

DEOMI News Highlights

DEOMI News Highlights is a weekly compilation of published items and commentary with focus on equal opportunity, equal employment opportunity, diversity, culture, and human relations issues. The DEOMI News Highlights is also a management tool intended to serve the informational needs of equity professionals and senior DOD officials in the continuing assessment of defense policies, programs, and actions. Further reproduction or redistribution for private use or gain is subject to original copyright restrictions.

First Woman Installed as Head of U.S. Military Service Academy [Stephanie Reitz, *Associated Press*, 4 June 2011]

- One of the earliest female graduates of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy returned yesterday to take over its top spot, becoming the first woman selected to lead one of the nation's five military service academies.
- Rear Admiral Sandra Stosz was installed as the academy's 40th superintendent in a change-of-command ceremony on the New London campus. She graduated from the academy in 1982, the third class to include female cadets.
- This fall's incoming class has the most cultural and ethnic diversity in the academy's history.

[First woman installed as head of U.S. military service academy \(CG\)](#)

Combat Stress Same for Men, Women, Study Finds [UPI, *Military.com*, 8 June 2011]

- Men, as expected, reported more exposure to combat and battle aftermath, as well as difficult living conditions, just based on the number of each gender serving in the military operations.
- "The fact that these differences were relatively small, however, suggests that women's exposure to these stressors in [Iraq and Afghanistan] may be, on average, only slightly lower than men's exposure on average," the study said.
- The findings are particularly significant given recent calls for the Pentagon to reverse its long-standing policy barring women from ground combat.

[Combat Stress Same for Men, Women, Study Finds](#)

Policy Changes Consider Troops, Families, Official Says [Lisa Daniel, *American Forces Press Service*, 8 May 2011]

- The Pentagon Office for Personnel and Readiness and the programs it oversees will not be immune from Defense Department efficiency initiatives, but will keep troops and their families at the forefront in the consideration of changes, the office's top civilian leader said.
- "Not a day goes by that we don't ask how we can help our troops. Accountability – that's critical to what we're doing, and making sure we're relevant," said Clifford L. Stanley, Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.
- One area Stanley and his staff are working on is reforming the department's "talent management," or personnel system. "It's about having the right people in the right places at the right time for the right kinds of missions," he said. "We don't have that right now."

[Policy Changes Consider Troops, Families, Official Says](#)

DEOMI News Highlights

Diversity

[Giving Americans With Disabilities the Chance to Work](#)

Human Relations

[First woman installed as head of US military service academy \(CG\)](#)
[Plessy and Ferguson: Descendants of a divisive Supreme Court decision unite](#)
[Why Wounded Warriors Sleep In Dumpsters](#)

Miscellaneous

[Combat Stress Same for Men, Women, Study Finds](#)
[Policy Changes Consider Troops, Families, Official Says](#)
[Stanley Draws From Military Experience as Civilian Leader](#)
[States Look to Guarantee Civility at Military Funerals](#)

Misconduct

[6 USS Patriot crewmembers guilty of hazing](#)
[Maltreated and hazed, one soldier is driven to take his own life](#)

Racism

[Don't Call Them 'Post-Racial.' Millennials Say Race Matters to Them](#)
[Racism remains an issue in Cuba, officials say](#)

Sexual Assault / Harassment

[Report reveals sexual assaults at veterans facilities](#)

Diversity

Giving Americans With Disabilities the Chance to Work

Jim Gibbons, President and CEO, Goodwill Industries International

Huffington Post, June 6, 2011

One of the first jobs I ever performed was as a janitor, cleaning offices. Today, I'm the CEO of an international nonprofit that serves nearly 2.5 million people each year. My journey from janitor to CEO presented many moments when I had to convince potential employers that I was the right person for the job. This is tough for anyone, but at points it was especially difficult for me -- I'm blind, and this often made employers skeptical about my ability to get the job done.

For the 54 million Americans with disabilities, the hardest part of making a living often isn't succeeding at work -- it's convincing employers to give you a chance. Americans with disabilities are almost twice as likely as anyone else to be unemployed. This isn't because they don't want to work or can't -- it's because employers often do not believe they have the skills needed to get the job done.

Fortunately, there are many workers proving those beliefs wrong every day. At Goodwill Industries, I get to meet a lot of those people. One of them is Michael Bulling of Tacoma, Wash. Michael was born extremely premature, weighing less than two pounds, and was diagnosed with cerebral palsy and a learning disorder. Despite his disability, he worked hard and graduated from high school, but he was unable to find a job.

Then, three years ago, after enrolling in a job training course at Goodwill, Michael was offered a job as a custodian at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. He eagerly accepted it, even though he has to travel by bus, making multiple transfers, to reach the airport every day from his home in a suburban area of Tacoma. With 30 million people passing through the terminal each year, Michael's job is physically taxing -- he sweeps, washes chairs, dusts and replenishes supplies, among other tasks. But Michael has performed this work for three years, impressing coworkers and supervisors alike with his dedication to the job and determination to build a stable life for himself. He spends his spare time giving motivational speeches at local Boys & Girls Clubs and other organizations. Eventually, he hopes to work as a consultant to help others with disabilities.

On the other side of Washington State, there's Chad Christman, another man who didn't let skepticism about his ability get in the way of his desire to work. When he was four months old, Chad was on a drive with his parents, sitting on his mother's lap in the passenger seat, when the car was t-boned and he was thrown from the vehicle. Chad spent much of his childhood in and out of hospitals. He was fitted for leg and back braces and had a metal rod inserted in his back. He was never able to walk, but he does have upper-body mobility.

Throughout all of this, Chad developed a strong sense of exploration and innovation, especially with computers; he would take them apart and put them back together, trying to make them work, eventually building his own computer network at home. But employment was another story. He landed job interviews, but he did not receive job offers.

In 2005, Chad found a job with Goodwill Industries of the Inland Northwest. In his first position, his computer skills were not exercised -- his main responsibility was sorting toys -- but supervisors soon recognized his unique skills and put them to good use. Today, he is the IT administrator for Goodwill, maintaining servers and assisting more than 240 computer users.

