

#4. Patriots: Freed slaves (Wikipedia)

Freedom was the motivation for the African American **slave** joining the Patriot army.

The **free black** may have been drafted or enlisted by his own will or desire. Some motives to joining the American forces may have been a desire for adventure, belief in the justice, and the goals of the Revolution, and the possibility of receiving a bounty (pay or money). Monetary payments were given or promised to those who joined.

During the course of the war, about one fifth of the northern army was African American.

Revolutionary leaders began to be fearful of using African Americans in the armed forces. They were afraid that slaves who were armed would uprise against them. Slave owners became concerned that military service would eventually free their slaves.

In May 1775, the Massachusetts Committee of Safety, stopped the enlistment of slaves in the armies of the colony. This action was adopted by the Continental Congress when they took over the Patriot Army. George Washington in July 1775 issued an order to recruiters, ordering them not to enroll "any deserter from the Ministerial army, nor any stroller, negro or vagabond".

In October 1775, Washington announced that all blacks, both free and slave would be "rejected altogether." In November he said that "Neither Negroes, boys unable to bear arms, nor old men unfit to endure the fatigues of the campaign, are to be enlisted."

Most African Americans were integrated into existing military units, but some segregated units were formed, such as the Bucks of America.

When the British began recruiting runaway slaves to fight on the British side, this brought fear to the Patriots. In December 1775, Washington wrote a letter to Colonel Henry Lee stating that success in the war would come to whatever side could arm the blacks the fastest. Washington then issued orders to the recruiters to reenlist the free blacks who had already served in the army. He worried that these soldiers may cross over to the British side. Congress in 1776 agreed with Washington and free blacks who had already served could be reenlisted.