



# Caribbean Volunteers at War: The Forgotten Story of the RAF's 'Tuskegee Airmen'

*Mark Johnson*

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All of a sudden there was the rush of an immense shadow coming towards him at terrific speed. It was the ground reaching up to gather him. The date was 26 June, 1943 and Cy Grant was the rarest of things - a black West Indian RAF crew member, blown out of his exploding Lancaster bomber.

The heroic exploits of the Caribbean men and women who volunteered their services to the Allied effort during the Second World War have, until now, passed by with little fanfare or attention. Indeed, whilst many people are aware of the contribution that the various Bomber Command units paid in securing ultimate victory, little is said or understood of the achievements and sacrifices of the heroic Caribbean volunteers who contributed to some of their greatest victories.

Mark Johnson presents us here with an engrossing and humane account of the exploits of such individuals. Including a great number of insights and fascinating details taken from conversations with his uncle, John Blair, the book illuminates the day-to-day reality of life as a Caribbean volunteer during the Second World War and the kind of culture-clash experiences that characterized their wartime careers. John Blair is a particularly important member within the context of this history and within the wider context of Bomber Command history. He served a full and distinguished tour with Bomber Command in the skies over Germany and was present at some of the most pivotal moments, earning a Distinguished Flying Cross in the process. The author has utilized transcripts of conversations with his uncle and a host of other Caribbean volunteers to create a dramatic and well written account of the proceedings. An important book, offering a platform upon which to appreciate the true extent of the Caribbean contribution to the Allied war effort, the work offers a new slant on the popular Bomber Command theme; one that looks set to intrigue a number of readers yet to be acquainted with this facet of the units history.

## REVIEWS

This is a useful study of a neglected group of RAF airmen, and a useful addition to the literature on Bomber Command.

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