

# **Missing in Action: African American Combat Arms Officers in the United States Army**

**A Monograph  
by  
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## **Abstract**

**MISSING IN ACTION: AFRICAN AMERICAN COMBAT ARMS OFFICERS IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY** by MAJ Oscar W. Doward, Jr., USA, 56 pages.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the subject of African American United States Army officers and their service in the combat arms branches. The research uncovered the complex roles that African American combat arms officers assumed during the past century, and how these roles evolved into their current variation that benefits from the Army's unwavering commitment to equal opportunity. A historic snapshot of 20th century America's domestic tensions frames the pressing issue of why African American officers currently choose to serve in the combat arms at a disproportional rate when compared with the African Americans represented in the army's total officer corps.

The African American legacy during the 20<sup>th</sup> century is a narrative that explains the tremendous strides African Americans accomplished along the path to equality. African American army officers were forced to rely upon one another in order to complete their duties in academic and operational environments; therefore, it was essential that information, institutional wisdom, and guidance were passed along. These efforts resulted in relationships that were based on mentorship. This research determined that mentoring is a key component in reducing the friction created by the diminished presence of African American combat arms officers.

The research determined that several efforts needed to be initiated in order to mitigate the effects of this complex phenomenon. The efforts identified were associated with improvements in institutional mentoring practices within the Army, increased networking within the active Army officer corps through organized support organizations partially staffed by retired Army officers, and the leveraging of well established African American socio-economic institutions that wield influence in African American community. The ROCKS, an organization whose core mission is to promote mentorship and networking among African American Army officers, continues to positively impact officer growth and development. Careful consideration and deliberate application of the conclusions will positively impact the proportional realignment of African American army officers serving in the combat arms and every other branch type represented in the United States Army.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction .....	1
The African American Army Officer and the Last One-Hundred Years .....	6
Mentoring: A Path to Success or Mediocrity .....	20
What Does It Mean To Be A Corporate Mentor? .....	21
The Essentials of Corporate Mentorship .....	22
The Duality of Corporate Mentoring: Guidance and Expectation.....	24
Mentoring Defined in the United States Army.....	27
Mentors: Qualifications and Relationship Parameters .....	29
Hear, Speak, Do: Expectations, Actions, and Results .....	32
African American Combat Arms Officers and their Quest for Mentor.....	34
The ROCKS .....	37
Closing Ranks: Getting the African American Community Behind Investing in Army Senior Leadership Development.....	40
Conclusions .....	42
Recommendations .....	47
Bibliography .....	50

## Introduction

The Army has long recognized the value of people with different backgrounds and different heritage and has striven to integrate everyone to produce a top quality military organization. However, the Army, like other large organizations in both the public and private sector, continues to work through the challenges of building and maintaining a diverse organization. The Army will achieve success in the future by valuing uniqueness, respecting differences, and maximizing individual talents and experiences. Senior leaders must recognize the importance of diversity and ensure that the climate and culture of their organization reinforces diversity as a value. The following senior leader guidance from the U.S. Army War College, Academic Year 1998 Curriculum Guidance clearly exemplifies this point.

Diversity in any organization enriches its competitive environment because it blends various perspectives in the pursuit of a unified end. This is critically important when it comes to the US Army. A multi-racial configuration at all levels of the army significantly improves the force morale and sustains the confidence of the general population. Lieutenant Colonel Elmer James Mason's "Diversity: 2015 and the Afro-American Officer," observed that "The twenty-first century will offer many diverse and challenging opportunities for the U.S. Army, but none will be more critical than maintaining a racially diverse force."<sup>1</sup>

This guidance demonstrates that diversity has been an important factor in the nation's military strategy for at least the last decade. The realization of a highly trained multi-ethnic army could imply that equal opportunities would materialize at every level. There are commonalities between diversity and equal opportunity; however, each term is fundamentally different.

Diversity is a holistic approach to organizational efficiency. Diversity and equal opportunity share the similar ends, but each is distinctly defined. Colonel Andre H. Sayles, Director of the Army's Diversity Working Group at West Point, differentiated the two by saying "diversity assumes that differences can add organizational value and enhance mission

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<sup>1</sup>Carrie W. Kendrick, "African American Officer's Role in the Future Army" (Research Project, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, 1998), 7.

accomplishment, while equal opportunity (EO) does not assume that improved organizational effectiveness is a primary outcome.” Colonel Sayles’ observations delved further, and equated diversity to a top down effort opposed to EO’s bottom up approach that focused on the individual.<sup>2</sup> Diversity permeates the lower elements of the army and affects potential pools of mentors, those being mentored, role models, and the army in general. When there are diversity gaps in specific fields of service, the repercussions can be significant. This point has been clearly made in observing African American officer service rates in the combat arms and African American officers serving as general officers.

According to the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI) in 2006 active duty African American Army officers comprised 13.1 percent of the total pool of active duty officers. The DEOMI’s 2003 report of US Army Occupational Codes by Race, Ethnicity, Gender, and Pay Grade found that African American Army officers made up 7.8 percent of the Army’s Tactical Operations Officers, but the same demographic almost tripled (23.4 percent) in the Supply and Procurement occupational code. “White officer’s highest representation is in the general officer and executives’ field at 87.9 percent. . . . Black officers’ highest representation is in the supply, procurement and allied officers field at 23.4 percent.”<sup>3</sup> This gap, between tactical or combat arms branch presence and representation in the supply and procurement or support related branches, supports why there is so little diversity in senior levels of army leadership. “According to the General Officer Management Office (GOMO), out of 318 generals in the Army

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<sup>2</sup>Anthony D. Reyes, “Addressing the Challenge of Black Officer Under Representation in the Senior Ranks of the U.S. Army,” *Focus* (July/August 2006), 5.

<sup>3</sup>Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute, “US Army Occupational Codes by Race, Ethnicity, Gender, and Pay Grade” (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, December 2003), iii.

today, only 26 (eight percent) are black.”<sup>4</sup> What is troubling is that the same 2006 GOMO findings illustrate that 59 percent of generals are combat arms with only 13 percent from combat support and 12 percent from combat service and support. The reason for such low numbers of African American officers at the senior levels is simply scarcity in potential selection pools. African American Army officers are under represented in the combat arms branches, and this shortage significantly reduces their numbers for selection to the senior ranks.

A combat arms career path is an obvious enhancement for any bright or high caliber officer who desires to become a general officer; however, individual preferences toward any of these branches are not solely left up to the potential officer. The commissioning sources such as Reserved Officers Training Corps (ROTC), Officers Candidates School (OCS), and the United States Military Academy (USMA), partially contribute to a potential officer’s (cadet) branch assignment. The combat arms branch itself shares a burden of responsibility in the selection of new officers to serve in its field. Irregardless of the path an officer must take in pursuit of a combat arms commission, the process becomes complicated when it incorporates an officer’s racial demographic differences into final selections for combat arms branching.

Demographic parity, with the rest of the army’s available African American officer pools, should be a specified goal for each combat arms branch. This goal will need to be extended throughout the mid-career branch specific officer pools. Mid-career meaning the periods between post-company level command through the completion of Command and General Staff College. Over the last two decades, there have been several monographs, thesis, and published articles that address the disproportional rates of African American officer assigned to the combat arms. Brigadier General (Retired) Butler’s thesis, “Why Black Officers Fail,” is one of the better known

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<sup>4</sup>Reyes, “Addressing the Challenge of Black Officer Under Representation in the Senior Ranks of the U.S. Army,” 11.



pieces on the subject and is often quoted. Brigadier General (Retired) Butler's main assertion is that African American officers who attend Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) are disadvantaged during their pre-company command level years since this period represents their acclimation to their new status as a minority professional in a predominantly white career field. Experiences in a nearly homogenous African American collegiate environment create false expectations that sub-cultural differences are not potentially problematic during their transition into and progression through the army officer's corps. This central point has been inferred in other papers such as Colonel Anthony D. Reyes', *Strategic Options for Managing Diversity in the United States Army*.

Colonel Reyes, a former Director of the Army's Diversity Program, wrote "many black officers serving during the early 1980s felt that officers commissioned by the United States Military Academy (USMA), as opposed to the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) or the Officer Candidacy School (OCS), had an overwhelming advantage."<sup>5</sup> Colonel Carrie Kendrick's, "African American Officer's Role in the Future Army," adds that African American officers view professorships in Military Science at historically black colleges and universities as a last stop job, but West Point assignments, in comparison, are considered career enhancers.<sup>6</sup> These observations by Colonels Butler, Kendrick, and Reyes were firmly substantiated in their methodologies through the absence of mentoring and ROTC's failure to make advance degrees a prerequisite for its primary instructors.<sup>7</sup> The ROTC and OCS versus USMA debate in officer preparation and selection into the army's combat arms is an unending debate. However, the army's accountability towards the balancing of the army's largest ethnic minority group in both enlisted and officer ranks, African American, needs to be stressed. Diversity matters at all levels of the army, and this

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<sup>5</sup>Anthony D. Reyes, *Strategic Options for Managing Diversity in the United States Army* (Washington, DC: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, Inc., 2006), 10.

<sup>6</sup>Kendrick, 21.

especially applies to the senior or general officer level. The Army needs to take their assessments of the diminishing presences of African American combat arms officers and follow a three pronged axis that realigns army senior level diversity with the demographic representation of African American officers.

This monograph explains why African American army officers are under represented in the combat arms branches through illustrating historically how this trend developed throughout the twentieth century. The African American army officer's service during each period of major conflict covering the last one-hundred years clarifies why modern day African American officers are prone to associate with branches outside of the combat arms. Once the problem has been properly identified, three approaches will be introduced in order to mitigate the effects of this premise. These solutions needed to increase the presence of African American combat arms officers include an intensified emphasis on the Army's mentoring program. This study compares army efforts with corporate America's methods in an effort to improve army mentor efficiency. The second recommendation concerns an organization that is mutually supportive to mentorship. The ROCKS is a program that incorporates mentoring and networking as its two cornerstone missions. The ROCKS as an organization has the necessary tools to help facilitate the sustaining of African American combat arms officers within the United States Army. Lastly, the Army needs to engage African American community through historic influential organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Urban League, and other mass media outlets through stressing how diversity is underdeveloped in the Army's pools of general officers. The ROCKS' close ties and affiliations with retired officers can also be associated with civilian outreach, and reinforce this approach too. Once these organizations grasp the connection between African American under representation within the combat arms and the impact it has on diversity at the general officer levels, historically their actions have proven that

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<sup>7</sup>Reyes, *Strategic Options for Managing Diversity in the United States Army*, 11.

they can influence the African American community to take steps to change the general perceptions on officer service in the combat arms.

