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L564 Values, Ethics & Military Leadership

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Army Values in today's United States

The United States Army is in an ethical dilemma. It faces two competing values and favors one choice over the other. In the decision to man a volunteer Army the choice of who would best serve the needs of the Army put the drive to select the best, smartest and morally fit recruit against an opportunity for all of the United States citizens. The Army chose the most economical choice, and has written-off the futures of many potentially great Soldiers. By not selecting those who have had a youth marred by encounters with the legal system they have ignored an entire group of potential Soldiers because they don't fit morally into the Army.

Individuals that do not fit morally have a values system that is not compatible with the Army and make it impossible for them to assimilate into our system. The big problem with this is that many of these people all come from the same groups. They are largely inner city poor. What results than is that the potential to use the military to improve an individuals condition is not afforded to a whole group of people and without prospects many end up in jail or dead, all of this because they do not fit into our values system.

The problem is that the Army has recognized that it must teach values, specifically the seven Army Values, to new Soldiers because they recognize that many of them may not have grown up with a values system that is like the Army's. The common reasons for this are the decline in the society. Many factors influence this and I believe that many of these are contributors to this.

First, the decline of religion in the United States, fewer people are going to church and receiving those critical early lessons of morality and values. There is also a general sense that religion is bad and removed from our everyday society. From lawsuits that remove "under God"

from the pledge of allegiance, "in God we trust" from our currency and the crosses from Las Cruces town symbol just to name a few. These trends suborn the values that religion professes and are quietly leading the society to adopt new values.

A second trend is the increase in one-caregiver families; this has two consequences that affect values. First, it now usually takes the incomes of two people to be middle class as opposed to just twenty years ago. Minimum wage dictate that in order to raise a family more than one job a person must have more than one job. In a single parent home, this means a parentless home for most of the time. This leaves a huge vacuum of who will teach the values. Second, as more people have single parents the value of a family becomes less and the desire to seek out long-term stable relationships disappears. The importance of having both a mother and father in the development of values is unquestionable.

So where are the values coming from. In inner cities the values are being taught by gangs and street rules. These values are definitely counter to the Army values and legal code of the United States. However consider this; a street-smart kid who joined a gang for survival and grew up under that value system has no other choice. To be survive he adopted the value system, and to be successful probably broke laws in order to excel in that system. If a driven person is molded by a different value system would they still be driven?

During the aftermath of the recent Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, the story of one young man stands out. When faced with rising water, a city and other governments unable to help, this young man hotwired a bus collected anyone along the way and using their combined resources bought gas and diapers for the babies onboard and drove to Houston. When reporting his story in addition to his initiative, they brought up his legal past. It seems this man raised in the inner city by an overworked single mother had been a gang member and had a few run-ins

with the legal system. Here is a classic case of a perfect young man for the Army that because of prejudices against his societal values system rules him out. He showed the initiative and drive, the concern for others. Wouldn't you want him on your side in a battle, I would.

If the Army is supposed to defend the people of the United States then it should represent all the people of the United States. In addition, look at this defense in a larger perspective. The Army is assisting in natural disaster here at home and nation building overseas, what about the disaster of ruling out our own poor and building our own nation. If we as an organization can recognize that we must teach our values to new recruits, how can we not recognize that we are ignoring a whole group of people that need these values? We used to spend the resources to educate new recruits and movements are to do this again; we send new recruits to language school if they are deficient in English. Why not make that investment in those faced with a different societal norm?

To sum up I would like to show how this all fits into our Army Values. Loyalty, Duty, and Respect for all those that make up this great nation. Selfless Service; we as an organization must see beyond the short term and help build a failing segment of our society. Honor the challenges faced by the most disadvantaged. Have the Integrity to see that we are failing our own people. Finally, the Organizational Courage to do what is right.