.S. Air Force Historical Research Agency.



Pilots of the 477th fly B-25s in formation. Training African-Americans to fly and maintain the world's most powerful and sophisticated killing machines implicitly challenged Jim Crow.

U.S. Air Force Historical Research Agency.



Members of the first class of graduates from the Tuskegee Army Flying School (TAPS) discuss flying with Robert M. "Mother" Long.

U.S. Air Force Historical Research Agency.

From Publishers Weekly

Moye, associate professor of history at the University of North Texas, updates a now familiar story in this excellent history of the first African-American military pilots. Under pressure from black newspapers and the NAACP to open pilot training to blacks (and facing a re-election fight), President Franklin Roosevelt in 1940 authorized the creation of a segregated flight school at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama and an all-black fighter squadron. The program trained almost 1,000 fliers, and nearly half served in combat during WWII, compiling an impressive record flying 15,000 sorties in North Africa, Sicily, and Italy. Despite official skepticism and occasional hostility, the Tuskegee Airmen successfully demonstrated that racial segregation of troops was inefficient and... hindered national defense. Their record helped persuade the air force—largely for reasons of operational self-interest—and President Harry Truman to seek the immediate desegregation of the military after the war. The author directed the National Park Service's Tuskegee Airmen Oral History Project and mined some 800 interviews for his exhaustive research. Moye's lively prose and the intimate

details of the personal narratives yield an accessible scholarly history that also succeeds as vivid social history. (Apr.)

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From [Booklist](#)

Moye draws on records from the Tuskegee Airmen Oral History Project while recalling the intense political negotiations behind the group's origins and development. Rather than focusing on their much-lauded combat achievements in Europe, he recounts how individuals were selected for training and their all-too-frequent encounters with racism in the Deep South. In several particularly moving passages, veterans recall the heavy load they carried to attain not only personal success but also achievement for their entire race. They knew the world was watching. Although readers may find the general history familiar, the personal nature of the examples Moye cites make it a far deeper and richer narrative than typical WWII fare. The expected framework—from the NAACP to Eleanor Roosevelt—is present, but so are dozens of names and events far beyond traditional mention. As both civil rights and U.S. military history, the Tuskegee Airmen comprise a worthy subject, while the author's friendly style should open the title up to even casual readers. Copious endnotes and a full bibliography add value. --Colleen Mondor

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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