

**WASTING TIME: BLACK
PARTICIPATION IN THE
COMBAT ARMS BRANCHES**

BY

COLONEL RANDOLPH CLIFFORD WHITE, JR.
United States Army

DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A:

Approved for Public Release.
Distribution is Unlimited.

USAWC CLASS OF 2009

This SRP is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Strategic Studies Degree. The views expressed in this student academic research paper are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.



U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013-5050

The U.S. Army War College is accredited by the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle State Association of Colleges and Schools, 3624 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104, (215) 662-5606. The Commission on Higher Education is an institutional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. **PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.**

1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 15-04-2009		2. REPORT TYPE Strategy Research Project		3. DATES COVERED (From - To)	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Wasting Time: Black Participation in the Combat Arms Branches				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Colonel Randolph Clifford White, Jr.				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Dr. James Gordon Department of Military Strategy, Planning, and Operations				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College 122 Forbes Avenue Carlisle, PA 17013				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Distribution A: Unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT Perception, as senior Army leaders are fond of saying, is reality. African American/Black representation and subsequent advancement in the combat arms branches of the U.S. Army is woefully lacking. Black accessions into the combat arms branches is miniscule, and the numbers of Black combat arms officers who advance in key leadership/command positions at the battalion and brigade command level and higher are token at best. It is a Historical fact that those few Blacks selected for senior combat/operational commands at the division level are typically placed out of sight to the American public and African American youth by default. In the past thirty years only two of the nine Black men selected to command Army Divisions have been slated to do so in CONUS. Young Black men and women can derive inspiration in pursuit of a given vocation, by seeing someone of their ethnicity in positions of great authority, but Black Division Commanders historically remain persona non grata in the eyes of Black youth. Despite politically correct rhetoric and a plethora of meaningless studies to the contrary, the U.S. Army shows little inclination to address this and many other issues that negatively impact black combat arms candidates or serving officers.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Minority, Army					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT UNCLASSIFIED	b. ABSTRACT UNCLASSIFIED	c. THIS PAGE UNCLASSIFIED			UNLIMITED

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

WASTING TIME: BLACK PARTICIPATION IN THE COMBAT ARMS BRANCHES

by

Colonel Randolph Clifford White, Jr.
United States Army

Dr. James Gordon
Project Adviser

This SRP is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Strategic Studies Degree. The U.S. Army War College is accredited by the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, 3624 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104, (215) 662-5606. The Commission on Higher Education is an institutional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

The views expressed in this student academic research paper are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

U.S. Army War College
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Colonel Randolph C. White, Jr.
TITLE: Wasting Time: Black Participation in the Combat Arms Branches
FORMAT: Strategy Research Project
DATE: 15 April 2009 WORD COUNT: 5695 PAGES: 26
KEY TERMS: Minority, Army
CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

Perception, as senior Army leaders are fond of saying, is reality. African American/Black representation and subsequent advancement in the combat arms branches of the U.S. Army is woefully lacking. Black accessions into the combat arms branches is miniscule, and the numbers of Black combat arms officers who advance in key leadership/command positions at the battalion and brigade command level and higher are token at best. It is a Historical fact that those few Blacks selected for senior combat/operational commands at the division level are typically placed out of sight to the American public and African American youth by default. In the past thirty years only two of the nine Black men selected to command Army Divisions have been slated to do so in CONUS. Young Black men and women can derive inspiration in pursuit of a given vocation, by seeing someone of their ethnicity in positions of great authority, but Black Division Commanders historically remain persona non grata in the eyes of Black youth. Despite politically correct rhetoric and a plethora of meaningless studies to the contrary, the U.S. Army shows little inclination to address this and many other issues that negatively impact black combat arms candidates or serving officers.

WASTING TIME: BLACK PARTICIPATION IN THE COMBAT ARMS BRANCHES

...In particular, Blacks are under-represented among the combat arms. This condition can be termed occupational segregation. The U.S. Army's leadership is concerned about the low number of Black officers serving in the combat arms for two reasons. First, the low number of Blacks in the combat arms reduces the diversity and perhaps the credibility of the U.S. Army's leadership. Second, it makes it difficult for Blacks to attain appropriate representation among general officers because seventy-two percent of the U.S. Army's generals are selected from the combat arms.

