**[Collingwood's Massacre](http://www.parentsandeducation.com/short-stories-of-the-week/2016/12/27/collingwoods-massacre.html)**

**In 1781 a slave ship, named the Zong (based out of Liverpool, England), was on a horrible trip to get human beings—to sell them in Jamaica.  The ship made it to Africa, along the coast of present-day Ghana, and then to Sao Tome (or St. Thomas, an island near present day Gabon and Equatorial Guinea).  Luke Collingwood was the captain of the ship and he decided to go with a “tight” packing method.**

**He loaded the ship with over four hundred and forty men, women and children…although this was well above the capacity for the ship.  On September 6, 1781 they left Sao Tome and headed out on the two-and-a-half to three-month trip to Jamaica.**

**By the time the ship got near to Jamaica, the captain mistook Hispaniola for Jamaica and decided to get the ship headed in the right direction.  This was November 27, 1781 and the ship had already been at sea for almost three months, since its departure from the coast of Africa.  The men, women and children who were crammed into the ship, in chains, were sick and frail…and almost 60 of them had already died.**

**On November 29th Captain Collingwood called together the crew.  He explained to them that if the human beings on board (the cargo) died from natural causes such as diseases, the insurers would not compensate the owners of the ship for their loss, but if they died out of a necessity to save the ship and the rest of the cargo, then the insurers would pay for the loss of goods.**

**The captain contended that they did not have enough water to sustain the crew and the men, women and children who were chained onboard and that, therefore, they needed to throw many of them overboard in order to save the crew and the ship.**

**At first one of the mates in the crew objected, but the captain's word prevailed.  Collingwood instructed the crew to take groups of men, women and children up from the bowels of the ship.  The crew then took turns chaining the men, women and children and throwing them overboard.**

**On the first day, 54 people drowned after being thrown overboard.  The next day, another 42 people were brought on deck and the crew, again, took turns chaining them and throwing them overboard.**

**Finally, on the third day, another 36 people were brought on deck.  The men, women and children were sick and near death.  They were not able to fight off their killers, but ten of them fought and were not chained—they jumped into the water themselves.  So, on that day, 26 were chained and thrown into the sea and 10 jumped in, rather than be chained by their murderers.**

**By December 22, 1781, the ship had made it to Jamaica.**

**The case strikes me because of the utter disregard for human life and because of the way the court proceedings played out once the Zong got back to England.**

**The owners of the ship filed a claim with their insurers to recover their financial loss for the 132 people who were thrown overboard.  The insurers refused to pay and several court cases and/or proceedings took place.**

**The Solicitor-General, who was acting on behalf of the owners, argued that the men, women and children were goods and that this was a matter of insurance.**

***“What is all this vast declamation of human people being thrown overboard?  This is a case of chattels or goods.***

***…it is the case of throwing over goods; for to this purpose, and the purpose of the insurance, they are goods and property…”***

**The question of their humanity, and of murder, never truly entered into the legal questions decided upon during the proceedings (although they were alluded to--no charges were ever brought against anybody involved).**

**Lord Mansfield (who presided over the application for, and the actual, second trial) said, in reference to the first trial,**

***“The matter left to the jury, was, whether it was from necessity; for they had no doubt (though it shocks one very much) that the case of slaves was the same as if horses had been thrown overboard.”***

**He further stated,**

***“…if the slaves die a natural death, the underwriters do not pay for them, but, in an engagement, if they are attacked and the slaves are killed, they will be paid for as much as for damages done to goods; and it is frequently done: just as if horses were killed.  They are paid for in the gross, as well as for horses killed; but you don’t pay for horses that die a natural death.”***

**- From minutes taken in court on May 21, 1783.**

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[**"Is This America?"**](http://www.parentsandeducation.com/short-stories-of-the-week/2016/11/11/is-this-america.html)

**I have often thought about writing about Fannie Lou Hamer over the years, but this recent election has caused me to ask,*"Is there anything I can learn from her experiences almost 50 years ago and are there any words from her life that can speak to me during this time of confusion?"***