This year, Goodwill Industries International is recognizing Michael as its Kenneth Shaw Graduate of the Year and Chad as its Achiever of the Year. Michael and Chad succeeded because of their own hard work and determination, but also because they found employers that knew their disabilities wouldn't stop them from performing on the job. Unfortunately, too many of the other 54 million Americans with disabilities never get the chance to work, because when employers look at

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-gibbons/giving-americans-with-dis b 869121.html>

them, they often see only a wheelchair, or cerebral palsy, or blindness, or a hearing impairment or other disability. Chad's and Michael's employers looked beyond their disabilities and saw two individuals with unique skills and outstanding work ethics. They also know that employing people with disabilities isn't about doing anyone a favor; it's quite the opposite, as they'd be hard pressed if they lost either of these dedicated employees.

Other employers who have hired Americans with disabilities report similar findings: people with disabilities are hardworking, motivated and enthusiastic about doing a good job, and it costs little to nothing to accommodate them in the workplace. Those who have hesitated to hire a person because the candidate has a disability should keep in mind the unique contributions these individuals can make, and remember that every person deserves the opportunity to reach their fullest potential through the power of work.

Human Relations

http://www.boston.com/news/local/connecticut/articles/2011/06/04/first_woman_installed_as_head_of_us_military_service_academy/

First woman installed as head of US military service academy

By Stephanie Reitz, Associated Press
Boston Globe June 4, 2011

HARTFORD — One of the earliest female graduates of the US Coast Guard Academy returned yesterday to take over its top spot, becoming the first woman selected to lead one of the nation's five military service academies.



US Coast Guard Rear Admiral Sandra Stosz adjusted her uniform hat before yesterday's change of command ceremony. (Sean D. Elliot/The Day/Via Associated Press)

Rear Admiral Sandra Stosz was installed as the academy's 40th superintendent in a change-of-command ceremony on the New London campus. She graduated from the academy in 1982, the third class to include female cadets.

Stosz, a native of Takoma Park, Md., takes over at the academy amid a push to draw more women and members of underrepresented minority groups into the cadet corps.

This fall's incoming class has the most cultural and ethnic diversity in the academy's history. Coast Guard Commandant Robert J. Papp, who presided over the ceremony, said maintaining and expanding that diversity is key to the Coast Guard.

"That's the priority I am going to give her," the admiral said of Stosz.

Stosz, 51, previously was the Coast Guard's director of reserve and leadership and also commanded two cutters during her 12 years of experience at sea. They included an assignment as the first female commander of a US icebreaker, the 140-foot Katmai Bay, in northern Michigan.

Stosz was a high school discus and swimming standout and a top scholar in her graduating class when she enrolled at the academy in 1978, two years after it began admitting women.

She said her return 33 years after her enrollment is a sign of how far women have come in the service.

"I'm proud to be a role model," Stosz said Thursday. "But this really is part of a natural progression."

The academy has about 1,030 cadets in its four-year program. Students graduate with a bachelor's of science degree and an obligation to serve five years in the Coast Guard. Many, like Stosz, make it their career.

"Personally, of course, I am very, very proud to be someone who is coming back as a role model," Stosz said. "It means a lot to me that I am able to continue to contribute and give back. I'm able to now develop these leaders of character so that we have the outstanding men and women to replace me someday."

http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/plessy-and-ferguson-descendants-of-a-divisive-supreme-court-decision-unite/2011/06/02/AGji3hJH_story.html

Plessy and Ferguson - Descendants of a divisive Supreme Court decision unite

**By Robert Barnes,
Washington Post, June 5, 2011**

NEW ORLEANS - When Keith Plessy and Phoebe Ferguson decided to start a new civil rights education organization that would bear their famous names, they sealed the deal in a fitting local spot: Cafe Reconcile.

They represent the opposing principals in one of the Supreme Court's landmark decisions, Plessy v. Ferguson, which upheld the constitutionality of Jim Crow laws mandating segregation under the "separate but equal" doctrine. It stood from 1896 until the court's historic Brown v. Board of Education ruling in 1954.

The descendent of the man who tested Louisiana's law requiring separate railroad cars for whites and blacks and the great-great-granddaughter of the judge who upheld it met in 2004.

The truth is, no reconciliation was required.

"The first thing I said to her," recalled Plessy, "was, 'Hey, it's no longer Plessy versus Ferguson. It's Plessy and Ferguson.'"

Her first reaction was to apologize.

"I don't know why," she said in an interview. "It's just that I felt the burden of it, this great injustice."

Plessy's response?

"I said, 'You weren't alive during that time. I wasn't either. It's time for us to change that whole image.'"

So the Plessy & Ferguson Foundation was born, and on Tuesday it will celebrate another anniversary of Homer Adolph Plessy's decision to buy a railroad ticket for the June 7, 1892, train trip from New Orleans to Covington, on the other side of Lake Pontchartrain.

The organization seeks to highlight the historic moments in New Orleans's struggle for racial equality and hopes to remind the public of the story behind the famous case. It was, Plessy and Ferguson said, a forerunner of the legal strategies and civil disobedience that took root in the civil rights struggles of the 20th century.

It was a setup from the start. New Orleans historian Keith Weldon Medley, in his book "We as Freemen," describes how the Comite des Citoyens (Committee of Citizens), an organization of freemen of color, planned the legal strategy for more than a year. They meant to challenge the segregation law using the post-Civil War 14th Amendment's equal-protection clause.

Plessy, a shoemaker from the Treme neighborhood, volunteered for the job and was the perfect candidate. Seven-eighths white, he was "colored" in the eyes of the law. He bought a first-class ticket, sat in the white rail car, answered that he was colored when asked, refused to leave and was arrested by a private detective. It had all been worked out in advance.

John Howard Ferguson was a carpetbagger from New England, schooled by an abolitionist lawyer in the north and married into an abolitionist New Orleans family. He had been on the bench only months when the Plessy case arrived on his docket.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/plessy-and-ferguson-descendants-of-a-divisive-supreme-court-decision-unite/2011/06/02/AGji3hJH_story.html

Despite his background, Ferguson upheld the segregation law. Plessy wasn't deprived of equal accommodations, Ferguson wrote, but "simply deprived of the liberty of doing as he pleased."

The Louisiana Supreme Court agreed, and so eventually did the U.S. Supreme Court, 7 to 1.

"We consider the underlying fallacy of the plaintiff's argument to consist in the assumption that the enforced separation of the two races stamps the colored race with a badge of inferiority," wrote Justice Henry Billings Brown. "If this be so, it is not by reason of anything found in the act, but solely because the colored race chooses to put that construction upon it."

