

Harlem hellfighters

[History](#)



No. The 369th and Racial Discrimination During World War II, black soldiers from Harlem not only fought for their country, but for their race as well. Prior to and during the war, racial segregation was rife in America, where black people were treated as minority. This situation was, however, bound to change with the involvement of the United States in the Second World War. The inclusion of the 369th would see to a positive change in how African-Americans were treated in the United States.

Prior to the Second World War, racial segregation was so prevalent that social amenities such as schools and theatres were built separate for whites and blacks. In this era, the 369th, a military organization for black people was formed in Harlem. This remarkable group fought for the French in World War I and helped the French defeat their enemies. It is this success that led to a dilemma within government quarters on what to do with the black soldiers during World War II. The Negroes were seen as inferior to the white combatants, apparently because the former were lacking in intelligence and discipline (Graebner & Waller 1996, p. 194). Majority of white people were opposed to the inclusion of black men in the U. S army arguing that the blacks would fail miserably in the military and would only bring shame to America.

Nonetheless, as a result of mounting public pressure, President Roosevelt was compelled to include black people in the military. The 369th was called up to duty in the Antiaircraft. For the black people in Harlem, 369th was not only fighting for the honor of their country, but also for that of the black people in America. The success of 369th would represent the success of the black community in America. 369th spent a year in training at Oswego and came out as professionally trained soldiers.

<https://assignbuster.com/harlem-hellfighters/>

On their mission to Hawaii, 369th encountered racist ideas such as; black men had tails and that a relationship with a black man would lead to a baby with a tail. The 369th also had to deal with incidents of fellow white soldiers getting drunk and insulting black men. According to Graebner & Waller (1996, p. 197) the latter would physically fight back for equality and honor. Some street fights had fatal consequences, as it happened on two occasions when white soldiers died in a street fight. The black men involved in the two incidents were, however, acquitted on grounds that they were fighting for their honor. In the military, the 369 was able to command respect even from junior white soldiers who were forced to salute their “ black seniors”.

By the time the war ended, the 369th had managed to silence all those whites who claimed that black men could not make it as good soldiers. 369th alongside white soldiers had successfully defended the honor of the honor of the United States. A second victory had been achieved by 369th as they helped bring honor to the black community in America. An example is that some of the 369th soldiers opted to remain in Hawaii after the war and married the locals. Statistically, the number of black residents in Hawaii in 1950 was ten times that of 1940. The achievements of 369th would not have been realized without the support of the military, which placed importance on military obligation over perceived racial dominance. The military ultimately led to racial assimilation in America during and after World War II.

Works cited

Graebner, William & Waller, Altina. True stories from the American past: since 1865. New York: McGraw-Hill. 1996. Print.