**There are:**

***"Is this America?"***

**Fannie Lou Hamer was born on October 6, 1917 in Montgomery County, Mississippi to Jim and Ella Townsend.**

**She worked on a farm as a sharecropper for 18 years and her parents, too, were sharecroppers.**

**When Fannie Lou was in her 20s, she married Perry Hamer and they tried, unsuccessfully, to have children.  Fannie suffered from a tumor and went into a hospital to receive treatment.  There she was given a full  hysterectomy, without her knowledge and without her consent.  She was furious and this was one of the things that set her on a path of freedom fighting as many African-American women had gotten the same treatment in her area; so much so that there was a term for that unwanted hysterectomy— the “Mississippi Appendectomy.”**

**On August 31, 1962 Fannie Lou Hamer was one of eighteen people who went to Indianola in Mississippi to register to vote.  When they got there they were detained and only two of them were allowed to take a literacy test in order to determine if they could vote.  This was 1962—only about 54 years ago.**

**The group then left Indianola and started back toward Ruleville…but were stopped by city police and state highway patrolmen.  They were taken back to Indianola and the bus driver was charged with driving a bus that was the wrong color.  They had to pull together the money to pay the fine, then they went on their way.**

**When she got back to Ruleville, her children ran to meet her (she and her husband adopted children).  They told her that the plantation owner, where she worked, was mad at her.  Then her husband came to meet her and told her the same thing.**

**The owner of the plantation, next came up and asked Fannie did she hear about what he had said.**

**She said, “Yes.”**

**He then said, “I mean it.  You will have to go down and take back your registration, or you will have to leave here.  And even if you do go to take it back, you still might have to leave here because we are not ready for that in Mississippi.”**

**She told him, “I didn’t go down there to register for you, I went down there to register for myself.”**

**She had to leave that same night.**

**About two weeks later a home in which it was believed she was staying was fired upon with about 16 shots, two girls were shot in Ruleville, MS and another home was fired upon.  The violence was real, but that did not stop Fannie Lou Hamer from actively registering people to vote.**

**On June 9, 1963 she attended a voter registration workshop in Charleston, SC and was on her way back to Mississippi with the group, when they stopped in Montgomery County, MS.  Four of the people got off of the bus to use the washroom and to go into a restaurant.  Fannie Lou Hamer stayed on the bus and noticed that the four people were rushed out of the restaurant.  She got off of the bus to see what was going on, when one of the men there yelled, “Get that one there.”**

**She and several others were arrested and she was kicked as she got into the police car.**

**They were taken to the booking room in the county jail and then transferred to cells.  Fannie Lou Hamer was in a room with Ms. Ivesta Simpson, when Ms. Simpson was taken to another cell.  Fannie could later hear Ms. Simpson screaming and the sound of licks being laid on her body.**

**She could hear a man say, “Can you say, ‘Yes, sir,’ nigger?”  “Can you say it?”**

**Ms. Simpson would reply, “Yes, I can say, ‘Yes, sir.’"**

**“Then say it,” the man would yell.**

**She courageously replied, “I don’t know you well enough.”**

**Fannie was then taken into her own cell, where two African American prisoners were waiting for her.**

**The patrolman ordered one of the prisoners to get the blackjack and he told Fannie to lay down, face-first, on the bunk bed that was in the room.  The first man began to beat her as she tried to protect herself by taking her hands and covering the left side of her body (because she suffered from polio as a child).  The first man beat her until he was exhausted and the second man was ordered to take up the blackjack.  He began to beat her as she worked her feet to defend herself, but the first man was ordered to sit on her to hold her down.**

**A white man then approached her, who was in the room, and began to hit her in her head and told her to stop screaming.  It was days before members of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee and her husband could get her medical attention.**

**Fannie Lou Hamer told her story at the 1964 Democratic National Convention, to the convention’s credentials committee.  Fannie had helped to organize the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party because the traditional delegation from Mississippi was all-white and did not allow others to participate.  She hoped to be seated among the delegates at the convention.**

**Her testimony brought to the attention of the country the riveting situation of human and political rights in Mississippi at that time.**

**Her words, from the closing parts of her testimony, speak to us today…as she retold all that she had been through.**

***American Experience Films, PBS, Youtube channel.***

**“All of this is on account of we want to register, to become first-class citizens. And if the Freedom Democratic Party is not seated now,**

**I question America.**

**Is this America, the land of the free and the home of the brave, where we have to sleep with our telephones off the hooks because our lives are threatened daily, because we want to live as decent human beings, in America?"**

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## [An Opportunity to Stand](http://www.parentsandeducation.com/short-stories-of-the-week/2016/6/4/an-opportunity-to-stand.html)