The lone objection came from Justice John Marshall Harlan, whose "Great Dissent" predicted the decision would join the infamy of the court's Dred Scott ruling.

"Our Constitution is color-blind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens," Harlan famously wrote.

The Comite des Citoyens closed shop; Plessy paid a \$25 fine in lieu of jail time.

Phoebe Ferguson and Keith Plessy were both born in New Orleans generations later, in the year Brown was decided.

The daughter of a conservative Tulane-grad father and a "radical feminist" Sarah Lawrence mother, Ferguson said she had no idea she was connected to the case.

"If my mother had known, she certainly would have talked about it," said Ferguson, who moved north and got the news years later when a man who had bought John Ferguson's house tracked her down.

She returned to New Orleans from New York "after the storm" — Hurricane Katrina — first with a 17-foot truckload of supplies and then later for good. She completed a film about the city's oldest African American social club called "Member of the Club" and lately has become involved in the city's schools.

"I'm a completely different person than I was in New York," she said.

Plessy, whose great-grandfather was Homer Plessy's first cousin, knew of his connection because of his fairly rare French name. He remembers grade school teachers calling him to the front of the class during a discussion of the case.

And his name has attracted attention from visiting civil rights luminaries who have passed through the downtown New Orleans hotel where he has made a career. He spoke with Muhammad Ali and was once called upstairs to meet Rosa Parks.

Plessy recalls rushing in to find Parks sitting in a chair, and he knelt before her.

"She said, 'Get up, boy. Your name is Plessy. You got work to do,'" he said.

He said he found that work after meeting Medley, and because of the revival of interest around the centennial of the Plessy decision. The city and state first recognized "Homer A. Plessy Day" in 2005.

"I was not a great leader or a great scholar or any of those things," Keith Plessy said. "I've been a 30-year employee of Marriott as a bellman and happy with that job.

"But I have an obligation and a privilege to keep my ancestor's history alive. What my ancestors dreamt about, I'm able to live."

Why Wounded Warriors Sleep In Dumpsters

The government has failed homeless vets suffering from psychological trauma.

That's why we're suing the Department of Veterans Affairs.

By Laurence Tribe and Bobby Shriver

Wall Street Journal June 9, 2011 Pg. 21

A group of desperate homeless veterans became plaintiffs yesterday in a suit, *Valentini v. Shinseki*, filed in U.S. district court against the federal officials responsible for their plight.

There are roughly 107,000 homeless veterans in America. Many of them are chronically condemned to wander our streets because the trauma they suffered serving our country has left them profoundly brain-damaged or disabled with terrible psychiatric conditions like post-traumatic stress disorder and paranoid schizophrenia. These wounds of war are physically invisible, but they are no less life-threatening.

When military service renders our returning soldiers unable to resume their civilian lives—by holding down jobs, continuing their education, or sustaining family relationships—our duty is to come to their aid. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 requires us to provide those veterans with therapeutic, supportive housing. Study after study shows that without secure housing, these vets simply cannot benefit from the psychiatric and other medical services to which our laws entitle them. Instead, they live and die in dumpsters or under freeway overpasses.

Facilities for housing these profoundly wounded vets are often readily available. For example, in Los Angeles—a place some call the nation's "capital of veteran homelessness"—there is a 387-acre parcel of land, the West Los Angeles VA Campus. That property is not just theoretically suited to therapeutic housing: It was donated to the government in 1888 by a U.S. senator and a private benefactor for the specific purpose of permanently maintaining a soldiers' home.

For 80 years, it operated as such. But during the Vietnam War, when some Americans turned their backs on our soldiers, the government put buildings and land formerly dedicated to veterans' therapeutic housing to other, more lucrative uses.

Today, where the disabled homeless vets of Los Angeles should find a home, they'll instead find a car-rental business, a private swimming pool, a dog run, an oil well, an 18-hole golf course, and a unit that launders linen for nearby luxury hotels. *Valentini v. Shinseki*, which we helped these disabled veterans file, asks only that the government keep the solemn promise it made when it accepted the land as a charitable gift: provide the housing.

Among the plaintiffs in this lawsuit is Greg Valentini. A private in the 101st Airborne, he took part in the initial invasion of Afghanistan. There, he participated in the assault on Tora Bora that sought Osama bin Laden. He was redeployed to Iraq, where he again experienced heavy combat. He received six decorations for his service.

After his honorable discharge, Mr. Valentini attended college, planning to become a police officer. But his combat experience made it difficult for him to control his emotions. He grew paranoid about his surroundings, experienced harrowing nightmares, and repeatedly considered suicide. He left college and soon found himself sleeping on the streets.

Mr. Valentini is one of some 8,200 homeless veterans in Los Angeles. Another, who wishes to be identified only as Jane Doe, had been raped repeatedly by her fellow soldiers during her service as an Army military radio operator. A third, Adrian Moraru, is a Marine who took part in the initial ground invasion of Iraq and ended up with violent seizures, spending his days and nights pacing Wilshire Boulevard. A fourth, Chris Romine, served twice in Iraq where his unit was responsible for "cleaning up" the body parts that remained after roadside bomb attacks on American forces.

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304432304576371591562510516.html?mod=googlenews_wsj

These veterans, like many others, all suffer from severe cases of post-traumatic stress disorder.

It is difficult to help a veteran cope with severe mental illness incurred on the battlefield even under the best of conditions; it is impossible to do so while the veteran is sleeping on the streets. By failing to provide safe and stable living conditions that are within its power to provide, the government denies veterans with mental disabilities meaningful access to its medical programs.

Unfortunately, efforts to rectify this outrageous treatment outside of court have been unsuccessful. We have therefore joined forces with the Southern California ACLU, and with several law firms acting pro bono. On behalf of this group of wounded veterans, we are asking the government to reveal its deals with the commercial users of the campus land; to use the profits of those deals to assist homeless veterans in obtaining the housing they need; and, above all, to fulfill the original purpose of the West Los Angeles Campus by dedicating it to the disabled veterans who could be helped by finding supportive housing there.

President Obama said in March 2009 that our veterans "have a home. It's the country they served, the United States of America, and until we reach a day when not a single veteran sleeps on our nation's streets, our work remains unfinished."