—Emmett E. Burke
“Black Officer Under-representation in Combat Arms Branches”
School of Advanced Military Studies 2002.¹

I have served 22 years and 2 months as an Infantry Officer on active duty with the United States Army. The subject of Black officer representation and subsequent ability to succeed in the combat arms has permeated every moment of my active service. As the son of a career combat arms officer I have always been well aware of the lack of ethnic peers in the combat arms branches, most notably in my own branch. I have spent numerous hours speaking to JROTC and SROTC cadets about the merits of service in the combat arms branches. I have participated in a plethora of surveys over the years which afforded me the opportunity to address the lack of blacks in the combat arms branches, and as a battalion commander from July 2004 – July 2006 was sent TDY on several occasions to speak to the cadets at several Historical Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) about becoming members of the combat arms branches. The visits to HBCUs were a direct result of a 2004 report by the Commission on Officer Diversity and Advancement; a report which disturbingly is not accessible via the public domain.

Numerous papers have been written over the years which have touched upon this subject or issues that directly impact minority combat arms officer success and failure and they include:

- *Why Black Officers fail in the U.S. Army*, BG (ret) Remo Butler, USAWC Class of 1996 (15 April 1995).
- *Promotions among the ranks - a focus on Black military officers*, Lt. Col Barbara Sutton (USAF), Air War College Class of 1995, (April 1995)
- *Influences in the Making of Black Strategic Leaders*, COL (ret) James E. Gordon, USWAC Class of 1996, (5 April 1996).
- *Mentoring Women and Minority officers in the US Military*, Major Darrell E. Adams (USAF), Air Command and Staff College, (March 1997).
- *United States Army Officer Professional Development - Black Officers' Perspectives*. Craig Johnson, USAWC Class of 1997 (7 April 1997).
- *African American Officers' Role in the Future Army*, COL Carrie Kendrick, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, (May 1998).
- *Black Officer Under-representation in Combat Arms Branches, LTC Emmett Burke*, School of Advanced Military Studies Monograph (2 June 2000)
- *The Lack of Ethnic Diversity in the Infantry: Why Are There So Few Black Infantry Officers in the U.S. Army*, LTC Ronald P Clark, School of Advanced Military Studies Monograph (2 June 2000).
- *Strategic Options for Managing Diversity in the U.S. Army*, LTC Anthony Reyes, Military Fellow Research Report Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies (June 2006)

- *Addressing the challenge of Black Officer underrepresentation in the senior ranks of the U.S. Army*, LTC Anthony Reyes, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, (July/August 2006).
- *Investigating the existing gap between Army culture and Black American Culture*, LTC Lentfort Mitchell, USWAC Class of 2008, (15 March 2008).

One can infer from the preponderance of papers on this issue that it is one of great importance to the minority officer community. On the other hand one may arguably conclude that this issue has received scant attention from the Army which has necessitated the almost repetitive nature of the papers listed above over the years.

On July 26, 1948 President Harry Truman issued Executive Order 9981 establishing Desegregation of the Armed Forces. The first paragraph of this executive order states: *“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.”*² Almost fifty-one years later the issue of equality, racial and otherwise, presents many challenges in the United States Army. Fifty-one years after Executive Order 9981 and African American’s still find success at the senior ranks of the military an illusive prospect. The senior decision makers in the Army are by and large Combat Arms officers, but to this day very few are of African American descent. After fifty years the time has come to consider that until the demographic make-up of the United States changes to reflect a brown or black skinned majority nothing will change. Until this day comes, African Americans must pursue the

course of Operations Support or Force Sustainment branches in order to increase their odds of being more competitive in gaining General Officer rank in the United States Army.

Why has the Army failed to see Executive Order 9981 to its fullest potential? Personal discussion with ethnic peers (black combat arms officers) over the years implies that there are several reasons and the first can be attributed to the Army's inability to develop and execute a Strategic Communication plan that addresses the paucity of Black Officers in the Combat Arms branches.

