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<b>14. ABSTRACT</b> Black Americans have always been treated unfairly and not been afforded the same opportunities as whites in American society. From slavery to segregation and Jim Crow Laws, American society has repeatedly implemented institutional barriers to put black people at a disadvantage. The military, though it has gone through great lengths to be a beacon for the society that it represents, is not much different. Black American service members have had to prove themselves as equals since before the independence of our nation. Currently, black officers remain underrepresented in the Army, but it is especially overt at the senior levels. Black officers represent 12% of the Army's officer corps, and minorities only represent 5.2% of flag officers within all the services combined. Black officers and other minorities continue to struggle to advance in today's military, not due to the lack of ability, but because of the institutional and social barriers deeply ingrained within its organization. These institutional barriers start as early as the pre-commissioning stage of an officer's career. Once a black officer receives his or her commission, these institutional barriers coupled with social barriers continue to impede their success, leading to the overall lack of diversity within the force. These institutional barriers include, but are not limited to, the accessions process, mentoring, discrimination, and promotion/command selection process. With the demographic trends within American society constantly					
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## APPENDIX C

United States Marine Corps  
Command and Staff College  
Marine Corps University  
2076 South Street  
Marine Corps Combat Development Command  
Quantico, Virginia 22134-5068

### MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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#### TITLE:

65 YEARS OF UNDERREPRESENTATION: THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES  
FOR BLACK OFFICERS IN THE  
US ARMY  
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

#### AUTHOR:

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*United States Marine Corps  
Command and Staff College  
Marine Corps University  
2076 South Street  
Marine Corps Combat Development Command  
Quantico, Virginia 22134-5068*

MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## *Executive Summary*

**Title:** 65 Years of Underrepresentation: The Struggle Continues for Black Officers in the United States Army

**Author:** Major Jared L. Powell, United States Army

**Thesis:** Institutional and social barriers continue to cause the underrepresentation of black officers, an indicator of the overall lack of diversity within the force, which has led to the lack of effectiveness within the organization.

**Discussion:** Black Americans have always been treated unfairly and not been afforded the same opportunities as whites in American society. From slavery to segregation and Jim Crow Laws, American society has repeatedly implemented institutional barriers to put black people at a disadvantage. The military, though it has gone through great lengths to be a beacon for the society that it represents, is not much different. Black American service members have had to prove themselves as equals since before the independence of our nation. Currently, black officers remain underrepresented in the Army, but it is especially overt at the senior levels. Black officers represent 12% of the Army's officer corps, and minorities only represent 5.2% of flag officers within all the services combined. Black officers and other minorities continue to struggle to advance in today's military, not due to the lack of ability, but because of the institutional and social barriers deeply ingrained within its organization. These institutional barriers start as early as the pre-commissioning stage of an officer's career. Once a black officer receives his or her commission, these institutional barriers coupled with social barriers continue to impede their success, leading to the overall lack of diversity within the force. These institutional barriers include, but are not limited to, the accessions process, mentoring, discrimination, and promotion/command selection process. With the demographic trends within American society constantly changing, the environment that we operate in is becoming more challenging and people centric, the Army has recently recognized the need to invest in the capital gained through diversity in order to maintain its supremacy in a world that has become more competitive.

**Conclusion:** Diversity is a complex problem, but if managed correctly within an organization, can equate to huge dividends in the form of operational effectiveness. Though the Army has made great strides in eliminating many barriers to success for minorities and has implemented programs to foster values of inclusion, the organization remains homogenous. The solution requires a long-term commitment of education and inclusion implemented from the top levels within the Department of Defense. Until the Army changes its cultural mindset, the organization will never be able to fully capitalize on all of its talents.

**DISCLAIMER**

THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

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## **Preface**

The origin of this paper comes from my experience as a Black and Korean American officer in the Field Artillery branch of the United States Army. I have noticed that as I progress in my career, there is less diversity amongst my peers and my superiors and even less people willing to acknowledge that the US Army has a diversity problem. The intent of this paper is not to criticize the US Army or to ignore that it has done a great job in improving diversity within the organization. Rather, the intent is to highlight the institutional and social barriers engrained within the Army and its culture, the negative impact it has on minority officer's careers and overall organizational effectiveness, and suggestions to fix many of the identified problems discussed throughout this document.

A project of this scope is not without many thanks. First, thank you for the guidance and support from Dr. Paolo Tripodi, my advisor. Additional thanks to Mr. Charles H. Davis, Marine Corps University Academic Chair of the Department of Homeland Security and COL James Smith. Naturally, I save the most important thanks for my wife, Jennifer, and my son, Brandon for allowing me the time to accomplish this, the eyes to review it, and their continuous and unwavering support.

## **Introduction**

Over the last decade, the United States (US) military has operated in complex environments filled with ambiguity and chaos. To continue to thrive and succeed in a world of uncertainty, the US armed forces must successfully leverage all of its capabilities to maximize performance. One of the military's strongest assets is its diversity. As the US military continues to maintain forces all over the world to conduct counter-insurgency and stability operations and remain committed to conducting current and future operations and training with our multinational partners, it is more important than ever to foster an inclusive environment of diversity, starting within our own armed forces. The relevance and the continuous need to focus on diversity in the military is evident by the policy changes of the last five years such as the "don't ask, don't tell" (DADT) policy that was repealed on September 20, 2011,<sup>1</sup> the Navy's policy allowing women to serve aboard submarines, implemented in 2011,<sup>2</sup> and the most recent, the rescinding of the "combat exclusion policy" for women in 2013.<sup>3</sup> In reference to the rescinding of DADT policy, President Barack Obama said, "our military will no longer be deprived of the talents and skills of patriotic Americans just because they happen to be gay or lesbian."<sup>4</sup> Like many people in American society, President Obama recognizes the missed opportunities, as well as the adverse effects of discriminatory acts and behavior.