Many soldiers who have returned from war have since died. If the Department of Veterans Affairs simply keeps the pledge made in 1888 when it accepted the gift of land, it will have taken a modest first step in turning the president's dream of securing every veteran a home into reality.

Mr. Tribe, a professor of constitutional Law at Harvard, recently returned from serving in the Obama administration. Mr. Shriver is a former mayor of Santa Monica, Calif.

Miscellaneous

Combat Stress Same for Men, Women, Study Finds

UPI

Military.com, June 08, 2011

Women servicemembers who experience combat apparently are as psychologically resilient as the men they serve alongside, a U.S. study says.

Men and women deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan in 2007 and 2008 experienced very similar levels of combat-related stress and post-deployment mental health impacts during the first year following return from deployment, a study published in the Journal of Abnormal Psychology said.

"Contrary to popular belief, women who go to war respond to combat trauma much like their male counterparts," said lead author Dawne Vogt, of the Veterans Administration National Center for PTSD and Boston University School of Medicine.

As of 2009, more than 750 women had been wounded or killed in action during operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, the study said.

Researchers used stress measures that included exposure to combat involving firing a weapon, being fired on, and witnessing injury and death; experiencing consequences of combat, such as observing or handling human remains and dealing with detainees; enduring difficult living situations in the war zone; and fearing for one's safety and well-being.

Men, as expected, reported more exposure to combat and battle aftermath, as well as difficult living conditions, just based on the number of each gender serving in the military operations.

"The fact that these differences were relatively small, however, suggests that women's exposure to these stressors in [Iraq and Afghanistan] may be, on average, only slightly lower than men's exposure on average," the study said.

Few gender differences were reported in post-deployment mental health, the researchers said.

The findings are particularly significant given recent calls for the Pentagon to reverse its long-standing policy barring women from ground combat, Vogt said.

Women Handle Combat Stress As Well As Men, Study Shows(for more detail see below)

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/06/08/women-combat-stress_n_873381.html

Policy Changes Consider Troops, Families, Official Says

By Lisa Daniel

American Forces Press Service, 9 June 2011

WASHINGTON, June 9, 2011 – The Pentagon office for personnel and readiness and the programs it oversees will not be immune from Defense Department efficiency initiatives, but will keep troops and their families at the forefront in the consideration of changes, the office’s top civilian leader said.

“I joined with an efficiency mindset,” Clifford L. Stanley, undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, said during a June 7 interview with American Forces Press Service of his recent return to the Pentagon.

Stanley is a retired Marine Corps major general who was appointed undersecretary in February 2010. Although he has worked in other senior civilian positions in the department, he said, his 33 years in uniform guide his decision-making today.

“Not a day goes by that we don’t ask how we can help our troops,” he said of his staff. “Accountability -- that’s critical to what we’re doing, and making sure we’re relevant.”

The personnel and readiness office, which oversees recruitment, career development, and pay and benefits for more than 2 million service members, is in the midst of a five-year strategic plan. Stanley said his goals for the plan, in order, are:

- To provide the right policies, practices, and tools to attract, train, educate, shape, sustain and retain diverse talent to anticipate and meet future requirements;
- Strengthen individual and mission readiness and family support;
- Deliver quality health care at an affordable cost while improving military readiness;
- Strengthen the internal workings of the personnel and readiness office; and
- Communicate with “one voice.”

To stay connected, Stanley and his staff travel to military installations around the country, as well as some overseas, including Iraq and Afghanistan. “He wants to know the honest truth,” said Marine Corps Master Gunnery Sgt. William Mahoney Sr., Stanley’s senior enlisted advisor. “At the end of the day, our work is about ‘What have we done to support the total force?’

“He’s not just reading it or publishing a plan,” Mahoney added. “He’s reinforcing it every day.”

It’s important to have a flexible, working document that doesn’t just sit on a shelf, Stanley said. “Our actions speak louder than our words,” he said. “We’re already executing our portfolio of initiatives.”

One area Stanley and his staff are working on is reforming the department’s “talent management,” or personnel system. “It’s about having the right people in the right places at the right time for the right kinds of missions,” he said. “We don’t have that right now.”

The system needs some improvement, Stanley acknowledged. “Our bureaucracy sometimes works against us in terms of getting the best here,” he said.

Stanley said he goes beyond common goals of hiring reform, focusing on “employment reform,” including recruiting new hires, developing staff, and properly transitioning people out of the military into civilian employment.

“At the same time, we have to be able to move those folks who aren’t performing out of the system,” he said. “The government is loath to that -- in many cases, for the right reasons that are

<http://www.defense.gov/News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=64265>

there to protect the system -- but I think we've gone too far in that. So, when a person is here, they're here for a long time."

The military system works better than on the civilian side because "if you don't make the next cut in promotion, you're out after a couple of looks," he said. "On the civilian side, we don't have the same. You can find yourself at a level and just be comfortable and retire there after 20 or 30 years. That's not right, so we have to fix that."

Stanley's plan also includes an assessment of military and family support programs. He couldn't say yet what the outcome will be, except that some programs need more resources, while others will be cut altogether, either because of duplication of efforts or because they are ineffective.

The strategic initiatives also focus on military health care, which Stanley is personally familiar with. "I am a TRICARE Prime user," he said. "I understand what the system is and isn't. I understood it when I was on active duty, so I'm not removed from that."

With booming health care costs and no fee increases since the mid-1990s, the department in its fiscal 2012 budget proposed raising TRICARE user fees on a gradual, sliding scale for working-age retirees. Stanley said other concerns to be addressed include too few military hospitals, serving National Guardsmen and reservists who live far from military or Veterans Affairs hospitals and outpatient centers, and improving the disability evaluation system.

"When we look at the disability evaluation system, we're looking at how we take care of people who have been wounded, that they're not being held up in some morass of bureaucracy," Stanley said. "How do we ensure they're taken care of immediately, and how do we do that with compassion?"

That also means extending compassion to those separating from the military. "We're not trying to kick anybody out the door," he said.

While no one knows yet what changes will transpire with health care, change itself is certain, Stanley said.

"This is going to affect families," he said. "We're looking at asking some hard questions, and I will promise you, we will change. We'll do it with the help of Congress and the people in this building, and the help of our service members and retirees, but we will change and we will improve."