**Muhammad Ali, January 17, 1942 - June 3, 2016. Rest in Peace.**

**Muhammad Ali is remembered for his talent in the ring, but mostly for his stance outside of the world of sports.  In 1960 he won an Olympic gold medal.**

* **In 1964 he won his first heavy title, when he defeated Sonny Liston.**
* **He immediately announced his conversion to the Nation of Islam and later received the name, Muhammad Ali.**
* **He was stripped of his title a few years later and would come back to reclaim it in a fight against George Foreman, in October 1974 (in Kinshasa, Zaire).**
* **He successfully defended the title ten more times, before losing to Leon Spinks in 1978...seven months later, however, he regained the title from Spinks, becoming the first man in history to win the heavyweight title three times.  But, it is not simply for these things that he will be remembered.**

**Taking a Stand**

**On April 28, 1967, Muhammad Ali went to the old Post Office building in Houston, TX for his required induction into the U. S. Army.  Ali had already expressed his opposition to the war in Vietnam and questioned why he should go and "kill his brother" in a foreign land, when no one in that country had ever called him "nigger" or sicced dogs on him--his rights were being violated right here in America.  He should stay in his country and fight the oppression he and his people were facing, rather than go to another country and kill people who had never offended him.**

**Ali stood in that building, along with eleven other men who were being inducted into the army.  When he was called into the room, an officer responsible for administering the oath called him forward to accept his induction.  He did not move.**

**Another officer then took him aside and explained the consequences for refusing to be inducted into the U.S. Army, after being drafted.**

**He, again, was given the chance to accept his induction and his name was called, but Muhammad Ali did not step forward and did not answer in the affirmative.**

**The next day he was stripped of his world boxing title.  He spent the next few years fighting this battle and ended up several hundred thousand dollars in debt.**

**He was sentenced to five years in prison, but was allowed to be out on bail while he appealed.  He was also fined $10,000, his passport was revoked and he was not allowed to box in the United States.**

**During the time he was banned from boxing, he gave speeches and did whatever he could to help "make ends meet."**

**He, by no means, was a rich man while this was going on, yet he still continued to stand on his religious beliefs and never went back on his decision.  When asked why he didn't disavow the Muslim faith or Black Muslims in the United States (or his friendship with Malcolm X), he said (and I am paraphrasing), "Well I figured when I was finished boxing and white men had no more use for me, they would simply cast me away...and when black people remembered what kind of man I was and what I had done, they wouldn't accept me either.**

**"I chose to stand on my beliefs."**

**I wonder if many of us today...athletes, politicians, and everyday people would be willing to stand up for what we believe in--even if it means giving up our conveniences and experiencing economic hardships.**

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## [The Dover Eight and Harriet Tubman's Efforts](http://www.parentsandeducation.com/short-stories-of-the-week/2016/3/31/the-dover-eight-and-harriet-tubmans-efforts.html)

[***This story is a part of our NEW book - "They Can't Pull Us Up: Harriet Tubman and Her Life," available NOW on Amazon.***](https://www.amazon.com/dp/0997138688/ref%3Dsr_1_5?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1481508549&sr=1-5&keywords=danita%20smith)

**Harriet Tubman, not only escorted escapees to freedom, she also conducted escapes by sending messages and helping to coordinate support--without physically being there.**

**Henry Predeaux was enslaved in the Bucktown area in Dorchester County.  This is the same area of Maryland where Harriet and her family were enslaved.  Henry’s owner, one day, threatened to sell him south and in March of 1857 Henry decided to escape.  He was a large man, about 27 years old, and was determined to seek his freedom using the network of people who were willing to try to help escaped slaves.  He was also able to get instructions from Harriet Tubman…probably through her father, and he likely received help from Samuel Green.**

**Henry Predeaux set out on his journey with Thomas Elliot, Denard Hughes, Lavina Woolfley, James Woolfley, Bill Kiah, Emily Kiah, and at least one other person.**

**These eight travelers made the long journey through the landscape of the Eastern Shore…navigating the wetlands, the wooded areas, and its marshes.  When they arrived in Dover, Delaware they were instructed to meet up with a man by the name of Thomas Otwell.  The eight men and women had been given instructions by Harriet Tubman, undoubtedly given to them through other people, and they followed the instructions every step of the way.  When they arrived in Delaware, they did not necessarily suspect that there would be any undue trouble.**

