

The Informer



From the Chair

By Tommy Simpson III, Department of Health, Health Services Consultant, US Army Veteran

February is here already?! If you're like me, you've probably already abandoned your New Year's resolution(s), and resolved to salvage what's left over the remaining 11 months – good luck with that!

February is also Black History month. This year's theme, which is published annually by the [Association for the Study of African American Life and History](#) (ASALH) is entitled, "African Americans in Times of War." The theme commemorates the centennial of the end of the First World War in 1918, and explores a broad range of concepts, while providing a useful framework for focusing on the roles of African Americans in every American war, from the Revolutionary War Era, to that of the present "Global War on Terrorism of GWOT."¹ You can read more about this in one of two featured articles in the newsletter. If I may embark on even earlier times in our illustrious U.S. military history, there were an estimated 186,097 (7,122 officers, 178,975 enlisted) African American men, comprising 163 units, who served in the Union Army, and many more who served in the Union Navy during the Civil War. Truly, the military history of African Americans spans from the arrival of the first enslaved Africans during the colonial history of the United States to the present day. In every war fought by or within the United States, African Americans participated, including the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Mexican–American War, the Civil War, the Spanish–American War, the World Wars, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as other minor conflicts.² It's important that we as Americans not forget, and or take for granted, the freedoms and opportunities we so enjoy today because of those who paved the way. We also remember the hardships suffered throughout such as racial segregation, discrimination, and numerous other inequalities.

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As we reflect on some of the great leaders and ground-breaking individuals who will be highlighted and celebrated this month, I would be remiss if we didn't pay tribute to some of the great and inspiring African/Black American women who have taken up the call-to-arms to defend the American way of life, hope and prosperity. Women such as, Cathay Williams (September 1844 - 1893) was an American soldier who enlisted in the United States Army under the pseudonym William Cathay. Cathay was the first African-American woman to enlist, and the only documented female in our military history, to serve in the armed forces posing as a man.³ Indeed there are many others to be mentioned, but for sake of brevity, I challenge each of us to do a little research and learn more about the sacrifices African/Black American women have made in defense of our nation both at war, and peacetime. Their contributions may have gone largely unrecognized and unrewarded until more recently portrayed by Hollywood. Unlike their Caucasian counterparts who equally share a history of discrimination based on gender, black women (and other female minorities), have faced both race and gender discrimination. Through their perseverance, while initially barred from official military status, black women have vigorously pursued their right to serve, and excel in service to their country. Just ask, Admiral Michelle Howard-first African American female and current Vice Chief of Naval Operations; LTG Nadja West-first African American female and current U.S. Army Surgeon General; LTG Gwen Sandra Bingham-2nd African American female and current U.S. Army Assistant Chief of Staff for Installation Management; and MG Marcia Anderson-first African American female general in the U.S. Army Reserves! This list is not exhaustive by any means, and merely demonstrate how far our military has progressed with regards to diversity, inclusion and gender equality.

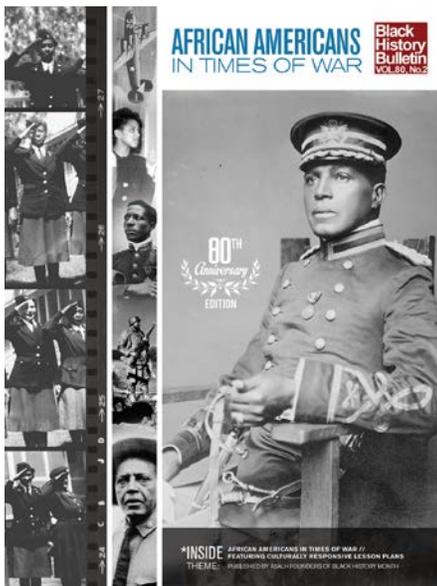
Thank you again for all you do for each other and our fellow veterans and their families!