Stanley Draws From Military Experience as Civilian Leader

By Lisa Daniel

American Forces Press Service, 9 June 2011

WASHINGTON, June 9, 2011 – As the top civilian leader over Defense Department personnel and readiness, Clifford L. Stanley is overseeing service members and their families through changing times. His best experience to guide that leadership, he says, is his 33 years on active duty.

“I’ve smelled the cordite. I’ve actually lived in the mud. I’m an infantry officer, retired,” he said during a June 7 interview with American Forces Press Service. “As a result, there’s a different perspective I bring to the table.”

A retired Marine Corps major general who holds a doctorate degree, Stanley was appointed as undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness in February 2010. His tenure will include overseeing the drawdown of troops from Iraq and Afghanistan, increasingly unpredictable military and humanitarian missions, personnel improvements for women and gays in the military, and constricting defense budgets.

The military has changed greatly – although not enough, Stanley is quick to say – in the four decades since he joined. When he entered the Marine Corps in 1969, he had very few African-American role models. The Marine Corps had only 100 black officers, he said, and the two most senior were lieutenant colonels. “When I made general, I was it in terms of race and ethnicity,” he said.

The increasingly diverse force has made it easier to work through issues such as discrimination, Stanley said. “With diversity, you actually have a better environment to talk about those issues because people approach the same issues differently.”

Another change for the better, Stanley said, is that people are beginning to take a much broader view of diversity than simply gender, race and ethnicity. “There’s a tendency to think that’s all there is. But there’s a lot more than that,” he said. “I can’t overemphasize that enough.”

Stanley’s passion for diversity of thought extends into the military chain of command. “When people think differently, [other] people have a tendency to quash them,” he said. “When you’re in a regimented environment, not thinking like your boss can be a career ender. I have some challenges to that kind of environment.”

Indeed, he said, “I feel the most comfortable when I’m around people who are not thinking like I’m thinking.

“We need people from different backgrounds, different geographical areas, who’ve gone to different schools, and have different skill sets and talents. One talent is not better than another,” he added. “We can all add to this great nation of strength.”

One thing that has not changed, Stanley said, is the ability of military service, especially combat experience, to break down barriers between people’s differences.

“One of the beauties I observed while serving -- even in an environment that was pretty tough, sometimes hostile -- when you are working side by side and people get to know you, that stuff falls down,” he said. “When they really get to know you, when their life depends on it, there’s no place for it. And they see it.

“When you are working and protecting somebody’s back“ he added, “there’s no place for it.”

<http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/states-guarantee-civility-military-funerals/story?id=13757615>

States Look to Guarantee Civility at Military Funerals

By Tracy Loew

USA TODAY, June 4, 2011

Ryan Ripp, a sophomore at McNary High School in Keizer, Ore., got angry after seeing a TV news report about members of the Westboro Baptist Church of Topeka picketing a military funeral earlier this year.

"I was just infuriated. I could not understand why people would want to protest at funerals," he said.

Ripp, 16, who has relatives who are veterans and says he plans on enlisting in the Marine Corps, asked Oregon state Rep. Kim Thatcher to introduce the legislation to try to protect military funerals from disruption.

Thatcher, a Republican, agreed, and Ripp researched what other states were doing, visited other lawmakers to drum up bipartisan sponsors, and testified in support of the bill in March.

"I told them how it impacted families and how it was absolutely constitutional for them to be able to limit time, place and manner. It doesn't limit free speech at all," he said.

Oregon is among 25 states this year to consider ways to shield military funerals from outside groups by creating or expanding buffer zones around military funerals.

The effort follows a Supreme Court decision in March striking down a lawsuit against the Westboro Baptist Church, which pickets the funerals of U.S. servicemembers, as part of its claim that God is punishing the United States for supporting homosexuality.

The court ruled that such protests are protected speech under the First Amendment, but states hope to get around that by creating protest-free buffer zones, or reserved areas, around funerals and routes to funerals.

"They can protest away, but it doesn't have to be in everybody else's face," Thatcher said.

Laws Pending in 14 States

Arizona, Arkansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, West Virginia and Wyoming already have passed such laws this year, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Laws are pending in 14 other states, including California, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Oregon and Texas. They have failed in Florida, Mississippi, Nevada and Utah.

Local jurisdictions in New York and Maryland also have proposed laws to protect military funerals.

Congress is also considering federal legislation. The Sanctity of Eternal Rest for Veterans (SERVE) Act would increase the quiet time before and after military funerals from 60 minutes to 120 minutes; increase the buffer around services from 150 feet to 300 feet; increase the buffer around access routes to services from 300 feet to 500 feet; and increase civil penalties.

The federal bill was introduced April 13 and referred to the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee. It is sponsored by Sen. Olympia Snowe, R-Maine, and has 25 Senate co-sponsors.

"We think it's a step in the right direction," said Peter Gaytan, executive director of the American Legion in Washington. "One day, hopefully, we can make it decidedly illegal to take advantage of these funerals to protest." Westboro Baptist Church members say they plan to challenge any new restrictions.

They already have suits pending in Oklahoma, Missouri, Ohio and Kentucky, said Fred Phelps Jr., a Kansas lawyer and son of the pastor heading the church.

"What they really want is for us to shut up. We're not going to do that," he said.

<http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/states-guarantee-civility-military-funerals/story?id=13757615>

The Supreme Court, in its decision, suggested that such buffer zones would be constitutional, said First Amendment expert Steven Shiffrin, a law professor at Cornell University in New York.

Shiffrin said he has concerns.

"To me, this turns First Amendment values upside down. Someone could be carrying a sign praising the deceased or the courage of the family and that would be precluded," he said.

The laws also might be vulnerable because they are directed only at military funerals, rather than all funerals, Shiffrin said.

Oregon bill raises concern

The American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon objects to the state's bill, legislative director Andrea Meyer said.

The proposal violates the state's guarantee of free expression, which state courts have interpreted more broadly than the First Amendment, Meyer said.

"When you draft legislation targeting the particular speech of a particular party because you find that speech abhorrent, you run into real risks under the federal and state constitutions," she said.

Loew also reports for the Statesman Journal in Salem, Ore.