The evolution of the African American officer's role from the post-reconstruction army to the Global War on Terror (GWOT) has undergone a remarkable change. The roles of the African American army officer during each period of major conflict covering the last 100 years bear similarity to the United States' growing pains while dealing with the issue of equality and civil rights for the African American civilian population. The history of the African American army officer's journey during the last 100 years paints a portrait of angst and hope that presently affects the army's current African American officer's professional and personal disposition towards being assigned as combat arms soldiers.

## **The African American Army Officer and the Last One-Hundred Years**

The past century has seen multiple trends in the employment of African American commissioned officers in the United States Army. The first half of the twentieth century enforced a dual army segregated by race. The army was structured along a racially biased system that separated African American service members from every other American ethnic group at all military levels. These segregated units reaped the similar benefits that their civilian counterparts received such as second-class education, training, and in many cases equipment. The idea of severely limiting the African American's presence in the combat arms was a side effect to this restrictive culture. There were over 389,000 African American soldiers associated with the army during the World War I, with only 42,000 assigned to combat related duties. Dr. Jennifer D. Keene reported that the remaining African American soldiers (approximately 162,000 deployed to France) were placed in labor-intensive units "as a consequence of racially motivated policies designed to keep black soldiers in the rear unloading boxes instead of manning the trenches along

the front.”<sup>8</sup> Dr. Jennifer D. Keene is an Associate Professor of History and Chair of the Department at Chapman University in southern California. She is the author of *Doughboys, the World War I and the Remaking of America* (2001) and *The United States and the First World War* (2000). Overall, during World War I, African Americans made up approximately one-third of the wartime army’s laboring units and one-thirtieth of its combat forces.<sup>9</sup> These significant numbers of African American servicemen led the civil rights activists of this time, such as Dr. William Edward Burghart Dubois to believe that conditions for leveraging patriotism in order to gain equality under the American system of segregation were ripe for exploitation.

William Edward Burghardt Dubois (W. E. B. Dubois), the nation’s first African American Ph.D., believed that African Americans needed to put their grievances and complaints concerning their disenfranchisement on hold for the benefits of the country’s strategic interests.<sup>10</sup> While W. E. B. Dubois was severely criticized for his earlier attempts to entice the African American Community to forget the grievances associated with Jim Crow and close ranks. Joel E. Spingarn, National Chairman of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was equally vilified, especially by the Negro press for his advocacy of a segregated military training camp for Negro officers and his circular urging Negroes to sign up for it.<sup>11</sup> Despite the criticisms from both the African American press and his civil rights peers and associates, Joel Spingarn gained ground toward the establishment of an African American officer training facility.

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<sup>8</sup>Jennifer D. Keene, “A Comparative Study of White and Black American Soldiers During the First World War,” *Annales De Demographie Historique*, no. 1 (2002): 82.

<sup>9</sup>John W. Chambers, *To Raise an Army: The Draft Comes to Modern American* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1987), 223.

<sup>10</sup>William B. White, “The Military and the Melting Pot: The American Army and Minority Groups” (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1968), 291.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 284.

Joel Spingarn also recognized that while the African American soldier has had an enduring presence in the United States Army over the past several centuries as both an active combatant and logistician, the presence of African American commissioned officers was virtually nonexistent. As early as 19 August 1916, an editorial in the *Defender* stated that “Segregation is something we have striven to abolish: and yet we must insist upon it as the lesser evil.”<sup>12</sup> The *Chicago Defender* was the United States largest and most influential black weekly newspaper by the beginning of World War I. The black press and other African American leaders of prominence saw the merits of flexibility in regards to segregation as a means to gain a definitive number of trained and qualified African American commissioned officers. The 24 May 1917 issue of the *Atlanta Independent*, another African American published journal in circulation during this period, printed an article that said, “The government has challenged the Negro race to prove its worth, particularly the worth of its educated leaders. We must succeed and pour into camp in overwhelming numbers. Let no man slack.” Spingarn’s voice and other liberal leaning whites in positions of authority eventually pressured the United States to establish an officer’s training facility for potential African American commissioned officers for service. On 17 May 1917, when the president sought Newton Baker’s (United States Secretary of War) assistance on how to respond to the various groups asking for a black officer’s camp, the White House learned of what Secretary Baker decided. Secretary Baker’s response follows.

I was called upon many times by Mr. Waldron and representatives and his committee of one hundred. After considering their requests I came to the conclusion that a training camp for colored people ought to be established. . . . It has now been definitely fixed at Fort Des Moines, Iowa, with full concurrence of the authorities at Howard University. . . . So far as I know, the question is settled wisely from the point of view of the army, and certainly from the point of view of the colored men.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Editorials in the *Bee*, “Rally to the Flag,” 31 March 1917; and the *Iowa Bystander*, 15 June 1917. Both editorials support the concept of a separate camp and endorse black participation in the war effort.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid*, 43.

The city of Des Moines, Iowa, was selected to be the approved training location for the training of these officers. It was an ideal location to the War Department because of its demographic composition. There were only 6,000 blacks living in a city of 110,000 whites; therefore, it was rationalized that racial friction would not be a decisive detractor for accomplishing the task of training such a volume of roughly 1,600 to 2,000 African American officers. The War Department made an official announcement on 23 May 1917, designating Fort Des Moines, Iowa as the nation's single training installation for African American army officers.<sup>14</sup> This instance was the first time in the United States history that a systemic effort to produce African American commissioned officers was enacted.

There were approximately 18,000 Regular Army and National Guard officers available when the war began, and the American Army would select and train nearly 182,000 officers from the civilians entering the military in the next year and a half.<sup>15</sup> There were 1,200 African American officers included in this final number. Fort Des Moines was to be a counter argument to the criticisms recommending that commissioned officers be generated from the scores of qualified and deserving noncommissioned officers who had distinguished themselves in active service with any of the four existing African American Regiments (24th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Regiment, 9th Cavalry Regiment, and the 10th Cavalry Regiment). There were dissenting voices from other high ranking army officers who stubbornly supported the Army's racist positions that African Americans did not have the aptitude to function on higher levels of learning. General Leonard Wood personally challenged Joel Spingarn to find 200 qualified African American college students. Joel Spingarn responded and by May 1917, the Central Committee of Negro College Men (organized at Howard University) had enrolled 1,500

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<sup>14</sup>Bernard C. Nalty, *The Strength for the Fight* (New York, NY: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1986), 111.

<sup>15</sup>Edward Coffman, *The War to End All Wars: The American Military Experience in World War I* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1968), 55-58.

members.<sup>16</sup> In response to the question of the availability of capable and experienced noncommissioned officers for candidacy to become commissioned officers, a total of 250 noncommissioned officers were selected out of a pool of 1,250 able bodied and enthusiastic young African Americans.<sup>17</sup> The remaining 1,000 candidates were the product of various African American Universities, such as Howard and Tuskegee Institute. At the conclusion of the program, 639 officers were commissioned (106 Captains, 329 First Lieutenants, and 202 Second Lieutenants). The diligent work on behalf of the black press, prominent civil rights proponents, and other influential Americans sympathetic to the plight of the African American officer paved the way for the commissioning of over 600 African American officers out of over 200,000 commissioned officers serving on active duty.<sup>18</sup> This was an accomplishment that disproved the doubts of many white Americans who believed that African Americans were incapable of serving in the capacity of commissioned officers.

The African American World War I generation did make tremendous strides, especially in the establishment of the African American Officer's Candidacy School at Des Moines, Iowa; however, its progress was severely limited when it came to changes in policy through executive actions. Combat experiences of African American soldiers during World War I did not directly contribute to the building and usage of African American combat units; however, these actions greatly assisted in the efforts of civil rights leaders, such as A. Phillip Randolph and Judge William H. Hastie.<sup>19</sup> These efforts offered the greatest civil rights gains that African American

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<sup>16</sup>Gail Buckley, *American Patriots: The Story of Blacks in the Military from the Revolution to Desert Storm* (New York, NY: Random House, 2001), 177.

<sup>17</sup>Nalty, 110.

<sup>18</sup>Jack D. Foner, *Blacks and the Military in American History: A New Perspective* (New York, NY: Praeger Publishers, 1974), 109.

<sup>19</sup>According to Phillip McGuire's book, *He, Too, Spoke for Democracy: Judge Hastie, World War II, and the Black Soldier*, Judge Hastie a Harvard Law School graduate and Dean of the Howard University Law School who was appointed s a federal judge to the US District Court of the Virgin Islands in 1937. He is recognized as being the first African American elevated to the federal bench. He took a leave of absence

soldiers had ever experienced during the history of the United States. World War I African American combatant's actions yielded the first steps toward equality within the armed services, and contributed to the momentum responsible for fueling the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s that finally achieved equality for all African Americans. Charles Houston, a former African American First Lieutenant who served in World War I, rose to become special counsel to the NAACP and an effective and articulate national spokesman for the cause of African American equal rights during both World War II and the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s.<sup>20</sup> Historian Gerald Patton wrote that "Agitation for such reform would continue in the interwar period and would begin to bear fruit during and after World War II. To some extent, the tribulations of the black officers of World War I helped to pave the way for such reform."<sup>21</sup> However, these advancements did not extend much in the way of reform for African American officers serving during World War II. The façade of an efficient separate but equal army remained a problem for the army throughout World War II.

