

# How New Bedford's William H. Carney became an American Hero, first black Medal of Honor recipient

Buried in the Oak Grove cemetery in New Bedford, Massachusetts is an American Hero whose legend should be taught in history books across the country. Army Sgt. William H. Carney is the first African American recipient of the Medal of Honor.

Serving on the legendary Massachusetts 54th regiment in the Civil War, he earned the Medal of Honor during the "Charge of Fort Wagner". When the unit's color guard was killed, Carney stepped forth, picked up the American flag, and rallied his troops up the hill towards almost certain death. It's important to emphasize that 270 of the 600 members of the 54th regiment were killed in this battle. These men truly embodied what it meant to "Live free or die".

With the flag in his hand, Carney was shot several times, yet refused to let the flag hit the ground. He planted the flag at the base of the fort and held it upright until his nearly lifeless body was rescued.

Miraculously, he survived, and when rescued he looked up at his fellow soldiers and told them, "Boys, the old flag never touched the ground". Check out this video highlighting the moment William Carney earned his medal of honor.