Lesson 19, Worksheet 2
Peter Vogelsang and the 54th Massachusetts Regiment

On July 18, 1863, two days after the Draft Riots, the Massachusetts 54th Infantry, the first black regiment raised in the North, led an attack on Fort Wagner. Their hope was to break the network of Confederate defenses protecting Charleston, South Carolina. Brooklynette Peter Vogelsang, a former clerk, was one of the soldiers.

He fought alongside Lewis and Charles Douglass, the sons of Frederick Douglass. They were led by Colonel Robert Gould Shaw, a young white Bostonian who came from a prominent anti-slavery family. The Confederates, protected by a strong fort, shot cannons and bullets at the men, leaving half of them wounded, captured, or killed. Vogelsang was one of the few survivors of the attack and was promoted to quartermaster-sergeant.

The Gallant Charge of the 54th Massachusetts (Colored) Regiment on the Rebel Works at Fort Wagner, Courtesy of the New-York Historical Society.