The army's Negro Problem assumed a different posture once the United States committed itself to World War II. This problem refers to the difficulties of recruiting, training, and assigning African American soldiers into units under a rigid and segregated system. There was an increase in the volume of African American draftees. "The congress passed a Selective Service Act with non discriminatory clauses. The War Department, urged by pressures generated by the political temper of an election year (1940), had announced a basic policy calling for a proportionate use

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from his duties as Dean on 1 November 1940 to serve as civilian aide to the Secretary of War in order to help shape policy concerning the affairs of African American servicemen during World War II. Judge Hastie was firmly established as a member of Roosevelt's Black cabinet of unofficial advisors who focused on African American civil rights improvement.

<sup>20</sup>Gerald W. Patton, *War and Race: The Black Officer in the American Military, 1915-1941* (West Port, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), 162.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid, 177.



and distribution of Negro troops.”<sup>22</sup> As far as the War Department was concerned, the Negro officers were not expected to be a leadership asset but as an answer to a question that refused to go away. It was a question of how to employ the numbers of African American officers without violating the existing laws of segregation. Officially, their expectations of these officers as leaders were minimal at best.<sup>23</sup> The army’s expansion of African American enlisted soldiers created a need for a proportional number of officers. The previous war solved this problem by assigning mostly White American officers to the segregated combat units at the company levels of leadership and higher, thus leaving mostly platoon level positions for the African American officers that were fortunate enough to get a combat arms assignment.<sup>24</sup> When the United States entered World War II, it was the army’s standard practice to assign African American officers to the service and support units; however, the surge of new recruits meant that there was a shortage of officers for both African and White American units. When these shortages were compounded with the derogatory, African American officers were forced to endure harsh and stressful treatment during the conduct of their mission requirements.

African American officers faced extraordinary pressures aside from the normal rigors expected of them as officers in leadership positions. The mutual distrust between the African American officer and his fellow White American officers contributed to the African American officer’s inability to professionally develop along the same timeline as the African American’s White peer. Ulysses Lee, an African American military historian, observed that “one result was that, in many units, especially the larger ones, little contact, even for discussion of, and conversation pertaining to, professional subjects existed among white and Negro officers.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Ulysses Lee, *The Employment of Negro Troops* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1994), 86.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid, 204.

<sup>24</sup>Phillip McGuire, *Taps for a Jim Crow Army* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio Inc., 1983), 33.

<sup>25</sup>Lee, 223.

There were memorandums that reinforced the army's segregation policies that sustained the African American officer's exclusion from camaraderie and mentorship by experienced officers, but as in every situation there were possible exceptions. LTC Krewasky Salter, a doctoral student in history, found that "the lack of assignment and misuse ultimately led to many of the problems the War Department experienced with African American officers later in the War. . . . Thus, many of these men, trained to be commissioned officers, remained inexperienced, and eventually became bitter."<sup>26</sup> The shadow of Jim Crow was destructive to the morale of the African American officer corps, but it helped to increase cohesion with their enlisted soldiers. In some instances, African American enlisted men would be influenced by their senior noncommissioned officers to favor white officers over African American officers. These actions were observed when African American officers exerted their influence and responsibilities to the chagrin of the noncommissioned officers who were accustomed to having complete control in the operations and domestic life of segregated units.<sup>27</sup> This had negative impacts on overall unit "esprit de corps" since it bred sentiments of "us vs. them" between themselves and African American officers.

World War II African American officers were usually marginalized by the army. Policies that prohibited African American officers from assuming supervisory positions over White Americans meant that they were usually limited in getting promotions.<sup>28</sup> This policy, amended by the Secretary of War in March of 1943 stated: "Except for medical officers and chaplains, senior Negro officers will not be assigned to a unit having white officers, nor in any case will white

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<sup>26</sup>Krewasky Antonio Salter, "Sable Officers, African American Military Officers, 1861-1948" (Dissertation, Ann Arbor, Michigan 1998), 245.

<sup>27</sup>Lee, 223.

<sup>28</sup>McGuire, 33.

officers be commanded by Negro officers.”<sup>29</sup> This was especially true in combat arms units where there was usually a higher percentage of White American officers assigned. This tainted the attitudes of the average African American soldier toward officers of his race because his position of authority seemed hollow. The negative perception of being an African American officer dampened the allure of becoming a commissioned officer, so many of the best and brightest noncommissioned officers were averse to seeing OCS as an option for professional progression.

Attaining rank, a position of authority, and respect were in reach without the headaches associated with being an officer, compounded by the emasculating policies of Jim Crow.<sup>30</sup> Sadly, the efforts made by Judge John Hastie, Brigadier General Benjamin O Davis, Asa Phillip Randolph, and a host of other influential figures in support of integration were unsuccessful in bridging this racial divide prior to the end of World War II. Despite the integration of Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) programs and OCS, African American army officers would maintain their segregated status and remain predominantly assigned to service and support related positions.<sup>31</sup> The perseverance of the army’s degrading culture of racial discrimination was long lived; nevertheless, the winds of change were approaching in the wings of the nation’s next major conflict.

Unfortunately, the army’s segregation policies remained in effect during both the World War I and World War II; however, in the years preceding the Korean War the efforts of anti-segregationists and an empathetic president produced drastic change. President Harry S. Truman’s 1948 Executive Order 9981 was the cornerstone event that laid the foundation to desegregation in the United States Army.

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<sup>29</sup>Maggie M. Morehouse, *Fighting in The Jim Crow Army* (New York, NY: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 28.

<sup>30</sup>Lee, 212.

The untimely death of president Franklin Delano Roosevelt placed a relatively minor player in the army's struggles with segregation, Harry Truman, as the commander and chief. President Truman was deeply engaged with all of the armed services because of fights over unification or organizational relevancy. The subject of integration was equally pressing. The army proved to be his administration's staunchest adversary against integration. General of the Army Omar Bradley was in agreement with certain army senior leaders who felt that the army was not the place for social experimentation. General Bradley felt that desegregation should be sorted out within the civilian court systems first before being imposed on the army.<sup>32</sup> General Bradley, like many of his fellow white Americans, probably felt that it was not the proper time to make such wrongs right, but there were millions of African Americans who felt enough time had passed. President Truman's views and decisions eventually sided with the latter's argument.

There has been speculation of Truman's motives that supported the integration of African American servicemen, but he was the first president to take decisive steps to end this inefficient system. He issued an order, the Executive Order 9981, which demanded equality and the prospects of equal opportunity for all Americans. "It is hereby declared to be the policy of the President that there shall be equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion, or national origin. This policy shall be put into effect as rapidly as possible, having due regard to the time required to effectuate any necessary changes without impairing efficiency or morale."<sup>33</sup> Unfortunately, this order did not specifically order desegregation. It was followed up by an executive appointed enforcement commission that was charged to complete the implied task of the order that was the methodical desegregation of all branches of services. The Fahy Commission, headed up by Charles H. Fahy, a former U.S.

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid, 202.

<sup>32</sup>Dale R. Herspring, *The Pentagon and The Presidency* (Lawrence, KS: The University Press of Kansas, 2002), 70.

solicitor general, began work on dismantling this restrictive cultural norm; however, it was the Korean War that completed this project.<sup>34</sup> Truman's Executive Order provided the framework for desegregation, but there was still considerable push back from the army's senior leadership. It would take the army's senior leader cooperation to make Charles H Fahy's efforts successful.

General Douglas MacArthur, General of the Army and Commander of the Far East Command was a strong advocate for the Army's segregation practices. When General MacArthur was later relieved of his command, General Matthew Ridgway was installed as the Commander of the Far East Command. General Ridgway was convinced that segregation was an un-Christian and un-American tradition that fostered an inefficient fighting force. "Moreover, the efficiency of his command depended upon the prompt arrival of trained replacements, but badly needed black infantry idled away their time in Japan because white units could not accept them." General Ridgway responded to this manpower crisis by formally asking the War Department for permission to integrate the forces within his area of operations.<sup>35</sup> General Ridgway's assessments blindly weighed necessity and practicality against an inefficient culture of bigotry.

General Ridgway's influence and the Korean War's manpower requirements expedited the army's integration of its total force. In March of 1951 a follow-up study, Project Clear, was formed in order to objectively examine the results of this evolution in military culture. The report essentially found that integrated African American manpower was more effective than segregated units and over 85 percent of the participating officer respondents reported that African American Soldiers performed in battle about the same as White American soldiers.<sup>36</sup> It was this fully

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<sup>33</sup>Buckley, 339.

<sup>34</sup>Richard O. Hope, *Racial Strife in the U.S. Military* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1979), 30.

<sup>35</sup>Nalty, 259.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid, 31.

integrated culture that African American soldiers and officers persevered and at times thrived throughout the conflicts that followed over the course of the next half century.

Project Clear was instrumental in exposing African American officers and soldiers to quality levels of training and resources that were previously denied. Opportunities to excel in the army and its officer corps were improved, but the lingering negative influences from centuries of racial oppression are still present in the United States and its armed services. The guarantee of civilian equal rights for all Americans regardless of race was over a decade and a half past the implementation of President Truman's Executive Order 9981. The frustrations of enduring limited citizenship lingered longer in the hearts and minds of the average African American. These impressions impacted the pools of African American officers and soldiers who left the turbulent American society during the height of the American Civil Rights movement and entered the United States Army. The African American officer and soldier's experiences during the Vietnam War would be completely different from any other war in the nation's history.

Over a century before the nation's involvement in the Vietnam War, Frederick Douglass, a famous abolitionist and advocator for African American combat soldiers during the civil war, wrote the following. "Let the black man get up on his person the brass letters U.S. Let him get an eagle on his button and a musket on his shoulder, and there is no power on earth which can deny that he has earned the right to citizenship in the United States."<sup>37</sup> As in every war since this statement was issued, African Americans saw military service as a means to an equal opportunity ends. The Vietnam War had the distinction of being the first war in which the armed forces were totally integrated, and for the first time in American history, African Americans ostensibly had the same opportunities as whites.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, the accommodation approach favored during

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<sup>37</sup>Quoted in Whitney Young, Jr., "To Be Equal," *The Baltimore Afro-American*, 19 February, 1966, 17.

<sup>38</sup>James E. Westheider, "My Fear Is For You: African Americans, Racism, and the Vietnam War" (Ph.D. diss., University of Cincinnati, 1993), 11.

