

Mini-Lesson 1: Emancipation

(ch. 1 of *FWIS*)

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How do people use institutions to advance their visions of freedom and security?

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING

Students will understand that:

- People participate in institutions and organizations to achieve and maintain freedom and security.
- For many groups of people, the quest for freedom and security involves protesting government policies.

LEARNING GOAL

Through reading the graphic history and assessing documents written by Black soldiers who served in the Civil War, students will demonstrate an understanding of how African American men participated in the U.S. war effort and used their military service as an opportunity to advocate for freedom and security.

DAILY NARRATIVE

Chapter 1 of *Freedom Was In Sight!* explores how enslaved people sought freedom for themselves and their families during the Civil War. It also focuses on the wartime military contributions of African American men and on how they used their service in the U.S. Army to advance their visions of freedom and equality.

This mini-lesson could fit with an existing lesson on the impact of the Emancipation Proclamation and its authorization of Black men's military service. The mini-lesson provides a pathway to explore the opportunities and challenges provided by African American men's military service in the Civil War. Both documents refer to the U.S. Army and to the experiences of African American soldiers who served in it. In both cases, Black soldiers argued that the U.S. Army was failing to live up to what it owed African American soldiers in return for their sacrifices. They asked the government to do more to protect their freedom.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Before the Lesson: Read Chapter 1 of *Freedom Was In Sight!*

FOCUS QUESTION: How can military service provide opportunities for people to build freedom and security? Use examples from current times in your answer.

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Students will examine documents demonstrating how African American soldiers used their military service to advance freedom and security.

Documents Included:

- **Letter from Sergeant George W. Hatton, First Regiment, United States Colored Troops***
- **Petition from Patients at L'Ouverture Hospital in Alexandria, Virginia**

Document 1

Letter from Sergeant George W. Hatton, First Regiment, United States Colored Troops

George Hatton was born enslaved in Maryland and enlisted in the U.S. Army on June 8, 1863, shortly after the Emancipation Proclamation authorized the enlistment of Black troops. Hatton showed leadership promise and was made a sergeant immediately. He signed on for a 3-year term of service but was severely injured just one year after enlisting, when he was shot in the leg during a battle. He wrote the letters below to the editor of a Black newspaper based in Philadelphia; the editor published the letters.

I feel that I am a man, fighting for a Government that recognizes me as such; but, behold, when I call my wandering mind to view facts, and the ground upon which I stand, I find that the leaders of the Government are still keeping us far behind the times. I appeal to the leaders of this great Republic to know the reason why they hesitate to give us our God-given rights. I do not expect to have all the enjoyments of home, but, undoubtedly, would not have any objection to being put on an equal footing with my brother white soldier.

We responded to the call of the Government at the time when her very metropolis was threatened with conflagration, willing to stand by her until the very last drop of blood be drained from our veins, on the promise of being treated as white soldiers, but, ah, I have been a soldier for more than a year, for the small sum of seven dollars per month. I want to know if the star spangled banner represents such unjust deeds.

Yours truly,
G. W. H.

"An Important Soldier's Letter," *Christian Recorder*, June 25, 1864

How does Hatton feel about the government's treatment of Black soldiers?

What government policies does Hatton believe are standing in the way of Black Americans achieving freedom and security?

Document 2

Petition from Patients at L'Ouverture Hospital in Alexandria, Virginia

As African American soldiers began serving in the Civil War, the government built a hospital in Alexandria, Virginia, to provide medical care for those who were wounded or sick. The hospital was called L'Ouverture Hospital, named after Toussaint L'Ouverture, an acclaimed military leader of the Haitian Revolution.

When Black soldiers died, the government buried them in a separate cemetery from white soldiers. Black patients at L'Ouverture signed the petition below to protest the segregation of cemeteries. Their protest helped prompt the Army to begin burying Black soldiers at Arlington National Cemetery. The bodies of some soldiers who were buried in segregated "freedmen's" cemeteries were even disinterred and moved to Arlington.

December 27, 1864

We the undersigned Convalescents of Louverture Hospital & its Branches and soldiers of the U.S. Army, learning that some dissatisfaction exists in relation to the burial of colored soldiers and feeling deeply interested in a matter of so great importance to us, who are a part and parcel with the white soldiers in this great struggle against rebellion, do hereby express our views, and ask for consideration of the same....

We learn that the government has purchased ground to be used exclusively for Burial of soldiers of the United States Army, and that the government has also purchased ground to be used for the burial of contrabands, or freedmen, so called, that the former is under the control of Capt. Lee, A.Q.M. U.S.A. The latter under the control of Rev. A. Gladwin, Superintendent of Contrabands. We are not contrabands, but soldiers of the U.S. Army, we have cheerfully left the comforts of home and entered into the field of conflict, fighting side by side with the white soldiers, to crush out this God insulting, Hell deserving rebellion.

As American citizens, we have a right to fight for the protection of her flag, that right is granted, and we are now sharing equally the dangers and hardships in this mighty contest, and should share [sic] the same privileges and rights of burial in every way with our fellow soldiers who only differ from us in color....We ask that our bodies may find a resting place in the ground designated for the burial of the brave defenders of our countries flag.

Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, General Correspondence and Reports Related to National and Post Cemeteries, National Archives, courtesy City of Alexandria website

Why would the signers of this petition care about where Black soldiers were buried and whether military cemeteries were segregated by race?

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How did the petitioners use their relationship with an institution to advance their claims to freedom?

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Culminating Question: How did Black Civil War soldiers use their relationship with the U.S. military to attempt to advance the rights of African Americans?

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