

# Heroes at War: African American Armored Units in World War II

## Introduction

African American soldiers played a vital role in the Allied victory in World War II, serving in both segregated and integrated units. One of the most famous and successful of these units was the 761st Tank Battalion, known as the Black Panthers.

The Black Panthers were the first African American armored unit to see combat in World War II. They fought in four major campaigns in Europe, from North Africa to Germany, and earned a reputation for bravery and skill. The unit was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation and the French Croix de Guerre, and several of its members received the Medal of Honor.

The story of the Black Panthers is a story of courage, determination, and triumph over adversity. Despite facing discrimination and prejudice, these soldiers fought valiantly for their country and helped to pave the way for greater equality for African Americans.

This book tells the story of the Black Panthers, from their formation in 1942 to their disbandment in 1945. It draws on a variety of sources, including interviews with surviving members of the unit, official records, and newspaper accounts. The book also includes a number of photographs and maps.

The Black Panthers are an important part of American history. Their story is one that should be told and remembered. This book is a tribute to these brave soldiers and their contribution to the Allied victory in World War II.

The Black Panthers were more than just a military unit. They were a symbol of hope and inspiration for African Americans during a time of great discrimination and

segregation. They showed the world that African Americans were just as capable as white soldiers, and they helped to change the perception of African Americans in American society.

The legacy of the Black Panthers is still felt today. They are remembered as heroes who fought for their country and for their rights as citizens. Their story is a reminder of the importance of equality and justice for all.

## Book Description

The story of the Black Panthers, the first African American armored unit to see combat in World War II, is a story of courage, determination, and triumph over adversity. Despite facing discrimination and prejudice, these soldiers fought valiantly for their country and helped to pave the way for greater equality for African Americans.

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**In this book, you will learn about:**

- The formation of the Black Panthers and the challenges they faced
- The unit's training and preparation for combat

- The Black Panthers' participation in four major campaigns in Europe
- The unit's awards and honors
- The legacy of the Black Panthers and their impact on American society

**Heroes at War: African American Armored Units in World War II** is a must-read for anyone interested in African American history, military history, or World War II history.

# Chapter 1: The Baptism of Fire

## The formation of the 761st Tank Battalion

In the early years of World War II, the United States military was still deeply segregated. African American soldiers were barred from serving in most combat units, and those who were allowed to serve were often relegated to menial tasks. However, as the war progressed and the need for manpower grew, the military began to reconsider its policy of segregation.

In 1942, the War Department authorized the formation of the 761st Tank Battalion, the first African American armored unit in the United States Army. The unit was initially commanded by white officers, but in 1943, Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin O. Davis Jr. became the first African American to command a tank battalion.

The 761st Tank Battalion was composed of men from all over the United States. They were farmers, factory

workers, and students. They were all volunteers, and they were all eager to serve their country.

The battalion trained at Fort Knox, Kentucky, and Camp Hood, Texas. They received the same training as white tank battalions, and they were just as skilled and capable. In fact, the 761st Tank Battalion was one of the best-trained tank battalions in the United States Army.

In 1944, the 761st Tank Battalion was deployed to Europe. They fought in four major campaigns: the Normandy invasion, the Battle of the Bulge, the Rhineland Campaign, and the Central Europe Campaign.

The 761st Tank Battalion fought bravely and with distinction. They were awarded the Presidential Unit Citation and the French Croix de Guerre. Several members of the battalion also received the Medal of Honor, the highest military honor in the United States.



The 761st Tank Battalion was disbanded in 1945. However, their legacy lives on. They were one of the most successful African American units in World War II, and they helped to pave the way for greater equality for African Americans in the United States military.

The story of the 761st Tank Battalion is a story of courage, determination, and triumph over adversity. It is a story that should be told and remembered.

# Chapter 1: The Baptism of Fire

## Early challenges and discrimination

The formation of the 761st Tank Battalion, the first African American armored unit to see combat in World War II, was a major step forward in the fight for racial equality in the United States. However, the unit's early days were marked by challenges and discrimination.

One of the biggest challenges was the lack of support from the military establishment. The Army was reluctant to give African Americans the opportunity to serve in combat roles, and the 761st was often given inferior equipment and training. The unit was also subjected to segregation and discrimination from white soldiers and officers.

Despite these challenges, the 761st persevered. The soldiers were determined to prove themselves in combat, and they trained hard to become the best tank unit in the Army. They also worked to overcome the

racism and discrimination they faced, and they gradually began to earn the respect of their white counterparts.

The 761st's first taste of combat came in North Africa in 1943. The unit was sent to Tunisia to help stop the German advance, and they quickly proved their worth. The 761st fought bravely and effectively, and they helped to turn the tide of the battle in favor of the Allies.

The 761st's success in North Africa helped to change the Army's view of African American soldiers. The unit's performance showed that African Americans were just as capable as white soldiers, and it helped to pave the way for the integration of the military after the war.

However, the 761st still faced discrimination and prejudice, even after their success in combat. The unit was often denied promotions and opportunities for advancement, and they were often assigned to menial

tasks. Despite these challenges, the 761st continued to serve with distinction, and they eventually earned the respect and admiration of all who served with them.

The 761st's story is a reminder of the challenges and discrimination that African Americans have faced throughout history. It is also a story of courage and determination, and it shows that African Americans have always been willing to fight for their country, even when their country has not always been willing to fight for them.

# Chapter 1: The Baptism of Fire

## Training and preparation for combat

The formation of the 761st Tank Battalion was a significant step in the United States' efforts to mobilize African American soldiers for combat in World War II. The unit was activated at Fort Knox, Kentucky, in February 1942, and its ranks were filled with volunteers from across the country.

The soldiers of the 761st Tank Battalion faced a number of challenges in their training and preparation for combat. They were often assigned to segregated units and given inferior equipment and training compared to their white counterparts. Despite these obstacles, they persevered and quickly proved themselves to be capable and effective soldiers.

One of the most important aspects of the 761st Tank Battalion's training was learning how to operate and maintain their tanks. The M4 Sherman tank was the

primary weapon of the battalion, and the soldiers had to be familiar with its operation and maintenance procedures in order to be effective in combat. They also had to learn how to work together as a team, and how to coordinate their movements with other units on the battlefield.

In addition to their technical training, the soldiers of the 761st Tank Battalion also received training in combat tactics and strategy. They learned how to attack enemy positions, how to defend themselves against enemy attacks, and how to conduct reconnaissance missions. They also received training in first aid and survival skills.

The training of the 761st Tank Battalion was rigorous and demanding, but it was essential to prepare the soldiers for the challenges they would face in combat. The soldiers who served in the battalion were dedicated and determined, and they were eager to prove themselves in battle.

The soldiers of the 761st Tank Battalion also faced a number of challenges in their training and preparation for combat due to segregation and discrimination. They were often assigned to segregated units and given inferior equipment and training compared to their white counterparts. Despite these obstacles, they persevered and quickly proved themselves to be capable and effective soldiers.

The 761st Tank Battalion was a groundbreaking unit in the United States Army. It was the first African American armored unit to see combat in World War II, and its success helped to pave the way for greater equality for African Americans in the military and in American society as a whole.

**This extract presents the opening three sections of the first chapter.**

**Discover the complete 10 chapters and 50 sections by purchasing the book, now available in various formats.**



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