World War I, World War II, and to some extent Korea did not apply. African Americans joined the army and were more willing to openly challenge racism or perceived racism. The 1960s ushered in positive changes for the average African American, but the long term effects of institutional segregation continued to infect the army. This was clearly evident in the army's war time numbers of African American commissioned officers.

“There were too few black officers in either command assignments, or especially in senior decision making positions, to have much impact on military race relations.”<sup>39</sup> This was critical during the Vietnam War since the most pivotal moments of the Civil Rights movement occurred during the prosecution of this conflict (Passage of Civil Rights and Voter Rights Act and the Death of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.). In 1962, there were 3,150 African American officers, or 3.2 percent of the total. Ten years later, there were 4,788 African American officers, but this was out of an officer corps, which numbered over 150,000, meaning African Americans still made up only 3.9 percent of the total.<sup>40</sup> Limited numbers of African American officers affected the availability of African American senior level officers. There were no African American General Officers in the United States Army during 1962. There were only six African American Colonels, 117 Lieutenant Colonels, and 424 Majors on active duty in the United States Army in 1962. However, by 1972 this number grew to seven Brigadier Generals, two Major Generals, and 92 Colonels.<sup>41</sup> These developments signified that there was an increase in the volume of African American Army officers attending senior service schools and afforded assuming brigade level commands. The constraints of institutional racism were still present, but in a severely diminished capacity.

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 235.

<sup>40</sup>Department of Defense, *Report of the Task Force on the Administration of Military Justice in the Armed Forces* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1972), 55.

<sup>41</sup>Westheider, 237.

It was commonly reported among African American officers during the Vietnam War era that they were expected to exert more effort in order to receive average ratings. “They had to be more intelligent, more motivated, more patriotic, and more aggressive than white officers, just to get consideration for promotion.”<sup>42</sup> However, these conditions did not dissuade African American officers from seeking combat arms assignment. Major General Fredrick E. Davidson became the first African American to lead an active combat brigade when he assumed command of the 199th Light Infantry Brigade in Vietnam during 1968.<sup>43</sup> These same generalizations are currently present in the 21st century’s Army. This monograph’s author was once told by a former field artillery battalion commander that “as a black artillery officer he needed to be sharper than his white peers in order to receive equal recognition.” Heightened or lowered expectations aside, the fact is that as of March 2008, there are 28 African American general officers on active duty to include one General and two Lieutenant Generals.

The history of the African American Army officer’s progression partially illustrates how the nation’s checkered past on race relations has influenced the current disposition of African American Army officers. The majority of African American veterans who served in the Army from World War II through Vietnam worked in service related specialties. These same veterans became the primary sources of army experience in African American communities throughout the country. It is possible that the residual effects of segregation over the past fifty plus years have helped to dissuade African American officers from choosing careers in combat arms related fields and promoted the selection of military specialties that are transferable to the mainstream workforce. The low numbers of twenty-first century African American officers in the combat arms demonstrates a shortage of available influencers in their hometown communities. The

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Major General Frederic E. Davision Interview, *Senior Officer Oral history Project, Blacks in the Armed Forces Series* (Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania U.S. Army Military History Institute, 1977), 24.



African American communities are failing to advocate service in these fields. One way to affect this diversity gap is to focus on methods to cultivate the few African American officers who are selected to complete their military obligations in the Army's combat arms branches. Mentorship is the most personal and efficient method to prevent shrinkage of the numbers of African American combat arms officers.

### **Mentoring: A Path to Success or Mediocrity**

Mentorship is a critical link in the chain of success for any professional, but there are certain conditions that need to be in place for these paths to success to occur. While the army's past cultural norms prevented officer development and mentorship between races, the army has become a fine example of what equal access truly means. Mentoring is a critical skill that is needed if the army is to achieve demographic parity across the combat arms; therefore, an analysis of what this type of relationship means is needed.

Mentoring has existed in varied forms throughout many types of professions. Mentoring is often drafted as a formal policy due to the results of intensive psychological, sociological, and even anthropological research focused on maximizing worker efficiency through personal relationships. In other instances, this efficiency multiplier is a loosely defined system that does not depend on formalized objectives; however, its goal of improved productivity is shared with its more formalized cousin. These methods are frequently implemented in both the civilian workforce and the United States Army. Each of these environments has the single objective of expanding employee production in some capacity, but there are differences in their methodology.

The civilian interpretation of mentorship has elements of personal interaction in order to promote achievement, but it is limited to the financial bottom line of that particular corporation. The United States Army's ideology on mentorship tends to make the individual employee the corporate bottom line because in many cases there are multiple missions involved within the military mentor/protégé relationship. This section will detail the definitions of mentorship in both

the civilian workforce and the United States Army, compare and contrast their modes of implementation, and highlight examples of both success and failure. These findings will assist in designing a tapestry that clearly demonstrates how the absence of key mentoring elements has led to the diminishing presence of African American Army Officers choosing career paths in the combat arms.

## **What Does It Mean To Be A Corporate Mentor?**

One corporate stratagem states that “In order to succeed in today’s competitive environment, corporations must create a workplace climate that encourages employees to continue to learn and grow.”<sup>44</sup> This particular company places emphasis on fruitful environments that establish the criteria needed for mentoring to thrive. This processes’ foundation is wedded to an open and almost tranquil atmosphere, but in order for any type of product enhancing relationship to occur, there has to be two ingredients, a mentor and his protégé.

A mentor’s corporate mission is to be a stable component in this specific brand of a company’s professional relationship. Mentorship can be informal, but in some cases these connections have morphed into involuntary, official, and directed activities. According to Dr. Linda Phillips-Jones, a consultant for The Mentoring Group, companies turn these relationships into programs or institutionalized stratagem that are created to force what probably can only come about naturally into a preconceived box that offers little to no choice.<sup>45</sup> The bottom line is that a corporate mentor needs to be the decision maker in the acceptance or denial of the mentorship privilege. Choice is the action word that encapsulates a successful corporate mentoring relationship. The protégé should have a say in who he desires to choose as a mentor, and the mentor must have that same option.

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<sup>44</sup>MentorNet: The E-Mentoring Network for Diversity in Engineering and Science, “MentorNet Community,” <http://www.mentornet.net/> (accessed 23 February 2008).

When a mentor assumes his mantle, he will have to be willing to serve as counselor and educator for those who have solicited his participation in this relationship. “Mentoring relationships (mentorships) are dynamic, reciprocal, personal relationships in which a more experienced person (mentor) acts as a guide, role model, teacher, and sponsor of a less experienced person (protégé).”<sup>46</sup> Corporate mentors are expected to coach and teach protégés in order to improve their company’s output.

## **The Essentials of Corporate Mentorship**

It has been established that relationships are the lynchpin to the process of mentoring, but there needs to be an examination of the tools and requirements possessed by the mentor. He will have to be an expert in their field who has had ample time (a decade or more) to develop their craft. Each should have a willingness to donate a portion of their time for the purposes of truly listening to an inexperienced and in many cases younger person who works under the same or similar corporate structure. Lastly, the mentor must have the ability to provide analytical assessments of their protégé’s opinions and beliefs, and give clear and concise guidance that leads the protégé’s ability to derive better developed options as he progresses in their career. Trust is the adhesive that combines all of these ingredients and makes this potentially vibrant bond successful.

The author T. S. Eliot once said that “Those who trust us, educate us,” and this is truly the case under corporate mentoring. “Mentors and protégés share secrets of their success, stories about their failures, and often reveal many details of their lives. Not only must protégés learn to

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<sup>45</sup>Linda Jones-Phillips, “Tips for Mentees: Becoming More Strategic,” <http://www.mentoringgroup.com/mentees.html> (accessed 23 February 2008).

<sup>46</sup>W. Brad Johnson and Charles R. Ridley, *The Elements of Mentoring* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), xv.

trust someone else, they in turn must be trustworthy.”<sup>47</sup> T. S. Eliot’s comment was indeed an accurate depiction of how trust is integral to the effective transmission of guidance and data, but it is incomplete. Reciprocity is the missing component of this observation, and it is this concept of mutual trust and respect that motivates each participant to strive for improvement as a consequence of their mentoring activities. Trust has been compared to a type of currency that can be deposited and withdrawn as a means of positively modifying both attitudes and behavior.<sup>48</sup>

Mentors must capitalize on the currency exchange of trust by being attentive to their protégés needs as both a coach and teacher. These attributes are typically linked to the commitments formed between a supervisor and his employee. In these instances, there is a more symbiotic association between the boss and the subordinate. Typically, the person in charge feels that he is the nucleus or hub of both the relationship and the operation that each participant is involved. However, effective and seasoned bosses realize that they actually need his employees more than their employees need them.<sup>49</sup>

The coach persona of the competent supervisor grasps the idea that his relationship with his team of workers is critical to their collective success; therefore, his involvement is principally motivated by his desire to succeed in his position. Corporate mentorship is practically paradoxical in comparison to this concept of coaching. There are two thoughts in the supervisory situation that are absent in mentoring. The first is symbiosis, and the second notion is compulsory motivation. The mentor is a stable and experienced professional who does not have a direct affiliation with his protégé’s department. Also, his intentions to spur professional growth and

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<sup>47</sup>Ellen A. Ensher and Susan Elaine Murphy, *Power Mentoring: How Successful Mentors and Proteges Get the Most Out of Their Relationships* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2005), 142.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Ferdinand F.Fournies, *Coaching For Improved Work Performance* (New York, NY: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1978), 10.

deepen commitments are in most cases altruistic, so this further nullifies any similarities between supervisory coaches versus mentorship.

The themes that are actually common between the two are the pushes and pulls between the senior and junior participants in these examples of partnerships. There are inherent expectations in these methods of corporate productivity, and the following section will examine their permeations in mentoring.