Though the Army's integration policy has been in effect since 1948, it took the military 30 years to recognize the value of diversity and the need to manage it properly. During the Vietnam War the level of discrimination was particularly bad. Since that time, diversity in the US Army has centered on leadership challenges at the tactical,

operational, and strategic levels and solutions related to the multidimensional mixture of individuals who comprise the organization and participate in its activities.<sup>5</sup> During that time, the Army implemented multiple strategic plans to ensure successful management and inclusion of diversity within its ranks. The most controversial of these strategies was the US Army's Affirmative Action Plan (AAP), implemented in the 1980s. Though the AAP was instrumental in the rapid increase of black officers within the military, from 4.8% in 1975 to 9.8% in 1985, many critics argued about the negative effects the program could have on the organizations recruiting, retention, and effectiveness. Growing opposition of the plan by a majority of Caucasian members of the armed forces pressured the military to abandon affirmative action in the early 2000s.<sup>6</sup> In recent years, the US Army's new strategy has been unable to sustain the number of black officers commissioned in the last two decades, affecting the overall diversity of the force. Army leaders cannot underestimate the great benefits that diversity brings to an organization.

One of the key contributors to the US Army's diverse ethnic composition and strategic success is the black soldier. While black enlisted soldiers are well represented in the US Army, the numbers of black officers remain rather small. Black officers continue to fail to achieve senior ranks within the service. Collectively, ethnic minorities make up only 5.2% of general officers within the US Army, Marine Corps, Navy, and Air Force.<sup>7</sup> The lack of ethnic representation at these senior levels is problematic. The fact that the officer corps is much less demographically diverse than the troops they lead, is also problematic. Both issues create a less diverse military, which has and will continue to have adverse consequences on the organization's effectiveness. This paper will address the Army's institutional barriers that impede professional opportunities for black

officers and how effective the programs that the Army has implemented to combat these barriers are. This paper will also explore and evaluate what and how such programs can be improved and the role the black officer community should play in improving its own probability of success, which in-turn will maintain and/or improve diversity within the organization, directly influencing its effectiveness. Though the focus is on Black Americans in comparison to their Caucasian counterparts, these recommendations can be applied across the spectrum of ethnicities within the US Army and the rest of the armed forces.

### **Key Terms**

This paper discusses three reoccurring terms: black officer success, diversity, and equal opportunity.

- In the context of this paper, achieving the rank at or above colonel, defines black officer success.
- Diversity: The Army defines diversity as the different attributes, experiences, and backgrounds of our soldiers, civilians, and family members that further enhance our global capabilities and contribute to an adaptive, culturally astute Army.<sup>8</sup>
- Equal Opportunity: The U.S. Army will provide equal opportunity and fair treatment for military personnel, family members and Department of the Army (DA) civilians without regard to race, color, gender, religion, or national origin, and provide an environment free [from] unlawful discrimination and offensive behavior.<sup>9</sup>

The distinction between diversity and equal opportunity (EO) as defined by COL Andre H. Sayles is as follows:

- Diversity is broader than equal opportunity as it addresses any difference that can affect organizational effectiveness, not just differences included in Army Regulation 600-20.
- Diversity assumes that differences can add organizational value and enhance mission accomplishment, while EO does not assume that improved organizational effectiveness is a primary outcome. Diversity also focuses on the organization and its people, while EO focuses on the individual and groups of individuals.
- Diversity is a top-down effort, while equal opportunity is a bottom-up effort.<sup>10</sup>

### **The Importance of Diversity and Inclusion**

Diversity is a major strength in the Army. As demographic trends continue to change within society and the military, embracing the diversity of its greatest commodity, the soldier, is more important than ever before. By building an inclusive environment, employees feel valued and accepted, which can lead to reduced personnel costs, increased innovation, and enhanced teamwork.<sup>11</sup> Diversity also brings greater recruitment and retention of soldiers. Valued soldiers, who are inspired, developed professionally, and feel that they have unlimited opportunities within an organization tend to stay. Those same valued soldiers are also the Army's biggest recruiting tools. They will deliver a positive message to potential recruits and their influencers.

Though the US Army has mastered the art of conventional warfare, today's environment is much different. The Army faces an unconventional and asymmetric operating environment where the human dimension in conflict is more dynamic than it has ever been. The more adaptive, culturally sensitive, and culturally astute the US Army becomes, the more prepared it will be in understanding the people and the environments

in which they operate. A good example among many is the counter-insurgency environment in Iraq. The US military's failure to fully understand and embrace diversity on the home front translated into a failure to understand and put into practice cultural sensitivity and awareness in the Middle East, a key component to success in a population centric counterinsurgency strategy. Montgomery McFate, a cultural anthropologist, stressed that, "misunderstanding culture at a strategic level can produce policies, which exacerbate an insurgency; lack of cultural knowledge at an operational level can lead to the development of negative public opinion; and a lack of cultural knowledge at a tactical level endangers both civilians and troops."<sup>12</sup>

As the US military continues to operate in over 80 countries on a reduced budget and downsized force, it must leverage their multi-national partners to achieve mission success. The chance of success increases in these partnerships with cross-culture competence, a direct result of internal cultural diversity. Cultural diversity is an emphasis on increasing the understanding of, and ability to interact effectively with people from different regions.<sup>13</sup> If the Army cannot properly deal with the differences within its own organization, it makes it even more difficult to work with and achieve mission success with people outside of the force, such as multinational partners and host nation countries.

### **Background of African-American Officers in the US Army**

The journey of Black Americans serving in the US Army dates back to the Revolutionary War, when black enlisted men, not yet free individuals, fought for the nation's independence. Most historians would even agree that a black man, Crispus Attucks, was the first American to die in the course of events that would lead to

independence for the United States.<sup>14</sup> Though the number of black slaves and free men that fought in the Continental Army against Great Britain for America's independence was small, their personal courage and impact on the war's outcome was significant. Black service members like Peter Salem fought courageously, earning praise from their white commanders for their actions in battle. In one instance, a white commander commented that Salem, "behaved like an experienced officer as well as an excellent soldier".<sup>15</sup> Although blacks fought bravely during the early battles of the Revolutionary War, on November 22, 1775, the Continental Congress issued an official order preventing further enlistment of blacks and only allowing those currently in uniform to remain in the military until their current enlistment expired.<sup>16</sup> Despite the official policy, blacks continued to join units in the Continental Army that would take them.