Misconduct

6 USS Patriot crewmembers guilty of hazing

By Matthew M. Burke

Stars and Stripes, 3 June 2011

SASEBO NAVAL BASE, Japan — Six crewmembers from the USS Patriot face administrative separation from the Navy after they were found guilty of hazing during Captain's Mast, Navy officials said Friday.

The hazing incident on the minesweeper occurred May 27, according to 7th Fleet spokesman Cmdr. Jeff Davis, who declined to provide specifics on the incident or the individuals involved, saying that information from non-judicial punishment proceedings is privacy-protected.

The six crewmembers were found in violation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice shortly after the incident, Davis said. He said there are several portions of the code that could be applied to a hazing case, such as failure to obey an order, assault or conduct unbecoming.

The sailors' fate now lies in the hands of the first flag officer of Command Task Force 76 based in Okinawa, Davis said. He was unaware of any specifics regarding an appeals process.

“The Navy has a very clear policy on hazing,” Davis said in an email to Stars and Stripes. “Acts of physical violence, to include striking individuals who have been advanced, are strictly forbidden. Hazing has no place in our Navy.”

<http://www.stripes.com/news/special-reports/suicide-in-the-military/maltreated-and-hazed-one-soldier-is-driven-to-take-his-own-life-1.145941>

Maltreated and hazed, one soldier is driven to take his own life

By Megan McCloskey

Stars and Stripes, 7 June 2011

For Army Spc. Brushaun Anderson, there was no escaping his torment.

The senior noncommissioned officers who ruled his life at a remote patrol base in Iraq ordered him to wear a plastic trash bag because they said he was “dirty.”

They forced him to perform excessive physical exercises in his body armor over and over again.

They made him build a sandbag wall that served no military purpose.

Anderson seemed to take it all in stride. Until New Year’s Day 2010, when the once-eager 20-year-old soldier locked himself inside a portable toilet, picked up his M4 rifle, aimed the barrel at his forehead and pulled the trigger.

Anderson left behind a note lamenting his failures in the military, and some soldiers in his unit immediately said that Anderson had been driven to kill himself by leaders bent on humiliating him.

“No matter what Spc. Anderson did, no matter how big or small the incident was, his punishment was always extremely harsh, [and] a lot of the time demeaning,” one corporal later told Army investigators.

“Spc. Anderson’s punishments were not like anyone else’s in the platoon,” another corporal said. “Spc. Anderson was singled out.”

The U.S. Army is confronting an unprecedented suicide crisis. Since the start of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, more than 1,100 soldiers have taken their own lives, with the numbers escalating each year for the last six years. Last year alone, 301 soldiers committed suicide — a new record.

Army officials often profess bafflement over the causes of the suicide epidemic, and they have spent more than \$75 million on studies to try to understand the problem and reverse the devastating trend.

In Anderson’s case, at least, there was little mystery.

An Army investigation into Anderson’s unit following his suicide concluded that he had been hazed on multiple occasions and subjected to “cruel, abusive and oppressive treatment.”

Anderson’s battery commander, first sergeant, platoon sergeant and squad leader were found responsible for his maltreatment, according to documents obtained by Stars and Stripes.

But the Army didn’t hold them criminally culpable, and they weren’t made to leave the service.

Instead, all four superiors are moving ahead with their careers in leadership positions, entrusted with molding the Army’s next generation.

This is the story of one soldier’s humiliation — and the Army’s decision to avert its gaze. It is based on interviews with Anderson’s family, soldiers who witnessed his mistreatment and more than 500 pages of Army documents, including sworn statements from members of his unit and the conclusions of two Army investigators.

Rocky deployment

Brushaun Anderson had been raised by his great aunt in a modest community in Columbus, Ga., and had joined the military for the same reason many low-income recruits do: He saw it as his chance to get ahead.

<http://www.stripes.com/news/special-reports/suicide-in-the-military/maltreated-and-hazed-one-soldier-is-driven-to-take-his-own-life-1.145941>

He was an inexperienced soldier, with only two years in the Army, and on his first deployment. He dreamed of joining Special Forces, perhaps becoming a sniper. He could rattle off details of the Army's weapons systems and obsessively cleaned his rifle. He also wanted to recruit, because he liked to teach and talk and "he loved what he was doing in the Army," said his great aunt, Phillis Eason.

In the beginning, Anderson saw success.

Capt. William Fisher, Battery A's commander, praised him in Army documents, calling him "an impressive soldier with the highly sought after 'self-starter' quality," and the battalion made him Soldier of the Quarter the month before they deployed.

Anderson was then given the honor of carrying the battalion's colors at the pre-deployment ceremony at Fort Drum, N.Y., and promoted to specialist not long after.

Yet, in Iraq, Anderson found himself something of an outsider. He was an infantryman, not a field artillery soldier. He and a few other young infantrymen had been added to 2nd Battalion, 15th Field Artillery Regiment for the deployment. He was also one of the few black soldiers in the battery.

Anderson received only mediocre performance reviews. He wasn't meeting expectations in many regards, including his attitude.

He had lapses in judgment and a hygiene problem that hurt his reputation among some of Battery A's leadership, even though one lieutenant said much of his behavior was typical of young soldiers. He thought Anderson simply needed more guidance from his direct leadership to help him develop as a soldier.

That wouldn't happen at Patrol Base Babil.

The base in eastern Baghdad was remote and austere. There was no running water, no amenities like Internet access and, for a while, no portable toilets. Battery A's 2nd Platoon and an attached squad lived sparsely in a tight square of tents next to Iraqi Security Forces.

Their battalion was based at the larger Joint Security Station Zafaraniyah about 20 minutes away, so the 40 or so soldiers at Babil were largely isolated from the rest of the unit.

The platoon's top enlisted man, Sgt. 1st Class Phillip Devos, was granted wide leeway to run the show, and he reveled in the power, declaring himself "Supreme Allied Commander--Babil," noncommissioned officers told Stars and Stripes.

He had the backing of Fisher, the battery's commander, and then-Sgt. 1st Class Stephen Amaral, the battery's first sergeant, both of whom encouraged a domineering spirit among the NCOs and emphasized punishment as a primary means of leadership, the NCOs said.

With this shared philosophy, the three leaders were close knit, the soldiers said. The leaders were eager for the deployment to turn into something big, itching for combat at a time when the mission in Iraq had shrunk to conducting courtesy patrols with the Iraqi Security Forces.