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Feature Article: The VERG Celebrates Black History Month

By Richard Worthy, Department of Enterprise Services (DES), Contracting Specialist, US Army Veteran



The 2018 Black History theme, “African Americans in Times of War,” commemorates the centennial of the end of the First World War in 1918 and explores the complex meanings and implications of this international struggle and its aftermath. The First World War was initially termed by many as “The Great War,” “The War to End All Wars,” and the war “to make the world safe for democracy.”⁴

The military history of African Americans is a rich one indeed. In WW I, worthy contributions were made to America’s war effort and one outstanding example was the 369th Infantry Regiment (known as the “Harlem Hellfighters”), which served on the front lines for six months, longer than any other American unit in the war and made notable due to the fact they had received less training. During this time, the unit never lost any prisoners or territory to the enemy. France awarded the entire unit with Croix de Guerre, that country’s highest military honor and 171 members of the unit were awarded the Legion of Merit.⁵ Corporal Freddie Stowers of the “Red Handed Division”, was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.⁶ In WW II, 125,000 African Americans served their country overseas honorably. Famous segregated units, such as the Tuskegee and 761 Tank Battalion and the lesser-known but equally distinguished 452nd Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion, proved their value in combat, leading to desegregation of all U.S. Armed Forces by order of President Harry S. Truman via Executive Order 9981, July 1948.⁷

In 1991, forty years after military segregation ended, Colin L. Powell, the first African American to serve as Chairman of the Joints Chief of Staff, the highest military post in the Department of the Defense, oversaw Desert Storm in Iraq.⁸

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Feature Article: Conversations around Diversity AND Inclusion, Equity, and Ethics in the Workplace

By Tommy Simpson III, Department of Health, Health Services Consultant, US Army Veteran

Washington State as a whole, specifically state-agencies, are committed to creating a diverse and inclusive environment for all employees. As both service providers and employers, affinity groups such as Employee Resource and Business Resource Groups (ERGs/BRGs), are formed at the statewide level to bring together employees from multiple agencies to collaborate and work on a number of initiatives and strategies. Appointed leaders, guests speakers and general attendees are brought together from aforementioned groups which include the Veterans Employee Resource Group (VERG), the LGBTQ+BRG, the Latino Leadership Network (LLN), the Interagency Committee of State Employed Women (ICSEW), the Washington Immigrant Network (WIN), the BRG for Persons with Disabilities and select representatives from the Office of Financial Management (OFM) who work alongside the ERGs/BRGs. Unity is more than creating an environment where people are comfortable being themselves; it also encompasses celebrating their identities and unique traits. In addition, the State wants to build a culture where people don't make assumptions or pass judgment on each other (i.e., if a person chooses to tell you their pronouns in their signature line or otherwise, they are simply letting you know how you can refer to them, without you having to make any assumptions). Finally, we are striving for a diverse workforce free of sexual harassment and discrimination.

The Interagency Committee of State Employed Women (ICSEW) has extended a wonderful opportunity to bring all the ERGs/BRGs together and begin collaboration efforts across the groups. The meeting, March 20, 2018, Department of Labor & Industries, 7273 Linderson Way SW, Tumwater, 8am-4pm is open to ALL state employees and lunch is free and will be catered. You can RSVP by clicking [HERE](#) and be sure to ask your supervisor to attend!

Finally, to learn and understand more about what it means to be "Gender Inclusive", and just what "Gender Inclusive Pronouns" are, visit "[Bottom Line](#)" and thanks for all you do every day to make all Washington State Agencies, "Employers of Choice" for everyone!⁹

Sources:

^{1 4} ASALH Announces 2018 Black History Theme, *African Americans in Times of War*

^{2 7} From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, *Military history of African Americans in the American Civil War*

³ From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, *Cathay Williams*

⁶ From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, *Freddie Stowers*

^{8 8} PBS History Detectives Special Investigation Series, *African-Americans In Combat*

⁹ *Bottom Line, Support of Gender Inclusive Pronouns*

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Meet our new Co-Chair



By Christine Dominguez, Labor and Industries (LNI), Staffing Consultant / Human Resources Consultant, 'Military kid'