**They had to travel through various terrain; the area around the Eastern Shores of the Chesapeake Bay is filled with wetlands, marshes, and challenging landscapes.**

**Thomas Otwell was a black man who knew Harriet Tubman and apparently helped her on several of her journeys through Delaware.  Many times Harriet and others would pay people to perform certain tasks in support of the Underground Railroad--housing or picking up someone, escorting escapees to different places, etc…  These tasks were rewarded with a little bit of money to help ensure the assignment got completed and to provide the person with some type of reward for the risks they were undertaking.**

**By the time the eight men and women reached Dover, there was a $3,000 reward for their arrest.  Thomas Otwell was supposed to meet the Dover Eight and take them to the home of William Brinkly, an African-American man who sometimes helped escaped slaves get through that part of Delaware.  Otwell, instead of taking the eight people to Brinkly’s house, led them to the local jail.**

**He had notified the sheriff and others, ahead of time, that he would be bringing by the escapees.  It was night time, and it was a little difficult to see, as Otwell led them up the stairs...remarking that they were “cold, but would soon have a good warming.”  Once they got in, a light was lit and the eight men and women noticed the iron bars.**

**A brutal fight broke out between the would-be captives and the sheriff and his men.  The group managed to make it down one flight of stairs and the brawl continued into the sheriff’s private apartment.**

**The sheriff’s wife and children were awakened and they began screaming and were scared for their lives.  Henry noticed a “shovel of fire” (used to help keep fire places going at that time) and spread its contents all over the floor.  This gave them a little bit of time.  The two women jumped through the window.  Henry then picked up an andiron (heavy iron supports used to hold wood inside a fireplace) and smashed out the rest of the window, through which the other men jumped.  The distance to the ground was about twelve feet and each of them made it out.  Upon hitting the ground they were faced with a wall surrounding the jail, but desperate times will bring out the best of physical efforts.  Seven of them made it over the wall…six of them managed to run off together but, for one of them, it was unclear where he went.**

**By the time Henry got on the other side of the wall, the sheriff was there facing him.  The sheriff stood there, “...in his stockings without his shoes” and pointed his pistol directly at Henry, but it did not go off.**

**Henry was able to get away.**

**Letter from Thomas Garrett (Abolitionist and Underground Railroad supporter)**

**Wilmington, 3d mo. 13th, 1857 (March 1857)**

**Dear Cousin, Samuel Rhoads:**

**I have a letter this day from an agent of the Underground Rail Road, near Dover,...saying I must be on the look out for six brothers and two sisters, they were decoyed and betrayed, he says by a colored man named Thomas Otwell, who pretended to be their friend, and sent a white (man) ahead to wait for them at Dover till they arrived; they were arrested...**

**....they broke jail; six of them are secreted in the neighborhood, and the writer has not known what became of the other two.  The six were to start last night for this place.  I hear that their owners have persons stationed at several places on the road watching.  I fear they will be taken....  I shall have two men sent this evening some four or five miles below to keep them away from this town,...**

**Thee may show this to Still (William Still) and McKim, and oblige thy cousin,**

**Thomas Garrett.**

**--------------------**

**The majority of the Dover Eight (including Henry) made it to William Still and the Vigilance Committee of the Underground Railroad in Philadelphia.  William Still documented their story and sent them on their way with help from the committee.**

**Several of the “Eight” were confirmed to have made it all the way to Canada, but nothing is known about what happened to Henry Predeaux after 1857.  This is just one example of the kinds of things people went through to gain their freedom.**

[**http://www.parentsandeducation.com/short-stories-of-the-week/?currentPage=4**](http://www.parentsandeducation.com/short-stories-of-the-week/?currentPage=4)

## [Sit-ins and Standing Up](http://www.parentsandeducation.com/short-stories-of-the-week/2015/2/11/sit-ins-and-standing-up.html)

**Four young men from North Carolina Agricultural & Technical College changed their world when they decided to stand up for their rights.**

**F. W. Woolworth donated part of the original lunch counter, from Greensboro, to the Smithsonian's Museum of American History.**

**Their names were Ezell Blair, Jr., Franklin McCain, David Richmond, and Joseph McNeil.  They were freshmen at North Carolina A&T in the fall of 1959 and they became friends when they met that year.  One of the things that they had in common was that they shared a disdain for the inequalities that surrounded them.**