Strategic Communication Failure: The Army Diversity Office and the Commission on Officer Diversity and Advancement (CODA)

Regardless of ethnicity, the recruitment and accession of the United States Army begins with Strategic Communication. The U.S. Army Accession Commands Strategic Outreach Directorate website contains a wide variety of video, posters, and documents designed to inform the public in regard to many of the opportunities afforded by service in the U.S. Army. This website represents the fairly straightforward attempt by the Army to comprehensively impact the American public in terms of recruiting the Army. However, if you are a young black male or female you will find little in the way of strategic communications that will sway your decision to pursue an Army career in the combat arms branches. It is the view of many peers through informal discussion that while posters, You Tube videos, and television commercials will continue to prove their limited worth in terms of convincing young Black Americans to seek out combat arms careers in the Army, the Army fails in terms of maximizing its ability to inform and reach out to the African American Public. The preponderance of this failure resides in the lack of substance available to the public reflected in the Army Diversity Office

(<http://www.armyg1.army.mil/hr/ado.asp>).³ A visit to the organizational website and a review of its various links reflects a paucity of information in regard to efforts being made to reach out strategically to the African American community.

The Army Diversity Office, or Army Diversity Task Force as it was entitled upon inception on 30 December 2007, was established with the following purpose as stated by the Chief of Staff of the Army, General George Casey: "The purpose of the task force is to increase awareness and to inform ourselves about how we need to adapt what we're doing so we can sustain awareness and focus on diversity."⁴

As stated above, a visit to the Army Diversity Office webpage provides very little information other than benign mission statements and goals. If one has any interest in seeking demographic/ethnic data in terms of numbers or percentages of Black servicemen and women in the combat arms you will not find it available to the public via the Army Diversity Office. A snapshot of the overall ethnic and gender based minority make up of the Army can eventually be found if one searches the Army Diversity Office webpage, but the sort of information that is crucial to prospective African American combat arm officer candidates and their influencers (parents, guidance counselors, etc.) is lacking.

Personal observations over the past twenty-two years notwithstanding; discussions with family members, ethnic peers, subordinates and in many cases the teenage children of each of these groups, the following information or data points were most often mentioned as being desirable in making a decision on whether or not to pursue Army service in a combat arms branch:

- Data, both historical and current, on the numbers of Blacks accessed into the combat arms branches.
- Data, both historical and current on promotion rates amongst Black combat arms officers.
- Data, both historical and current on where Black combat arms officers serve in regard to key and developmental positions. This includes Black General Officer Assignment patterns (This will be discussed in more detail later).
- Data, both historical and current on the rate at which Black officers are removed by the Army Human Resources Command from combat arms branches in order to serve in other functional areas...functional areas which, it must be pointed out, do not historically produce Operational Brigade, Division, Corps, or Army Commanders no matter what ethnicity the members may be .
- Data, both historical and current on the selection rates of Black combat arms officers for Operational Battalion, Brigade, Division, Corps and Army/Theater level Commands.

None of the items mentioned above is readily available to the young Black male or female seeking informational trends directly related to Minority Service in the combat arms branches of the United States Army. In other words the young black male or female thinking of serving as an Army officer cannot simply go to a website and pull this information. One can argue that decisions, be they simple or complex are made largely on the basis of information related and available in regard to said decision. People make decisions on what to purchase at grocery stores based on the information

available in terms of what goods they are lacking in their homes. Children make decisions on which toys to play with based on their own information about which toy brings the most joy or produces the greatest amount of fun. It seems impractical for the United States Army to assume that minority officer candidates will make branching decisions based on the paucity of information available. One must ask; is the Army hiding something? Is there something that the senior leadership of the Army fears in regard to the public release and availability of the aforementioned data points? The answers to these questions are as illusive as they are diverse and deserve the attention of a separate research paper.

It is disappointing that in the year 2009, which has seen the United States inaugurate it's first African American President, the United States Army is unable to place information related to the accession of Black officers into the combat Arms branches into the public domain in a manner which is easily accessible and would support its efforts to increase the numbers of Blacks who choose to pursue the Combat Arms branches. We live in a time where young men and women glean a great deal of their information via traditional and social media on the internet such as newspaper websites, YouTube, Twitter and Facebook.⁵ The time is long past for the Army to place the data points discussed into the public domain using the internet. Senior Army leaders often claim to value candor in discussion and decision making, but a casual observer could very well conclude that this candor would not seem to be welcome in the context of data points related to Black participation in the combat arms branches.

