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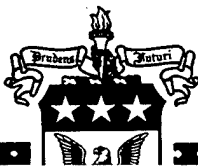
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**UNITED STATES ARMY OFFICER PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT: BLACK OFFICERS' PERSPECTIVES**

BY

**CRAIG THOMAS JOHNSON
Central Intelligence Agency**

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Craig Thomas Johnson, Civilian, CIA

TITLE: United States Army Officer Professional Development:
Black Officers' Perspectives

Format: Strategy Research Paper

Date: 07 April 1997 **PAGES:** 50 **Classification:** Unclassified

The United States Army was one of the first American institutions to provide opportunities for black Americans in their struggle for equality. Nonetheless, history indisputably documents incidents of segregation, bigotry, and racism against blacks in the Army. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Army Officer Corps was very reluctant to accept blacks amongst its ranks. Since their inclusion into the service, black officers have made tremendous strides as a group to reach the highest echelons within the Army. Even so, they have not fared statistically as well as their majority contemporaries. These statistics pose interesting questions about black officer professional development and career progress. How has the Army fared with the professional development of blacks within the officer corps? What is the perception of black officers currently serving within the institution regarding the Army's efforts to provide professional development for black officers? Do systemic prejudices toward blacks in the officer corps still exist? What roles have black officers played in the development process? What do the answers to these questions suggest for the Army's officer corps management? Answers to these questions provide valuable insights for strategic leaders responsible for personnel management within the United States Army.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	vii
INTRODUCTION	1
THESIS	2
HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE FROM USA COLONEL CHARLES YOUNG	2
HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF RACISM AGAINST BLACKS IN AMERICA	4
BLACKS IN POST CIVIL WAR ARMY OFFICER CORPS	7
ACHIEVEMENTS FOR THE ARMY	11
CURRENT US ARMY OFFICER PERCEPTIONS	11
GLASS CEILING AND STAGNATED CAREER PROGRESSION	12
RACISM, HARASSMENT, AND DISCRIMINATION	16
OCCUPATIONAL ENVIRONMENT	17
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND OPPORTUNITIES	19
VIEWS FROM FORMER BLACK GENERAL OFFICERS	21
SYSTEMIC INSTITUTIONAL RACISM	25
BLACK OFFICERS OVERCOMING SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY	26
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT vs PROFESSIONAL PROGRESSION	27
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	30
ENDNOTES	35
BIBLIOGRAPHY	39

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

<u>FIGURE</u>		<u>PAGE</u>
1	BLACK AMERICANS MURDERED BY LYNCHING DURING A FOURTEEN YEAR PERIOD 1882~1896	6
2	ARMY ACTIVE DUTY OFFICERS, BLACK AND MAJORITY	15

INTRODUCTION

This strategy research project was undertaken because blacks and other minorities continue to perceive that parity does not exist at all levels in the military. As recently as 15 January 1997, the United States government sought to rectify past injustices by belatedly awarding Medals of Honor to seven black Americans for heroic efforts during WW II.¹ Such overdue recognition notwithstanding, how do current black officers perceive race relations in the Army? Has the Army really changed since the late 19th century when racism was most blatant and brutal? Do blacks currently perceive a subtle form of bias and prejudice, as a perplexing continuation of past injustices? From the perspective of black officers in the system, how well has the Army performed in changing race-based systemic and institutional bias that limit professional progress? These are important questions for strategic leaders responsible for personnel management in the US Army. This research paper will address these questions from several different viewpoints.

Racism is not exclusive to one ethnic group. However, the lessons learned from black Americans' struggles to achieve parity have been used as templates for other social struggles. Appreciation of the sensitivities and cultural differences of all ethnic groups has become key to successful interpersonal relations and organizational dynamics. This study will focus on

the attitudes and experiences of black officers in the current cultural environment of the US Army Officer Corps.

THESIS

The United States Army has provided tremendous opportunities for blacks, but it has not done a good job of educating the entire organization on the importance of a level playing field. In the worst case, empirical data from this study suggests that black US Army Officers perceive that their career progress has been impeded because of racism. In the most promising case, this study reveals that a communication gap exists between black and majority personnel. This study will identify impediments perceived by black officers as counter-productive to their career progress. Additionally, it will provide recommendations to close the communication gap between black and majority personnel in the Army officer corps. Finally, it will provide strategies for the Army and for black Army officers to address perceptions of racism.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE FROM US ARMY COLONEL CHARLES YOUNG

It is understandable why "trail blazers" of yesteryear suffered and endured in silence. Being obstinate, resisting, or standing up to racism had its peculiar rewards—often delivered by violence or brutality. This may explain why few black officers' memoirs provide candid comments of their experiences. Nevertheless, US Army Colonel Charles Young's Military Morale of

Nations and Races, (1912) cogently expressed his thoughts about the Negro soldier and black officers. Colonel Young wrote:

As a soldier, in Africa, in the English Army, and in America, the Negro has been a success, measured by the white man's standards and as penned by the historians and testified to by his white officers. In Jamaica is found more than one Negro soldier wearing the Victoria cross for distinguished gallantry and heroism. And in America the medals of honor on their breast and the pages of war-history tell of their bravery and intrepidity. In spite of the disadvantages of prejudice to which they are at times subjected, their tractability, military pride, good nature, obedient spirit, and heroism in the hottest fight[s] have won for them the highest encomiums from even their enemies. The Negro soldier has long ago passed his probationary stage. It has even been said that he must have a white commander, if good soldiership is to be required of him. Recent events in the war with Spain and in the Philippines have proved this, however, to be false. And we know now that the Negro soldier has a commendable pride in efficient leaders of any people. Moreover, it should be added, in justice to him, that he finds especial pleasure in the [capability] of his own race. Indeed, the American Negro's rally-point and particular fetish are today an appeal made him for the honor of his race. 'The Negro,' says a Southern officer of the United States Army, 'comes into the Army with more of the qualities necessary to a good soldier than any other man recruited.'²

Colonel Young was a great American soldier. His words are as relevant today for black officers in the US Army Officer Corps as they were 85 years ago. The probationary period for black officers has long passed. The Army's story about the challenges of overcoming racial problems can be told with pride if one considers how far the Army has progressed toward racial equality. But present trends that have placed blacks in leadership roles have not always been the case. Critics today will say that the Army still has a long way to go, although empirical data does suggest that the Army is much farther ahead than the private sector.³

A discussion about blacks in leadership roles in the US Army must start with the period during the late 19th century. This period is relevant because large numbers of blacks began entering American society as free citizens emancipated from the bondage of slavery. This period is also the time when many Americans developed biases and racial prejudices toward blacks that served to institutionalize racist attitudes, which even today detracts from our national ideals. Understanding this era will give us a benchmark to show how far the Army has come in dealing with race relations.