**One event would cause them to act and start a movement that echoed throughout the country.  During the winter break that year, each of the young men went home for Christmas.  On his way back to school, Joseph McNeil went to get something to eat at the bus station in Richmond, VA.  He approached the counter and they refused to serve him; he was told he had to go around to a counter in the back, to get served, because of the color of his skin--he was furious.**

**When he returned to school, he told his friends about the incident.  After some debate, they decided that they were going to do something.**

**On February 1, 1960, they walked down to the F. W. Woolworth store, in Greensboro, NC, purchased some small items from the store, sat down at the lunch counter, and asked to be served.**

**I always thought that there was an organized structure behind them, but there were no adults and there was no major organization directing them on that day.  They simply decided to take a stand.**

**This act caused a great stir in the city of Greensboro, NC and the next day more students joined them at the Woolworth's lunch counter.  Eventually, the word got around and the courage to conduct sit-ins spread like wildfire.**

**Other Cities**

**Some time before the sit-in in Greensboro occurred people in Nashville, TN were already preparing for non-violent demonstrations.**

**A few years earlier an organization called the Fellowship of Reconciliation (a faith-based organization which started in 1914 in Europe) assisted the Montgomery bus boycott movement by sending staff members to work with Dr. King and others as they planned strategies during the boycott.**

**The Fellowship of Reconciliation produced a comic book, after the boycott, entitled Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Story.  The book sold over 250,000 copies and many college students got a hold of it.**

**James Lawson and Glen Smiley, who were with the Fellowship of Reconciliation, began teaching workshops that promoted nonviolence during demonstrations throughout the South and, in particular, in Nashville, TN.  Local college students began to participate in significant numbers.**

**Students would pretend they were in a sit-in while others pretended to beat them and yelled at them to help them prepare for the real violence they were going to face during an actual sit-in.  They practiced how to group together to protect one another and how to protect important parts of their bodies, like their heads.**

**In Nashville, John Lewis and Diane Nash were very active student leaders, while other organized sit-ins began to take place across the country...as the news of the Greensboro sit-in spread.**

**Within weeks, 50 cities across the United States experienced sit-in demonstrations and over 100 cities by the end of the year.  Tallahassee, Raleigh, South Carolina, Georgia, Virginia, New York...**

**In fact, when asked "if he was advocating that Negroes in New York stay out of national chain stores like Woolworth's, the famous Congressman from Harlem, Adam Clayton Powell, answered:**

**"Oh, no.  I'm advocating that American citizens interested in democracy stay out of these stores." (Eyes on the Prize, 1987)**

**In Nashville students continued their sit-ins and eventually the opposition got violent.  On February 27, 1960 a group of men attacked the student protestors.  They put out cigarettes on their backs, yanked them from their stools, and then beat them.  When the police arrived they arrested eighty-one of the student protestors, not their attackers, and charged them with disorderly conduct.**

**Eventually, both Black and Caucasian patrons began to stay away from businesses and the economic impact was apparent.**

**After much protest and continued opposition, six lunch counters in Nashville started serving African-American customers in May of 1960.  On July 25, 1960, F. W. Woolworth announced that it would desegregate all of its lunch counters, throughout the country.**

**Sit-ins continued in other cities and, eventually, movie theaters, hotels, and public buses were also scenes for additional protests.**

**The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) played very important roles in organizing and supporting more protests and sit-ins.**

**However, this was truly a student-inspired movement that grew out of the desire for young people to see change in the society in which they were living!**

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## [Excerpt from "Stories about Black History: Vol. 2"](http://www.parentsandeducation.com/short-stories-of-the-week/2016/5/30/excerpt-from-stories-about-black-history-vol-2.html)

**Chapter 1: Henry Johnson and the Harlem Hellfighters**

**William Henry Johnson was born in Winston Salem, North Carolina in 1892.  While still a teenager, Johnson moved to New York...he was an industrious young man and found work as a soda mixer, in a coal yard, as a chauffeur, and eventually as a redcap porter in Albany’s train station.**

**In April of 1917 the United States declared war on Germany and, just two months later, William Henry Johnson volunteered to serve his country—he enlisted on June 5, 1917.**

