



**BUFFALO SOLDIER  
CURRICULUM GUIDE**

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***Applause! Series***  
**CIVIC CENTER OF GREATER DES MOINES**  
**February 10, 2010**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>About the Company</i> .....	Page 3
<i>About the Performance</i> .....	Page 3
<i>Brief History of the Buffalo Soldiers</i> .....	Page 4-5
<i>In Focus: Buffalo Soldiers and the Spanish-American War</i> .....	Page 6
<i>Iowa Connection: The Buffalo Soldiers and Fort Des Moines</i> .....	Page 7-8
<i>The Buffalo Soldier Monument</i> .....	Page 8
<i>Chronological History of African Americans in the U.S. Armed Forces</i> .....	Pages 9
<i>Vocabulary</i> .....	Page 10
<i>Discussion Questions</i> .....	Page 11
<i>Activities</i> .....	Page 11
<i>Your Role as an Audience Member</i> .....	Page 12
<i>Theater Etiquette</i> .....	Page 12
<i>About the Civic Center of Greater Des Moines</i> .....	Page 13
<i>References/Acknowledgements</i> .....	Page 14-15

## **ABOUT THE COMPANY: THEATRE IV**

Based in Richmond, Virginia, Theatre IV has been producing theater for young audiences for 34 years. Drawing its name from a commitment to high standards in four areas—the arts, education, children’s health and safety, and community leadership—Theatre IV strives to provide quality performing arts experiences for students and educators across the country. While continuing to produce and present original works at the Empire Theater in Richmond, Theatre IV also tours the nation with several shows each school year. All shows are designed to make strong connections between the classroom and the theater, engaging students in a unique and personal learning process.

Theatre IV was the first professional theater for young audiences in Virginia when it was founded in 1975, and as it has grown, so has its reputation within the performing arts community. In conjunction with Richmond Public Schools, Theatre IV was the first producing theater in the country approved for participation in Partners in Education, the Kennedy Center’s highly respected arts education program. Bruce Miller and Phil Whiteway, founders of Theatre IV, have been recognized numerous times for their work. The Virginia Board of Education and the Commission for the Arts honored Miller with the Leader in Arts Instruction award, and both Miller and Whiteway received Governor’s Award for the Arts from the state of Virginia in 2008.

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## **ABOUT THE PERFORMANCE: BUFFALO SOLDIER**

The story of the segregated African-American troops who served our country is told through the eyes of Jones Morgan, a 109-year-old African-American Buffalo Soldier who, in 1990, was found living in poverty in Richmond, Virginia. The son of freed slaves, Mr. Morgan was the oldest living Buffalo Soldier in the nation. Even with his memory fading, Mr. Morgan's life story is the stuff of legend. He tells how he ran away to become a Buffalo Soldier in 1898 at the age of 15. Many people consider Jones Morgan crazy, but two extraordinary individuals, a wheelchair-bound Army reservist from Hawaii and an inner-city boy from Richmond, join forces to learn the truth about Jones Morgan.

A key element of Mr. Morgan's final years, and of this play, is the disagreement among reasonable people as to whether the events portrayed are fact or fiction. The action of the play moves back and forth from Jones Morgan's memories of the Spanish American War (1898) to the events of his final years in Richmond and his attendance at the dedication of the Buffalo Soldier Monument in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas (1989 through 1993).

*Buffalo Soldier* has earned numerous honors and accolades. Most notably, it was selected as one of the *Best American Plays for Young Audiences* in 1996 and was performed at the Pentagon following September 11, 2001.

## **BRIEF HISTORY OF THE BUFFALO SOLDIERS**

At the beginning of the Civil War, the North expected the conflict to end quickly and was not prepared for the death toll that quickly mounted. In need of more soldiers, the government soon turned to African Americans and asked them to join the fight. More than 150,000 men enlisted in all-black regiments in the Union Army. While a few of these men achieved officers' rank during the Civil War, they were never permitted to command troops because many of the nation's leaders believed they lacked the necessary skills and experience. By the war's end, these skillful soldiers had taken part in over 400 battles and had helped the North preserve the Union.

Soon after the Civil War ended, many settlers headed west to the American frontier. The federal government set about taming the frontier by force, and soldiers were dispatched to the West. Among these soldiers were four newly formed black regiments created by Congress on July 28, 1866 through legislation that, for the first time, allowed African Americans to join the Army during peacetime. The troops in these four regiments were soon known as Buffalo Soldiers, a name given to them by the American Indian warriors they encountered.



