

National African American History Month, 2008

During February, we honor the achievements, traditions, and rich heritage of African Americans. We also recognize and honor the sacrifices and important contributions they have made to the U.S. Army in past wars and continue to make today. As Soldiers and Leaders from the Battle of Lexington to the Battle for Fallujah, African Americans have answered the Call to Duty and valiantly defended the cause of freedom throughout the world.

A profile of the courage and dedication of our African American Soldiers would certainly highlight Sergeant William Carney. In July 1863, Sergeant Carney, while wounded, saw that the Color Bearer had been shot. He summoned his strength to retrieve the fallen Colors and continue the charge. During the charge, Sergeant Carney was shot several more times, yet he kept the Colors flying high – they never touched the ground. For this act of heroism, Sergeant Carney became the first African American to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Here at home, African Americans have upheld the ideals of our great Nation and enriched our culture and society. Brave leaders such as Carter G. Woodson, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Colin Powell caused America to respect the dignity, equality, and contributions of all people, regardless of race. We, as a society, have made progress toward achieving justice and equality for all. Still, we must work to ensure that every individual has the opportunity to realize the promise of America.

Thank you for taking the time to honor this national tradition.

Dean G. Popp