### **The Duality of Corporate Mentoring: Guidance and Expectation**

The field of sociology recognizes the strength of reciprocity in a given relationship. Reciprocity is conceptually identified as a theory of behavior called social exchange, and has been applied to comprehend dyadic or two person relationships that are common in supervisor and employee relationships, friendships, and mentorships.<sup>50</sup> It takes a more interpersonal, savvy, and astute boss to recognize the true benefits of this cyclical link; however, friendships and mentors can achieve these positive results naturally. There is a bit of fluidity in the mentor/protégé exchanges. Meaning that given the situation one perspective could dominate the exchange; never the less, the final returns are positive for both parties. These progressive steps are predicated on the mentor's ability to formally or informally offer career guidance, provide emotional support, and serve as an effective role model.<sup>51</sup>

An advisory role is the traditional corporate interpretation of mentorship. The old paradigm of finding a promising individual who is an example of a mentor's past self is still a guiding factor under the corporate mentoring format. This situation is not necessarily formal, but it is a model to set the protégé up for success to assume a higher or covenant position.<sup>52</sup> A clear

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<sup>50</sup>Ensher and Murphy, 70.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 29.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid, 28.

example of this classic approach is the dynamic of the master and apprentice relationship in the George Lucas' epic motion picture series *Star Wars*. A Jedi master is a required match for the development of each apprentice or padawan. The purpose of this relationship is to groom this future knight as a future replacement for his mentor.<sup>53</sup> It is a thought that has existed throughout human development; however, it is important for the mentor to hold himself accountable of his actions. A mentor's accountability means maintaining a sense of consideration for the protégé's needs within the relationship and paying strict attention to his communication habits.

Terry Paulson, a licensed psychologist and author of the books *They Shoot Managers Don't They* and *50 Tips for Speaking Like a Pro*, paints a vivid picture of his first professional mentor as inquisitive and absorbing. He recalled that his mentor had a sign in his office that stated "Every person I work with knows something better than I. My job is to listen long enough to find it and use it."<sup>54</sup> He saw his primary duty as a mentor was to be a listener. This would enable him to sift through his protégé's personal habits that may have clouded his assessment. He could then ask questions that made his protégé seek better paths to improve his position and shape his future professional prospects. Terry felt that this technique provided dual benefits. The first being an increased awareness of the control that he had on his future, and the second was the essence of being an effective leader through genuinely knowing your subordinate's needs and expectations. These are excellent points that facilitate clear career enhancing guidance, but a mentor's considerations do not end at professional development. There are also personal support matters that require a mentor's influence.

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<sup>53</sup>Aaron Kesher, "Honoring Differences: Creating Respect and Inclusion in the Workplace," [www.progroupinc.com/site/download/asset/49/3/364/e16c725c411f6f15c564f9323f](http://www.progroupinc.com/site/download/asset/49/3/364/e16c725c411f6f15c564f9323f) (accessed 24 February 2008).

<sup>54</sup>Marshall Goldsmith, Beverly Kay, and Ken Shelton, *Learning Journeys: Top Management Experts Share hard Earned Lessons on Becoming Great Mentors* (Palo Alto, CA: Davies-Black Publishing, 2000), 24.

A human's physical limitations will not allow him or her to be productive and function in a constant state of laboring in a profession; therefore, a balance between personal and professional priorities is vital for a protégé's growth. Mentors must possess the ability to absorb the personal concerns of a highly efficient and enthusiastic protégé and transmit lucid messages that warn his charge when they are approaching a severe imbalance between their personal and professional lives. The tactics that drive this process require humility on the part of the mentor.<sup>55</sup> Mentors have to accept a degree of pushing back from the apprentice on these issues concerning emotional investment. Qualities in human nature such as drive, loyalty, and focus can yield volatile responses when it is revealed that they are being used in excess. It is an uncomfortable position for the mentor and protégé to find him or her, but it is a critical phenomenon that is essential to reaching a successful mentorship. It is the mentor's active and passive methods of influence that will determine if the last step toward the protégé takes root firmly. A mentor's lasting positive impression will imprint the status of role model into the heart of his mentored subject.

Harry Belafonte, a consummate entertainer of the arts (theater, television, cinema, and audio recording), developed into a globally renowned civil and human rights activist whose efforts provided substantial boosts to the American Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and the United States Peace Corps.<sup>56</sup> Harry Belafonte saw his accomplishments and their cumulative effects as coming from a strong relationship he developed with his mentor Paul Robeson.<sup>57</sup> Belafonte wrote

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<sup>55</sup>Michael W. Galbraith and Norman H. Cohen, *Mentoring: New Strategies and Challenges* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1995), 75.

<sup>56</sup>Matilda Raffa Cuomo, *The Person Who Changed My Life: Prominent People Recall Their Mentors* (New York, NY: Barnes and Noble Books, 2003), 20.

<sup>57</sup>Paul LeRoy Bustill Robeson (9 April 1898-23 January 1976) was a multi-lingual African American actor, athlete, Basso cantante concert singer, writer, civil rights activist, fellow traveler, Spingarn Medal winner, and Stalin Peace Prize laureate. A great American singer and actor, spent much of his life actively agitating for equality and fair treatment for all of America's citizens as well as citizens of the world. Robeson brought to his audiences not only a melodious baritone voice and a grand presence, but magnificent performances on stage and screen. Although his outspokenness often caused him difficulties in

that he saw embodied in Paul Robeson everything he wanted to measure his life against. Robeson's political and social courage challenged Belafonte to improve all aspects of his life. Paul Robeson continually inspired Belafonte to do more, to always push the limits of his abilities to help as many people as possible in a persistent struggle against injustice in not only the United States but on a global scale.<sup>58</sup> Belafonte's experience with his mentor might have created extraordinary results because of the extreme nature of racism that burden both his and Paul Robeson's personal and professional lives. However, the idea of mentor influence fits the same pattern of the corporate mentorship agenda. As a capstone of their engagements with their protégés, mentors above all else must be inspirational. Competence, effective dialogue, and inspiration are the enablers that culminate with a protégé's possession of keys to the executive bathroom, but these same paths to success are not universal. There are differences between the corporate versions of mentoring and the United States Army. The following segment will highlight the United States Army's system of positively employing mentorship.

### **Mentoring Defined in the United States Army**

Mentoring in the corporate world has a lucrative impact on an employee's growth and development; however, it is a system that is motivated by the profitability gained through the participants involved in this process. Corporate success is, for the most part, a derivative of increased financial profits. The United States Army's position on mentoring is anything but a technique to improve an existing profit margin. Robert A. Harney, Jr.'s master's thesis entitled, "Development of a Formal Army Officer Mentorship Model for the Twenty-First Century," clearly outlined six conclusive reasons that have proven the need for an established mentorship program in the United States Army. Robert A. Harney, Jr.'s findings are listed as follows:

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his career and personal life, he unswervingly pursued and supported issues that only someone in his position could affect on a grand scale. His career flourished in the 1940s as he performed in America and numerous countries around the world. He was one of the most celebrated persons of his time.



Senior Officer mentoring is important to leader development and career progression. Mentoring contributes to culture adaptation, competence, confidence, upward mobility, and decisions to stay in the military. Mentoring is key in the early years and should begin before the first assignment (during the precommissioning process). Black senior leaders have a higher mentor-to-protégé ratio than their White counterparts. Cultural misunderstandings and lack of diversity awareness often limit the mentoring process. The exclusionary nature of informal mentoring leads to race and gender barriers due to a lack of minority mentors and exposure to senior leaders.

Each of these conclusions is an excellent observation that explains the army's need for mentoring within its officer corps. However, before further progress is made on the necessities of mentorship, a better interpretation of this army system will be identified.

Webster's Ninth Collegiate Dictionary defines a mentor as being a trusted counselor or guide. This clearly describes a participant in the mentoring process itself, but an actual portrayal of mentoring is that it is what the International Mission Board (IMB) calls "a form of teaching that includes walking alongside the person you are teaching and inviting him or her to learn from your example."<sup>59</sup> Webster's and the IMB have similarities with the corporate edition of mentoring, but each definition has a stronger bond with the army's explanation of mentorship outlined in its Field Manual (FM) 6-22.

FM 6-22 defines mentoring as "the voluntary developmental relationship that exists between a person with greater experience and a person of lesser experience characterized by mutual trust and respect." Like the corporate and IMB forms of mentoring, this variation rests on guidance, coaching, trust, and teaching; but it is different because of its voluntary nature. The army's idea of mentoring places emphasis on the participant's willingness to engage each other. Mentoring is a critical event in the army that is a highly regarded element of progression. The Department of the Army (DA) Pamphlet (PAM 350-58, *The Enduring Legacy, Leader*

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<sup>58</sup>Cuomo, 22.

<sup>59</sup>International Mission Board, "Glossary," <http://www.imb.org/CPM/Glossary.htm> (accessed 21 February 2008).

*Development for America's Army* (dated 13 October 1994) further says that “mentoring is more personalized and individualized than teaching and coaching. It is an optional, subjective process between a concerned senior leader and a very select few of his subordinates. Mentoring involves candid dialogue, career advice, caring support, commitment, and assistance with assignments.”<sup>60</sup>

The Army designates mentoring as an optional tool that functions as a relationship designed to transfer institutional wisdom from its experienced leaders to its newest batch of leaders. Mentoring can be achieved through formal prescribed methods or it can remain within the spirit of its voluntary nature and be informal. No matter the way it is covered, multiple army publications, and the highest levels of army leadership have been endorsed mentoring as a type of service multiplier. The United States President, George W. Bush, stated during his 2003 State of the Union Address that “One Mentor, one person, can change a life forever, and I urge you to be that person.” Mentoring is securely anchored in the contemporary army’s lexicon, but what does it really mean to become a mentor in the United States Army?

### **Mentors: Qualifications and Relationship Parameters**

The Army’s established seven core values are solid screening criteria that can serve as an intelligent means of qualifying a great mentor prospect. Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Self-less Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage are all character traits every mentor needs to clearly possess. A pointed flaw in either one of these attributes is a fatal blow to mentor credibility. Keeping this in mind, there must be a deeper exploration of what a mentor is expected to have once he is selected to perform his mentoring duty. Colonel Mark A. Melanson, a contributing writer to the *Army Medical Department Journal*, stated that “mentoring is a partnering relationship where a senior, more experienced officer provides guidance and advice to a junior officer in order to foster professional growth in the subordinate. Speaking from personal

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<sup>60</sup>U.S. Department of the Army, Army Pamphlet 350-58, *The Enduring Legacy: Leader Development for America's Army* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1994), 13-14.

experience, mentoring has been and remains the single most important factor in my development and growth as an officer and a leader.”<sup>61</sup> Colonel Melanson places heightened values on one’s exposure to mentorship, and he credits it to personal advancement and growth. Colonel Melanson expands his criteria for mentor success through several rules.