Hello, I am honored and humbled to have been elected by my peers to serve as your new VERG Co-Chair! I felt it would be important to give you a little insight to who I am and where I come from. I have been in State government for a little over 5 years now. I got my start through an on-call Office Assistant position with the Department of Transportation. I was one of Chuck Johnson's first hires (so he gets credit for my start on this crazy career life as a recruiter). From there I was lucky enough to do a project in their OHR with their Training Development Team and also assisted in recruitment. My background is actually in art and design with a degree in News & Social Media, and I've had quite the crazy path determining

where my motivation for a career comes from. From being an event planner for South Puget Sound Community College to being an Activities Director for Alzheimer's and Dementia... I've learned life is unexpected and I enjoy positions that provide opportunity for the greater good. Public Service is my home, and Art is a passion. Two years ago, I made the decision to work for Labor & Industries and the growth that has happened with my career and ability to concentrate on the things I believe matter has been overwhelmingly great. I was given the opportunity to take on Military outreach and be our department's liaison. The amount of support, education, and encouragement I see and have experienced through this hits me right in the heart. I am a military kid: my dad served in the US Army, and my mother was a civil servant RN overseas and at Madigan. I was briefly a National Guardsman spouse and have always had a heart to work towards building a relationship between OUR military communities with our civilian one. I am highly motivated and excited about Human Resources and Recruitment, hiring veterans, and I have an inexhaustible drive to provide excellent customer service, meet a client's needs in a quick, clear, and concise way, and help them find their own career paths and excitement in their work. I believe in maintaining a positive management/working relationship with staff and outside stakeholders regardless of challenges presented. I am highly capable of working in high stress environments in a flexible, adaptable, and courageous way, and hope to serve this committee with that same attention.

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2017 VERG Employer of the Year

By Betty DeVos, Department of Revenue (DOR), Talent & Retention Manager, Military Spouse



Just before we adjourned for Winter break nominations were submitted for five agencies competing for the 2017 VERG Employer of the Year award. The award recognizes the efforts of state agency employers who are creative and innovative in increasing opportunities and initiatives to support Governor Executive Order 13-01. Among nominees this year were, Edmonds Community College, Department of Licensing, Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Revenue and of course, the Department of Labor and Industries (L&I). All boasting positive steps forward in assisting transitioning military service members.

VERG Chair, Dennis Leischner, presented the award to Director of L&I, Joel Sacks and Deputy Directors Ernie LaPalm and Randi Warick at an L&I event that included over 100 audience members in November. In accepting the award, Director Sacks immediately thanked the individuals of L&I for their great strides in Veterans outreach and employment. He also emphasized that it was “not just a policy that moved the efforts forward, but each individual buying in that made the efforts successful.” Dennis also commented that “everyone cheered loudly at the presentation, and it was heartening to see how invested people are in assisting veterans”.



Among the agency’s notable accomplishments was the career event hosted specifically for Veterans at the L&I headquarters building in Tumwater. Event planners coordinated with 24 state agencies to maximize opportunities for attendees and arranged to have a successfully transitioned speakers address the audience in easing transition concerns and navigating state employment process. Unlike many career events however, hosts regularly reach back out to the over 60 military service members who attended to see how they’re faring in their career searches and offer assistance as they continue with the transition into civilian sector. A show of true support! Congratulations to L&I.

Special thanks to VERG members Marika Barto, Don Chavez, Ashley Harris, Janet Kurz, and Tim Strickler for your work on evaluating nominations this year!

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Veterans Spotlight – Department of Health

By Kenneth Coleman, Department of Health (DOH), Communications Consultant, US National Guard / US Air Force / US Army veteran



Kenneth (Kenny) Coleman, was hired on Jan 18, as a Communications Consultant 5, within Health Systems Quality Assurance, Office of the Assistant Secretary. Kenny attended his very first VERG meeting October last year and applied for his current position soon after! In his own words, Kenny has this to share: “I was raised in Maryland, so I hail from the east coast, but Tennessee is as much my home as anywhere else. I am married to my high school sweetheart (Cindy) 30 years this May!

I have two daughters - Brittany and Shelby, and two granddaughters – Noemi and Ivette. I have a bachelor’s and master’s degree from East Tennessee State University (Go Bucs!) with a concentration in Digital Media.

I served in the Maryland and Tennessee Army National Guard before beginning active duty in the U.S. Air Force (intelligence analyst) and U.S. Army (Logistician and Public Affairs Officer) and retired in July 2016. I received basic and advanced course Public Affairs training at the Defense Information School in Maryland. I served overseas in Korea, Malaysia, Japan and Afghanistan.