By mid 1776, black soldiers served in nearly every battalion of the Continental Army and both American and British service members took notice of their abilities. A British mercenary wrote in his diary that, "the Negro can take the field instead of their masters; and therefore no regiment is to be seen in which there are not Negroes in abundance; among them are able-bodied, strong and brave fellows."<sup>17</sup> As the American Revolutionary War raged on and the Continental Army's casualties began to rise, the participation of black service members in the war was vital in sustaining the amount of personnel needed to compete in battle against the British Army. After eight years of fighting, the war ended and the United States of America (USA) gained its independence from Great Britain. From 1775-1783, estimates consistently place the number of blacks that served in the military during the war at around 5,000 of the total 300,000 American soldiers.<sup>18</sup> Though blacks served gallantly during the war, America's slavery policy and

perception of Black Americans remained relatively unchanged and a precedent had been set. The white American majority could look to blacks for assistance in time of great military need and then ignore them and their accomplishments when peace resumed.<sup>19</sup>

The Civil War began in 1861. Once again, the nation was at war and once again, blacks overwhelmingly answered the call to duty. Though President Abraham Lincoln was initially reluctant to support the recruitment of blacks into the military, they served in many capacities during the war. Upon approval by Congress and once signed into law by President Lincoln, the Emancipation Proclamation allowed blacks to officially join the Union Army. On January 26, 1863, then-Massachusetts governor John A. Andrews was authorized to form the first two all black volunteer regiments of the war. Once again, blacks fought courageously, just as they did during the Civil War and the War of 1812, but this time in larger numbers. From the battle at Port Hudson in May 1863 to the assault on Fort Wagner in July 1863, all black regiments were helping the Union win the war against the Confederates. Not only did black soldiers and regiments begin to dispel many of the misconceptions of their white counterparts, they were beginning to receive official recognition for their contributions to the war effort. SGT William H. Carney, Company C, Fifty-fourth Massachusetts Infantry Regiment, was the first black soldier awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his actions during the battle at Fort Wagner, South Carolina, on July 18, 1863.<sup>20</sup> With the end of the Civil War came the end of slavery of black people in America. This freedom came at a high price for all black men involved in the war. During the Civil War, more than 180,000 blacks served in the Union Army and between 38,000-68,000 of those soldiers died in service of their

nation.<sup>21</sup> Though a significant leap took place towards the equality of blacks, post Civil War discrimination remained high.

Following the Civil War, black Soldiers continued to show their worth in garrison and in combat, however they were not allowed to be a part of the officer corps, until 1877. In 1877, Second Lieutenant Henry Ossian Flipper became the first black commissioned officer in the US Army. This was a significant moment in military history. For the first time, a black soldier could command troops. Even though black officers were limited to commanding black troops, a barrier was broken.

Black soldiers were a part of every war from 1887 to 1948. During that time the Army saw its first black general officer, Brigadier General Benjamin O. Davis Sr. in 1940, as well as the first black Army pilots, the Tuskegee Airmen, that same year. As Black Americans continued to make progress within the military, until 1948, black and white units remained segregated. On July 26, 1948, President Harry S. Truman signed executive order 9981, integrating the Armed Forces for the first time allowing black officers to command non-black officers, non-commissioned officers, and soldiers. This executive order was monumental in the movement towards equality for blacks and other minorities within the armed forces because American society during the mid 1900s provided Black Americans limited equality access and opportunity.<sup>22</sup> Since the desegregation of the armed forces, soldiers of every ethnicity have fought side by side to defend the nation's freedom.

Since the Vietnam War, the armed force have gone to great lengths to improve racial equality and is seen by most Americans as the country's leader in equality, fairness, and diversity. During that time, the military has seen its first black Chairman of the Joint

Chiefs of Staff, General (Retired) Colin Powell; first female black female four-star Admiral, Michelle Howard, and the first black Commander and Chief of the Armed Forces, President Barrack Obama. Though the US military and society has improved on the equality forefront, the reality is that much remains to be done. A majority of Caucasian males continue to lead the military's officer corps, particularly within the senior ranks where service decisions are made that have operational and strategic effects on the entire force. In 1999 Colonel Remo Butler explained that, "since the time that executive order 9981 was signed, black officers are falling behind their white counterparts in promotions at and above the rank of lieutenant colonel at a disconcerting rate".<sup>23</sup> There is also a disparity of selection rates of black officers for battalion and brigade command in comparison to their white counterparts. As recent as 2009, the Army has tacitly acknowledged that the US Army has a diversity issue and openly discusses the importance of diversity's effects on force readiness. In April of that year, then Secretary of the Army, Pete Green, Army Chief of Staff, George W. Casey Jr., and Sergeant Major of the Army, Kenneth O. Preston, released an Army policy that stated, "Leaders must lead the Army's diversity efforts. As we continue to strengthen our knowledge and understanding of diversity within our ranks, our strength, versatility, and efficiency amplifies. In addition, we must be more effective at understanding the cultures and environments where we serve. We expect all leaders to develop and maintain an inclusive environment that will sustain the Army as a relevant and ready force. We share this commitment as a team."<sup>24</sup>

### **Current Situation**

In 2014, the percentage of Black-American active duty officers is the lowest it has been in 15 years, a trend that will mostly continue. In 2001, Black-American officers accounted for 11.9% of the Army and at the height of combat operations in 2006; that number peaked at 12.9% of the total active duty Army officers.<sup>25</sup> The overall percentage of active duty Black-American officers in the US Army has made a marginal increase of just 2% from 2001 to 2013. In fiscal year 2014, African-Americans accounted for 21% of the active duty Army's total force, but only 12% of the officer corps.<sup>26</sup> Even more disproportionate is the number of black service members in the Army's general officer corps. Black officers only make up 9% of the Army's general officer corps, with only three of which are four-star generals: General Lloyd Austin, Commander of US Army Central Command (Infantry officer), General Vincent Brooks, Commander of US Army Pacific (Infantry officer), and General Dennis Via, Commander of the US Army Material Command (Signal officer).

The most concerning reason for the underrepresentation of African-Americans within the officer corps, particularly the senior ranks of the US Army, is the lack of black officers in combat arms branches: infantry, artillery, and armor. Leading combat arms units significantly increases the likelihood of reaching the senior ranks within the Army. For instance, currently two-thirds of the Army's general officers come from a combat arms background.<sup>27</sup> Unfortunately, with current branch transfer rates, command and promotion selection rates, and reduced accessions of black officers, the likelihood of black officers from achieving senior ranks within the service through combat arms

branches are even less likely in the future. The road to entry to one of the three main combat arms branches begins with the pre-commission and accessions process.

