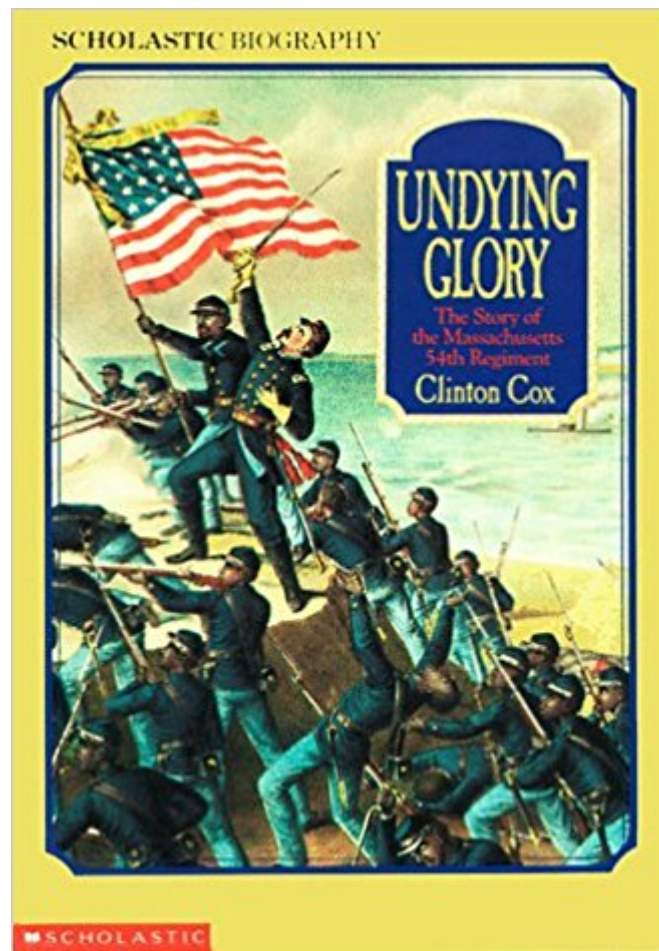




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Undying Glory: The Story Of The Massachusetts Fifty-Fourth Regiment (Scholastic Biography)



Synopsis

A look back at the African Americans who fought for the Union Army during the Civil War describes how, despite the fact that they were treated like second-class soldiers, the men proved their courage in battle. Reprint. H. K. VY. AB.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

What interesting educational book. I enjoyed learning right along side my kids as I read aloud to them. Shipped quickly

I learned a lot of good stuff from that little book.

HONOR THE MEMORY OF COLONEL ROBERT GOULD SHAW AND THE FIGHTING MASSACHUSETTS 54TH BLACK REGIMENT IN THE CIVIL WAR
FEBRUARY IS BLACK HISTORY MONTH
Those familiar with the critical role that the recruitment of black troops into the Union Armies in the American Civil War usually know about the famous Massachusetts 54th Regiment under Colonel Robert Gould Shaw which has received wide attention in book, film and sculpture. Those heroic black fighters and their fallen leader deserve those honors. Glory,

indeed. Although Shaw was hesitant to take command of those troops after suffering wounds at Antietam when he accepted he took full charge of the training and discipline of the regiment. Moreover, as the regiment marched into Boston to cheering crowds before embarking on ships to take them South each trooper knew the score. Any blacks captured (or their white officers, for that matter) were subject to Southern 'justice', summary execution. Not one trooper flinched. Arms in hands, they fought bravely at the defeat of Fort Wagner and other Deep South battles, taking many casualties. I have remarked elsewhere (in a review of William Styron's *Confessions of Nat Turner*) that while the slaves in the South, for a host of reasons, did not insurrect with the intensity or frequency of say Haiti, the other West Indian islands or Brazil that when the time came to show discipline, courage and honor under arms that blacks would prove not inferior to whites. And the history of the Massachusetts 54th is *prima facie* evidence for that position. I should also note that the Massachusetts 54th was made up primarily of better educated and skilled freedmen and escaped slaves unlike the black troops recruited from the plantations in the Deep South in the 1st and 2nd South Carolina black regiments. Thus, one might have suspected that they would not be up to the rigors of Southern duty. Not so. After reading a number of books on the trials and tribulations of various Union regiments, including the famous Irish Brigade, the story of the 54th compares very favorably with those units. However, so as not to get carried away with the 'liberalism' of the Union political and military commands in granting permission for black recruitment it is necessary to point out some of the retrograde racial attitudes of the time. It took a major propaganda thrust by Frederick Douglass and other revolutionary abolitionists to get Lincoln to even consider arming blacks for their own emancipation. Only after several severe military reversals was permission granted to recruit black troops, although some maverick generals were already using them, particularly General Hunter. As mentioned above there were qualms about the ability of blacks to fight in disciplined units. Moreover, until 1864 black troops were paid less than their white counterparts. The Massachusetts 54th is also rightly famous for refusing pay until that disparity was corrected. One should also not forget that the North in its own way was as deeply racist as the South (think of the treacherous role of the Southern-sympathizing Northern Copperheads and the Irish-led anti-black Draft Riots in New York City, for examples). This reflected itself in the racial attitudes of some commanding officers and enlisted men and well as the general paternalism of even the best white commanding officers, including Colonel Higginson of the 2nd South Carolina. It was further reflected in the disproportionately few blacks that became officers in the Civil War, despite the crying need for officers in those black regiments and elsewhere. Yet, all of these negatives notwithstanding, every modern black liberation fighter takes his or her hat off to the gallant 54th,

arms in hand, and its important role in the struggle for black liberation

This book basically proves that without the help of black freedman, the war against the South could not have won. It's the story of the 54th Regiment, the first colored regiment. Colonel Robert Gould Shaw was commanding officer of the 54th regiment. The Civil War was at first a white mens war, but that didnt last long. The colored men came from 22 states, north and south. Most were in their twenties, some as young as sixteen, and many were in their forties. These black men risked their lives for the Union cause. At first they were treated very harshly because they were a colored regiment. Although treated like second-class soldiers, their gallant assault on Fort Wagner erased all doubt about their ability to fight. By the end of the civil war, however, they proved their courage and determination as they fought to free their brothers and sisters from slavery.

Okay - so hear I am once again reading a kid's book. However, it is for my classroom library - I try to read them all so I can make recommendations. For those not in the know, this is a brief history of the 54th Massachusetts - the first official regiment of blacks in the American Civil War. The unit was immortalized in the Academy Award winning film 'Glory', starring Denzel Washington. Cox has the great majority of his facts straight (I have some quibbles, such as when he claims that a good soldier could load and shoot a civil war rifle in about 45 seconds, when the reality was that a competent soldier could do it up to 3 times per minute.) The larger problem goes from being factual to the problem of being written in such a way that young people would be interested. Cox tells the story, but rarely in a narrative form. From time to time it becomes merely a series of facts written in a plain, simple style rather than a gripping tale of history. I give it a rather high score as I am grading on a curve today. 4 out of 5 in this case means that it is readable, factually correct book, but written in a rather uninspired manner that is unlikely to spur on a reluctant reader.

It was about war. It was educational book for children. This book was kind of interesting. The genre of my story was mystery. [Eulalia Aparicio]

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