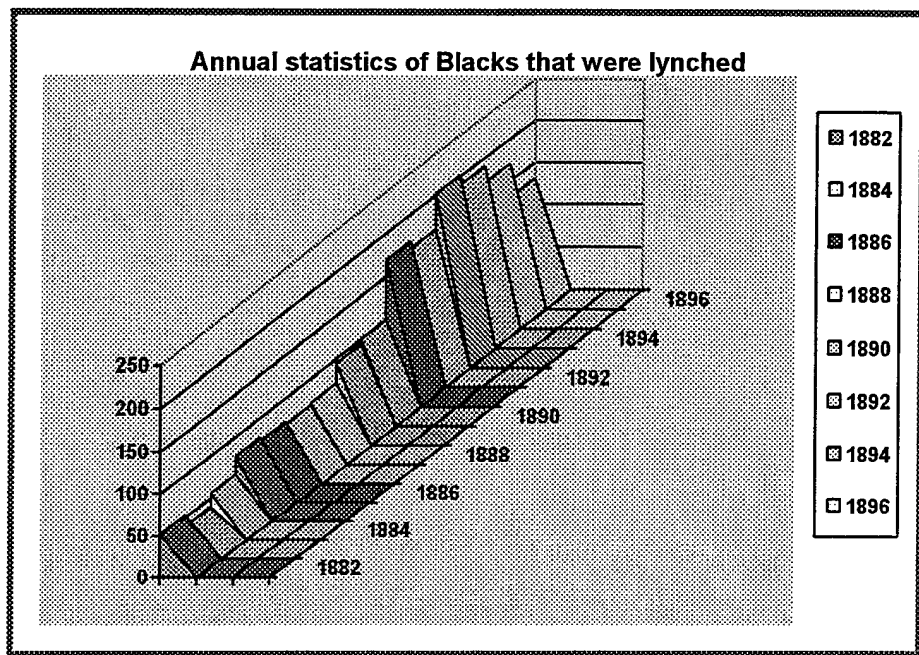
HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF RACISM AGAINST BLACKS IN AMERICA

"O Lord, we pray to be saved from this new and damnable heresy that this is a white man's country, and that there is no place here for the black man. We ask Thee, O Lord, to raise up some widow's son, who is now at his mother's knee, to the task of saving the black slave, not from the shackles of iron, but from the shackles of prejudice; save the black race from hatred; save the white man from supercilious contempt; save the white man from his degradation, and lift him up until he can learn to love his fellow-man, made in God's image." (Prayer by Rev. Newell Dwight Hillis, pastor of the Plymouth Church, Beecher's old Church, in Brooklyn, on the occasion of the celebration of Lincoln's birthday, 1897.)⁴

Reverend Hillis' prayer echoes the hopes and struggles of many black Americans during the period of 1860-1900. Negro slaves were emancipated following the American Civil War in 1865, which triggered a savage reaction against recognizing blacks as freed people. Racism and prejudice against blacks peaked during this period. Many states in the very young and newly

reconstituted Union of the United States continued to fight for "the way things were" before the Civil War. High officials in state governments in the South conspired with local mayors, city officials, and law enforcement personnel to perpetrate domestic terrorism to maintain control over black Americans. History discloses that United States President Andrew Johnson was a staunch supporter of the Southern states and was opposed to reconstruction reforms decreed after the surrender of Confederate General Robert E. Lee at Appomattox.⁵ As an illustration of the intensity of domestic terrorism, Figure 1 below provides graphic statistics of the atrocities committed against blacks.⁶

Figure no. 1



Over 1,697 blacks were lynched from 1882-97, primarily in the Southern states that formed the old Confederacy.⁷ Racism in American society was commonplace during this period. In *Black Scare*, Forrest G. Wood describes the first "white backlash" in American history following the emancipation of Negro slaves. Wood reports that "white supremacists—through pamphlets, newspapers, books, sermons, and a great deal of outraged oratory—launched a relentless campaign of racist demagoguery, leaving a scar on the face of American society that is visible today."⁸

To support their preconceived notions of white superiority, prejudiced Americans cited a highly respected

and presumably unimpeachable authority in the Holy Bible. Wood explained that white supremacists tried to justify their racism by saying blacks were cursed by God to lead a life of servitude.⁹

Given this domestic terrorism perpetrated against blacks, along with the prevailing racist beliefs that were apparent in civilian society of that time, we can safely infer that such views existed in the Army. Let us examine the Army officer corps.

BLACKS IN POST CIVIL WAR ARMY OFFICER CORPS

The idea of a black having the prestige and responsibilities of an officer and gentleman posed a threat not only to the racial mores of the day but also to the military caste system.¹⁰ Again, the heart of the matter was racial prejudice. In Forged in Battle: The Civil War Alliance of Black Soldiers and White Officers, Joseph T. Glatthaar captured the feeling of the time:

When men in the 70th Indiana Infantry passed the 15th US Colored Infantry, the white troops were silent until they spotted a black with lieutenant's shoulder straps. Their cries of 'jerk them off, take him out, kill him' resounded all along the line. Had the white troops not been in the line of march...they 'would have dealt severely with him.'¹¹

Glatthaar reported that blacks were not perceived to have the leadership qualities necessary to soldier troops. Many of the officer positions required considerable educational skills, such as reading and writing to handle the enormous amount of administrative work in the regiments. On balance, few whites of

proper education could fill many officer positions of that day, and even fewer blacks were sufficiently educated to be officers. So blacks' lack of education became a convenient excuse for refusing them officers' billets.