### **Pre-Commissioning**

The US Army has three commissioning sources: the United States Military Academy (West Point), Officer Candidate School (OCS), and the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC). Historically, African-Americans make up roughly 6% of the approximately 1,000 cadets that graduate from the USMA each year.<sup>28</sup> Traditionally, OCS has produced a high percentage of African-American officers, 90 in FY13, but accessions for this commissioning sources is expected to decrease in the foreseeable future, as brief by Human Resources Command to Chief of Staff of the Army in July of 2014. ROTC, the largest commissioning source for all officers, accounts for 92% of the Black-American officer population in the United States Army.<sup>29</sup> ROTC is the US Army's largest commissioning source for the black officer population.

An undergraduate degree is the final requirement for commissioning into the US Army, through the USMA or ROTC program. In the United States, 84.2% of all Black-Americans graduate from high school, but only 9.8% of that population goes on to college to receive their undergraduate degrees.<sup>30</sup> Once a cadet earns his or her undergraduate degree and receives their commission, it takes approximately 21 years for an officer to become a Colonel in the Army. During those 21 years, the attrition rate is high among all ethnicities serving as officers in the US Army, but to the already small Black-American officer footprint, these effects can be detrimental. The small pool of available black candidates at the undergraduate level directly feed into an even smaller pool of black officers joining the Army's commissioning programs.

### Accessions

Senior cadets receive one of 16 available Army career fields, through the accessions process. In the first step of this process, each cadet submits his or her career field preference to the US Army Cadet Command (USACC). The USACC then combines each cadet's preference with the Cadet Order of Merit List (OML). The OML ranks cadets nationally based on academic achievement, leadership evaluations from the Leadership Development and Assessment Course (LDAC), Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) score, and ranking within their ROTC senior class by their Professor of Military Science (PMS). The top ten percent of cadets on the OML receive their first choice of their branch preference. For the remaining 90% of cadets, the US Army will place the cadet in their first choice of career field in accordance with their sequence number. This will occur until the quota is reached for that career field. If a cadet's first choice is full, the Army assigns him or her to their second choice, so on, and so forth. The Army continues this trend down the OML and career fields until all careers reach their quota. Once all careers have reached their quota, the remaining cadets on the OML are branched either within the US Army National Guard or within US Army Reserve.

Historically, black cadets favor non-combat arms career fields. In fiscal year (FY) 2014, Black-Americans had a decrease in accessions from the previous years in the Combat Arms at 6% versus the 12% overall Black-American Army Component Command population.<sup>31</sup> Statistics also show that 45% of Black-American officers that began their careers in the combat arms profession transfer to other branches, which raises a retention issue.<sup>32</sup> Both factors continue to contribute to the lack of competitiveness of Black-American officers in comparison to their Caucasian counterparts. Promotion rates

continue to decrease because of these factors. Black officers are promoted at a 5% lower rate than their Caucasian peers do.

There simply are not enough Black Americans in the commissioning pipeline to sustain the 10%-15% rate of active duty black officers serving each year for the last 20 years. In 1997, there were 413 total Black Americans accessed from all three commissioning sources. In 2007, 596 Black Americans were commissioned and 2013, that number decreased to 365. In 2017, that number should decrease below the 2007 figures.

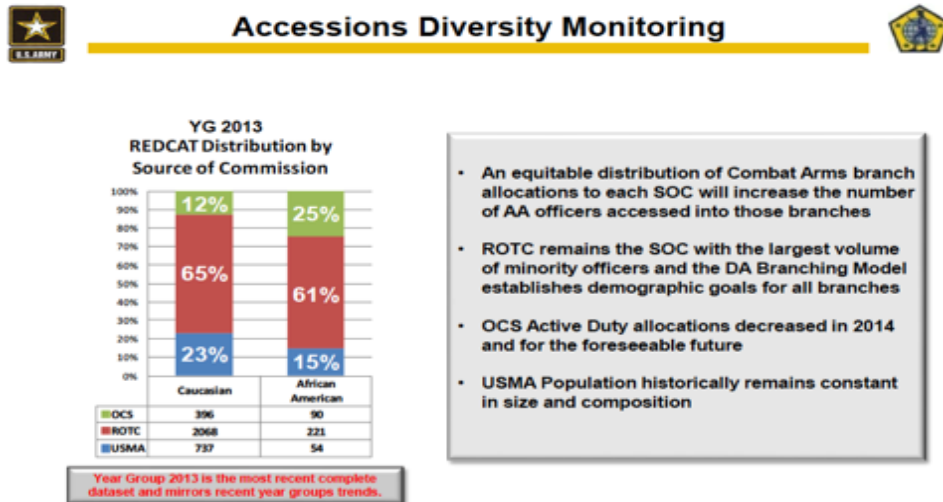


Figure 1: Caucasian vs. Black American Officer Distribution YG 2013

**Officer Evaluation Report and Command/Promotion Selection Boards**

Another barrier to black officer’s opportunities for success within the military is the US Army’s officer evaluation report (OER) system. The OER is a formal document used by a person’s immediate supervisors and that supervisor’s superior to evaluate the

rated officer's performance, usually over the course of a year. Research has shown that superiors in performance evaluations rate Black-Americans in the workforce lower than Caucasians.<sup>33</sup> According to Charles Gallagher, "What happens is that people tend to gravitate towards people who look like them and who have had similar experiences. The people that are running the show are white males, and they end up bonding with young white males that come in. As a result, women and minorities get evaluated differently, they get promoted and brought on board for projects differently, and as a result we don't see them in the upper ranks of management."<sup>34</sup> Evidence further suggests that this is largely due to stereotyping and similar –to-me bias prevalent in society and the workplace. In addition, Black-Americans rated lower than whites on both task and relationship-related dimensions of performance.<sup>35</sup> Their supervisors assessed that they had less potential for promotion and were more likely to have leveled out in their careers.<sup>36</sup>

The US Army promotes within the service based on the individual's potential to serve at the next higher rank, using the OER as the cornerstone for the decision-making process. An officer selection board and command selection board review the files of each individual officer eligible for promotion or command. An eligible officer's file consists of all performance evaluations, officer record brief (ORB), and official military personnel file (OMPF). The board reviews these documents and makes a decision for or against an individual's promotion and/or command selection. As stated by law (title 10, USC) and Army policies, the selection board for promotion and command is a fair and equitable process with many safeguards to ensure the highest standards and that the integrity of the process is absolute and above reproach.<sup>37</sup>

