



MISSION: READINESS

MILITARY LEADERS FOR KIDS

Strengthening National Security through Racial Equity

Who We Are

Mission: Readiness is the nonprofit, nonpartisan national security organization of more than 300 retired generals, admirals and other senior military leaders calling for smart investments in America's children. It operates under the umbrella nonprofit Council for a Strong America.

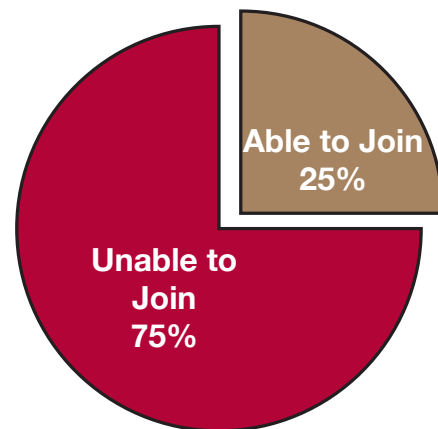


The dedicated men and women who serve our country in the Armed Forces are the backbone of our national security—even more so than the ships, aircraft, tanks and weaponry. The United States military maintains rigorous eligibility standards because it needs competent, healthy and educated young men and women to fill the ranks of the most professional, respected and technologically-advanced military in the world.

Leadership at the Department of Defense (DoD) believes that recruiting the widest possible pool of talent is a national security issue. As stated in the Department's recent *Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan 2012-2017*, "It is critical that DoD strive to have a Total Force that not only possesses the diverse backgrounds and experiences to meet the complex challenges of the future global security environment, but that also reflects the face of the nation."

Unfortunately, many young Americans who want to join the Armed Forces cannot. Startling statistics released by the DoD show that 75 percent of all young people ages 17 to 24 are currently unable to enlist in the United States military. The most common barriers for potential recruits are insufficient education, poor physical fitness or a criminal record.

75 Percent of Young Americans Cannot Join the Military



17- to 24-year-old Americans

Source: Dr. Curtis Gilroy, Director of Accessions Policy, U.S. Department of Defense

While these obstacles are a concern for young people from every walk of life, they are even more serious for many young men and women of color. For instance, in 2009 the DoD's Military Leadership Diversity Commission found that up to 80 percent of age-eligible minorities do not meet the qualifications for the Marines.

In the last 60 years, the U.S. military has been a leader in increasing opportunities for millions of Americans by aggressively recruiting a diverse force. In 1948, President Truman charted the course toward ending public discrimination with his landmark Executive Order 9981, which abolished racial discrimination in the military and was a major step toward ending segregation in the Armed Forces.



Diversity is a Strategic Imperative to the Department of Defense

As the Department of Defense's *Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan* states:

We defend the greatest nation in the world – a democracy founded on the promise of opportunity for all. It is a nation whose demographic makeup parallels the environment in which we live – continually changing – and DoD must change to maintain and sustain its future forces. To the degree we truly represent our democracy, we are a stronger, and more relevant force... It is critical that DoD strive to have a Total Force that not only possesses the diverse backgrounds and experiences to meet the complex challenges of the future global security environment, but that also reflects the face of the nation.

The reality, however, is that too many young Americans cannot join. While our nation has made strides towards providing equal opportunities, even twice electing an African-American president, it is clear that young people of color still face many hurdles in society that adversely affect their ability to qualify for the Armed Forces. For instance, the Education Trust, an organization that works to improve academic achievement levels, says African American and Latino students have made little progress in 12th-grade reading scores since 1994, and continue to lag behind white students. Math achievement has also remained flat, as the

"Good for America – that must be the measure for all that we do – whether it's economic policy or military strategy or seeing what we can do to make our American family more inclusive."