During this time in history, the Army attempted to purge the less competent personnel and began enlisting larger numbers of white cadets from the military academy to fill officer ranks.¹² This was also the same period that blacks began to emerge for the first time as officers into the Army from the military academy.¹³ Three black line officers who were West Point graduates received the brunt of racism. Coffman, a noted scholar, describes Henry O. Flipper, John H. Alexander, and Charles Young as victims of racism; they were the only three who served on active duty in the regular Army during this period.¹⁴ Coffman noted

...that for a well-prepared white, West Point was a difficult challenge. Blacks, some of whom were not that well prepared, had to deal with ostracism that reflected solidly entrenched and pervasive prejudice, as well as with the regular challenges of courses and training.¹⁵

Most, if not all, whites shared the prevalent racial attitudes, however, and believed that the military academy was not a place to engage in a social experiment. They thus saw no reason to intervene to stop what Flipper, a 1877 West Point graduate called "these little tortures—the sneers, the shrug of the shoulder, the epithet, the effort to avoid, to disdain, to ignore."¹⁶

But, as Coffman reports, being a West Point graduate did not assure blacks a promising Army career. Coffman offered an overview of the careers of Flipper, Alexander, and Young:

After what he considered an auspicious beginning, Flipper's career came to a disastrous end with dismissal by court-martial in 1882. As commissary officer at Fort Davis, he was accused of embezzlement. Despite denials of wrongdoing and the steadfast support of his regimental commander, Flipper was dismissed. Both Alexander and Young went into the Ninth Cavalry upon graduation from the West Point Military Academy...Alexander endured what a white classmate called the "lonely army life" for only seven years, for he died of heart disease at age thirty. There then remained only Young, who was the last black graduate of West Point until 1936.¹⁷

Colonel Charles Young was not the only black officer to serve a long career during this period in the regular Army. Colonel Young's career overlapped that of an officer who became the first black American to achieve the rank of general, Benjamin O. Davis. As a Major, Charles Young understood years earlier the importance of developing blacks in the military when he penned a personal letter to a junior second lieutenant Benjamin O. Davis on 28 August 1905. Young offered Davis the following counsel:

...stick to the boys and they will stick to you. Cultivate the good will of the girls and they will influence the boys [to dedicate themselves to their military careers.] Remember, yours is a greater work than any save the professor of math, for yours is the work of imparting discipline—self discipline (for there is no authority that can impel a college boy other than his own will to discipline himself). Remember the 'colored boy' needs in actual life this thing worse than all others to make him stick to things.¹⁸

First, this letter reveals a mentoring situation from a seasoned Major Charles Young to a junior Lieutenant Benjamin O. Davis. Second, the letter seems to suggest that both Young and

Davis were aware of their unique position as the two ranking black officers in the entire armed services of the United States. Third, the letter also reveals the vast area of ambiguity, the "in between world," where blacks find themselves when they become successful in mainstream America. Not completely accepted by the mainstream majority and accused of "selling out" by their own race,—some successful blacks embrace the beliefs of other successful people, beliefs that are not necessarily supportive of their own race. Perhaps Young and Davis felt like pharaohs: They had no racial peers, but they shared a common interest in being successful officers. This emotional balance of embracing beliefs of "other successful" people buttressed against the obligation of "knowing your roots" has produced a dilemma for some successful blacks, one that is relevant to current successful blacks. Major Young revealed this struggle in this letter to the young Lieutenant Davis. Major Young displayed the attitudes of the majority dominated society by stressing to a subordinate Lieutenant Davis the important personnel matters that could derail Davis' career and those of young black enlisted men subordinate to him.

The Army would fight the Spanish-American War and two world wars before segregation in the military ended just as the US ended its involvement in the Korean War during the 1950s. The War Department's policy had previously decreed up to the end of the Korean War that black and white personnel would not

intermingle in the same regimental organization.¹⁹ However, race relations in the Army and the use of blacks within its ranks at the beginning of the 1900s portended slow but consistent progress. Black Americans struggled on four fronts during the late 1890-1930s. They fought to become socially, politically, and psychologically accepted; at the same time, they fought in combat for freedom and democracy against our nation's enemies.

ACHIEVEMENTS FROM THE ARMY

Over time, the Army matured and exhibited racial tolerance by completely integrating its enlisted ranks and officer corps. Further, the Army appointed Benjamin O. Davis as the first black brigadier general on 25 October 1940. Likewise, the Army was the first military service branch to appoint a black four star general officer, Roscoe Robinson, Jr. in August 1982.²⁰ The first black Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was Army General Colin Powell. Today, the Army has a greater percentage of blacks, women, and minorities in senior level positions than any of the other military services.²¹ Statistically, it appears that all is well—blacks are advancing, the ranks are integrated. But what is it really like for black officers in the Army?

CURRENT US ARMY BLACK OFFICERS' PERCEPTIONS

To obtain a perspective on the experience and attitudes of current US Army black officers toward the Army, a survey was administered to twenty-eight black officers assigned to the US

Army War College. The surveyed respondents were both men and women recognized as the future leaders of the Army. The majority of the respondents were students in the Class of 1997 with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel or Colonel. A few surveyed respondents were black officers assigned to the Army War College as faculty advisors or garrison personnel. The entire surveyed population ranged in grade from lieutenant to colonel. Twenty-eight surveys were distributed: Twenty-six individuals returned completed surveys resulting in a 92% response rate.

Survey results have been divided into four major areas for discussion. The areas for discussion are the glass ceiling and stagnated career progression; racism-harassment-discrimination; occupational environment; and, professional development and opportunity. Each area will be analyzed systematically, beginning with a statement of the problem, historic background of the problem, commentary by retired black US Army General Officers interviewed for this study, and by the researcher's interpretations.²²

GLASS CEILING AND STAGNATED CAREER PROGRESSION

Why is it perceived that black officers are under-represented in senior positions in the Army? Many blacks surveyed for this study offered two primary reasons for this perception: The first reason is the belief that a quota has been placed on blacks to limit their numbers in senior positions. Blacks perceive that they must compete among themselves for

opportunities before they compete with majority officers for the top jobs. The explanation is: Black officers compete among themselves for the top prize of "the most qualified black officer." Thereafter, the most qualified black competes with the general population toward the ultimate goal of obtaining the position or promotion. This process would naturally limit the number of blacks considered for senior level positions.

The second reason for this perception is that many blacks feel some majority folks have an innate fear about them as a race. Blacks are reminded of that fear when they hear apparently joking comments about a "conspiracy" when three or more blacks are huddling together in a discussion.