The thing a mentor must know is that he is not the subject or center of gravity in a mentoring relationship. Colonel Melanson suggests that there is a danger of failure if the mentee does not remain the focus of the process, or if the mentor exploits his mentee for ill gotten gains. The second key rule is to ensure that boundaries are firmly emplace and enforced. Mentors must maintain all forms of military courtesy within the relationship, and take caution not to over step his authority by circumventing his mentee’s chain of command. It is mandatory that a mentor is approachable, or he will not emit the presence that will attract potential mentees to voluntarily seek mentorship. Lastly, mentors have to be active listeners who are committed to setting aside the time and energy to truly hear the concerns of their mentees and respond with candid advice. Mentors must be the epitome of competence, confidence, and peer admiration. An excellent example that illustrates a competent leader’s methodology in mentorship is between two legendary African American Army officers of the early 20th century, Colonel Charles Young and 1st Lieutenant Benjamin O Davis, Sr.

Colonel Charles Young was the third African American graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point and was the highest ranking African American officer in the Army during World War I. According to Jack D. Foner’s *Blacks and the Military in American History*, five days from the signing of the Armistice, Lieutenant Colonel Young was promoted to Colonel and recalled to serve as a military adviser to the adjutant general of the State of Ohio. He eventually moved on to serve as a military attaché in Liberia and Nigeria. It was during his

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<sup>61</sup>Mark A. Melanson, “Mentors and Proteges: Simple Rules for Success,” *Army Medical Journal* (July-September 2006), 52.

African tour of duty that he encountered a bout with tropical fever, and passed away on the continent of his ancestors. Throughout his career, he trained African American troops for combat and led them in action, but it was the fear that he might command whites that prevented him from contributing to the victory in the World War I or from wearing the stars of a general officer.<sup>62</sup>

The following guidance between two exceptional pioneers of the African American officer experience during the 20th century provides an excellent historical account of mentorship. It is a record of correspondence between Major Charles Young and Second Lieutenant Benjamin O. Davis<sup>63</sup> around late August 1905. 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.<sup>64</sup>

The obvious reason for why this and other sessions between these two officers would be helpful is that they were both products of their times. They were two of a handful of African American Army officers serving on active duty who were not physicians, musicians, or chaplains. Cultural commonalities are a plus when it comes to communications across the ranks; however,

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<sup>62</sup>Foner, 15.

<sup>63</sup>*The Oxford Companion to American Military History* states that Benjamin O. Davis, Sr was the United State army’s first African American general. Brigadier General Benjamin O Davis headed a special section of the Inspector General’s Department that dealt with racial issues involving U.S. troops during World War II. He used his position to convinced General Dwight D. Eisenhower to accept the integration of African American platoons into white units, a temporary breakthrough in the army’s traditional segregation by regiment, during the Battle of the Bulge in 1944. Brigadier General Benjamin O Davis retired in 1948 after fifty years of service.

what happens when these common backgrounds do not mesh? According to Brigadier General (Retired) Remo Butler, when this occurs there is “a debilitating inertia in the way young black officers are mentored and a lack of common cultural understanding among both black and white officers.” Butler’s assertions are that there is an inherent gap between black and white officers in the combat arms, and since these branches are dominated by whites, black officers have a higher chance of alienation.<sup>65</sup> This is a troubling concept since a mentor’s actions can direct young officers to remain in their branch and successfully negotiate the unsteady tides of experience.

Colonel Young’s guidance was a terse, thoughtful, and fulfilling message that provided timeless wisdom. Young’s words helped to cultivate and nurture 1st Lieutenant Davis as he successfully negotiated the army’s rather limited ladder of success to reach the rank of Brigadier General. The exchange is a classic instance of mentorship; however, it is incomplete. It is an incomplete sample of a mentoring session, because the mentee’s responses are not annotated. A comprehensive session has included a form of dialogue or an exchange of thoughts. Mentees are required to meet specific benchmarks in order to close the circle of mentorship.

### **Hear, Speak, Do: Expectations, Actions, and Results**

Competency and dependability have already been mentioned as qualities that are paramount to an effective mentor, but they are also applicable to the mentee. A mentee’s competence is not a technical mastery of his profession, but an embedded sense of knowing when to both seek guidance and how to analyze the information provided. A characterization of practical intelligence could possibly be explanation enough, but that is somewhat simplistic. Intelligence is what enabled the young officer to reach the point of being a commissioned officer

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<sup>64</sup>Craig Thomas Johnson, “United States Army Officer Professional Development: Black Officer’s Perspectives” (Research Report, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, 1997), 9.

<sup>65</sup>Remo Butler, “Why Black Officers Fail” (Research Report, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, 1998), 3.

and professional. It is his competence that shapes what paths he will take toward excellence. A mentee, in most instances, has to be the person who makes first contact with a mentor.

The army's interpretation of mentorship states that the mentoring process is voluntary. Unlike the corporate version of when a mentor selects a protege and protégés are expected to draw inspiration in order to become mentor replicas. The informal nature of the army system makes mentoring an almost casual relationship initially, but it has to be started by a competent perspective mentee. Colonel Carrie Kendrick's 1998 Army War College strategy research project entitled, "African American Officer's Role in the Future Army," reflected that this competence is actually a form of socialization that needs to be developed during pre-commissioning curriculum. Colonel Kendrick cited how the United States Military Academy enacted a formalized mentoring program that dedicated several cadets to a mentor at the institution. This program is a regulated interpretation of mentorship; however, the mentees were better qualified to know what to look for and expect once they reached active status.<sup>66</sup>

Mentees need to always realize that a mentor's time is currency, and that they should expend this resource wisely. A mentee makes the most of a mentor's interaction through providing seeds for guidance and being consistent with all required follow-ups. A rapport of trust and confidence is the quintessential element in this reciprocal relationship, but mentees must not fall into the trap of only bringing problems into the relationship. This also includes initiating or reengaging a mentor once he has reached dire straits. "Regrettably, young black officers too often fail to get attached to a mentor early on: they tend to seek assistance only during crises."<sup>67</sup>

Early mentor selection is the best way to off-set the probability of being negatively distinguished and marginalized.

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<sup>66</sup>Robert A. Harney, Jr., "Development of a Formal Army Officer mentorship Model for the Twenty-First Century" (Thesis, U.S. Army Command General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 2000), 25.

<sup>67</sup>Butler, 9.

Mentees must inhale all of the offered guidance and trust that this information originates from a mentor who truly has his best interests in mind. Mentees must consider what was said and take action where he feels it is appropriate. The strength of this process comes from the options generated. Particularly, these options would not have manifested themselves within the vacuum of the mentee's limited experience. This is the bottom line of what mentoring offers to any young army officer.

The army's mentorship programs are career enhancing and provide mutual benefits to both senior and junior officers. When the army's system is contrasted with the corporate way of conducting mentoring, the inconsistent agent is the bottom up selection of mentors. The army's way of mentoring capitalizes on total leader development that transcends the fiscal motivations of the corporate world that appreciate an almost cloning approach to generate more efficient echelons of middle managers. The army's methods work exceptionally well in regards to sharpening its young leaders, but its selection strength is also a weakness. Unfortunately, not all young officers, especially African American officers, are not always mentee competent during the initial stages of their careers. Compound this fact with the numbers of African American army officers, serving in branches that have a negatively disproportionate representation of African American officers such as the combat arms. This is a partial dilemma to the greater problem of why the African American army officers' presence is at its lowest in the combat arms.

### **African American Combat Arms Officers and their Quest for Mentor**

Research has soundly demonstrated that the availability of a mentor can be a multiplier for any individual junior officer. However, the question is what happens when certain junior officers do not feel the same way? What happens when young officers clearly do not grasp the magnitude of how beneficial these relationships are to their chances of successfully navigating through the treacherous waters of career progression? Knowing these things has been established as mentee competence, and many young African American officers are lacking such

competencies. These knowledge gaps can develop into cultural hurdles that feed misconceptions and cloud communications between the African American officers, their white peers, and superiors. It is in these clouds that young African American army officers find themselves mentorless. Brigadier General (Retired) Remo Butler is an African American who spent decades in the Army's special operations branch. He identified African American Officer short comings in a United States Army War College strategic study entitled *Why Black Officers Fail*. Butler observed the following mentoring trends.

While in a perfect world mentoring should transcend race, the reality doesn't match the ideal. A black mentor who understands the black culture and who has also been successful in the military environment that predominantly reflects the culture of the white majority can usually relate best to the young black officer. It is critical for young black officers to find a good mentor.<sup>68</sup>

Butler's research revealed that the hurdles of cultural and sociological differences can be intimidating to young African American army officers during their search to find a dependable and trust worthy mentor. "The army is primarily a reflection of a white-male-dominated culture with which many young blacks have little to now experience. . . . Many white officers, perhaps most, have never participated in a social event where the majority of the participants were black."<sup>69</sup> The combat arms branches have the lowest percentages of African American army officers, so these gaps in cross cultural communications are intensified.<sup>70</sup> Cultural gaps create opportunities for stereo typing and grossly ineffective dialogue between potential white majority combat arms mentors and the minority African American officers. There has to be both a lowering of these hurdles and a boost to the sprinting young African American army officers in order to circumvent cultural gaps.

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid,10.

<sup>70</sup>Galbrait and Cohen, 72.



A definitive method of closing the gap would be through stressing diversity within the combat arms. Diversity has been defined as a tool to increase organizational harmony from the top echelons down. This interpretation can be likened to a case of putting the cart before the horse since there is a recognized problem of decreased numbers of African Americans in these combat specific branches. The almost drought like condition of senior African American officers in the combat arms has left the avoidance of the pitfalls in existing cultural gaps up to the junior officer's personal devices.

