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75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DESEGREGATION OF THE U.S. ARMED FORCES

Navigating Duality in Black & African Americans' Military Journey

The Black experience in America can be best described in terms of its contradictions. While the United States was a pioneer in promoting freedom and democracy, it was also one of the last nations to outlaw slavery. African Americans did not gain full voting rights until the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, yet Black Americans are known for their patriotism and high participation rates in elections compared to other racial or ethnic groups. For Black service members and veterans, their experience is similarly marked by duality. Black or African American service members have played crucial roles in the U.S. Armed Forces in every major conflict, often enduring unequal conditions, overt discrimination, and limitations on their rights and privileges compared to their fellow service members and military veterans.

The military has long served as a pathway to upward mobility for countless individuals, offering opportunities for education, career advancement, and financial stability. It has been particularly significant for many Black and African American servicemembers, enabling them to gain skills that translate into civilian success. However, while the military has been a stepping stone, it is essential to recognize that it cannot single-handedly bridge the racial equity gap in our society. Systemic issues such as educational disparities, economic inequality, and discriminatory policies persist inside and outside of the military context, underscoring the need for broader societal efforts to address and decrease the racial equity gap. This includes reforms in education, criminal justice, housing, and employment.

As we commemorate the 75th anniversary of Executive Order 9981, which formally desegregated the military in 1948, this brief reflects on some of the contemporary “dualities” in the experience of Black veterans. It highlights both positive and negative aspects of the experiences of Black and African American service members and veterans who have made significant contributions to the U.S. military throughout history, despite the challenges of segregation, discrimination, and unequal treatment.

HISTORICAL NUMBERS

It's important to note that historical records on the number of Black and African American soldiers serving in every war are not always complete, and the figures can vary widely.

- American Revolution (1775-1783): An estimated 5,000 to 10,000 served in both the Continental Army and the British Army during the American Revolution.
- Civil War (1861-1865): Approximately 186,000 soldiers served in the Union Army and Navy during the Civil War.
- Spanish-American War (1898): Roughly 5,000 to 6,000 served in various capacities during the Spanish-American War.
- World War I (1917-1918): Approximately 350,000 served in segregated units during World War I.
- World War II (1941-1945): Over 1 million served in various capacities during World War II.
- Korean War (1950-1953): An estimated 600,000 served in integrated units during the Korean War.
- Vietnam War (1955-1975): An estimated 300,000 to 400,000 served in integrated units during the Vietnam War.

Timeline

Here is a timeline that includes important dates related to Executive Order 9981, which desegregated the U.S. military, as well as the GI Bill and the Civil Rights Act, along with events that highlight the intersection of serving in the military, increasing access to education, and civil rights advancements. The fight for racial equality and justice remains ongoing, with various challenges and achievements in each decade.

1941-1945:

World War II - During World War II, Black soldiers served in segregated units, facing discrimination and unequal treatment. The GI Bill of 1944 provided vital benefits to veterans, marking an early step toward addressing inequalities.

1948:

Desegregation - Executive Order 9981, signed July 26 1948, was a turning point. It desegregated the U.S. military, ending racial discrimination in the armed forces and advancing equality for Black servicemembers.

1950-1953:

Korean War - In the Korean War (1950-1953), Black servicemembers served in integrated units as a result of Executive Order 9981, demonstrating progress toward integration.

1954:

Brown v. Board of Education - The 1954 Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* declared racial segregation in public schools unconstitutional, initiating significant civil rights advancements.

1957:

Civil Rights Act of 1957 - President Eisenhower's signing of the Civil Rights Act of 1957 marked a step forward in voting rights and established the U.S. Civil Rights Commission.

1960:

Civil Rights Act of 1960 - The Civil Rights Act of 1960, signed by President Eisenhower, strengthened voting rights and desegregation, further promoting civil rights.

1963:

March on Washington - The 1963 March on Washington featured Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s iconic "I Have a Dream" speech, a pivotal moment advocating for civil rights and equality.

1964:

Civil Rights Act of 1964 - President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, prohibiting discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, marking a historic milestone in the fight for equality.

1971:

GI Bill Improvements - The expansion of the GI Bill in 1971 provided greater educational opportunities and benefits to Black veterans, enhancing their post-service prospects.

1970s-1980s:

Vietnam Era - Black and African Americans continued to serve in integrated units during the Vietnam War and post-Vietnam era. Legal developments, such as the *Furman v. Georgia* case and the Pregnancy Discrimination Act, addressed specific issues affecting Black servicemembers and women.

1990s-2000s:

Gulf War to President Obama - Black and African Americans served in integrated units during the Gulf War and subsequent military operations. Significant legislation, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act, promoted civil rights and accessibility. The election of Barack Obama as the 44th President marked a historic milestone.

2010s:

Civil Rights and Education - Initiatives like "My Brother's Keeper" addressed opportunity gaps for young men of color. However, legal developments, such as the *Shelby County v. Holder* case and "*Fisher v. University of Texas*," underscored the ongoing struggle for civil rights. The "Ferguson unrest" highlighted issues of racial inequality and police violence, while the Every Student Succeeds Act aimed to address educational disparities.

2020s:

Ongoing Civil Rights - The 2020s saw renewed activism and protests following George Floyd's death, reigniting discussions on racial justice and police reform. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed healthcare disparities. In 2023, a Supreme Court ruling addressed race-based admissions, reflecting ongoing debates on affirmative action and diversity in education. However, the court exempted military academies from this ruling due to their "potentially distinct interests".

