

Minorities Participation in WW1

Directions: Read the paragraph. Then, fill in the blanks at the bottom.

Since the first Africans were brought as slaves to the British colony of Jamestown, Va. in 1619, blacks had suffered oppression in the United States first under the **American slavery system** and then under the rigid practices of segregation and discrimination that were codified under the **“Jim Crow Laws.”** With the entry of the United States into the Great War in 1917, African Americans were eager to show their patriotism in hopes of being recognized as full citizens. After the declaration of war, more than 20,000 blacks enlisted in the military, and the numbers increased when the Selective Service Act was enacted in May 1917. It was documented on July 5, 1917 that over 700,000 African Americans had registered for military service. However, they were barred from the Marines and served only in menial roles in the Navy. Blacks were able to serve in all branches of the Army except for the aviation units.

The government made no provision for military training of black officers and soon created segregated training camps for that purpose. Disheartened, blacks protested against this discriminatory practice. Despite the outcry, Fort Des Moines in Iowa became one of the segregated camps and in October 1917 over 600 blacks were commissioned at the camp as captains and lieutenants.

African-American soldiers provided much support overseas to the European Allies. Those in black units who served as laborers, stevedores and in engineer service battalions were the first to arrive in France in 1917, and in early 1918, the 369th United States Infantry, a regiment of African-American combat troops, arrived to help the French Army. Earning the reputation from the Germans as “Hell Fighters,” the 369th was nicknamed the **“Harlem Hell Fighters”** because the regiment “never lost a man through capture, lost a trench or a foot of ground to the enemy.” The 369th was also the first to reach the Rhine River and provided the longest service of any regiment in a foreign army. They fought in the trenches for 191 days and the entire regiment received the Croix de Guerre medal for their actions at Maison-en-Champagne.

Directions: Fill in the Blank

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