The Commission on Officer Diversity and Advancement (CODA) is another glaring example of the Army's failure to utilize information gathered for the purpose of

effectively communicating strategically with African Americans interested in military service and accession into the combat arms branches. This conclusion is based on intimate personal experience and the fact that CODA has no webpage on the public domain. According to an Information Paper embedded within the Army's 2008 posture statement, "The Army Diversity Office was stood up in 2006 following recommendations from a 2004 study conducted by the Commission on Officer Diversity and Advancement (CODA), and a subsequent 2005 CODA Senior Review Panel's endorsement of the stand-up. That study and review indicated the need for a Headquarters Department of the Army-level office to oversee the full spectrum of all workforce diversity issues for Soldiers and Department of the Army Civilians."⁶

Given that the combat arms branches represent the predominant road to more opportunities for promotion—perhaps even to the rank of general officer—the Army must work harder to move black officers into those branches. Efforts have been made to do this. In April 2003, former Chief of Staff of the Army General Eric Shinseki directed the Commanding General (CG) of the Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) to analyze the apparent minority underrepresentation in the senior Army leadership, determine the causes, and implement short-, mid-, and long-term courses of action, as warranted, to promote diversity throughout the Army. The Commission on Officer Diversity and Advancement (CODA) was established to perform this task.⁷

CODA executes a wide variety of studies on diversity for the Army and its findings are touched upon extensively in the sited document prepared by COL Anthony Reyes entitled *Strategic Options for Managing Diversity in the Army*.⁸

COL Reyes writes: The Commission on Officer Diversity and Advancement (CODA) developed a number of recommendations that outline a plan for the Army to address diversity issues relating to accessions... The number of black combat arms officers is directly correlated with underrepresentation of black officers at the senior levels of the U.S. Army. Given that the majority of general officers today are products of one of the combat arms branches, it is logical to conclude that greater opportunities for advancement exist in the combat arms as opposed to the other branches. Out of the 318 current general officers, 59 percent are from combat arms branches, 13 percent are from combat support, and 12 percent are from combat service support. The remaining 16 percent are divided among Special branches (three percent), U.S. Army Medical Department (four percent), Acquisition (six percent), and Reserve Components serving on active duty (three percent). This pipeline to the senior ranks—i.e., the combat arms—is discussed later in the paper as a critical element in improving racial diversity in the senior ranks of the Army. It should be acknowledged that the assessment of this pipeline is based on analysis of current promotion patterns. As noted further on in this paper, this pipeline may change depending on the direction that the U.S. Army takes with regard to the skill sets required of all officers in the future. It should be noted that this paper intentionally focuses on black male officers rather than other minority groups. The reasoning behind this decision is that if we develop solutions to improve the situation for the largest minority group within the Army (blacks), those solutions will also benefit other minorities, including the second-largest minority group, Hispanics. Also, an emphasis is placed on the combat arms branches because they serve as the predominant pipeline to the senior ranks of the Army.⁹

The Commission on Officer Diversity and Advancement (CODA) developed a number of recommendations that outline a plan for the Army to address diversity issues relating to accessions:

1. Examine the OML process from all commissioning sources to confirm its effect on the branching process and placement of officers in the Army.¹⁰
2. Refine the existing officer branching model to provide a greater spread of quality and diversity across all the branches. The DA G1 is working with the Office of the Judge Advocate General (OTJAG) to incorporate changes to the model in preparation for the next officer Branching cycle.¹¹
3. Cadet Command [should continue to engage] in an aggressive minority marketing campaign designed to influence individual branch preference for the combat arms. USACC (United States Army Accession Command) identified six senior ROTC schools with the highest concentration of African American males and has executed two of six on-campus combat arms briefings at senior ROTC schools to date. Additional briefings will follow the initial pilot. A Hispanic Access Initiative/Hispanic Serving Institution (HAI/HSI) school follow-on effort is also underway.¹²
4. Establish alternatives to bring additional Student Athlete Leaders (SALs) into ROTC programs on campus. Oftentimes this desired type of student we are trying to attract is unable to balance academics, sports and ROTC and opts instead not to enter or continue ROTC.¹³
5. Work closely with Human Resources Command to meet HBCU requests for combat arms officers and NCOs to provide the desired mentorship.¹⁴