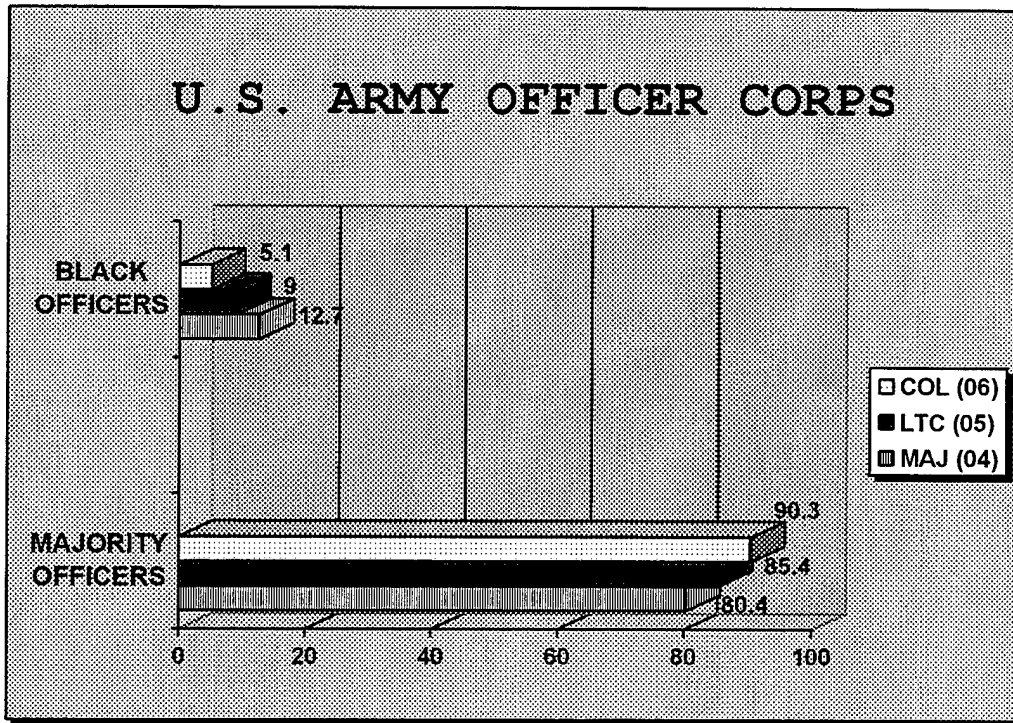
This fearful perception dates back to the Civil War period. When Union forces needed reinforcement, abolitionists strongly argued for the use of black slaves as a means of augmenting Union troop strength. Those strongly opposed to this recommendation were fearful that armed slaves would pose a greater risk to white society when they returned from the war than did the Confederate soldiers. Many asked, 'What would prevent these slaves from turning against their former masters?' 'How can the majority dominated society continue to have its way with slaves upon their return?' 'Will slaves be rebellious after tasting emancipation while fighting in the Union Army?' These historic examples may apply to the modern Army: Majority contemporaries may fear that blacks could dominate the senior levels in the Army according to

the perceptions of the many black officers surveyed for this study. These emotional dynamics are at play in the perceptions of many blacks, who feel whites are threaten by their career progress, their challenges to glass ceilings, and their opposition to quotas that limit minorities.

General Officers consulted for this study generally agreed that some majority officers in authority positions may continue to harbor fears of blacks holding senior level positions in the Army. However, they unanimously agreed that the Army must continue to address these fears head-on through awareness training.

The Army has done a good job, but it should not feel satisfied that the job is finished. Figure 2 below provides an illustration of the percentages of blacks in the officer corps.²³ Since the percentages of blacks declines up the ranks, the chart may validate blacks' perceptions of a glass ceiling. On the other hand, since the percentages of younger blacks at the Major rank (O4) seems to be approaching or exceeding the percentage of blacks in the general population, the chart may validate majority officers' fears that blacks are starting to "take over" the Army.

Figure no. 2



DATA FROM DEOMI PAM #95-1

Even so, black officers must continue to overcome this glass ceiling challenge, particularly those in leadership roles by increasing their numbers in leadership positions. All General Officers agreed that black officers should hold themselves to higher standards. Some of the psychological pressures focused on this issue may be self-imposed by black officers. Black officers must overcome these pressures.

The Army has an obligation to all personnel to assure that a level playing field exists. Further, it should ensure through enforcement that the field remains level. By so doing, the Army will address the issue of setting the tone for all personnel and

eliminate many of the peripheral problems, such as respect for others. Integrating minority officers into all promotion panels, into all available assignment officer positions, and into all selection boards will provide a minority officer perspective in the decision-making process.

Racism, Harassment, and Discrimination

It is surprising that many blacks (85%) responding to this study—in very high percentages—reported that they experienced military-related discrimination, racism, and harassment in the US Army. Such incidents as the racially motivated murders at Fort Bragg have recently shaken public confidence of the Army. Conversely, the Army is representative of American society. It should not be a surprise to anyone that many of the behaviors exhibited in American society have also been exhibited in the Army. But the civilian public reveres the armed forces of the United States and has held the Army to higher standards as an institutional model for addressing race relations.

The historic tradition of blacks receiving the brunt of discrimination in the Army is as old as American racism itself. We must remember that blacks were integrated into the mainstream of the armed services only at the end of the Korean War in the 1950s. Before that time, the ugly descriptions of bigotry were commonplace and freely exhibited even in the Army: Recall the mistreatment of Henry O. Flipper during his court-martial at Fort Davis for being falsely accused of embezzling government funds.

Nonetheless, he was drummed out of the Army for conduct unbecoming an officer.²⁴

General officers consulted for this study unanimously agreed that current perceptions and experiences of racism come as no surprise. The Army is representative of the larger American society. However, the Army has always been proactive with awareness programs and education about cultural differences. It was very disappointing to all General officers that this type of behavior has not been eradicated from the Army through all the preventive efforts such as awareness briefings, chain teaching, and other training.

The Army cannot afford to rest on this issue. The survey responses which indicate that racist behavior continues to exist in the Army is very disconcerting from a personnel management point of view. The senior leadership of the Army must set the tone and make clear that the Army has "zero tolerance" for racism, discrimination, and harassment.

Occupational Environment

Survey respondents have described their work environments as non-supportive. Their comments indicate that they do not feel valued by superiors in the organization. Several respondents specifically stated that they were being denied appropriate opportunities in the Army. There is a perception of favoritism toward majority officers; many black officers believe that white subordinates show less respect to black officers as compared to

respect shown for majority officers. Additionally, black officers have the perception that superiors have less respect for them than for their majority officer counterparts. Such perceptions are historically consistent with post Civil War stereotypical beliefs and biased views against blacks.