Butler believes that only the United States Military Academy offers formal detailed training in military customs and courtesies to its senior cadets. Butler further states that African American cadets at white majority colleges and universities are better adept in crossing the cultural gaps that inhibit cross racial communication. Unfortunately, most of the army's African American young officers are the products of historically black colleges and are not privy to these types of indoctrinations.<sup>71</sup> This is why the burden of assimilation is placed on African young American army officer.

Butler referred to an incident in which several white officers attended an army function that was predominately African American. Butler noticed the white officers' unease and how they found comfort in socializing amongst themselves.<sup>72</sup> The point of this story was that crossing these cultural divides is hard for a white officer who finds himself the minority at mostly African American social function. The bridge across this cultural gap is extra-ordinarily difficult for the sparsely populated African American army combat arms junior officer during his attempts to locate a mentor. This situation will always be an issue for the African American army officer in the combat arms, and there are programs designed to boost their sprinting efforts along this track

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<sup>71</sup>Butler, 11.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 13.

of finding mentors. ROCKS, an African American officer based non-profit organization was created for this very purpose of boosting the sprint.

Craig Thomas Johnson, Central Intelligence Agent and former student of the United States Army War College, expounded on the importance of the ROCKS organization in his study entitled, “United States Army Officer Professional Development: Black Officers; Perspective.” He interviewed three African American General Officers on the subject of mentorship, one being former Secretary of State and General (Retired) Colin Powell. Each of the three respondent generals agreed that mentoring African American officers was critical for their survival in the modern army, and that “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.”<sup>73</sup> The rewards associated with the ROCKS organization were independently ratified by three army senior leaders.

## **The ROCKS**

The ROCKS is a non-profit organization that provides scholarship assistance for ROTC cadets, professional interaction and mentoring, and socialization among active duty, reservists, and retired officers of the United States Armed Forces.<sup>74</sup> It is named after Brigadier General (Retired) Roscoe “Rock” Conklin Cartwright, and the organization’s philosophy is comprised of concern, dedication, and professionalism. Brigadier General Roscoe Conklin Cartwright, affectionately known as “Rock,” forged an impressive record during his 33 years of Army service. He overcame seemingly insurmountable barriers during his service, provided mentoring for young officers ascending through the military ranks and laid a roadmap that lives on today through his legacy. Serving in World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War, General

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<sup>73</sup>Johnson, 22.

<sup>74</sup>The ROCKS, Inc., “History,” <http://www.rocksync.org/NationalBOD.htm> (accessed 25 January 2008).

Cartwright was the first black Field Artilleryman promoted to Brigadier General and would eventually serve in the Pentagon. In 1974, shortly after his retirement from active service, General Cartwright and his wife, Gloria, died in a commercial airplane crash while returning to their home outside of Washington, DC.<sup>75</sup> Colin Powell, a retired General and former Secretary of the Defense for the United States, once commented that the ROCKS as an organization appealed to him. Colin Powell credited ROCKS for looking out for him during his career and encouraged him to do the same for younger African American officers. Colin Powell stated that he had always tried to spot young black military talent and help those officers realized their potential. In Colin Powell's opinion, African American army officers have done a better job of providing professional support than in any other American institution, and that this type of mentoring could serve as a model for the rest of the African American community.<sup>76</sup> ROCKS chapters make mentorship a priority for its members, and it provides the necessary tools to prepare African American officers to become efficient mentors and mentees. There are twenty-six chapters located throughout the continental United States (CONUS) and outside the Continental United States (OCONUS), and the organization is chaired by retired African American general officers.

The ROCKS has made tremendous strides towards diversity enrichment at the senior levels of army leadership. It continues to focus on the young African American officer's professional development and improved competency; however, its mission is not exclusively for a specific branch of specialty but for the needs of all African American army officers. The ROCKS is a sorely needed program that encourages career success and reaches learning depths that most other established army mentoring programs are unable to achieve. However, the ROCKS is not the single solution to the issue of an exodus of African Americans officers from

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<sup>75</sup>Dorian Cartwright, "Biological Sketch," <http://www.arlingtoncemetery.net/rccartwright.htm> (accessed 25 January 2008).

<sup>76</sup>Colin L. Powell and Joseph E. Perisco, *My American Journey* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1987), 160.

the combat arms branches. There are limits to the ROCKS mentoring operations, but this organization is not the only positive avenue that carries influence in the fight for achieving proportional African American officer representation in the combat arms. The presence of role models is a slight contributor to this dilemma and is worthy of discussion.

African American role models inspire others through their positions of heightened visibility. Role model achievements and current contemporary activities energize their audience by inducing them to see their personal objectives and goals as being within their reach. The role model serves as a living dream. He embodies dreams that provide inspiration for his own ethnic and cultural demographic. Examples of role models would be both former Secretary of State and General (Retired) Colin Powell and United States Air Force General Daniel “Chappie” James.<sup>77</sup> Their success and legacy contributes to the past, current, and future benefactors who become familiar with their stories. Mentorship, as established in earlier sections, is a more intimate process that if done properly can yield better returns than the gains associated with role models.

Mentorship can be a barometer for positive advancement through counsel on matters such as assignments, advanced civil schooling, or how to demand fair assessments through evaluations. It is an invaluable form of networking that has practically exponential remuneration. The issue of African American scarcity within the combat arms does little to change the vicious cycle of a stagnant status of African American Army officers in the combat arms, but this is only the case if only African Americans are expected to exclusively mentor their own kind. The laws of mathematics state that it is practically impossible to increase African American Army officer enrollment in the combat arms through using existing African American combat arms senior leaders. Therefore, there will have to be other adjustments in order to transform this movement. It is at this juncture that organizations independent of the army such as the ROCKS, the National

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<sup>77</sup>General James was the first African American Servicemen to attain the rank of 4 Star General.

Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and even the Urban league can add weight toward the efforts of gaining parity in diversity within the army's combat arms.

## **Closing Ranks: Getting the African American Community Behind Investing in Army Senior Leadership Development**

In 1918 Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois issued an editorial entitled "The Black Soldier" in the June issue of *The Crisis* that stated "out of victory for the armies of the Allies would raise an American Negro with the right to vote and the right to work and the right to live without insult. . . . We make no ordinary sacrifice but we make it gladly and willingly with our eyes lifted to the hills."<sup>78</sup> Dubois believed then that African Americans needed to put their grievances and complaints concerning their disenfranchisement on hold for the benefits of the country's strategic interests. Dubois' belief that African Americans throughout the nation needed to put their nation's needs before the rights and privileges they so rightly deserved, and that this sacrifice would quicken the pace for acceptance and equal opportunity in the land that their fore fathers helped create. Dubois was mistaken in his conclusion, but his ability to clearly articulate a critical issue affecting African Americans that was not entirely based on social concerns is an occurrence that is really needed in today's African American community.

Given the importance of diversity, the army needs to continue to conduct positive outreach towards the African American community. Historically, social and civic organizations such as the NAACP and the Urban League have had seemingly love or hate relations with the army over its history of segregation and the opposition to using African American combat units (World War I and II). "In fact, Afro-Americans' attitudes toward the military are diverse and often contradictory. In simplified terms, the black general public tends to have favorable views of

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<sup>78</sup>Foner, 109.

the military, while black leadership and intelligentsia tend to be more critical.”<sup>79</sup> Currently, the initiatives for change in the African American community driven by these organizations deal in economic empowerment in order to reduce the gaps in wealth between themselves and the mainstream American community. The main issue for the army is that while a career as an army officer offers sound economic stability, it is harder to rationalize sustained earning potential as a professional artilleryman, infantryman, and armored cavalryman. The army will have to bridge this gap with the black civilian leadership by helping them to see past mainly domestic concerns and become familiar with nuances of army senior leader diversity.

Outreach on the part of the army towards engaging this organization will assist their recruit efforts along all levels of service. The army is already doing an excellent job of sustaining a diverse force under a holistic perspective. The army is insufficient in getting the community’s support in reaching diversity results at its upper ranks, because it has done a poor job of communicating the relationships between combat arms service and the percentages of combat arms services at the General Officer level. History has proven that if these highly organized and influential organizations are oriented on unified purpose, such as attaining racial parity among the army’s senior ranks, that organizations such as the NAACP can communicate this purpose along various and credible networks throughout the African American community.

The army’s challenge is to get inside of these organization’s decision cycles in order to adjust nest the issue of army senior leadership’s lack of diversity parity under these organizations’ social and domestic mission focuses. It is at this juncture that the ROCKS could be helpful in transmitting this message.

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<sup>79</sup>Elmer Price, “Diversity: 2015 and the Afro-American Army Officer,” (Research Report, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, 1998), 19.

## Conclusions

The history of the African American army officer serving during the last 100 years paints a portrait of angst and hope that presently affects the army's current African American officer's professional and personal disposition. The African American officer's evolutionary role is indicative of a tumultuous journey; a journey that coincided with the United States' growing pains felt while dealing with the issues of implementing fair and just civil rights for the African American citizen. There are numerous examples of official and unofficial obstacles erected by policy makers and senior ranking soldiers from World War I through the Vietnam War to either curtail the creation of these types of officers or divert their services away from combat-related fields of expertise.

History provides a glimpse of how the World War I junior officers were ostracized by their white peers, so they were unable to benefit from peer to peer learning. This exclusion hit the African American officer's professional development hard because in most instances their white peers had the benefits of receiving superior schooling, professional instruction, and resources. The army's World War I policy limited the number of African American combat troops to the two segregated infantry divisions. The act of severely limiting the African American's presence in the combat arms was one effect to this restrictive culture. There were over 389,000 African American Soldiers associated with the army during the World War I, but only 42,000 assigned to combat related duties. Dr. Jennifer D. Keene reported that the remaining African American Soldiers (approximately 162,000 deployed to France) were placed in labor intensive units "as a consequence of racially motivated policies designed to keep black soldiers in the rear unloading boxes instead of manning the trenches along the front."<sup>80</sup> The white officers who were assigned to the few African American combat units were usually stigmatized by their association, so their

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<sup>80</sup>Keene, 82.

abilities to improve conditions for their African American officer subordinates were often marginalized. These types of situations permeated the army during both World Wars and The Korean War, so the prospects of mentorship selection especially within the combat arms were dim for most African American officers of this time.