The third recommendation made by CODA resonates on a personal level. In the Fall of 2004 while serving as Battalion Commander for the 2nd Battalion 58th Infantry Regiment assigned to the Infantry Training Brigade at Fort Benning Georgia, I was summoned to the deputy Commandants Office and informed that I would participate in visits to HBCUs to provide Combat Arms briefings to cadets. These are the visits cited in paragraph number three of the CODA recommendations quoted above. The HBCUs/Universities targeted included Fort Valley State University, Tuskegee University, Howard University, Morgan State University, South Carolina State University, Florida A&M University and their associated HBCU satellite campuses. I would lead a team of combat arms officers and LTC Matthew Coleman, a Black Infantry Officer then assigned as the Deputy Commander of the 11th Infantry Regiment at Fort Benning Georgia would lead another team. Our “mission” was to lead our teams of officers in visits to the aforementioned HBCUs and speak to the cadets about the benefit of accessing into the combat Arms branches.

COL Reyes states in another published article: “Why is the number of black officers recruited and commissioned insufficient? One problem that needs to be addressed is the lack of combat arms officers in the ROTC classrooms. An ROTC instructor with experience outside of one of the combat arms branches may find it difficult to convince a cadet that he should choose a combat arms branch. According to one professor of military science, low recruitment numbers are also partly the result of signals coming from black communities regarding the war in Iraq. On more than a few occasions, for example, cadets’ ready to join the program would receive a call from a concerned parent and decide to withdraw at the eleventh hour. As noted earlier, low

numbers in the black officer corps, especially in the combat arms branches, may exist for other reasons as well, including the perceived lack of marketability in the civilian sector. (This belief may be unfounded, as employers are often attracted to officers with prior military experience more for their leadership skills and work ethic than for their affiliation with a specific branch of the military.) To address these issues, attention must be paid to influences at the community level. For example, family members, religious leaders, and local politicians can all play an influential role in supporting recruitment efforts; yet, the Army must take the first step and reach out to them. Our ROTC units are doing an outstanding job, but they cannot do it alone. We as an Army must return to our communities and take the lead in teaching and reinforcing the historical contributions of blacks in the military. We do an admirable job during Black History Month, but current circumstances call for an ongoing process of raising awareness. At the same time, we as an institution must ensure that the careers of black officers are as rewarding and upwardly mobile as the careers offered by our competitors in the civilian sector. Black officers must be represented across all ranks of the Army in numbers large enough for them to serve as role models. Young lieutenants and captains just beginning their careers need to be able to see opportunities in the U.S. Army to advance to the higher ranks and to gain valuable experience.”¹⁵

The remarks of COL Reyes are well known to any Black combat arms officer and LTC Coleman and I were no exception as we had discussed this issue at great length over the course of our lengthy friendship. What was deeply disappointing to LTC Coleman and I was our inability to gather copies of reports and research from CODA as we prepared to visit the designated HBCUs. Numerous email queries to our Point of

Contact at CODA (a DA civilian) were rebuffed with cryptic responses about information being *close hold* or otherwise sensitive. This was extremely frustrating and compelled each of us to conclude that the Army was not serious about this endeavor. The deputy commandant at Fort Benning was unable or simply unwilling to do any better. Consequently LTC Coleman and I drew our own conclusions from personal experience and endeavored to do the best that we could in terms of speaking to the cadets.¹⁶

A second disappointment in terms of carrying out the recommendations of CODA came in the way of the combat arms team composition. On each of our visits to the HBCUs, the briefing team was composed of Infantry, Armor and Aviation Officers (all were African American except for one Caucasian female from the Aviation branch). No explanation was afforded as to why Field Artillery, Air Defense Artillery, Special Forces, and Engineer branch representatives were not included.