All of the Generals said that they were dismayed with the survey responses in light of the progress that has been made by the Army. All agreed that the Army cannot change the minds of hard core racists, but the Army can modify behavior by enforcing rules. They also said that the Army has a long way to go.

Institutional integrity is important. Authority figures in an organization are the "keepers of the keys" for institutional integrity. Senior leaders set the tone regarding who is significant in the organization and who is "irrelevant." Junior officers take their lead from senior leaders regarding behavior that is condoned in the work environment. The survey evidence is too preponderant to dismiss as responses elicited by isolated incidents occurring in the workplace. Black officers cited incidents of preferential treatment for majority officers,—they also reported being targets of intellectual harassment.²⁵ Majority and black officers recognize that all of these conditions are hypocritical and erode institutional integrity.

It is very disconcerting that 46% of the surveyed group were concerned that their promotions or careers may be jeopardized if their chain of command knew of their candid response to survey

questions in this study. Also, another 23% were uncertain whether their candid responses may adversely affect them. This means that many are working in a hostile environment. Solving this problem may entail two approaches—one institutional and professional development for officers. The Army must address these problems head-on by setting the tone and establishing an understanding among all personnel—majority and minority—that prejudicial behavior and all forms of harassment are unacceptable. Finally, black officers could be supported by an official mentoring program designed to enable them to cope with existing problems and to remedy them when possible.

Professional Development and Opportunities

Why do black US Army officers feel that they are evaluated unfairly and are receiving inadequate opportunities for professional development? From the surveyed group, 57.7% black officers felt that the system was unfairly negative in providing them with opportunities for advancement. Black officers also said that their performance had been devalued, and they reported many other examples of demoralizing incidents in the workplace. More than 88% of the surveyed group disagreed with a survey question that said "Black officers are receiving more than their fair share of opportunities in the US Army."

This perception of unfairness dates back to the time when blacks began to emerge in the officer corps during the 1870's.

Few majority officers had confidence that blacks could be equal partners as leaders of men in combat. As Colonel Charles Young mentioned previously in this study, the probationary period of the blacks in the Army has long past. The number of blacks, women, and other minorities in the Army is increasing. This fact may portend a changing attitudes toward the performance of blacks in leadership positions.

General officer assessment of this issue revealed that the Officer Evaluation Reports (OER) for black officers are not as strong as those for their majority officer contemporaries. They believed that this may be the primary reason for the lack of professional development opportunities for black officers. The basis for these low evaluations may be a combination of lack of mentoring, of unfair evaluations, and of system accountability.

As a group, black officers are not receiving appropriate career counseling. Therefore, OERs indicate black officers are not as competitive as their contemporaries. This can be rectified by ensuring that officers receive good counsel from assignment officers or mentors. Further, the "bias factor" from a rater writing an OER may account for the unfair evaluations for black officers in cases where a high rating is warranted from sterling performance, but denied because of the officer's skin color. This is a system accountability issue that must be addressed by the Army. Finally, black officers believe that the system is not being held accountable in the matter of treating

blacks fairly and equitably. The following are some verbatim comments from survey respondents:

"Performing at a superior level when compared with majority officers and receiving lower OER reviews..."

"Seeing majority officers not meeting the same higher standards as black officers..."

"Not given a chance to show what you can do..."

The content of these comments are relevant, but pale in significance if one considers the tone of the messages which reveals frustration. These issues may have adversely impacted black officers psychologically. What are the views of retired former black US Army General about these findings?

VIEWS FROM BLACK FORMER GENERAL OFFICERS

Three retired black general officers were briefed regarding the purpose of this study—General Colin Powell, Lieutenant General Alonzo Short, Jr., and Major General Thomas Prather, Jr. Each was given the statistical results from the survey for review along with the survey questionnaire. Each general responded independently and each was unaware of what the others may have said. Except for General Colin Powell, none of the general officers was aware that the others would be interviewed for this study. Yet, there was very little variance in their explanations of the responses.

All three general officers agreed that mentoring black officers was important for their survival in the Army. Mentoring should begin upon their entry into the officer corps. Each

general emphasized the need for black officers to seek significant assignments. Further, one general officer emphasized the importance of an assignment to the Total Army Military Personnel Center as an assignment officer. Assignment officers learn which assignments are recognized by the board to be tough jobs, "stepping stone jobs," or key jobs. Further, each general officer felt it was important that black officers serve on selection and promotion boards with the courage and purpose of seeking fairness. In essence, black officers should speak against unjust evaluations that might be perpetrated during panel deliberations.

Each emphasized the need for black officers to network more often and use one another as resources. On this specific point, all three general officers referred to the Army's black officer support group, The ROCKS, and to promising programs being initiated through Historic Black Colleges and University ROTC units. All three officers expressed their support for The ROCKS and praised the efforts of that organization to embrace the alliance of majority officers to assist with efforts to recruit black officers.

General Colin Powell said that the aggregate survey results are disconcerting and are worthy of further study. In his view, the salient message from the survey results is that these black officers have not allowed their troubling perceptions to inhibit their progress. Most of the surveyed group were Army War College

students; they are thus among the elite of the total Army to be selected for the War College. General Powell further persistently contended that the Army is "head and shoulders" above the other branches of the military with regard to addressing racial issues. Drawing on his service as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, he noted the Army had the most blacks in the military and seemed to better understand the dynamics of team work.²⁶

Generals Prather and Short served on Army selection and promotion boards more recently than General Powell. They spoke with conviction about some of their challenges on those boards. When asked what personal challenges he faced as a board member, General Short admitted,

I found myself constantly having to argue the merits to fellow board members about black officers that were better performers than their OER ratings reflected. I knew this due to personal knowledge of that officer's performance. I, as well as other board members, became very frustrated with how some evaluators were able to make such ratings. I felt obligated to step in the gap for many young officers that I knew were great performers but were somehow receiving low performance ratings on OERs when compared to their majority officer counterparts. Again, I do not want to attribute everything to bigotry and prejudice but certainly a large part of those situations was in fact due to those kind of feelings.²⁷

General Short's explanation reveals the vulnerability in the evaluation system. Integrity and fairness must be structured fundamentally into the OER process. If this is not established, the entire board process will be weak and will lack credibility to both majority and minority officers.