10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry soldiers near Mexican border in 1916.  
Photo courtesy of <http://www.nps.gov/prsf/historyculture/buffalo-soldiers.htm>.



Crest of 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry.  
Image courtesy of <http://www.10thcavchapter.org/information.html>.

There are several explanations for the "Buffalo Soldier" name. According to one story, the black soldiers wore furry buffalo hides in the winter. All wrapped up in the hides, they reminded the Indians of buffalo. Another story says that Native Americans admired the soldiers' bravery just as they admired the strong and plentiful buffalo. The African-American soldiers accepted the name with pride, and the 10th Cavalry even included the buffalo in its regimental crest.

## ***BRIEF HISTORY OF THE BUFFALO SOLDIERS, cont.***

The four new black regiments were the 9th and 10th Cavalries and the 24th and 25<sup>th</sup> Infantries. White officers were assigned to lead these regiments because the Army did not permit black commanding officers. According to the law establishing the peacetime army, the black regiments were to be composed of men who “had served two years during the Civil War and had been distinguished for capacity and good conduct in the field.” Eventually, these regiments included 12,500 newly enlisted African-American men and offered the soldiers steady pay, food, and shelter. Each enlistment was for a five-year term and paid \$13 a month.

The Buffalo Soldiers’ original assignment was to guard the American frontier, and during the years of conflict with the American Indians, eighteen black soldiers were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for Gallantry. The Buffalo Soldiers went on to become valued servicemen in the Spanish-American War, the Philippines, World Wars I and II, and the Korean War. On February 2, 1948, President Harry S. Truman signed Executive Order 9981, bringing an end to segregation in the United States Armed Forces and ending the long and honorable service of the segregated troops known as the Buffalo Soldiers.



9<sup>th</sup> Cavalry soldiers before shipping out to Philippines in 1900.

Photo courtesy of <http://www.nps.gov/prsf/historyculture/buffalo-soldiers.htm>.

## **IN FOCUS: BUFFALO SOLDIERS AND THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR**

Of all the American military conflicts in which the Buffalo Soldiers fought, they received perhaps the most notoriety for the role they played in the Spanish-American War. In the 1890s, Cubans were struggling for independence, claiming that their Spanish rulers were unjust and cruel. The United States sent the battleship *U.S.S. Maine* to Havana Harbor in Cuba on a “friendly” mission. The ship was also there to help evacuate Americans from Cuba if heavy fighting ensued. At 9:40 AM on February 15, 1898, a large explosion sank the *U.S.S. Maine*, killing 260 crew members. Although no one could determine the true cause of the explosion, Spain was blamed and by April the United States and Spain were at war.



Buffalo Soldiers who served in Spanish-American War.  
Photo courtesy of <http://www.nps.gov/prsf/historyculture/buffalo-soldiers-and-the-spanish-american-war.htm>.

Following the declaration of war, the Buffalo Soldiers traveled to Tampa, Florida, where they boarded ships for Cuba. On June 22, 1898, they arrived in Cuba. The 10th Cavalry, of which Jones Morgan was a member, joined the Rough Riders in hills called Las Guasimas. Led by Theodore Roosevelt, the Rough Riders were a group of cowboys, adventurers, and wealthy young men who knew little about combat. While making their way through the jungle trees, the Rough Riders came under heavy gunfire from the Spanish sharpshooters. The highly trained and skilled Buffalo Soldiers came to their rescue.

On July 1, the Buffalo Soldiers and the Rough Riders fought and won one the most important conflicts of the Spanish-American War, the Battle of San Juan and Kettle Hills. For their service and bravery, five Buffalo Soldiers were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for Valor. On July 3, the U.S. Navy defeated the Spanish naval squadron in Santiago’s harbor. Two weeks later, Spain sought peace with the United States.

## **IOWA CONNECTION: THE BUFFALO SOLDIERS AND FORT DES MOINES**

When the United States entered World War I in 1917, the government came under fire from prominent African-American organizations for the limits imposed on African-American enlistment in the military and the ban on training African-American soldiers as officers. As a concession, the United States Army agreed to officer training for a small number of African-American soldiers and recruits. Although other training sites were considered, Fort Des Moines was selected because of its low-profile, Midwest location.



Clayton Hall at Fort Des Moines, now serving as the Fort's Museum & Education Center.  
Photo courtesy of [fortdesmoines.org](http://fortdesmoines.org).