In December 2009, Devos got a new soldier to command when Anderson was moved from 1st Platoon to Babil.

Devos and the squad leader, Staff Sgt. Charles Bruckner, immediately pounced on Anderson's minor mistakes.

Soldiers said once Bruckner and Devos identified Anderson as a soldier they could pick on, they never let up. They called him names and told him he wasn't good enough for their platoon, that he was a "shit-bag soldier."

<http://www.stripes.com/news/special-reports/suicide-in-the-military/maltreated-and-hazed-one-soldier-is-driven-to-take-his-own-life-1.145941>

They encouraged the other NCOs to find it funny and “release the dogs” on Anderson, a sergeant later wrote in his sworn statement.

Bruckner and Devos lacked even a “hint of moral capacity or professionalism,” another soldier wrote.

According to one sergeant, Devos was known for his “belittlement, cruelty and his verbal abuse.” Another soldier stated that Devos called Anderson stupid and sneered that the specialist must have cheated on his recruitment test because the Army doesn’t accept “retards.”

Anderson was also punished for “unreasonably long periods,” a soldier wrote, often for violations of rules that no one else had to abide by.

“Spc. Anderson was not a perfect soldier and he knew he made mistakes,” the soldier continued, “but no one deserved to get smoked like he did.”

Harsh punishment

For Christmas, the entire battery squeezed in at Babil to celebrate together.

Anderson was pulling guard duty in the predawn hours while most of the battery slept. As the sun began to rise, he lit a cigarette while sitting in the truck.

That was technically against the rules, but it was common practice at Babil.

Fisher asked him if he was smoking.

“Yeah, roger,” Anderson replied.

Fisher and Amaral weren’t pleased with the response. Both men demanded not just respect but total deference, soldiers said.

They had Bruckner and Anderson’s team leader counsel the specialist for disrespecting a senior officer and violating a lawful order for smoking in the truck. Both NCOs then recommended that Anderson get a company-grade Article 15, a nonjudicial punishment through the Uniformed Code of Military Justice.

Fisher and Amaral decided against that. Instead, Anderson was ordered to perform hours of corrective training.

Fisher, in fact, never approved an Article 15 during the entire deployment, setting him apart from the other battery commanders in the battalion. He and the rest of the battery and platoon leadership portrayed this as if they were doing the soldiers a favor.

It was better to keep these things in-house with corrective training than to go through the UCMJ, the rationale went. Some of the soldiers in the battery agreed.

Fisher told Stars and Stripes there was a simple explanation for it: Nothing rose to the level of an Article 15 while his battery was deployed.

The Army specifically states that corrective training isn’t supposed to be punitive. It’s intended to teach a soldier how to improve and to instill discipline, and it should directly relate to a soldier’s weakness.

But in Battery A, corrective training was a euphemism for whatever punishment the leadership chose that day.

For Anderson on Christmas, that meant he would get little rest.

<http://www.stripes.com/news/special-reports/suicide-in-the-military/maltreated-and-hazed-one-soldier-is-driven-to-take-his-own-life-1.145941>

After his night shift on guard, he had to pull two more hours of the duty. Then he was ordered to don full body armor for an hour of strenuous physical exercise with his rifle: sprints, push-ups, lunges while holding his rifle over his head and mountain climbers.

A lieutenant with the battery was on his way to start his shift serving the enlisted men their holiday meal when he saw Anderson sweating through the exercise.

He went to find Fisher to see whether the captain was aware of what was going on.

“I’m a firm believer in disciplining soldiers,” Fisher replied, according to the lieutenant’s sworn statement.

The lieutenant “questioned the weight of the punishment” and “made it known” that he “did not agree [Anderson] should have to suffer that long for such an easy correction, especially on Christmas morning.”

Fisher, who was old for a captain as a prior enlisted soldier, replied that Anderson’s punishment was his decision and it needed to be done.

The lieutenant was unimpressed.

“Personally, I believe there are more important things to focus on rather than demanding respect from subordinates,” the lieutenant wrote in his statement.

He walked away from his talk with Fisher concerned that Anderson was the only one being held accountable for smoking on guard duty while more concerning infractions by other soldiers, such as urinating near the sleeping tents, went ignored.

As part of the corrective training, Anderson’s squad was also roused out of bed and told that because Anderson had messed up, they all had to start filling sandbags for what was called the “Wall of Shame” or the “Wall of Discipline.”

The construction of the random wall, which had no legitimate military purpose, had become routine punishment for Anderson and the junior soldiers in his squad. There was even a wooden sign reading “Wall of Discipline.” One private first class, though, said it was just a joke and no one took it too seriously.

Anderson was instructed to join his squad once he was done with his hour of physical training.

While the young soldiers labored on the wall with “a clearly broken spirit,” one sergeant said, Fisher and Amaral stood by laughing.

Devos joked that the soldiers looked like refugees.

Deriding mental help

Anderson started spending more time by himself. At Babil, he often paced around the small patrol base or stood alone by the campfire.

A private first class asked him whether he was OK one night, and Anderson said he just wanted to be alone to think.

Friends said Anderson, the happy guy who made jokes and was always willing to help out, seemed to shrug off his treatment at the hands of Bruckner and Devos.

“If he was humiliated he never really showed it,” a specialist in the platoon said in a sworn statement, “and if it bothered him he never said it did.”

<http://www.stripes.com/news/special-reports/suicide-in-the-military/maltreated-and-hazed-one-soldier-is-driven-to-take-his-own-life-1.145941>

Some of the soldiers in the battery said Anderson brought things on himself by being lazy and repeatedly making stupid mistakes. The trouble wasn't the platoon or battery leadership, a few said in their sworn statements, it was his lack of discipline.

One soldier wrote: "He wasn't singled out. He did dumb [stuff] and got in trouble for it."

Two days after Christmas, when most of the battery had been up for at least 36 hours, Anderson failed a room inspection at Zafaraniyah. The platoon rotated through that base to get showers and a break from Babil.

Bruckner told him his room was a "disgrace" with "trash on the floor, leftover meals in trays, flies, empty soda cans, dirty laundry and military equipment strewn all over the floor," according to a formal counseling statement that Bruckner prepared. "Once again this shows the unit you have no discipline."

Amaral was livid. He started throwing Anderson's stuff around in his room, saying, "I'll show you NCOs how to toss a room," according to one sergeant.