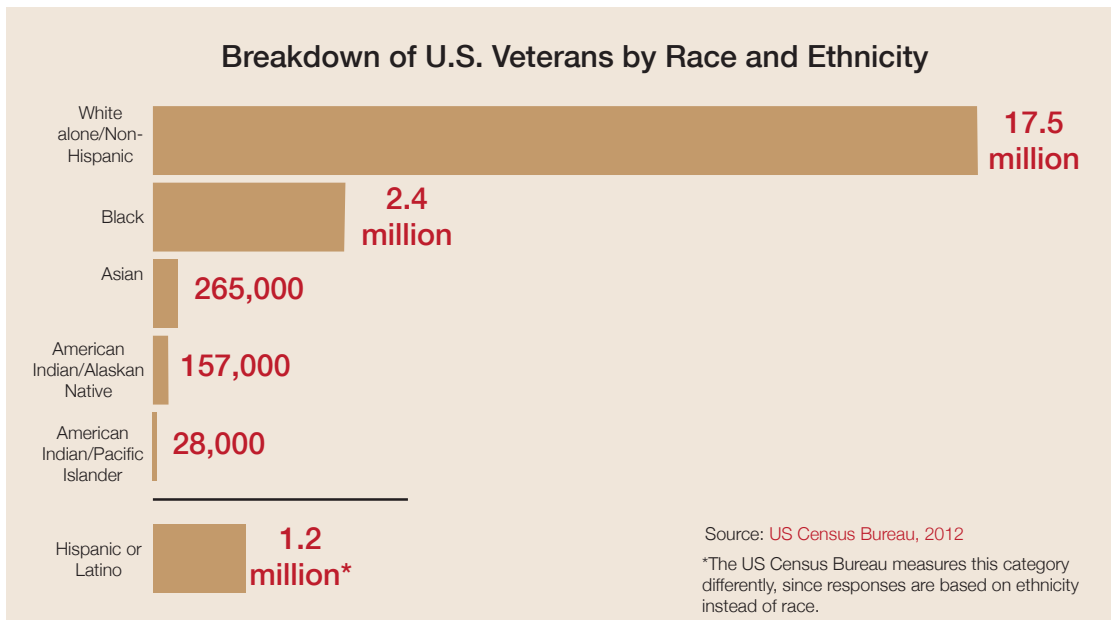
– General Colin Powell,
US Army (Ret.)

gap between white students and those of color has widened. In fact, on average, African-American and Latino high school seniors perform math and reading at the same level as 13-year-old white students. It is these types of disparities that must be addressed to increase the pool of young people eligible to join the military.

The Department of Defense Was One of the First Major Institutions to Desegregate

Strides have been made by many organizations in the civilian sector, but the U.S. Department of Defense was one of the first major institutions in the United States to desegregate. On July 26, 1948, President Truman charted the course toward desegregating America with Executive Order 9981, forbidding discrimination against military personnel because of race, color, religion, or national origin. His order stated:

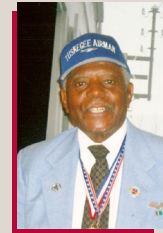
Breakdown of U.S. Veterans by Race and Ethnicity





How Military Service Can Make a Difference

Dr. Eugene Richardson, Jr. was one of the Tuskegee airmen whose path-breaking service during World War II helped lead the way to the integration of the military and other gains in civil rights following the war. Richardson flew P-40 and P-47 aircrafts. After the war he used the G.I. Bill to help pay for a college education, eventually earning a doctorate in education. Dr. Richardson worked for thirty-five years in the Philadelphia school system as both a teacher and principal. He remains active as a speaker committed to seeing that all children have the opportunity to pursue their dreams.



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.

The U.S. military has made tremendous progress since President Truman's directive more than 60 years ago. In fact, in the military, there are large units composed mostly of whites led by people of color and there are large units composed mostly of men led by women. This is a testament to the DoD's focus on equal opportunity in the Armed Forces.

According to a 2008 study of over 30,000 active duty personnel, the Armed Forces' social hierarchy—explicitly based on rank—overrides many of the racial or gender biases in civilian society, which tend to act as barriers for minorities and women in career advancement. Researchers looked at five measurements of career satisfaction, including

overall quality of life and opportunities for advancement, and found African-American women to be the most positive and satisfied with their jobs, followed by African-American men, Latinas, Latinos, white women and, lastly, white men.