## Discrimination

Probably the most disheartening factor for the underrepresentation of black officers within the officer corps is discrimination. Even though this theory is highly contested within the military, one would be naïve to believe that discrimination exists in American society, but not the US military. The Michael Brown case in Ferguson, Missouri, Eric Garner being suffocated to death by New York City police officers, and the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) Police shooting of Oscar Grant III while he was handcuffed, are proof that discrimination not only exist, but is prevalent within American society. These cases are not isolated incidences, nor are they limited to the civilian sector. President Obama said, “This type of racial discrimination found in Ferguson, Missouri, is not unique to that police department”.<sup>38</sup> The most recent case within the military is “racial Thursdays” within the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, 1<sup>st</sup> Stryker Brigade Combat Team at Fort Wainwright, Alaska. Allegedly, leadership in one of the platoons in the 1<sup>st</sup> Stryker Brigade Combat Team allowed and encouraged their soldiers to use racial slurs against one another on Thursdays, without the fear of consequences. The investigation is also trying to discover if there is any link to between “racial Thursdays” and the suicide of, Danny Chen, a member of the unit during the time of his death in 2011. The original investigation conducted by the US Army in 2011 cited that Chen had committed suicide due to constant harassment over his Chinese ancestry.

The most recognized form of discrimination in the US Army is the glass ceiling effect. The “glass ceiling” effect refers to the invisible barrier that block minorities such as Black-Americans from advancing beyond lower or middle management positions within an organization.<sup>39</sup> For instance, in 2014, there was not a single African-American

officer selected for command among the 25 brigades in the Army; there were only three African-American officers elected for command among the 80-battalion openings that same year. In 2015, there were two African-Americans selected for command in combat brigades and one for command for the available 78-battalion openings.<sup>40</sup>

The lack of diversity at the senior officer level is not only an indicator of the level of discrimination within the organization; it is also an antecedent of further discrimination such as segregation. Segregation perpetuates itself because of “homosocial reproduction”, where individuals promote those who are like themselves, thereby resulting in fewer opportunities for individuals who are different from the people in power.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, a lack of diversity among all ranks, particularly at the senior level within the US Army, increases the likelihood of the organization’s culture remaining monolithic.

To add to the complexity of the situation, the Department of Defense is currently in a long-term Force Reduction Plan (FRP), which is another possible indicator of discrimination within the US Army. Over the next 5 years, the army plans to reduce its active duty troops from 490,000 to 420,000 soldiers.<sup>42</sup> The down-sizing will reduce the troop strength of the United States Army to its lowest since 1940.<sup>43</sup> In fiscal year 2013, the United States Army conducted its first of many Officer Separation Boards (OSB) and Early Separation Early Retirement Boards (ESERB), two of the many initiatives to meet the downsizing requirements mandated by the US government. In 2013, 20% of the OSB and ESERB’s population was African-American and 9.4% of the considered population was Caucasian.<sup>44</sup> Black officers made up the largest group selected for early separation by the OSB at 9.8%, even though the overall median average of selection across all

ethnicities was 6.5%, with the lowest average of any ethnicity being Caucasians at 5.7%. The Early Separation Early Retirement Board (ESERB) had a similar composition and similar results. Eleven and a half percent of the population selected for early separation or early retirement were African-Americans even though the median average of selection across all ethnicities was 10.5%, with the Caucasian population considered for separation by the ESERB having the lowest selection rate at 10%. In both cases, African-Americans were the largest percentage selected for early separation. From those personnel chosen for involuntary separation, 28% of all Black-Americans and 29% of all other ethnicities had no derogatory or poor performance evaluations (below center of mass) in their files. This indicates that African-American officers selected for early separation had performance evaluations on par with their peers, but the Black-American selection rate was on average, 8% higher. The data clearly shows that there is a need for further investigation on why black officers were the largest group considered for separation and involuntarily separated by both boards even though their performance files were on par with their peers. The process must be refined; if not, Black-American officers considered for involuntary separation in the future will suffer the same fate as their predecessors. For the foreseeable future, the United States Army plans to continue conducting OSBs and ESERBs, as indicated by the brief given to General Ray Ordierno, the Chief of Staff of the Army, by the Human Resources Command, in July 2014.<sup>45</sup> The large amount of Black American officers being involuntary separated through the OSB, ESERB, and other initiatives of the US Army to further reduce the force and will play a major role in the projected increase in the disparity gap between Black-American officers and their Caucasian officer counterparts.



## Demographics

-Race and SOC trends historically consistent  
-Lack of deployment is a slight indicator