**He was assigned to the colored 15th New York Infantry Regiment (in Company C)—an all-black National Guard unit…which would become the 369th Infantry Regiment (the "Harlem Hellfighters") of the 93rd Division, American Expeditionary Forces.**

**African-American units were not allowed to serve alongside white Army units, so General Pershing, commander of the American Expeditionary forces, eventually brigaded and attached this infantry regiment to French forces during the war.**

**The men of the 369th were given front-line combat duty on the western edge of the Argonne Forest in France.**

**On one occasion, the Infantry received intelligence that German forces were going to attack their position and, as a result, Private Henry Johnson and Private Needham Roberts were assigned to guard duty, at night.**

**It was the evening of May 15, 1918 when Johnson and Roberts were suddenly attacked...they found themselves cut off from any help and surrounded by at least twelve German raiding men.  Roberts and Johnson used all of their ammunition in the ensuing battle.**

**Both Roberts and Johnson were severely wounded, when Johnson noticed German soldiers pulling Roberts off and dragging him—to capture him.  Johnson leapt into action.**

**He ran from his position, toward the men who were dragging Roberts, and struck one of them with the butt of his rifle.  He then pulled out a bolo knife and struck one of the men in the head and turned around to another and struck him in the stomach.  This brought Johnson some time…he fought and then lobbed grenades at the remaining enemy forces, until they withdrew.  In this way, he was one of a two-person team that was able to fight off a raiding force of at least twelve men and he prevented that enemy force from capturing Needham Roberts as a prisoner of war.**

**The German raiding party left behind valuable evidence; including weapons and other equipment.**

**New York Division of Military and Naval Affairs.  Sgt. Henry Johnson and the Harlem Hellfighters' parade is shown as it passes through New York during February 1919.**

**French officials recognized Johnson’s bravery and awarded him their highest military award for valor—the Croix de Guerre avec Palme.  Though Johnson was badly wounded, he stayed with his unit, and did not return home until the war’s end.**

**When Johnson did return home, he had difficulty finding a job because of his wounds—during the war he sustained 21 injuries, while in various combat situations.**

**These injuries made it difficult for him to find steady employment and he died in 1929.**

**In 1996 he was, posthumously, awarded the Purple Heart and, in 2002, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.**

**On June 2, 2015 he received America’s highest military decoration, the Medal of Honor.**

**Henry Johnson is buried in this hallowed ground, Arlington National Cemetery.**

**Harlem Hellfighters**

**About 380,000 African Americans served in the wartime Army during World War I and approximately 200,000 of them were sent overseas.  Over half of those who were sent were assigned labor duties such as building roads, bridges, trenches, etc.. and 42,000 of them served in combat situations.**

**The 369th would be one of those units who saw combat and it would distinguish itself on the battlefield; earning the nickname the "Harlem Hellfighters" (because many of the men were from the area of Harlem).**

**In December of 1917, Russia and Germany came to an agreement and reached an armistice, which allowed Germany to focus more troops on the Western Front.  The 369th was a part of the effort to repel this German offensive.**

**The 369th was assigned, as we have mentioned, to brigade with French troops (and not American troops) and on September 25, 1918, in Meuse-Argonne, the 369th was there!**

**Fighting alongside of French soldiers, the 369th was instrumental in that battle...sustaining heavy casualties, while facing severe opposition. They helped to capture the town of Sechault and, at one point, the 369th advanced faster and farther than their French counterparts, to the left and right of them.  When they fell back to reorganize, they had advanced some 8.7 miles in the face of heavy German fighting.**

**This heroic effort earned the entire regiment the French Croix de Guerre.**

**The "Hellfighters" are credited with participating in the Champagne-Marne, Meuse-Argonne, Champagne 1918 and Alsace campaigns.**

**During the course of their service, 171 of their men and officers received medals.  The 369th spent more days in combat than any other American unit during World War I—191 days.**

**When they came home they were greeted with a big parade in New York, but not with equality and freedom in their everyday lives.**

**Despite the discrimination they experienced (at home and abroad), their service cemented, in history, their contributions toward making the world "safe for democracy”.**

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## [Excerpt from "Stories about Black History: Vol. 3"](http://www.parentsandeducation.com/short-stories-of-the-week/2016/5/29/excerpt-from-stories-about-black-history-vol-3.html)

