

# The Tuskegee Airmen: Soaring Through the Color Barrier

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Individual Website

Student-Composed Words: 1198

Process Paper: 491

Multimedia: 2 minutes and 48 seconds (2.8 minutes)

### **Choosing the Topic:**

One day over a summer vacation, I watched the 1995 movie *The Tuskegee Airmen*. Scenes from that movie stuck with me and learning more about the source material always intrigued me. Furthermore, I knew I wanted to branch into an Africana studies topic this year. After the *Breaking Barriers In History* theme was announced, I realized the potential that this topic had to check both of those boxes.

### **Conducting My Research:**

The first step in conducting my research was to consult *Encyclopedia Britannica*. This online database is home to a wealth of knowledge curated by experts. It was a good place to gain a basic understanding of who exactly the Tuskegee Airmen were and in which context they operated. Next, I paid a visit to my local bookstore and library to find books about the Tuskegee Airmen. These sources provided me with a deeper, more analytical perspective. As I maneuvered through the earlier stages of research, I sent numerous emails to professors and authors who were knowledgeable about my topic. I was eventually able to secure a 45-minute phone interview with Professor Daniel Hutchinson of Belmont Abbey's College. Interspersing audio from our conversation enhanced my overall website. Primary sources, which in my case came mostly from presidential libraries, gave me insights on the contemporary view of the Tuskegee Airmen.

### **Choosing the Category and Creating the Project:**

The website category is home to my two primary interests, technology and history, so I was naturally drawn to it. A website has the unique ability of being able to weave in multimedia and images alongside your own composed analysis. It is also the only truly interactive category, providing a distinctive feel from the others. The blue backdrop of my website is reminiscent of P-51 Mustang's, the plane the Tuskegee Airmen flew, body paint. The red behind the quotes and the yellow found on the buttons are meant to imitate the highlights found on the tail and nose of the plane. An overarching historical quote from an important figure introduces each page and establishes the context in which it will be written.

### **Relation to the Theme:**

The Tuskegee Airmen themselves broke multiple barriers within the military, but they also facilitated the clearing of other domestic hurdles. Foremost, they were the first Black U.S. Air Force pilots, escaping the menial and degradative tasks previously set upon their kind. The creation of Black flying units, despite the fact that they were segregated, normalized the existence of African-Americans in advanced combat roles. This paved the way for complete de-segregation in 1948. More generally, the Tuskegee Airmen created a favorable context for civil rights progression. Their success delegitimized Jim Crow, which was contingent on Black inferiority. The Tuskegee Airmen were able to improve both their specific field and general African-American prosperity.