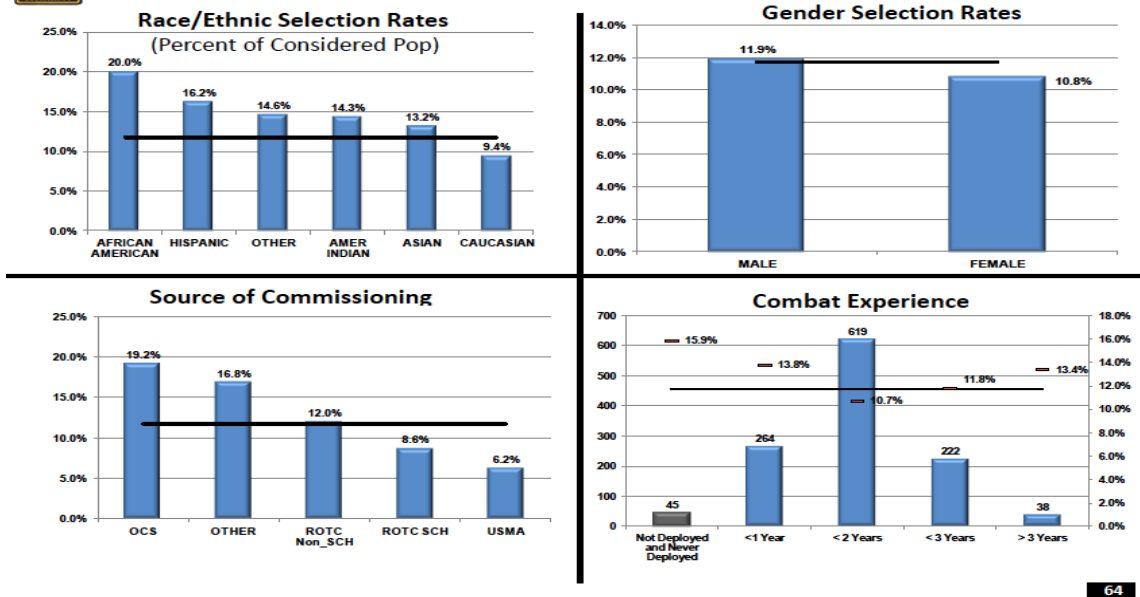


Figure 2: OSB/ESERB Selection Rates by Demographics for FY14

### Lack of Mentorship

Another institutional barrier of Black-American success within the US Army is the lack of mentorship. Research has found that mentoring positively relates to career outcomes such as higher salary levels, increased promotion rates, and higher job satisfaction.<sup>46</sup> A few of the many lessons that a successful mentor can help protégées understand and achieve are to set goals and take steps to realize them, assist protégées in networking and to introduce them to professional resources and organizations that they may be unaware of. They can also provide the mentee with guidance to aid in the further development of themselves as leaders and professionals, as well as tips on how to increase their personal success within the organization.

In July 2005, the Army formalized a mentorship program to encourage soldiers to engage in mentoring activities beyond the chain of command. This program is voluntary.

By definition, a mentor is a wise and trusted counselor or teacher.<sup>47</sup> One of the most important jobs as a military officer is leading and guiding troops. Mentoring is a part of a leader's responsibility, but the Army as a whole fails to meet that challenge, particularly in the Black-American officer community, due to biases and cultural differences within the organization.

Research has shown that a mentor to mentee relationship is less likely to develop between individuals from different demographics.<sup>48</sup> As earlier stated, African-American officers only make up 12% of the active duty Army officer corps population. Due to the underrepresentation of African-American officers, they must depend on other ethnicities, particularly Caucasian officer majority for mentorship. This is problematic for many reasons. Even though mentoring is supposed to be blind to race, people inherently have biases. One of the most prevalent of those biases seen in society and in the US Army is the cross-race effect. The cross-race effect states that people of one race have difficulty identifying with members of a race other than their own.<sup>49</sup> This difficulty causes discomfort and intergroup anxiety that hinders Caucasian officers from attempting to mentor officers outside their race or it may hinder the quality of a Caucasian officer to minority officer mentoring relationship. US Army Colonel Florentino Carter rightly noted that, "there is not a conscious effort on the part of leaders to exclude minorities but rather a recognition that certain innate human tendencies affect how leaders are more apt to mentor members of his or her own phenotype."<sup>50</sup>

### **Mentorship: Cultural Differences**

Another barrier that causes Caucasian officers from mentoring Black-American officers are their cultural differences. Culture is the collective programming of the mind

that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another, which influences virtually every aspect of life.<sup>51</sup> Black-American officers come into the Army with inherently different cultural mores than Caucasian officers. A useful parallel to highlight the cultural differences between Black-Americans and Caucasians is the political polarization between the two ethnicities. Black-Americans have a tendency to be democrats, while Caucasians, historically are republicans. For example, 72.4 % of the American population is Caucasian, but only 39% of whites that voted, casted their ballot for President Barack Obama versus 59% for Senator Mitt Romney. In contrast, 93% of black voters casted their ballot for President Obama, an African-American, and a member of the Democratic Party, in comparison to 6% for Senator Romney.<sup>52</sup>

Another example to the power of cultural differences was evident during the first day of the United States Marine Corps Command and Staff College (CSC). The CSC director told all students to meet in Breckenridge Hall at a certain time, but gave no guidance as to where the students were to sit. Each governmental agency and military service segregated themselves from each other within the auditorium. All the US Army officers sat together, the Navy officers sat together, the civilians sat together and so on. To go even further, within each segregated group in the Breckenridge Auditorium, there were subgroups. The black officers within each group gravitated towards each other and either sat directly next to one another or in the front or behind one another. This observation highlights that humans not only have cultural differences, but that these difference, whether consciously or subconsciously divide people. People tend to gravitate to familiarity and comfort; in this case, it was due to cultural likeness, first at a professional level and then by ethnic level. These examples demonstrate a parallel to

highlight cultural differences, which further reduces the probability of a mentoring relationship between persons of different races.

An example of successful mentoring in the black officer community was the relationship between Frank Carlucci (white, mentor), Casper Weinberger, (white, mentor) and Colin Powell (black, protégée). When Frank Carlucci was the US Secretary of Defense, he interviewed and hired a then young Army officer by the name of Colin Powell. As a white house fellow in 1972, Colin Powell made a lasting impression on both Carlucci and Weinberger. After leaving the White House in 1975, Colin Powell's mentoring relationship continued with Weinberger and Carlucci. When Colin Powell was a Brigadier General, he was called upon again by Carlucci at the Department of Defense to assist in the transition from the Carter to the Reagan administration. Colin Powell also served as the senior military aide to then Secretary of Defense, Caspar Weinberger during the Reagan administration. General Colin Powell eventually became the youngest military officer to serve as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and later became the US Secretary of State. Colin Powell's work ethic coupled with Frank Carlucci's mentorship and position attributed to many of his opportunities and early success, starting as a mid-grade officer.

### **Army Initiatives**

Since the end of WWII, the US military has made a conscious effort to be a more inclusive organization. In 1948, President Harry S. Truman established the Fahy Committee, which examined the rules, procedures, and practices of the armed forces to effect the desegregation of the military.<sup>53</sup> In 1962, President John F. Kennedy established an investigative body to assess the effectiveness of the Armed Forces policies and

procedures in regards to equality of treatment and opportunity and improved equality of opportunity for members of the Armed Forces in the civilian community.<sup>54</sup> The most recent of these investigative bodies was the Military Leadership Diversity Commission. In 2009, Congress appointed the MLDC to evaluate and make recommendations regarding diversity and policies affecting minority members in the armed forces, particularly at the senior leadership level. The MLDC's report concluded that the US Army did not have an effective diversity program in place to facilitate progress towards their vision of diversity. The Army's current diversity program reflects the recommended changes found in the MLDC's diversity report. The Army's diversity vision in 2009 was as follows: The US Army will be national leader in embracing the strengths of diverse people in an inclusive environment, investing in and managing talent, valuing individuals, and developing culturally astute soldiers and civilians who enhance our communities and are prepared for the human dimensions of global engagement.<sup>55</sup>

