

An African American History Month Message from Mr. Dean G. Poppo, Acting Assistant Secretary of the Army (Acquisition, Logistics and Technology)

It is with great pleasure that I join you in marking African American History Month 2009. This is a time to remember and reaffirm our common commitment - across our Army and our Acquisition Workforce - to justice, equality, and opportunity.

America's Army is grateful to generations of African Americans who have answered the Call to Duty to serve America as Soldiers and Civilians.

In every one of our wars, African Americans have played vital roles - often overcoming prejudice, discrimination, and extreme hardship. From the famed Regiments of the Civil War ... to the Buffalo Soldiers of our Westward movement ... to the Harlem Hellfighters of World War I ... to the Tuskegee Airmen of World War II ... their story is one of courage, distinction, and valor.

During February, I urge you to honor the achievement of African Americans. Many special activities are planned within the Pentagon, your organizations, or in your communities to commemorate their contributions.

To fully appreciate their significant accomplishments, we should reflect upon several key historic milestones in our American experience - which document our Army's leadership role in changing the culture of our society:

1770 - Crispus Attucks, an African American, becomes first casualty of the American Revolution;  
1838 - Frederick Douglass escapes from slavery and settles in Massachusetts where he becomes an abolitionist speaker;  
1863 - President Abraham Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation, which declares slaves in Confederate states to be free;  
1865 - Congress ratifies the 13th Amendment, which abolishes slavery;  
1877 - Henry O. Flipper becomes first African American graduate of United States Military Academy;  
1900 - Sergeant William H. Carney becomes first African American Congressional Medal of Honor recipient - for his bravery during the Civil War;  
1917 - World War I generates huge demand for factory labor in the North; many African Americans move to Northern cities to help the war effort;  
1940 - Benjamin O. Davis becomes first African American General Officer;  
1943 - President Franklin Delano Roosevelt issues directions, which result in the Pentagon becoming the first integrated Federal facility in Virginia;  
1948 - President Harry S. Truman desegregates the military by Executive Order, well ahead of landmark 1950s Supreme Court decisions;  
1955 - Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat on a bus in Montgomery;  
1963 - Martin Luther King, Jr., leads masses in the March on Washington;  
1964 - The Civil Rights Act is passed by Congress, which outlaws segregation in schools, public places, and employment;  
1982 - Roscoe Robinson becomes first African American to attain Four-Star rank;  
1989 - Colin H. Powell becomes first African American Chairman of the Joint Chiefs;  
2009 - President Barack Obama takes the Oath of Office and becomes first African American Commander-in-Chief

We will join in celebrating African American History Month in a special ASA(ALT) Town Hall, Friday, February 20, from 1430 to 1530, in the Pentagon Auditorium. Details of this event will be published separately. Please mark your calendars accordingly.

V/r,  
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