General Prather approached this question from a different viewpoint. He also acknowledged that the Army must assume some responsibility, but he focused more on the individual responsibility of the black officer:

When promotion boards look at records there are certain assignments recognized as tough or key jobs...the board has a limited number of people to select for these jobs and it tries to decide who is the best qualified. The board will most likely select the person who has had a series of difficult jobs rather than someone who has had 'cushioned jobs.' It is important that the officers are advised of this type of consideration. Why should an officer want an assignment to Fort Meade, Maryland or Fort Jackson? Is it because those are career development jobs or are they the assignments that are near his/her spouse's home?...Young officers should want their records to look more favorably different from everyone else. Using the two locations above, the officer can take the assignment at Fort Meade and perform well, but the assignment will not stack up against someone who is in the 82nd Airborne Division portrayed to have better competitive assignments. Everyone recognizes the degree of difficulty there and these people seem to receive the top command jobs.²⁸

General Prather is talking about empowerment for black officers. Without such guidance, they appear less competitive than their majority counterparts. This is the kind of information that young black officers do not have sufficient access to. General Prather noted that the Army has never been complacent in matters of race relations. It understands the importance of teamwork and harmonious relations. He believed that awareness is the key to the Army's edge in addressing racism.²⁹

Former US Army Captain Theodore A. Carthen reflected on his training in the Army by providing the following point about officer development on racial matters. The Army teaches all

officers to have a 'race neutral mind-set.' In essence, officers are not ready for command [particularly at the strategic level] if they are concerned about their ethnicity when making decisions.³⁰ Black officers must master the monster of bigotry that seems to lurk in all humankind. As the old prayer was whispered by Reverend Hillis a century ago, "...and lift him up until he can learn to love his fellow man, made in God's image."³¹

SYSTEMIC INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

Ridding systemic racism from an institution is very difficult. The Army's effort to create an environment of intolerance for hatred and racist behavior is more expedient than an institutional program to alter individual attitudes.³² Racist ideologies derive from people and are perpetuated by traditions, rules, codes or regulations. The Army has largely eliminated traditions, rules, codes, and regulations used in the past to sustain these ideologies. The new battlefield is with individuals whose racist views make them bold enough to practice their beliefs in the work environment. General Alonzo Short provided his views on the issue of blacks being viewed by whites as inferior:

...I think it is a little more insidious than what is projected. I think this is the self-fulfilling prophecy. I do not think it is a matter that blacks are being held to a higher standard of excellence. I think some majority officers do not believe that blacks can perform. There is a slight difference there. When you hold an individual to a higher standard of excellence, you are believing that that individual is a peer competitor. I do not think that you will ever get some of our majority brothers to agree with that statement. The key question

is what are their expectations? [Do you think the expectations are beyond what can be achieved by anyone to include a majority officer?] ...No, I think it is the old self-fulfilling prophecy. I think if you are talking about dealing with individual prejudices and bias some people are not going to accept that blacks are equal competitors. Therefore, their expectation will not be as high. And if the expectations are not high, some majority officers in supervisor roles will feel justified by not providing a high [OER] evaluation for a black officer.³³

General Short's analysis poses interesting questions that should be considered by the Army. Whereas racist views may never be changed, the Army can modify behaviors through the consistent enforcement of rules and regulations prohibiting behaviors of bias, racism, and discrimination. Maintaining compliance of these regulations is the Army's responsibility.

BLACK OFFICERS OVERCOMING SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY

Black officers have a responsibility to overcome or circumvent the self-fulfilling prophecy of some majority officers. General Prather, remarked that "...black officers cannot give in to the stereotype; they must perform. Blacks are not going to fix the problem with words. The only way blacks can fix the problem is through performance."³⁴ Generals' Prather and Powell agreed on this point. General Powell admitted:

I am sure that I was held to a higher standard during my years in the Army. Certainly, I was the first black American to ever become National Security Advisor for the President of the United States, or the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff and was probably held to very high standards. My thought on that is 'so what,' go out and beat the standard.³⁵

Black officers are obligated not to yield to stereotyped views. Failing this obligation will mean that black officers will confirm the views of the racist—that blacks are inferior.

Many people may have the misconception that blacks, women, and other minorities are able to transcend attitudes of racism when they move up the corporate ladder or, that once they achieve a level of rank, racism against them will disappear. This never happens, as General Powell eloquently confirmed:

The White House received contact from a very sensitive source that wanted to convey the message to the President through the National Security Advisor. All the appropriate security measures were used to conceal this informant, such as bringing him into National Airport on a chartered flight, having him deplane in an enclosed hanger, and arranging to have a clandestine meeting in the airport lounge. The agreement was made that I would meet him in front of the ticket counter in the lounge area. I went on to National Airport in a White House chauffeured vehicle with security escort and arrived at the rendezvous location. I was appropriately dressed, had my hair groomed, had my 'cool glasses on' and looked like someone who might belong to the National Security community. I paced the area in front of the ticket counter for approximately ten minutes and was not approached by anyone. No one was in the immediate area, except for one person. I noticed a man standing at the counter all the while that I was there, but he never acknowledged my presence. I went to the ticket counter and spoke loud enough for the man to hear. I asked the ticket attendant, 'Excuse me, I am General Powell, someone was supposed to meet me here. Do you have a message for me?' The man standing at the counter immediately said, 'Oh, you are General Powell...' I knew what the next words were going to be but they never came. I never let that interfere with my objective.³⁶

General Powell's experience tellingly reveals that black officers never entirely escape the prejudices, misconceptions, and biases of others. As his story illustrates, blacks officers need strategies for defusing such ignorance. The burdens of prejudices and biases finally live with the people who own them.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT vs PROFESSIONAL PROGRESSION

Black officers in today's Army have considerable access to professional development. General Powell claimed "the road to becoming a general officer begins at the rank of lieutenant. The

basic training in leadership, management, and on-job-experience commence at the lieutenant levels in preparing young officers for leadership positions." General Powell was complimentary of the Army's effort to re-focus the new Officer Evaluation Review (OER) to allow for flexibility in the development of young officers. Eliminating the "zero defects" mentality will result in an environment where young officers will be allowed to make learning-curve mistakes during their developmental years. This will encourage real learning and development. Once officers roll through the various gates and assignments, they are ready for senior level assignments when they reach the lieutenant colonel and colonel levels because they have the training and job experience. This leadership training will be afforded to all officers.

