

Black History Month

A Florida Focus

A CIVICS IN REAL LIFE SERIES: CIVICS CONNECTION SPOTLIGHT

Spotlight #6: Battle of Olustee

On February 20, 1864, the Civil War Battle of Olustee was fought in Baker County. Known for being the largest battle fought in Florida, Olustee should also be remembered for the bravery and sacrifices made by Black troops of the Union Army. For the Union, [Florida](#) was a key military stronghold and capturing it would also allow for the disruption of Confederate supply routes, and open opportunities to [recruit](#) more Black soldiers. After [successful raids](#) from Jacksonville, Union troops under the command of General Truman Seymour would advance west towards Lake City. Included in this advance were three Black regiments: the [54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment](#), the [8th U.S. Colored Troops](#) (USCT), and the [35th U.S. Colored Troops](#) (USCT). When the Union Army neared the Olustee railroad station, it was met by Confederate General Joseph Finegan. By the afternoon of the 20th, there were around 10,000 troops engaged in battle. Outmatched in terms of supplies and ammunition, the Union forces began to retreat by nightfall. The Confederate Army attempted pursuit, but the Black soldiers from the 54th Regiment and the 35th USCT stood their ground as the [rear guard](#) to hold the Confederates off. Despite many of the Black soldiers being inexperienced with combat and having suffered heavy casualties, these soldiers fought fearlessly. Their valiant efforts allowed their fellow Union soldiers to retreat safely. Tragically for some of the Black soldiers, their heroic actions during the battle came at a high cost. After the battle ended, many of them were left wounded. They were captured, tortured, and murdered at the [hands of the Confederate Army](#). Despite being a loss for the Union Army, the courageous actions of the Black soldiers at Olustee showed the nation that they were not only deserving of the opportunity to serve their country, but were equally deserving of receiving the full rights associated with citizenship in the United States of America.

CONNECTION QUESTIONS

- How do the efforts of the Black soldiers during the Battle of Olustee contribute to the passage of the [13th](#), [14th](#) & [15th](#) Amendments to the U.S. Constitution?