**Chapter 1:  Christiana, William Parker and the Horn**

**One of the most famous challenges to slavery took place at the home of an African-American man named, William Parker.  On September 11, 1851, Edward Gorsuch showed up at Parker’s home.  Gorsuch was seeking several escaped men whom he believed were being sheltered at Parker’s house.  William Parker was, himself, a person who escaped from slavery and settled in the Lancaster area of Pennsylvania (near Christiana).  Parker was an active member of the community and he went so far as to develop a group, composed of mainly African-Americans, that would actively work to prevent anyone from being taken back into slavery under the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850.**

**So, on September 11, 1851 when Edward Gorsuch showed up at William Parker’s door there was bound to be a clash between politics and freedom.  Edward Gorsuch was from Maryland and he had with him U.S. Marshall, Henry H. Kline, and a party of other men (including some of Gorsuch’s family members).**

**Gorsuch believed that he would find the escaped men in William Parker’s home and he was there to claim them.**

**Kline, Gorsuch and the others showed up early in the morning, to hopefully surprise the men and women at William Parker’s house—to catch them off guard.  After demanding that Parker open the door, Kline, Gorsuch and others simply came into Parker’s home.  They explained that they had a warrant for the arrest of four men, under the authority of the Fugitive Slave Act.  They insisted that some of the men were there and demanded that they come down to be taken into custody.**

**Parker was upstairs, he had gotten word that the men were coming a short time before they arrived.  He did indeed have some of the men, who were owned by Gorsuch, in his house, but he had promised not to allow anyone to be taken back into slavery.  Parker got his weapon and told the other men who were with him to get their weapons too—a stand off was about to take place.**

**Parker yelled to the men downstairs (Kline, Gorsuch, and the others) that there was nothing in his house that belonged to Gorsuch and that they should leave his home.  As both sides yelled at one another, Kline decided to come up the stairs.  William Parker’s men opened fire and Kline was unable to come upstairs.**

**Parker told his wife to go up to the attic area and sound the horn. She ran up to the upper room, stuck a horn out of the window and began to blow.  Kline and Gorsuch wondered what was going on.  Kline ordered two of his men to go outside to see where the noise was coming from.  They went out and decided to climb a tree to get a better view, when they noticed William Parker’s wife in the window blowing the horn again.  They fired several shots at her...she ducked and was able hide underneath the seal, but she continued to blow.**

**The horn was an alarm for the group of men who had sworn to protect anyone who might be taken back into slavery.  The group was made up of largely African-American men who had committed themselves to protecting the freedom of their fellow citizens.  In minutes, men began to run from their homes toward William Parker’s house.  They grabbed whatever weapons they could find and rushed to the scene.**

**By now, because shots were fired inside of the house, Gorsuch, Kline, and the others moved into the front yard.  Parker and several of his men also ran into the front yard and the additional African-American men began to show up.  A fight ensued and Henry H. Kline ran into the woods, refusing to be seriously injured.**

**Edward Gorsuch, however, did not run.  He said he had come to retrieve his property and that he would not leave until he had recovered it.  One of the men who belonged to Gorsuch confronted him in the yard, and beat him, until several of the other men joined him.  Apparently there were women who also joined the fight and Edward Gorsuch died right there in Parker’s front yard.  Gorsuch’s son was also injured.  In fact, most of the men with Gorsuch fled and the men whom he intended to take back into slavery were not captured.**

**William Parker and many of the men who were directly involved fled to Canada, as they all had to leave the country.  Two white men had come by Parker’s house during the stand off and were ordered to help capture the men, but they refused.  Authorities subsequently came into the area and arrested dozens of African Americans and the two (or three) white men (Castner Hanaway, Elijah Lewis and Joseph Scarlet) who refused to help (or who were known supporters of anti-slavery causes).**

**Remarkably those who were arrested were not charged with simply violating the law, but they were charged with treason—for intending to “levy war” against the United States by forcibly preventing the laws of the government, and the Constitution, from being executed.**

**About forty men and women were arrested—thirty-seven of whom were African American.  The prosecution had difficulty making the charge of treason believable during the trial and each of the people who were charged were not found guilty.  This infuriated supporters of slavery, throughout the country.**

**The issue of escaped men and women not being returned to slavery was a major sticking point in the years leading up to the Civil War and there were many African Americans, whose names and faces we will never know, who risked their lives in fights to ensure that men and women would not go back into slavery.**

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