African-American college graduates enlisted at Fort Des Moines in 1917.  
Photo courtesy of [fortdesmoines.org](http://fortdesmoines.org)

Approximately 1,000 college graduates and 250 Buffalo Soldiers (members of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalries and the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> Infantries) arrived at Fort Des Moines in 1917 to form the 17<sup>th</sup> Provisional Training Regiment. While many felt that Col. Charles Young, an African-American man and Buffalo Soldier, should be asked to command the soldiers at Fort Des Moines, the Army selected Lt. Col. Charles C. Ballou, a white officer with political connections. Following 90 days of intense training, 639 members of the 17<sup>th</sup> Provisional Training Regiment graduated to the rank of colonel or lieutenant on October 15, 1917. The graduates went on to complete basic training in several locations, including Camp Dodge.

Following basic training, the members of the former 17<sup>th</sup> Provisional Training Regiment came back together to form the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion of the 92<sup>nd</sup> Division. They traveled to France where they fought in World War I. The soldiers made history when the all-black regiment, under the direction of African-American officers, led the attack in the final battle of the war.

Although the African-American soldiers trained at Fort Des Moines had served valiantly in combat, the reception they received upon their return to the United States was not always warm. The soldiers faced discrimination and even violence from those who did not believe in racial equality. However, by setting a positive example and continuing to fight for equal rights, the officers of Fort Des Moines paved the way for the success of future generations of African Americans, both in the military and beyond.

In 1949 Fort Des Moines was converted into a U.S. Army Reserve training center, and it continues in that capacity today. The site became a National Historic Landmark in 1976, and efforts began in 1997 to create the Fort Des Moines Museum and Education Center.

Today the Fort Des Moines Museum and Education Center includes museum galleries, dedicated to the African-American officers and Women's Auxiliary Army Corps members who trained at the Fort, in restored Clayton Hall. The site also features a Walk of Honor, a reflecting pool and sculpture by Richard Hunt, and a restored chapel.

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## ***THE BUFFALO SOLDIER MONUMENT***

The Buffalo Soldiers seemed to be the forgotten heroes of the American Army until 1982 when General Colin Powell was stationed at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. During this time, he noticed that the only monuments to the Buffalo Soldiers were two alleyways named 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Streets and a stained glass window in the chapel. Seeking recognition of the Buffalo Soldiers' achievements and sacrifices, Powell began the process of creating the Buffalo Soldier Monument. When Powell left Fort Leavenworth, Commander Carlton Philpot of the U.S. Navy took over the project. On July 25, 1992, Col. Powell returned to Fort Leavenworth to unveil the Buffalo Soldier Monument. Jones Morgan was in attendance at the ceremony. In 1994, the United States Postal Service honored the Buffalo Soldier with the creation of a .29 cent stamp featuring a Buffalo Soldier on horseback.



Buffalo Soldier Monument at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

Photo courtesy of ftlvnhistsoc.org.



Buffalo Soldier stamp artwork by Mort Kunstler, 1994.

Photo courtesy of postalmuseum.si.edu



## ***A CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF AFRICAN AMERICANS IN THE U.S. ARMED FORCES***

- 1770 On March 5, Crispus Attucks, a former slave, is among the first to die in the Boston Massacre.
- 1776-1781 7,000 African-American soldiers and sailors take part in the Revolutionary War.
- 1862-1865 186,000 African-American soldiers serve in black regiments during the Civil War; 38,000 black soldiers lose their lives in more than 400 battles.
- 1866-1890 Units of black soldiers, referred to as Buffalo Soldiers, are formed as part of the U.S. Army.
- 1872 On September 21, John H. Conyers becomes the first African American admitted to the U.S. Naval Academy.
- 1914-1918 More than 400,000 African Americans serve in the U.S. armed forces during the First World War.
- 1918 On May 15, two black soldiers, Henry Johnson and Needham Roberts, become the first Americans to receive the French Medal of Honor (Croix de Guerre).
- 1940 Benjamin O. Davis, Sr., becomes the first African-American general in the active Regular Army.
- 1941-1945 American forces in World War II include more than a million African-American men and women.
- 1948 On February 2, President Harry S. Truman signs Executive Order 9981, ordering an end to segregation in the U.S. armed forces.
- 1950-1953 Black and white forces fight side by side in Korea as separate black fighting units are disbanded.
- 1965-1973 Twenty African-American soldiers are awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor during the Vietnam War.
- 1971 On April 28, Samuel L. Gravely becomes the first black admiral in the history of the U.S. Navy.
- 1975 In August, Daniel "Chappie" James becomes the first African-American to achieve the rank of four-star general.
- 1989 On October 3, Colin Powell becomes the first African-American Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