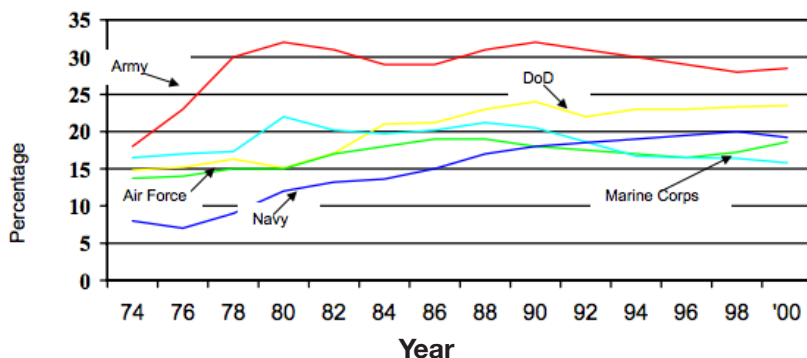
Moreover, *Newsweek* magazine cites the research of University of Massachusetts sociologist Jennifer Hickey Lundquist indicating that:

Overall, there's a very clear contrast in job satisfaction between civilian and military society, and it seems to come down to the military's meritocratic structure. In the Armed Forces people of color and women see much of the racial bias and outright discrimination that still exist in civil society rendered irrelevant.

Promotions and pay scales are all based on rank; equal employment regulations make it difficult to take much else into consideration.

The Department of Defense has provided opportunities for millions of Americans through its recruiting of a diverse and effective force. For our nation to dramatically increase the number of young people who can qualify for military service, it will require not only continued efforts by the DoD, but partnership with and leadership from other sectors of American society. Working across the public and private sectors, we can strive to implement measures that will continue the military's ability to recruit diverse members and strengthen our democracy.

African-Americans as Percent of the Active Duty Enlisted Force, by Service



Source: Defense Manpower Data Center



“Diversity is more than simply representing the American population – it is about a more effective military capability through inclusion – recognizing, and fully utilizing the wide range of talents, skills and abilities of our service members. This is a national security issue requiring the attention and collected effort of top public officials.”

– General Lester Lyles
US Air Force (Ret.)
Chairman, Military Leadership
Diversity Commission



How We Can Help Address this National Security Challenge

As retired generals and admirals, we recognize that achieving racial equity will be challenging. However, we must:

- 1) Continue to take steps to eliminate both conscious and unconscious bias from the Armed Forces and promote diversity as described in the DoD’s *Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan* and in the Military Leadership Diversity Commission’s (MLDC) full recommendations, which are available at: http://mldc.whs.mil/download/documents/Final%20Report/MLDC_Final_Report.pdf
- 2) As community and national leaders, join in the efforts of Mission: Readiness by supporting public investments in vulnerable children – such as quality early childhood education, obesity prevention and good nutrition – proven to reduce barriers to achievement, improve outcomes for young children, and help them grow up to be healthy, educated, and law-abiding young adults ready, willing and able to serve, either in the military or in any other careers they may choose.
- 3) As individuals, facilitate the difficult but essential discussions about race that can increase our understanding of unconscious bias and “put racism in front of us, so we can put racism behind us.”

Conclusion

When all Americans have a level playing field, our nation is stronger. If we have an honest dialogue and work together to tackle the challenges ahead, we will help young people succeed and strengthen our national security.

The Department of Defense views diversity as a strategic imperative. Diverse backgrounds and experiences bring inherently different outlooks and ways of thinking, the key to innovation in organizations. We gain a strategic advantage by leveraging the diversity of all members and creating an inclusive environment in which each member is valued and encouraged to provide ideas... Valuing diversity is not simply the right thing to do. Leveraging diversity ensures we maintain the competitive advantage – an adaptable, innovative Total Force capable of meeting current and future operational demands.

Source: US Dept. of Defense *Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan 2012-2017*