The final disappointment in regard to carrying out visits to HBCUs in order to compel more cadets to access into the combat arms branches involved the lack of a CODA website or weblink with information accessible to the public at large. This fact, as with the previously discussed paucity of information from the Army Diversity Office (ADO), once again compels the casual observer to ask: what is it that the army is hiding in terms of findings and conclusions conducted by the ADO and CODA? Is the information gleaned by these organizations which are allegedly committed to diversity, so sensitive as to be denied to someone in the possession of TS/SCI as well as Special Access Program (SAP) clearances such as LTC Coleman and myself? As of the publication of this paper there exists no public website for CODA. The same can be said for finding anything of substance in regard to African Americans in the combat

arms on the ADO website. One can only conclude that the Army has something to hide or has a retarded understanding of the utility of Strategic Communication and its criticality to the African American officer candidate that the Army claims to want. It is the year 2008 and the United States Army treats information that could possibly help its recruitment of Black Officers into the combat arms as if it were not critical to the overall diversity of the force.

Black Combat Arms General Officers: Out of sight and out of mind.

As stated previously in the abstract of this paper, it is commonly held by social scientist that young minorities; be they black or otherwise, can derive inspiration in pursuit of a given vocation, by seeing someone of their ethnicity in positions of great authority, serving in said vocation or acting as a mentor. In a study conducted by several to include Mr. David Thomas of the Harvard Business School it was found that “Clearly in terms of objective outcomes, the race of a mentor has been shown to have a strong impact in terms of predicting career outcomes for protégés.”¹⁷

In a 1998 article written for the Strategic Studies Institute COL Andre Sayles writes: “Women and minorities will only know for sure that they can achieve success through hard work if they have seen it done by one of their own. They need to believe that they can be the same, but different and still make it to the top. They need to know that they can be successful without abandoning all of their differences in order to emulate fully the dominant culture. Women and minority role models that go beyond tokenism in an organization prove that stories about glass ceilings and “good old boy” networks are not true. For the Army, these women and minority role models need to be at all levels and in all branches.”¹⁸

In the summer of 1978 my father a career combat arms officer (Infantry and Aviation) was stationed at Fort Bragg North Carolina. I was 14 years old at the time of our arrival and drew immediate inspiration from the man that lived directly across the main post parade field from our home...then MG Roscoe Robinson, who at the time served as the Commanding General of the 82nd Airborne Division. Like the son of many soldiers, I knew well before my teen years that I wanted to be a soldier as my father, grandfather, great grandfather and several uncles had served in the U.S. Army. As the son of parents who knew well the Jim Crow laws of this country in their youth I was acutely aware of the challenges faced down by my parents and other relatives. I was a child who for whom the civil rights movement was not a distant abstract event...it had occurred in my lifetime. Consequently even at a young age I had noticed and rejoiced along with my parents when LTG (ret) Julius Becton was selected to command the 1st Cavalry Division. While still living at Fort Bragg we also were moved when COL (ret) Don Phillips took command of the 3rd United States Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard). These events served as inspiration for the author and other young African Americans interested in an Army career.

These were great events for many African Americans but what we had no way of knowing at the time was that after Roscoe Robinson relinquished command of the 82nd Airborne Division in 1978, it would be 25 years before a Black Man assumed command of an Army Division posted on the Continental United States. This would be LTG Lloyd Austin taking command of the 10th Mountain Division. Eleven African Americans have served as the Commanding General (CG) to United States Army Divisions since 1974¹⁹. These men are outlined in Table 1.

Name	Date & Unit
Harry W. Brooks, Jr.	1974-1976, CG 25 th Infantry Division
Julius Becton	FEB 75 - NOV 76 CG, 1st Cavalry Division
Roscoe Robinson	OCT 76 - DEC 78. CG 82 ND Airborne Division
Henry Doctor	JUL 83 - AUG 85 CG 2 ND Infantry Division, Korea
Calvin Waller	JUL 87 - JUL 89 CG, 8th Infantry Division USAREUR
Michael B. Sherfield	MAY 97 – SEP 98, CG 2 ND Infantry Division, Korea
Larry Ellis	MAY 97 - JUL 99 CG, 1st Armored Division, USAEUR
William Ward	JUL 99 - NOV 00 CG 25 TH Infantry Division
Russel L. Honoré	SEP 00 - JUL 02, CG 2 ND Infantry Division, Korea
Lloyd Austin	SEP 03 - AUG 05 CG, 10 th Mountain Division
John W. Morgan III	NOV 07 – Present CG, 2 nd Infantry Division, Korea

Table 1.