The training black officers receive in leadership and experience gained from responsible command positions place them in a unique cadre of qualified black professionals. Due to this extensive military training, they are being heavily recruited for private sector jobs.

Thus, retired Lieutenant General Julius W. Becton, Jr. was recently appointed as the superintendent for Washington, DC schools; and retired Major General John H. Stanford was appointed as the superintendent of schools in Seattle, Washington, after serving as county executive of Fulton County, Atlanta, Georgia. Retired Brigadier General Donald L. Scott was

appointed as the Deputy Librarian for the Library of Congress and retired Lieutenant General Alonzo Short and Major General Thomas Prather—both interviewed for this study—are CEO and Vice President respectively for their private firms. These black former Army general officers have moved laterally into very senior private sector jobs. Development and training in the Army led to successful Army careers and prepared them well for the private sector. This was not always perceived by the black officers surveyed.

Successful professional progression can be "in the eye of the beholder." It may be linked to the individual's perception of how successfully they have moved up the corporate ladder to senior level positions. To others, successful progression may be achieved by acquiring the job that provides the most personal satisfaction. In the Army, many define this by rank—such as achieving the rank of general officer—or by an assignment—such as a commander of a significant or prestigious unit. Most of the surveyed black officers perceived that they had experienced biases or prejudices that limited their attempts to achieve successful career progression. Achieving the rank of Lieutenant Colonel or Colonel and attending the War College may appear to most as a "successful Army career" and can lead one to dismiss black officers perceptions as faulty. General Powell warns against this:

The perception of these black officers cannot be dismissed. The Army will feel obliged to examine much closer the cause of these perceptions. I would have felt more comfortable if the surveyed group was less homogeneous and varied more with age and years of experience. Approximately 90% of the surveyed group are students at the War College where they have all had similar experiences over the years. Recognizing your suspense date for the completion of the paper, I would be interested in knowing if your survey results would change significantly if you sent the survey to all the members of the ROCKS [US Army Black Officer support group]. They have approximately 100 members and your survey results might be different.³⁷

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Army offers the finest professional development any corporate institution can provide. This is offered to all officers in a "color-blind" manner. Nevertheless, the study results indicate that black officers perceive that there are factors which interfere with their career progression. Whether these perceptions are accurate or biased, dismissing the complaints of black officers is not the solution.

Issues that were raised in this study have negative strategic possibilities. Why? Because these issues may adversely have an impact on personnel readiness, organizational effectiveness, and succession planning—all considered strategic touchstones. Therefore, I recommend the following:

A) MENTORING PROGRAM. Black officers, particularly young officers, genuinely need senior advisors or mentors.³⁸ These mentors should not be their supervisors; they should be trusted advisors outside their chain of command. Mentors can provide wisdom of the unwritten rules for black officers

on how to be successful in the Army. Mentors can provide personal attention to officers that would be perceived as favoritism if the same attention were given by a supervisor. These advisors can help black officers manage some of the emotional burdens revealed in the survey results.

B) ENGAGE THE ROCKS. Black officers in the US Army have formed a black officer support group called "The ROCKS," named after the deceased US Army General Roscoe "Rock" C. Cartwright. This organization is actively involved in outreach programs with Historic Black Colleges and Universities ROTC programs, in mentoring black officers, and in providing supplemental support to the Officer Professional Development program. Each of the general officers interviewed for this study suggested that the Army personnel department engage The ROCKS. I agree with the general officers' suggestion. The ROCKS can facilitate mentoring and can provide an expanded black officer perspective on the issue of parity for minorities in the Army. Senior leaders responsible for personnel management would be well served by addressing these myriad of issues with The ROCKS.

C) SENIOR LEADERSHIP SETTING THE TONE. It was evident in the initial sensing interviews and validated with survey results that numerous officers felt that senior management was not receptive to the concerns expressed in this study.

Several comments suggested that a career military person could not conduct this type of research project without risking the wrath of those who dispute the relevance of these issues. Furthermore, many problematic behaviors described in this survey were said to have "implied institutional" sanctions. Senior management needs to set the correct tone in all areas of military life.

D) SENSITIVITY AWARENESS. Much of the behavior perceived as racist can be the result of insensitivity. These behaviors can be resolved through seminars or vignettes folded into existing training scenarios. Training and education are key to enlightening people on the issues. How they are perceived—what should be done—and how to resolve—are areas covered in training scenarios. Many perceived racist actions can be eliminated if the actor knew how their behavior could be interpreted by others.

When, however, a racist act has occurred, responsibility lies with both sides, the "offender" and the "offended." Appropriate and direct notification should be given to the alleged offender that there is a perception that "you are exhibiting an offending behavior." Further, the offended party should be given an early opportunity to accept the offender's explanation in order to bring closure to the issue as an "unfortunate misunderstanding."

Communication is the key to many of these situations; timely and clear communication may prevent an ugly situation from developing. The Army must be careful to avoid the worst aspects of human depravity. I call them the eight pillars of latent human behavior relating to interpersonal relationships. The eight pillars are insensitivity, callousness, harassment, bias-prejudice, sexism, racism, bigotry, and discrimination.

E) 360 DEGREE FEEDBACK. Black officers and the Generals interviewed for this study expressed concerns about the Officer Efficiency Rating (OER) system. In many cases, they believe these supervisor and senior rater OERs are biased and are not reflective of the black officer's abilities or potential. To compensate for these shortcomings, a 360 degree OER which incorporates supervisor, peer, and subordinate evaluations would allow the person being evaluated to receive comprehensive feedback about their abilities and management style. Incorporating a 360 degree feedback instrument into the OER system could provide greater depth and provide more accurate information on (majority and minority) officers' performance.

These recommendations may resolve many of the issues raised in this report. However, in the final analysis, black officers must take control of their destiny through empowerment,

networking, and self-reliance. The old cliché remains relevant today: One must make the best of every opportunity.³⁹

ENDNOTES

¹ Lt. Vernon Baker, Pvt. George Watson, Sgt. Edward A. Carter, Jr., Pfc. Willie F. James, Jr., Lt. Charles L. Thomas, Lt. John R. Fox, and Sgt. Ruben Rivers all were awarded the Nations highest military award, the Medal of Honor, for gallantry and conspicuous bravery during WW II reported from the Sunday edition of The Idaho Spokesman Review, dated December 1, 1996.