## **VOCABULARY**

**Battle of San Juan Hill:** conflict near the end of the Spanish-American War in which the Rough Riders and the Buffalo Soldiers captured high ground outside the Cuban city of Santiago; enabled U.S. military to begin siege on city of Santiago that resulted in Spanish surrender

**cavalry:** soldiers in the military who serve on horseback

**infantry:** soldiers in the army who fight on foot

**Fort Des Moines:** training ground during World War I for the U.S. Army's first African-American officers

**frontier:** land beyond settled or developed territory

**regiment:** a group of ground forces in the military

**Rough Riders:** a group of volunteer cavalry soldiers organized and led by Theodore Roosevelt during the Spanish-American War

**segregation:** the separation or isolation of a race, class, or ethnic group

**U.S.S. Maine:** United States Naval battleship sent to Cuba in 1898 as tensions rose between Cuba and Spain; exploded under mysterious circumstances in Havana Harbor on February 15, 1898; turned public opinion in American against Spain and eventually led to declarations of war between the two countries in April 1898

## **PRE-PERFORMANCE DISCUSSION**

1. The legend of the Buffalo Soldiers was kept alive for many years by Jones Morgan, who told his story to anyone willing to listen. Many family histories are also kept alive orally. Have students share family histories of their own with the class.
2. Following the Civil War, many of the first Buffalo Soldiers were dispatched to the American frontier. Discuss the specific challenges they may have faced as they encountered harsh conditions and unfamiliar people.

## **POST-PERFORMANCE DISCUSSION**

1. The action of the play moves back and forth between different periods of time in Jones Morgan's life. Is this an effective technique for portraying the events in Morgan's stories? How would the play be different if the action moved more linearly?
2. Many Buffalo Soldiers participated in military actions designed to drive Native Americans from their homelands. Discuss the parallels between the history of Native Americans and that of African Americans, particularly in regard to their lack of freedom.
3. Consider the types of the battles fought by the Buffalo Soldiers. How are they similar or different to the battles that U.S. soldiers encounter today?
4. The era of the Buffalo Soldier ended with the desegregation of the armed forces in 1948. Discuss how this may have influenced or reflected the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s.

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## **ACTIVITIES**

1. Pretend you are a Buffalo Soldier who has enlisted in the military soon after the Civil War. Write a letter home to your family describing the western American frontier, including both the adventures and challenges of your new life.
2. African Americans have willingly taken part in every major American war, battle, and military campaign. Have students divide into groups and research the specific roles that African Americans played in the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Civil War, the World Wars, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the Persian Gulf War. Bring the students back together to share their discoveries.
3. A few of the African American officers trained at Fort Des Moines returned to Iowa following World War I. Have students research and prepare a brief presentation about Charles Howard, James B. Morris, or James Wardlaw Mitchell. What positions did these men hold in their community? How might their actions (both in Iowa and abroad during the war) have influenced their neighbors and fellow citizens?
4. It took the interest and determination of General Colin Powell and other prominent individuals to make the Buffalo Soldier Monument a reality. Imagine that General Powell had asked you to submit a design for the monument. Draw a sketch of your design, including notes about why you decide to include various elements. How does your monument honor the service of the Buffalo Soldiers?

## ***YOUR ROLE AS AN AUDIENCE MEMBER\****

Attending a live performance is a unique and exciting opportunity. Unlike the passive experience of watching a movie, audience members play an important role in every live performance. As they act, sing, dance, or play instruments, the performers on stage are very aware of the audience's mood and level of engagement. Each performance calls for a different response from audience members. Lively bands, musicians, and dancers may desire the audience to clap and move to the beat, while other performers may want the audience to focus silently on the stage and applaud only during natural breaks in the performance. Audience members can often take cues from performers on how to respond to the performance appropriately. For example, performers will often pause or bow for applause at a specific time.

As you enjoy the show, consider the following questions:

- What kind of live performance is this (a play, a dance, a concert, etc.)?
- What is the mood of the performance? Is the subject matter serious or lighthearted?
- What is the mood of the performers? Are they happy and smiling or somber and reserved?
- Are the performers encouraging the audience to clap to the music or move to the beat?
- Are there natural breaks in the performance where applause seems appropriate?

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## ***THEATER ETIQUETTE\****

Here is a checklist of general guidelines to follow when you visit the Civic Center:

- Leave all food, drinks, and chewing gum at school or on the bus.
- Cameras, recording devices, and personal listening devices are not permitted in the theater.
- Turn off cell phones, pagers, and all other electronic devices before the performance begins.
- When the house lights dim, the performance is about to begin. Please stop talking at this time.
- **Talk before and after the performance only.** Remember, the theater is designed to amplify sound, so the other audience members and the performers on stage can hear your voice!
- Appropriate responses such as laughing and applauding are appreciated. Pay attention to the artists on stage—they will let you know what is appropriate.
- Open your eyes, ears, mind, and heart to the entire experience. Enjoy yourself!