I love to tinker and research. Enjoy sports and gaming. I like to run, play tennis and volleyball. I enjoy hiking and travel. I love board and card games and have a very small group of authors I read.

I am excited to begin the next chapter of my life as a state employee and looking forward to interacting and working with fellow VERG members and volunteers across our great state!”

Upcoming Events

WDVA Events Calendar	Continuously updated		Locations vary	http://www.dva.wa.gov/calendar
Employment Security Department IT Career Fair	Monday, 2/5/2018	3:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.	SPSCC (Lacey Campus), 4220 6 th Ave SE, Lacey, WA 98503	https://esd.wa.gov/paid-family-medical-leave/employment-opportunities
WA ST Employment Workshop & Recruitment Event	Thursday 2/8/2018	12:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Auditorium, Bud Hawk Transition Center, North Fort Lewis, 11577 41 st Division Dr	Contact Don Chavez @ Don.Chavez@OFM.WA.GOV
JBLM Military Spouse Hiring Event	Thursday, 2/22/2018	10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.	Amer. Lk. Conf. Ctr, 8085 NCO Beach Rd, JBLM, WA 98438	https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/event/joint-base-lewis-mcchord-military-spouse-hiring-event

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Announcements, Tools & Resources

Active Military and Veterans Services: It's estimated that within King County there are 127,000 veterans who have served the U.S. Military. Of these, 20,000 veterans have likely experienced Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) or Military Sexual Trauma (MST). Based on national trends, there may be as many as 12,000 of those who are reluctant to seek treatment or support. There are also many thousands of veterans who are experiencing homelessness, poverty and/or unemployment. Additionally, every year up to a thousand veterans return home to King County and face significant transitional challenges due to unemployment and/or serious disabilities.

NAMI Homefront online program: Is a free, 6-session program for family, friends and significant others of military Service Members and Veterans. The class helps families understand what the Service Member/ Veteran is experiencing related to trauma, combat stress, civilian life transition, PTSD and other mental health conditions. The program is designed to help family members understand and support their Service Member/Veteran while maintaining their own well-being. NAMI Homefront leaders have personal experience with mental health conditions impacting their Service Member/ Veteran. The class is free but you are expected to attend all six sessions. You must have access to a laptop, PC or tablet with a stable internet connection to participate. Audio will be telephone, a headset or headphones with microphone are recommended.

For the Pacific Coast, the program will be on Mondays, 6:30 - 8:30 PM, from 02/19/2018 - 03/26/2018. For more information and how to register online, click on the link provided above.

Pacific Mountain Work Force Development: The PacMountain WDC has developed a series of excellent career pathway videos which are available on their [primary website](#), and also has been uploaded to [YouTube](#) for easier individual video usage. Two of the videos focus on connecting military families (1 for veterans and another for spouses) to the American Job Center network, and the rest are more geared to specific industries/careers. Per [Sean Murphy](#), Associate Director – Strategic Initiatives and ESD Partner, “The spouse video is my favorite!”

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[WSAC/SAA pledges to support Guard and Reserve Personnel:](#) The Washington Student Achievement Council's State Approving Agency recently received a Statement of Support for the Guard and Reserve from the ESGR ([Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve](#)). Mr. Wayne Hilton, South Sound Area Chair of the ESGR, presented the document to WSAC/SAA staff and leadership.

This represents a Pledge for the WSAC to recognize and support is current and future employees in the National Guard and Reserve. It was signed by the Secretary of Defense, James Mattis.

WSAC pledges to support our country's Service members and their families in peace, in crisis and in war.



[NASAA - Vets Education](#) is with [Laura Bach](#) and [Gary Allin](#) at [Washington Student Achievement Council](#).

[WA Pathways to Employment \(Veterans Pages\):](#) Each year thousands of disabled military personnel return to the civilian labor force seeking rewarding and meaningful work. The resources in these pages can help you in your job search and your transition to civilian life.

[Working for Washington State:](#) Check out state employment opportunities and sign up for daily job postings sent to your email inbox.



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Contact us if you have a relevant news story, idea(s), and or general information to share and the Communications Team will take action!

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