

# Glory Soars In N.Y. For Tuskegee Fliers

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Reginald Brewster shows off Congressional Gold Medal at St. Philip's Episcopal Church in Harlem yesterday.

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Four Tuskegee Airmen were awarded Congressional Gold Medals yesterday in Harlem - nearly 70 years after the first all-black squadron took flight.

"What you have is a whole bunch of old men who went through a whole lot. It's great to be honored," said Airman Frederick Lawrence, of Queens, who turned 87 yesterday.

The octogenarians join more than 300 of their peers who were awarded the custom-made gold medals emblazoned with "Tuskegee Airmen" in Washington on March 29.

The elite group trained in Tuskegee, Ala., from 1942 through 1946, fought in World War II and battled racism at home and abroad. They often provided escort for bombers and are credited with never losing a bomber to enemy fire.

"We are here today for the sole purpose of issuing a medal that is long overdue," Tuskegee Airmen Tristate chapter President Ed Monroe told parishioners during the ceremony at St. Philip's Episcopal Church. The airmen, he said, joined the ranks of other Congressional Gold Medal honorees such as Colin Powell and Rosa Parks.

"This is something we were hoping they'd get around to," said a beaming Alton Burton, 84, of Clinton Hill, Brooklyn. "I made it!"

Reginald Brewster, of St. Albans, Queens, and Otis Forman, also were honored with the medals - the highest civilian award bestowed by Congress.