\*as adapted from the Ordway Center for the Performing Artist study guide materials.

## **ABOUT THE CIVIC CENTER OF GREATER DES MOINES**

Opened in 1979, the Civic Center of Greater Des Moines has become a cultural landmark of central Iowa. The mission statement is the guiding philosophy in everything the organization pursues; the Civic Center is committed to engaging the Midwest in world-class entertainment, education, and cultural activities. A member of national organizations including The Broadway League, the Independent Presenters Network, and International Performing Arts for Youth, the Civic Center has achieved a national reputation for excellence as a performing arts center. Four performing arts series currently comprise the typical season—the Willis Broadway Series, the Prairie Meadows Temple Theater Series, the Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield Family Series, and the Applause Series. The Civic Center is also the performance home for the Des Moines Symphony and Stage West.

In keeping with the vision in which the Civic Center was created, the organization is a private, nonprofit organization and is an integral part of the central Iowa's cultural community. Through the education programs, the Civic Center strives to engage our patrons in arts experiences that extend beyond the stage. Master classes bring professional and local artists together to share their art form and craft, while pre-performance lectures and post-performance Q&A sessions with company members offer ticket holders the opportunity to explore each show as a living, evolving piece of art. Through the Applause Series—curriculum-connected performances for school audiences—we encourage local students to discover the rich, diverse world of performing arts. During the 2009-2010 season, the Civic Center will welcome more than 26,000 students and educators to 11 professional productions for young audiences.



## **REFERENCES**

### **Online Resources for Students and Educators**

Buffalo Soldiers National Museum:

<http://www.buffalosoldiermuseum.com/?linkid=410&webid=1000>

Fort Des Moines:

<http://www.fortdesmoines.org>

Iowa Public Television, Black Officers at Fort Des Moines in WWI:

[http://www.iptv.org/iowaPathways/myPath.cfm?ounid=ob\\_000294](http://www.iptv.org/iowaPathways/myPath.cfm?ounid=ob_000294)

National Park Service, Presidio of San Francisco:

<http://www.nps.gov/prsf/historyculture/buffalo-soldiers.htm>

This Day in History 1898: The Battle San Juan Hill (The History Channel):

<http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history.do?action=article&id=5140>

### **Related Books**

*An Album of Black Americans in the Armed Forces* by Donald L. Miller, 1969.

*Buffalo Soldiers* by Catherine Reef, 1997.

*The Buffalo Soldier* by Sherry Garland, 2006.

*The Buffalo Soldiers* by Alice K. Flanagan, 2005.

*The Buffalo Soldiers (History of the Old West Series)* by Tracey L. Barnett, 2002.

### **Study Guide Resources**

The Civic Center of Greater Des Moines:

<http://civiccenter.org>

Dictionary.com

<http://dictionary.com>

Fort Des Moines:

<http://fortdesmoines.org>

Iowa Public Television, Black Officers at Fort Des Moines in WWI:

[http://www.iptv.org/iowaPathways/myPath.cfm?ounid=ob\\_000294](http://www.iptv.org/iowaPathways/myPath.cfm?ounid=ob_000294)

Naval History & Heritage Command: U.S.S. Maine:

<http://www.history.navy.mil/faqs/faq71-1.htm>

## ***REFERENCES, cont.***

### **Study Guide Resources, cont.**

Theatre IV:

<http://www.theatreiv.com/>

This Day in History 1898: The Battle San Juan Hill (The History Channel):

<http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history.do?action=article&id=5140>

**Support for Civic Center Education and Community Engagement programs provided by:**

Alliant Energy, American Republic Insurance Company, Bradford and Sally Austin, Bank of America, Citigroup Foundation, Continental Western Group, EMC Insurance Companies, Jules and Judy Gray, Greater Des Moines Community Foundation, John Deere Des Moines Operations, Richard and Deborah McConnell, Pioneer Hi-Bred - a DuPont business, Polk County, Prairie Meadows Community Betterment Grant, Target, U.S. Bank, Wells Fargo & Co., Willis Auto Campus/Lexus of North America, and the more than 200 individual donors.

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Emily Gruis, Deb Kellogg, Eric Olmscheid, and Lucy Suvalsky.  
Based on the study guide "Buffalo Soldier" by Bruce C. Miller of Theatre IV.