8.78 Describe African-American involvement in the Union army, including the Massachusetts 54th Regiment and the 13th U.S. Colored Troops in the Battle of Nashville, (C,H,TN)

African American Soldiers in the Civil War — Mr. Zoller

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S5lNSvk9T2M

Over 200,000 African American soldiers signed up to fight in the Civil War by the end of the war. The US Army did not accept black soldiers; however, the Navy did allow African Americans to serve on their ships.

Frederick Douglass was very vocal about the enlistment of black soldiers and believed they could help the North. Finally, when the Union Army badly needed soldiers and it looked like the end of the war was not near, Congress passed the Second Confiscation and Militia Act which allowed President Lincoln to “employ as many persons of African descent as he may deem necessary and proper for the suppression of this rebellion…” (History.com).

In 1863 Massachusetts governor John A. Andrew put out the call for black soldiers. The 1000 that enlisted formed the first black regiment formed in the north, the 54th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment. Many of the soldiers that joined this regiment were not from Massachusetts. Many came from slave states, Canada and the Caribbean. Robert Gould Shaw was chosen to lead the regiment.

Pictured Above: Original Massachusetts 54th voluntary regiment

Glory — Clip prior to battle

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GrMoki4-weM

African American soldiers captured during battle were in danger. Many were executed or enslaved. Jefferson Davis,
President of the Confederate, supported these actions. Even though black soldiers served right along with white soldiers their pay was not equal. Black soldiers were paid $10/week, and white soldiers were paid $3 more.

The 54th Regiment Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry was an infantry regiment that saw extensive service in the Union Army during the American Civil War. The regiment was one of the first official African-American units in the United States during the Civil War. [1] The 1st South Carolina Volunteers, recruited from freed slaves, was the first Union Army regiment organized with African-American soldiers in the Civil War, though many African-Americans had fought in the American Revolution and the War of 1812 on both sides.

From www.history.com, learn about the 54th Regiment of Massachusetts

http://www.history.com/topics/american-civil-war/the-54th-massachusetts-infantry

The Fifty-fourth Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment was the first military unit consisting of black soldiers to be raised in the North during the Civil War. Prior to 1863, no concerted effort was made to recruit black troops as Union soldiers. The adoption of the Emancipation Proclamation in December of 1862 provided the impetus for the use of free black men as soldiers and, at a time when state governors were responsible for the raising of regiments for federal service, Massachusetts was the first to respond with the formation of the Fifty-fourth Regiment.

The formation of the regiment was a matter of controversy and public attention from its inception. Questions were raised as to the black man’s ability to fight in the "white man’s war." Although Massachusetts governor John A. Andrew believed that black men were capable of leadership, others felt that commissioning blacks as officers was simply too controversial; Andrew needed all the support he could get. The commissioned officers, then, were white and the enlisted men black. Any black officers up to the rank of lieutenant were non-commissioned and reached their positions by moving up through the ranks. On 28 May 1863, upon the presentation of the unit’s colors by the governor and a parade through the streets of Boston, spectators lined the streets with the hopes of viewing this experimental unit. The regiment then departed Boston on the transport De Molay for the coast of South Carolina.

Information from the Massachusetts Historical Society http://www.masshist.org/online/54thregiment/essay.php?entry_id=528

In Tennessee the 13th US Colored troops were instrumental in fighting in the Battle of Nashville, a battle in which the first Confederate capital was captured by the Union army. By the end for the battle the colored troop had lost about forty percent of its soldiers. The troop was disbanded in 1865.

Pictured Above: Tennessee colored regiment

Information - 13th US Colored Infantry

http://www.tngennet.org/civilwar/usainf/usa13c.html

United States 13th Colored Infantry

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pPTH83bDwYw
The Battle of Nashville was a two-day battle fought on December 15–16, 1864. It is considered a major success by the Union army over Confederate forces in the Western Theater of the Civil War. (Western Theater = west of the Appalachian Mountains, but east of the Mississippi River.) African Americans, who as laborers helped to build fortifications for the city, fought as soldiers to protect it in that decisive battle. They, and the Union, won.