The US Army has five strategic goals for diversity: (1) ensuring leader commitment to diversity and inclusion practices at all levels; 2) institutionalizing talent management processes that identify, recruit, develop, and retain a cadre of high-performing personnel from diverse backgrounds; (3) establishing a structure to support its diversity roadmap; (4) implementing diversity training and education programs that develop sociocultural competencies; and (5) creating and maintaining an inclusive environment where the value of diverse knowledge, experiences, and background enhances mission readiness.<sup>56</sup> Though the Army has five strategic diversity goals, its efforts focus on educating the force at the unit and individual level even though one of its five strategic goals states that leader commitment to diversity and inclusion should be

practiced at all levels. The Army has encouraged leaders at all levels to educate their subordinates as a part of unit training. They also help to facilitate this process by providing all soldiers and civilian personnel useful tools on their diversity website. It also provides an online chat forum on their Army Knowledge Online (AKO) website to allow for information sharing among their employees via the web. They've also spent a vast amount of time and energy to ensure that all their advertisements are ethnically inclusive and at times, tailor their marketing campaigns to specific ethnicities. A fair amount of cultural awareness training also takes place, but focuses only on the culture(s) and cultural implications of warfare during a global engagement in in the area of operation in which a unit will be deployed. The other problem with diversity training within units is the lack of attention given due to the multitude of other requirements that a unit must complete within a given FY. Cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity training must compete with a unit's core competency requirements, mission requirements, and taskings received from their higher headquarters. There is no way a unit can meet all the requirements set forth by the US Army in a FY. This imbalance of expectation versus reality leads to task prioritization by unit leadership, whose training focus is on the six-warfighting functions. All the requirements that do not directly enable a units warfighting success is are either "hand waved" or done begrudgingly to satisfy the unit's higher headquarters directive. Therefore, cultural and diversity training will have minimal to no impact.

### **Pre-Commissioning Recommendations**

At a ceremony commemorating the day President Truman ordered the desegregation of the armed forces, former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates said, "we

must make sure the American military continues to be a great engine of progress and equality.<sup>57</sup> That process starts at their commissioning sources and the process must be a priority of senior leaders within the force. First, senior Army leaders must implement an aggressive marketing strategy to seek highly qualified Black American's to serve as officers. They must also convey the importance of this campaign from the top down and make a priority of the brigades, battalions, and the individual Recruiting and Operations Officers (ROOs) at each college and/or university. ROO's are typically contractors or government service (GS) employees. Active duty recruiters should replace them. Active duty service members as ROOs provide more institutional and organizational understanding and expertise to the position, which allows them to effectively engage and recruit their target audience. Second, the recruiting strategy should extend to high schools. ROOs, with the support of Cadre and Cadets, at colleges and universities across the nation, must initiate contact with young Black-American high school students as early as legally allowed in each state and maintain a relationship with these potential ROTC candidates throughout their four years at their respective institutions. Fortune 500 companies such as Coca-Cola, Pepsi, and Microsoft, as well as almost all division I colleges and university sports programs across the country, have been highly successful in filling their ranks with high quality members by actively recruiting and tracking of potential candidates as early as grade school. An avenue to gain and maintain the relationships with certain high schools is through their Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (JROTC). USACC already has a program in place in which each ROTC program at the undergraduate level mentors an assigned JROTC program in their local area. USACC should leverage these relationships, which will provide a pool for ROTC

programs to recruit from in the future. USACC currently does not have a cohesive national system in place to monitor the program's progress nor does it emphasize the importance of the program as a recruiting tool. The only requirement of each ROTC program is to visit their assigned JROTC program at least once a year. It is the sole responsibility of the individual ROTC program to mentor the assigned JROTC programs the way it sees fit, with minimal to no oversight by its higher headquarters. Fourth, the Cadre within ROTC programs must be ethnically diverse among the positions at the higher echelons of leadership, specifically the PMS, the top position at each university and/or college's Army ROTC program. This position is predominately filled by Caucasian male officers with a combat arms background (0-5 billet). This is a direct reflection of the lack of minorities in the combat arms profession and the under representation of black officers at the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. For example, the USMA has never had an African-American as the commandant of the school and in FY14, there were no African-American Colonels, one Lieutenant Colonel, six Majors, and one Captain on their staff of over 600 officers.<sup>58</sup> Fifth, an alternative program must be established for bringing additional Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM), Student Athlete Leaders (SAL), and nursing program students into ROTC programs on campus for ethnicities. These students often times have an increased academic workload and additional commitments that normal students do not have. These obligations coupled with rigors of the ROTC program, tend to deter these students from joining the commissioning program. Sixth, USACC must ensure that the cadre at ROTC programs are vetted and assigned by a CSB. By being selected by a CSB, officers will be more dedicated to their position and work harder in their billet because it will be

considered a “career enhancing” position for promotion by the US Army. In addition, selecting cadre to specific ROTC programs will increase the quality of leadership, which will also have a direct impact on the quality of mentorship. This initiative will also influence the retention and accession selection by cadets.

### **Accessions Recommendations**

To ensure that black officers remain competitive with their white peers at the initial entry point as a second lieutenant, the officer branching model must be refined to increase the distribution of combat arms branches to more black officers and other minority officers. The US Army must aggressively leverage black officer leadership to influence Black-American cadets to select a combat arms branch. Often most cadets do not have a clear understanding about what Army career field they might prefer. Their decisions in order of merit, especially their top one or two desired branches, are heavily influenced by their cadre and the experience they receive during their attendance to LDAC. Finally, the USACC should implement a policy that mandates that all cadets to place at least two combat arms branches in their top five branches on their branch preference sheet as seniors in the ROTC program.