The army eventually took a significant leap towards equality regardless of race. President Truman's Executive Order 9981, which demanded equality and the prospects of equal opportunity for all Americans, and the follow-up investigation of the Charles Fahy commission, was critical to the fulfillment of equal opportunity doctrine within the army. However, the nation's progress on the civilian front lagged for over a decade and a half. This fact continued to impede the gains made during the Truman administration, because the racial tensions of the civil rights and Vietnam War era poisoned the army's mentoring process within the African American officer corps.

Low overall African American officer presence and even lower African American officer presence in the combat arms only compounded the problem of cultivating African American officer talent in the mists of a social revolution. In 1962, there were 3,150 African American officers, or 3.2 percent of the total. Ten years later, there were 4,788 African American officers, but this was out of an officer corps, which numbered over 150,000, so African Americans still made up only 3.9 percent of the total.<sup>81</sup> In terms of combat arms representation there were several exceptions to the rule such as Major General Fredrick E. Davidson, the first African American to lead an active combat brigade when he assumed command of the 199th Light Infantry Brigade in Vietnam during 1968. There were a host of other African American company and field grade commanders who distinguished themselves as extraordinary leaders during the Vietnam War, but the existing racial tensions and their low numbers tainted the army's efforts to maintain

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<sup>81</sup>Department of Defense, *Report of the Task Force*, 55.



demographic parity within the combat arms. The percentage of African American officers has increased during the post-Vietnam War era, but the residual effects of a reduced footprint of African American officers in the combat arms continue to persist.

The historic patterns of below average distribution of African American combat arms officers have continued to stymie efforts to achieve demographic balance at the general officer level. Unfortunately, this trend makes efforts of army mentorship exceedingly difficult; African American senior leaders are being forced to assume a higher mentor to mentee ratio than their White counterparts. This is a condition that actually weakens the benefits of following the army's mentor model, because it reduces the amount of quality attention that a mentor can reserve for each mentee.

The army's leadership doctrine prescribed in Field Manual 6-22 defines mentoring as the voluntary developmental relationship that exists between a person with greater experience and a person of lesser experience. The relationship is characterized by mutual trust and respect. Mentoring is an optional tool that functions as a relationship designed to transfer institutional wisdom from its experienced leaders to its newest batch of leaders. The army's perspective sees mentoring as a critical event that is a highly regarded element of progression for its officer corps. However, it is recommended to be implemented as a voluntary and informal arrangement that does not require a linear professional relationship. The army's strength in this department is that there is minimal coercion to take a mentor's advice, since neither the mentor nor the protégé are typically working towards the same immediate professional ends.

The army's mentoring process is designed to start from the bottom and work its way up. This means that the mentee has to make the effort to find mentors who are willing to transfer that institutional wisdom and expertise. This is the one area of army mentorship that can benefit from

borrowing a concept from the corporate model.<sup>82</sup> The army needs to do a better job at the mentor level in seeking junior officers for mentorship. It is at this juncture that the African American junior and mid-grade combat arms officers tend to come up short.

The pressures and difficulties of reaching out to senior level officers who match a prospective mentee's professional profile are not equal across the spectrum of the combat arms. History has proven that there is still a color divide across the country that existed before, during, and after military service; therefore, this tension adds another layer of complexity. This does not mean that other tensions do not exist, such as the lack of common interests outside of their military profession, or even gender (a possibility given the prominent combat role women play in the current war). However, the army's most volatile and contentious personnel issue over the past century has been over racial differences. The army has done a tremendous job in reducing the negative perceptions in order to disinfect institutional racism, but it is a work in progress. African American officers can be mentored by any officer senior to them who is willing to engage in the process, but the reality is that in most instances mentorship occurs along racial lines. It is here where Brigadier General (Retired) Butler's assertion that there is a cultural disconnection, continues to hurt the average African American officer's long-term progress.

The adage that "more is better" definitely applies to the subject of increased African American combat arms officers in terms of mentorship, because the junior officer will gravitate towards an officer who is aligned with his cultural profile. To the credit of many combat arms

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<sup>82</sup>Under the corporate model a mentor needs to be the decision maker in the acceptance or denial of the mentorship privilege. The mentor must have a willingness to donate a portion of his time for the purposes of truly listening to an inexperienced and in many cases younger person who works under the same corporate structure. Mentors are required to provide analytical assessments of their protégé's opinions and beliefs, and give clear and concise guidance that leads to the protégé's ability to derive better developed career choices. However, above everything else the relationship between mentor and protégé must directly benefit the corporation that employs both participants. Corporate mentors are expected to coach and teach protégés in order to improve their company's output. In other words, their relationship is linear along a direct chain of responsibility in which the mentor can directly affect the protégé's advancement; this construct is different than the army's mentorship position.

African American senior leaders, history has shown that they have generally taken steps toward finding junior African American officers to mentor. These numbers are insufficient in maintaining African American officer equivalency in the combat arms. Butler's ideas on conditioning African American officer's to develop the social skills needed to reach out to all prospective mentors, and not just officers who share their same cultural backgrounds, is right on target. This outreach has to occur if the numbers of African American combat arms officers are to increase and stabilize; however, it is also imperative that mentors do more to actively recruit mentees across the combat arms while taking the proclivity to cling along cultural lines into consideration. This means that it may take longer to reach that comfort zone needed for frank and candid dialogue between mentor and mentee. The bottom line is that aside from the army's commendable work in assuring diversity across the army's officer's corps, mentorship is the one professional effort that can immediately affect the issue of African American officers departing the combat arms branches and the problems this creates in general officer diversity. Achieving this bottom line is laced within the fabric of the ROCKS' DNA.

The ROCKS was founded out of a necessity of mid grade African American officers who needed immediate reassurance and support, but were concerned with widening the trails for those African American officers coming behind them. Major General (Retired) James Klugh, a former national chairman of the ROCKS, explained that an outlet was needed for African American officers to exchange professional wisdom from each other under unfavorable conditions. It was formed out of a necessity for African American officers to perform at the Command General Staff College during a time of divisive racial attitudes in the late 1960s. The ROCKS is a relevant and sorely needed program that continues to encourage career success and reach depths that most other established army mentoring programs are unable to achieve. The uniqueness of its origins puts it into a context similar to civil rights groups that were organized decades earlier. Its evolution to a nationally incorporated organization that focused its efforts on mentoring and

networking makes it a viable tool in sustaining an African American presence in the combat arms. It also has the ability to influence on the African American civilian community.

Given the effect needed to cultivate the African American officer's preference for non combat arms related fields, the army cannot solve this issue alone. There will have to be a combined effort by both the Department of The Army and the African American community. There needs to be drastically improved communications targeting the same types of organizations that spearheaded the drives for social improvement during the 20th century's national civil rights movement. When the problem of diminished opportunities for the selection of African American officers to senior leader positions is fully realized, the NAACP, Urban League, and other organizations with similar aims should convey this message to the communities that sustain their reasons for existence. The army's challenge is to get inside of these organization's decision cycles in order to include issue of army's general officer corps' lack of diversity parity within these organizations' agendas.

## **Recommendations**

The significance of low African American participation among the army officer combat arms branches has been established as a detriment to diversity in the army's general officer corps. Much of it has been explain through a historical analysis of the African American officers' evolution during the last ten decades. This paper concluded solutions can be generally applied as concepts to improving this problem; however, the four following recommendations are army actions that either fundamentally changes how the army defines mentorship or the way the army engages the African American community on racial diversity within its general officer corps.

The army needs to track its senior leaders beginning at the Lieutenant Colonel level and manage a mentoring profile the same way it manages its senior rater profile. Army doctrine describes mentorship as a highly valued concept that is important to the shaping of its future senior leaders, but it is tagged as a voluntary action. This paper recommends that Field Manual 6-

22 definition be adjusted and make mentoring a mandatory process that incorporates every senior level officer and a specific grouping of junior officers. This particular change in the army's current mentoring operation is directly tied to the next recommendation.

The second recommendation is to implement a mandatory mentoring program that formally requires all African American officers accessed into the combat arms to participate in the established senior level mentoring program for a period of no less than three years after their date of entry into active service. This will help to bridge the gaps of army cultural learning that most of African American combat arms officers struggle with once they enter into the white male dominated officer corps. In many instances African American combat arms officers see fewer numbers of African American field grade leaders within their branches, so they deduce that their prospects for future success are dim. This program's purpose is to become a sustaining effort that reduces the numbers of African American combat arms officers who decided to branch transfer once the options become available post company level command. These adjustments must be pushed from the top echelons of the army's staff in order for each of the two preceding recommendations to gain traction within the army's existing mentoring structure.

The third recommendation is that the army's chief of staff designates an annual officer focused mentoring week. This week will not be in conjunction with other established officer professional development systems, but one that emphasizes the improved policy of mandatory mentorship from the senior leaders to junior leaders, specifically African American officers in the combat arms. It should include a recorded message from the Chief of Staff of the Army that explains why the policy has been implemented and who are required to participate. This message would be viewed by every army active duty officer who is not deployed during this particular week.

The final recommendation is related to the army's efforts to engage the African American community on this issue of diversity within the officer corps' combat arms and the army's general officer corps. The army can affect millions of educated and concerned African Americans

and other Americans by participating in an annual one day panel discussion that is broadcast via CSPAN and the World Wide Web. The Black State of the Union Address is a program that is facilitated by national commentator and syndicated talk show host Tavis Smiley. This forum has been conducted for the last five years, and it usually includes representatives from the United States Congress, the White House, a host of highly regarded intellectuals (authors, social scientists, technology experts, and media personalities) and every major African American civil rights organization active at the time. The army needs to send its G1 to this event, so that this particular general officer can explain to the listening audience why it is important for the African American community to invest a portion of its college bound males into the army's combat arms in order to achieve diversity at the army's general officer levels. History has proven that the African American community is fully capable of decisively responding to the nation's needs if the issue was well framed and directly given to them.

These four recommendations are not individually or even collectively considered to be the all in one answer to refining the solutions concluded within this paper. It is impossible to gauge how effective these steps can be in making positive influences on the African American community during the conduct of an unpopular war. However, the chances of them exacerbating the problem of low African American officers in the combat arms are unlikely.

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