What will immediately strike the African American observer to this list is that the preponderance of Black Division Commanders has executed their duties in either Europe or Korea. Indeed it is a note of dark humor amongst serving black combat arms officers that while we may see men of our race commanding an Army division; that division will most always be overseas and not in the continental United States. One must wonder in regard to commanding the 2nd Infantry Division in Korea...can it be sheer coincidence that black men have commanded the 2nd Infantry Division *four times*. How are African American youth to be inspired by the possibility of commanding an Army Division when few ever see someone who looks like them ethnically command a Division in the continental United States? What does this say about the acumen (or lack thereof) of the men and women in uniform who have led our Accession or Recruiting commands over the years? Do they not detect the disparity and put forth these observations to the Chief of Staff of the Army? Indeed what does this say about

the true level of commitment to Diversity and visibility in regard to the Chiefs of the Army Staff over the past 40 years?

The current Commander of the U.S. Army recruiting command and his immediate predecessor are Black combat arms General Officers. The Commanding General and the deputy Commanding General of U.S. Army Cadet Command are also Black combat arms General Officers. Is there no place in the Operational Army for any of these men? What message does this send to young Black men and women considering the choice of combat arms branches in the Army? One black Combat Arms General Officer has received any level of publicity in the current Global War on Terror. That would be BG Vincent Brooks who served as the CENTCOM spokesman during Operation Iraqi Freedom I. LTG Lloyd Austin, current Commander of U.S. Forces in Iraq is all but invisible in terms of media coverage, which in all fairness has seemed to drop off significantly since the end of the "surge".²⁰ Is this a function of the changing dynamics in Iraq or is this a failure in terms of U.S. Army public affairs? The bottom line is that the average Black High School or College student will seldom if ever see a person of their ethnicity featured in military media reports. Those few black combat arms officers who ascend to the higher levels of rank in the United States Army remain all but invisible. Is this happenstance or by design? If the Army is serious about diversity, then perhaps it will learn to pay a modicum of attention to the assignment and posting of Black Combat Arms Officers so that said postings may lend a residual hand to the recruiting and accession of Black Combat Arms Officers.

One final note on the Black Combat Arms General Officer; until this small group decides to publicly bring to light the disparity of Black Representation in the combat

arms nothing will ever change. Efforts by Congressman James E. Clyburn and other members of the Congressional Black Caucus²¹ are not enough. It will take the public courage of Black Combat Arms General Officers to find their voices and publish articles in professional and National Media journals that speak to the lack of Black Combat Arms officers. To date Black General Officers who emanated from the combat arms branches have not found their public voice. It can be argued that if Black General Officers begin to speak publicly the effects will be to compel the Army to work harder in order to access more Black Americans into the combat arms branches and also raise the level of awareness in the Black community and public at large.

This project began by listing several similar projects written by African American Officers which addressed in some shape form or fashion the inability of the Army and Armed forces at large to set the conditions for success amongst African American officers. It is neither my intent nor desire to once again cover the ground that my predecessors have covered. Especially in the context of an academic exercise which yields little in terms of public or intra Army discussion. After having read all of the aforementioned papers and many of the attributed documents I have come to a simple conclusion. The inequities in terms of Black Combat Arms Officers represent a challenge that our Army is not able or willing to overcome. It appears that until the demographic/ethnic landscape of this nation changes little will improve for the man or woman of color aspiring to a career in the United States Army Combat Arms Branches. Consequently my singular recommendation is that serving African American Combat Arms officers do all that they can to dissuade young Black men and women from accessing into the combat arms branches. The obvious affect will be that the

Operational Army will not look like America, but one can make a strong argument that this is currently the case. Army senior leadership has had many years to address this issue but shows no inclination to seriously do so.

