

Editorial: For Tuskegee Airmen, a late but heartfelt honor

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heart

It came about 60 years late, but when it comes to honoring the brave and noble, there can be no statute of limitations.

Fighting racism at home and totalitarianism overseas, the Tuskegee Airmen battled valiantly against both enemies during World War II.

Now well into their 80s, they received the Congressional Gold Medal last week, making official what their country already knew: These men are heroes.

Almost 1,000 fighter pilots trained as a segregated unit at the air base in Tuskegee, Ala., a program President Roosevelt ordered despite criticism from some of his top generals.

Long before they headed overseas, they faced a vicious enemy at home — the discrimination of their own countrymen.

Dozens died in combat throughout Europe, the Mediterranean and North Africa.

"We are so overjoyed," retired Capt. Roscoe Brown Jr., said, according to the Associated Press.

Brown and five other comrades accepted the medals on behalf of the 300 former aviators who attended the ceremony.

While one ceremony cannot wash away the horrible legacy of discrimination in this country, it was a powerful moment that juxtaposed the unfairness of the past with the gratitude of the present.