Current Experience of Military Service

CURRENT POPULATION

Black & African American Service Members & Veterans

ACTIVE DUTY, GUARD, & RESERVE

359,000+

Black & African American Active Duty and Selected Reserve Members to date

VETERANS

2.3 million+

Black & African American veterans in the U.S. today

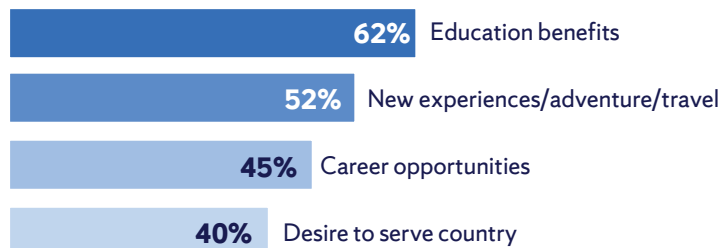
POST 9/11 VETERANS

OF ALL POST-9/11 VETERANS, 16% ARE BLACK AND AFRICAN AMERICAN (THIS IS HIGHER COMPARED TO THE 13% OF NONVETERAN COUNTERPARTS)

OF ALL FEMALE POST 9/11 VETERANS, 23% ARE BLACK AND AFRICAN AMERICAN

Views on Military Service

TOP MOTIVATIONS FOR MILITARY SERVICE



WAS MILITARY SERVICE WORTH IT?

89% reported that joining the military was a GOOD decision

HOWEVER

- ACTIVE DUTY SERVICE MEMBERS REPORTED
- 56% have considered "racial/ethnic discrimination" in their decision-making process
 - 53% have "concerns about safety regarding base/ installation preferences due to my (or my family member's) racial/ethnic identity"

Transition

PERCEPTIONS OF SERVICE

93%

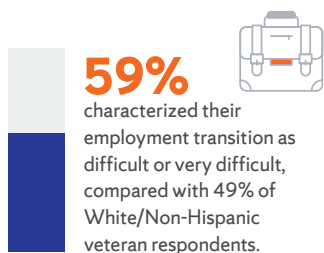
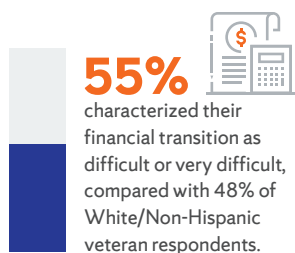


FELT PRIDE FROM THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENTS DURING SERVICE.

YET

- ▶ 56% reported they would be happy if their child(ren) were to join the military*
- ▶ 49% felt retaliated against or penalized after standing up for something
- ▶ 45% believe their racial/ethnic identity has hurt their ability to get ahead at work

TRANSITION DIFFICULTIES

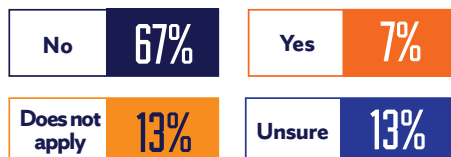


POST SERVICE CAREER



Higher Education

AFFORD SCHOOL WITHOUT THE GI BILL?



IN 2020

EDUCATION ATTAINMENT

Black & African American post 9/11 veterans have achieved:



Syracuse University's D'Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF)

is the first national institute in higher education singularly focused on advancing the lives of the nation's military, veterans, and their families. Through its professional staff and experts, and with the support of founding partner JPMorgan Chase Co. as well as U.S. Navy veteran, IVMF Advisory Board Co-Chair, University Life Trustee and Co-Founder & Chairman Emeritus of the Carlyle Group Daniel D'Aniello '68, H'20 and his wife, Gayle, the IVMF delivers leading programs in career and entrepreneurship education and training, while also conducting actionable research, policy analysis, and program evaluations. The IVMF also supports veterans and their families, once they transition back into civilian life, as they navigate the maze of social services in their communities, enhancing access to this care working side-by-side with local providers across the country. The Institute is committed to advancing the post-service lives of those who have served in America's armed forces and their families.

In Partnership with:

Syracuse University's Office of Veteran and Military Affairs (OVMA) serves as the university's single point of entry for all veteran and military-connected students, programs and initiatives. Committed to being the "Best Place for Veterans,"[™] OVMA assists university stakeholders to support and empower military-connected students and veteran employees of Syracuse University.

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REFERENCES

FOR A LIST OF FULL REFERENCES, PLEASE SEE: Maury, R.V.; Zoli, C.; Fay, D.; Stone, B.; Linsner, R. K; Akin, J.L; Rivera, C.C.; Harvie, J.Y.; & Tihic, M. (2022). Data Brief: Missing Perspectives: Black and African American in The Military - From Service to Civilian Life. Syracuse, NY: Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University.

Employment and Entrepreneurship



MILITARY SPOUSE UNDEREMPLOYMENT

Female Black and African American military spouses are

3X MORE LIKELY

TO BE UNEMPLOYED compared to civilian counterparts and **EARN 54% LESS THAN THE TOTAL POPULATION**



\$24,500 COMPARED TO **\$42,600**

UNEMPLOYMENT

In 2021, Black & African American veteran unemployment was at

5.0%

this was **HIGHER** compared to White non Hispanic veteran counterparts but **LOWER** compared to Black and African American nonveteran counterparts

EARNINGS

IN 2019

\$50,000



Average earnings for Black and African American veterans

HIGHER compared to the total median of the U.S. population who earn about \$42,600 but **LOWER** compared to non-minority veteran counterparts who earn about \$61,000

ENTREPRENEURSHIP



Motivations For Pursuing Entrepreneurship

- ▶ 58% indicate that entrepreneurship helped them find a purpose after military
- ▶ 58% consider themselves social entrepreneurs



YET 40% have difficulty navigating the resources in their local community

Access to Capital Barriers

IN 2020

69% applied for funding (compared to 52% White/Non-Hispanic veteran respondents)

63% indicated that the capital they need is not readily available

57% of those that applied for funding were turned down (compared to 29% white counterparts)