Additionally, the author has undertaken a letter writing campaign (with the assistance of several peers) to the Professors of Military Science at HBCUs which encourages the PMS and their staffs to push accession into the Operations Support or Force Sustainment branches by the cadets at their institutions. A cursory (albeit unscientific) look at the General Officer Management page in the Army Knowledge Online (AKO) website will validate this course of action since it is clear that a Black American has a better chance of attaining General Officer rank in the Operations Support or Force Sustainment branches than he or she ever will as a combat arms officer. Additionally those opting for accession into the Operations Support or Force Sustainment branches will be armed with a technical skill (Communications, Logistics, Transportation, etc.) to go along with the leadership experience so coveted by the private industry. There simply is no reason to continue to encourage African Americans to pursue service in the combat arms branches, and those attempting to, even in the year 2008 are wasting their efforts.

In 2008 many Army Divisions have yet to have an African American (or for that matter Hispanic, Asian, etc.) commander. The U.S. Army War College (another General Officer (GO) billet typically reserved for a combat arms officer has yet to have an African American Commander. The 3rd United States Infantry (The Old Guard), arguably the most “high visibility” unit in regard to recruiting and accession has had one

Black Commander, 26 long years ago. The 82nd Airborne Division had its token black thirty long years ago.

The day will ultimately come that sees African Americans raise to the senior ranks of the combat arms branches in other than token numbers, but until that day African Americans will find the more level playing field in the Operations Support or Force Sustainment branches. Attempts to find success at the senior levels in the United States Army combat arms branches will have to wait for the time being.

Endnotes

¹ Emmett E. Burke, *Black Officer Under-representation in Combat Arms Branches*, Monograph (School of Advanced Military Studies June 2002).

² Harry S. Truman, *Executive Order 9981* (Washington D.C: The White House, 26 July 1948).

³ Army Diversity Office (ADO) Army G-1 Human Resources, <http://www.armyg1.army.mil/hr/ado.asp>. (accessed January 8, 2008)

⁴ J.D. Leipold, "General Casey announces creation of Diversity Task Force," Army News Service, December 3, 2007.

⁵ Julia Luscher Thompson, "Using Social Media to Reach Young Readers," Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard, Spring 2009, <http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reportsitem.aspx?id=100940> (accessed MARCH 4, 2009)

⁶ General George Casey and Secretary of the Army Pete Geren, 2008 Army Posture Statement, February 26 2008.

⁷ Colonel Anthony Reyes, "Strategic Options for Managing Diversity in the U.S. Army," Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, June 2006.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Colonel Anthony Reyes, "Addressing the Challenge of Black Officer Underrepresentation in the Senior Ranks of the U.S. Army"; Joint Center for Economic and Political Studies, July-August edition 2006.

¹⁶ The author has made numerous attempts over the years to obtain a copy of the CODA report for personal research and education. On March 31, 2009 the author spoke face to face with COL John McPhaul, Chief of Staff of the Army Diversity Office (ADO) and asked for assistance in obtaining the report. This discussion took place during a visit to the USAWC by the Commander of the ADO, BG Belinda Pinckney. On April 8, 2009, due to the efforts of COL McPhaul, the author finally received an email copy of the report from COL David Glover, US Army Accessions Command.

¹⁷ David Thomas, Audrey Murrell, and Stacy Blake-Beard, "Unfinished Business: The impact of Race on Understanding Mentoring Relationships", July 2006, <http://www.hbs.edu/research/pdf/06-060.pdf> (accessed March 3 2009).

¹⁸ COL Andre Sayles, "On Diversity" Strategic Studies Institute, USAWC, July 1998 http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/ssi/on_diversity.pdf (accessed February 12 2009)

¹⁹ General Officer Management Office, <https://www.us.army.mil/suite/portal/index.jsp> (accessed January 2 2009)

²⁰ Sherry Ricchiardi, "Whatever Happened to Iraq? How the media lost interest in a long running war with no end in sight," American Journalism Review, June/July 2008.

²¹ James E. Clyburn, "House Armed Services Committee (HASC) Approves Senior Military Officer Diversity Commission; Increases Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps Units," House Armed Services Committee press release, May 15, 2008.