² Charles Young, Military Morale of Nations and Races (Franklin Hudson Publishing Co., 1912), pp. 214-215.

³ Charles C. Moskos and John Sibley Butler, All That We Can Be: Black Leadership and Racial Integration the Army Way (Basic-Books, 1996) pp. 105-110.

⁴ Reverend P. Thomas Stanford, The Tragedy of the Negro in America (Boston Press, 1897), front cover of book.

⁵ Stetson Kennedy, After Appomattox: How the South Won the War (University Press of Florida, 1995), p. 45.

⁶ Stanford., pp. 137-138.

⁷ Ibid., p. 140.

⁸ Forrest G. Wood, Black Scare (University of California Press, 1970), pp. 1-5.

⁹ Ibid., p. 5. Professor Wood explained that the most explicit and certainly the most sweeping religious justification for white supremacist views was the Old Testament episode of Noah and the 'curse of Canaan.' According to the racist version of the story, the Negroes, the so-called Hamitic peoples, were the descendants of Noah's son Ham who had been punished for watching his father sleep in the nude by having Canaan, one of his four sons, and all of his descendants 'ordained' to 'servitude under the descendants of Shem and Japheth,' because, as a northern racist put it, 'he judged it to be their fittest condition.' Anti-slavery clerics, of course, challenged the biblical argument. Slavery was not God's ordinance, they replied, and the curse of Canaan had no modern application. The curse had been Noah's, they insisted, not God's. Besides, the Negroes had descended from all of Ham's sons, not just Canaan. Most Americans of that time, especially those with strong prejudices, probably did not take the time to analyze these arguments. Since the Negro seemed so clearly inferior, they simply assumed that somehow God was at least partially responsible for his condition; thus to interfere with that condition would be to violate Holy Writ.

¹⁰ Edward M. Coffman, The Old Army (Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 226.

¹¹ Joseph T. Glatthaar, Forged in Battle (Meridian Publisher, Inc., 1991), p. 77.

¹² Coffman., p. 222.

¹³ Blacks received direct commissions as Army chaplains. Coffman stated that between 1866 and 1898, eight blacks received commissions in the army. Five were chaplains and three were cavalry lieutenants and graduates of West Point. Because clergymen could not command, asserted Coffman, they did not represent as much of a departure from racial standards as did the three line officers.

¹⁴ United States Army War College, Military History Institute. Ethnicity files. Between 1870 to 1889, twelve blacks attended West Point, but only half stayed beyond the first semester. Following are the twelve black cadets with their reported dispositions and timed served at the academy:

James Webster Smith	1	July 1870-26	June 1884	Failed philosophy
Henry Alonza Napier	1	July 1871-30	June 1872	Failed math/French
Thomas Van Rensselaer Gibbs	1	July 1872-11	Jan. 1873	Failed math
Henry Ossian Flipper	1	July 1873-15	June 1877	Graduated
John Washington Williams	1	July 1873-19	Jan. 1874	Failed French
Johnson Chestnut Whittaker	1	Sept 1876-23	Mar. 1882	Failed philosophy
Charles Augustus Minnie	1	Sept 1877-18	Jan. 1878	Failed math
John Hanks Alexander	1	July 1883-12	June 1887	Graduated (died 1894)
Charles Young	15	June 1884-31	Aug 1889	Graduated
William Trent Andrews	14	June 1885-21	Jan 1886	Failed math
William Achilles Hare	14	June 1885-21	Jan 1886	Failed math/Eng/disc
Henry Wilson Holloway	1	Sept 1886-26	Sept 1887	Failed math

¹⁵ Coffman, pp. 226-227.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 26-29.

¹⁸ From the archives of the United States Army War College, Military History Institute. From the personal memoirs of US Army General Benjamin O. Davis, Sr., box #3.

¹⁹ Bernard C. Nalty, Strength for the Fight: A History of Black Americans in the Military, (The Free Press, 1986), p. 259.

²⁰ Department of Defense Publication, Black Americans in Defense of Our Nation, US Government Printing Office, 1992.

²¹ USA Colonel James E. Gordon, Influences in the Making of Black Strategic Leaders (USAWC Strategy Research Project, 1995), pp 28.

²² Survey questions were created based on research and interviews conducted by the author of this study. Several draft questionnaires were pilot tested with selected officers of the US Army before a final draft was distributed to the surveyed population. The questionnaire sought to determine if there was a consistent pattern to answers from respondents. The majority of the answers to most survey questions

offered five options: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. Confidentiality to all surveyed respondents was assured.

²³ USA Colonel Gordon, pp. 28.

²⁴ Henry O. Flipper, Negro Frontiersman: The Western Memoirs of Henry O. Flipper (Western College Press, 1963), p. 20.

²⁵ Intellectual harassment is defined in the following manner. When a peer and/or a supervisor withhold critical information and leaves a black officer in a state of having an "information deficit" and thus the black officer is perceived to be incompetent.

²⁶ Taken from an audio taped interview by the author with retired Army General and former Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Colin Powell on 28 January 1997. Transcription and audio tape is held by the author.

²⁷ Taken from an audio taped interview held by the author with retired Lieutenant Army General Alonzo Short on 31 December 1996. The entire transcript of this interview is on file with the USAWC Military History Institute, Oral History Department.

²⁸ Taken from an audio taped interview by the author with retired Major Army General Thomas L. Prather, Jr. on 3 January 1997. The entire transcript of this interview is on file with the USAWC Military History Institute, Oral History Department.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Comments from former US Army Captain Theodore A. Carthen, a consultant for this study, reflecting succinctly on his training in the Army when talking about officer development and racial matters.

³¹ Reverend P. Thomas Stanford, p. 1.

³² Moskos and Butler, pp. 105-113.

³³ Interview with retired Lieutenant Army General Alonzo Short.

³⁴ Interview with retired Major Army General Thomas L. Prather.

³⁵ Interview with retired Army General Colin Powell taped interview.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Business Week, Diversity: Making the Business Case, December 1996. Following is a listed the most preferred firms for employment for people of color based on their company practices. Harrah's Atlantic City, Summit Bancorp, Kings Super Markets, Inc., Rutgers University, NJBI, Public Service Electric and Gas, Prudential Insurance Company, and Hoffmann-LaRoche, Inc. just to name a few.

39 I have the highest respect for those who had the courage to provide candid responses to this study. I will forever protect their request for confidentiality.

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