### **Officer Evaluations and Promotion Boards Recommendations**

The Army goes to great lengths to ensure that each officer’s file submitted to the board weighs fairly and equally, however, biases continue to play a role in the evaluation process. The Army should take a further step to ensure equality by removing anything within an individual’s file that could lead to unethical selection/non-selection for promotion or command by a board member based on a bias. For example, the Military Association of Atheist and Freethinkers (MAAF) started a petition at [Whitehouse.gov](http://Whitehouse.gov) to

remove all “religious preferences” from military forms, particularly any forms that will be seen on a soldier’s promotion or command selection board file. The logic of the MAAF is that since the religious preference of the majority of the US Army is Christianity, at almost 70%, they will discriminate against those who are Non-Christian, particularly Atheist (“no-preference”, because atheist is not a religious choice on Army forms).<sup>59</sup> In addition, a person’s name, their DA photo, which shows race, and gender, must not be a factor in mitigating unethical decisions made on biases. A way to implement this change into the board process is by masking the potential discriminators in an individuals board file. This will allow the board members to select the best-qualified applicant based solely on the performance of an individual. The counter argument of the proposed change is that it may lead to an even larger disparity of diversity within the Army. That may be true, but selection for command or promotion based on ethnic quotas can cause distrust and resentment within the organization, which was evident upon the research conducted on the effects of affirmative action practices like the Department of the Army’s Affirmative Action Plan (AAP) introduced in May of 1990. Research has shown that AA devalues the accomplishments of people selected for a particular billet based on their qualifications and merit. AA practices also often encourage individuals who are not disadvantaged to identify themselves as a preferred group member when they are not. Overall, Card and Krueger stated that AA practices can increase racial tension and that they create policies that are at the direct expense of the majority group.<sup>60</sup> Though the plan helped increase the number of black soldiers and officers recruited and retained within the force by increased promotion rates for Black-American community and other minorities, its implementation was one contributing

factor to a growing ethnic divide among service members that hadn't been seen since the Vietnam War. For instance, in 1994, two white male former officers prepared a class action lawsuit against the US Army for what they called reverse discrimination for using the AAP in the promotion process.<sup>61</sup>

The refinement of the promotion and command selection process only works if the OER process is reformed and an aggressive educational program of cultural sensitivity and inclusion reduces the amount of personal biases associated with equality. The program must first identify and consciously acknowledge that there are differences within groups and individuals, through cultural and diversity training. Then, individuals will become aware of the different types of biases and the effects/potential effects that those biases can have on an individual within the organization and/or the organization as a whole. Next, the program should help an individual identify their biases. An individual can only work to correct the sources of a bias if they are aware that they exist. The next step is to monitor the individual's efforts to correct their biases through consistent engagement with the individual, providing oversight and by using a mechanism for feedback. A way to implement this step is to appoint a professionally trained outside observer to review each rater's and senior rater's performance evaluations, with an emphasis on spotting biases and blind spots, and providing feedback to each of the evaluators before the final evaluation report is submitted to the Human Resources Command. Finally, superiors and mentors must continuously reinforce the program's contents at the unit and individual level. The US Army must continue to be the leading institution for change in American society and commit to an enduring process to change the cultural and institutional mindset of the force.

### **Mentoring Recommendations**

In order to improve success within an organization, mentoring must take place. Harvey Firestone, one of the most successful and enlightened American businessmen emphasized that, “it is only as we develop others that we permanently succeed.”<sup>62</sup> The US Army must mandate mentorship. Officers at all levels have the responsibility to mentor others within their organization. The US Army should use the Officer Evaluation Report (OER), beginning at the company grade level as a tool to not only encourage, but also enforce this mandate. This step will not only ensure that senior officers are actually mentoring their junior officers, it also provides the senior officer an incentive to maximize his/her effort in the mentoring relationship. Mentoring should also be “color blind”. High-quality mentor to mentee relationships with diverse subordinates are the key to providing opportunities for success and combating discrimination in organizations.<sup>63</sup> Mentoring must go beyond day-to-day interaction by a superior to a subordinate, initial counseling sessions, and yearly counseling sessions. A strong mentor to mentee relationship forms by building a professional and personal rapport. This begins with the willingness of both parties, the mentor and mentee, to understand and foster ethnic differences and build a relationship based on commonalities, not differences.

### **Black American Officers’ Responsibilities**

As the US Army shoulders the burden in ensuring that institutional barriers that impede black officer success are minimized, black officers ultimately have the responsibility in ensuring their own success, and it all begins with hard work. As General (Ret) Colin Powell once said, “there are no secrets to success, it is the result of preparation, hard work, learning from failure.”<sup>64</sup> Black-Americans must continue to

excel in their duties. An individual's efforts rarely go unnoticed forever. Hard work will lead to recognition by superiors and will be reflected on their performance evaluations, which in-turn will translate into promotions and command selections. Hard work and quality performance also plays a part in discrediting the negative stereotypes within the organization. By breaking down these stereotypes, Black-American officers also have a responsibility to seize upon the opportunities presented to them by the US Army. To succeed and continue to make positive institutional changes, Black-American officers must choose to join combat arms branches, compete for the tough jobs that are not always convenient, and continue to seek professional military education (PME) and other job enhancing opportunities that the US Army has to offer. Black officers also can no longer continue to use the military as a means of social mobility. That mindset needs to change. The US Army must become a long-term commitment, not a stepping-stone to employment in the civilian sector after gaining a few years of technical and leadership experience within the organization. The last and most important aspect is to pave the way for the next generation of minorities in the military. Too many times, once a person achieves success, they forget about the struggles they went through to get there and fail to help others to achieve to achieve the same success. Just as the Montford Point Marines, Tuskegee Airman, and Buffalo Soldiers did generations prior, minority servicemen and servicewomen must continue to break down discriminatory barriers such as racism, no matter how tough the road may be and never forget to help others along the way.

### **Conclusion**

These recommendations provide a springboard for further research and action in removing barriers that impede overall advancement of minorities and diversity initiatives.

Diversity is a complex problem, but if managed correctly within an organization, can equate to huge dividends in the form of organizational effectiveness. Human interaction is the one constant within the Army, its allies/partners, and its area of operations. That is why it is so important for the US Army, as the beacon for the rest of the world, must ensure that it is culturally astute, fosters an inclusive environment within its own organization, and welcome diversity as a positive commonality when working with other nations.

Though the Army has made great strides in eliminating many barriers to success for minorities and has implemented programs to foster values of inclusion, the Army remains a homogenous culture, especially at the senior levels, where policy and directives that affect the entire force are decided. The solution requires a long-term commitment by senior leaders to institutionalize change to increase diversity within the Army. The justification for and the goals of the diversity programs and initiatives must be clearly articulated to all of the members within the organization. Senior leaders must also leverage leaders at every level for feedback to ensure the impacts of the diversity programs and initiatives are continually and accurately assessed, which will ensure that the goals are correctly framed and achieved. Until these changes occur, black officers and other minorities will continue to fail reach the senior ranks within the Army and the military will move farther and farther away from achieving its potential of maximum effectiveness within the organization and around the globe.

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