The NCOs had Anderson put on his body armor and remove everything from his room, wipe down the walls and floor and then move everything back in.

Then Bruckner, who soldiers said tried hard to impress Devos, told Anderson to pack up his stuff because he was being exiled back to the spartan Babil permanently. That was a threat Devos often held over the heads of soldiers, one sergeant said.

One of Anderson's friends, another specialist, saw him afterward and asked whether he planned on doing anything stupid.

"No, I'm fine," Anderson told him. "I just need to settle down and slow down."

Back at Babil, the platoon's leaders didn't relent.

They yelled at Anderson for not keeping up with proper hygiene. They told him he smelled bad and called him dirty, and then they forced him to wear a garbage bag at all times, according to sworn statements.

That type of demeaning treatment of soldiers wasn't new for Devos, and it wasn't unknown to the Army.

The spring before the unit deployed, Devos was admonished by a military judge. During a court-martial of one of Devos' soldiers, it came to light that Devos had called out the accused in formation, made threatening remarks and generally acted in a "manner designed to humiliate, punish and degrade" the soldier, the judge said.

He was so "gravely concerned" about Devos' "inappropriate and unprofessional" behavior that his actions ended up being a "significant mitigating factor" in sentencing the soldier.

Less than a year later, Devos — or "Big Time" as soldiers said he liked to call himself — was back at it in Iraq.

He had the encouragement of Amaral, a close friend.

To Amaral, everything was a game, a sergeant who served with Anderson told Stars and Stripes.

He molded the battery's NCOs into the kind of leaders who hound junior enlisted soldiers, lecturing them that "soldiers have no rights" and if "you aren't yelling at soldiers, you aren't doing your job," several soldiers said.

<http://www.stripes.com/news/special-reports/suicide-in-the-military/maltreated-and-hazed-one-soldier-is-driven-to-take-his-own-life-1.145941>

The first sergeant often boasted of how he took his personal frustrations out on soldiers by yelling at them or making fun of them. Amaral called the practice “Joe Time,” referencing the common nickname for soldiers.

Neither he nor Devos had much tolerance for the Army’s new spotlight on soldier care and they mocked the emphasis of mental health. In fact, Devos subjected his soldiers to exactly the kind of stigma the Army claims it’s trying to eliminate from the ranks.

If a soldier went to the “wizard,” as Devos derisively termed mental health counselors, that soldier was considered weak, the sergeant told Stars and Stripes.

“He said it so frequently that everyone knew,” the sergeant continued, asserting that promotions were also withheld for anyone who sought mental health care.

Devos often turned suicide into a punch line. Before working his soldiers hard, for example, he’d tell them they’d better get their ACE cards ready, referring to the laminated pocket guide for suicide intervention that soldiers carry.

When Babil got three portable toilets, the sergeant told Stars and Stripes, Devos joked that no soldier should use one as place to kill himself because he didn’t want to have to clean up the mess.

Tired and defeated

On Jan. 1, 2010, soldiers at Babil didn’t get out of bed until around 1 p.m. They had spent the night before out on patrol and arrived back early in the morning.

Anderson had fallen asleep in the turret during the mission — a serious violation — and so would spend the first day of the new year working on the “Wall of Discipline.”

Before he could get started, Anderson was caught for another infraction, this time for uniform standards. He was wearing an unauthorized pair of eyewear with headphones.

Those type of standards were mostly nonexistent at Babil, and it was the kind of infraction that was commonly ignored, several soldiers said.

But Anderson was nabbed for the violation and promptly made to do mountain climbers in full body armor with his rifle. Amaral put an end to the exercise around 10 minutes later.

Soon after, wearing a trash bag, Anderson started filling sandbags for the “Wall of Discipline.” Soldiers described him as looking tired and defeated.

Anderson headed to the bathroom and, on his way, he ran into a friend, a private first class who asked him what he was doing.

“Taking a break,” he said, before going into the middle of three portable toilets.

About 15 minutes later, a gunshot brought the soldiers running to the latrines.

The first soldier there knocked and called out “Hello?” before yanking the door open. He saw an M4 rifle in a pool of blood and Anderson slumped over on the seat.

In his journal by his bunk, Anderson had written what appeared to be a suicide note.

“I really don’t know what to say in a note like this. I just don’t feel good about what I’ve accomplished in my life. I feel like a failuer (sic). I feel like I’ve failed. And theirs (sic) no hope of improving. I’ve been a couple of places in the Army and it’s all been pretty much the same.”

'It was preventable'

<http://www.stripes.com/news/special-reports/suicide-in-the-military/maltreated-and-hazed-one-soldier-is-driven-to-take-his-own-life-1.145941>

Immediately after Anderson's suicide, Bruckner told his soldiers to quickly empty the sandbags and take down the "Wall of Discipline," three different sergeants said. Amaral also wanted the wall removed.

Devos later convened a meeting with all the NCOs. He told them there was a "circle of trust" and that they had to know who was on the inside and who was on the outside, a sergeant wrote. Devos tried to convince the soldiers that the questions being asked about Anderson's death were an affront to the entire platoon.

Then a few days later, Bruckner held another meeting with the same NCOs, imploring them to stick together and protect Devos, to have his back.

"I believe he told us NCOs that ... because they knew they were wrong in what happened," a corporal wrote in a sworn statement.

The soldiers calling attention to how Anderson had been treated before his suicide were told to pipe down by battery and battalion leadership. At one point, some of the NCOs tried to convince a few soldiers that Anderson killed himself because he was gay, a sergeant told Stars and Stripes.

But the Army's subsequent investigation into Anderson's suicide revealed the battery's troublesome corrective training practices, and some soldiers told the investigator that they thought the battery's leadership played a role in Anderson's death.

"I knew him very well, and I believe his suicide was in direct relation with how he was being treated and made an example out of in front of all his peers and fellow soldiers," Anderson's former team leader from 1st Platoon said.

A sergeant wrote: "It was preventable. The battery leadership allowed unorthodox and mean spirited punishment to take place. This was a direct result of how [Amaral and Fisher] ran the battery."

Another soldier wrote: "I believe the constant pressure from his chain of command pushed him over the edge."

Those concerns set off a larger investigation a few months later into the battalion's use of corrective training and improper punishment.

Token reprimands

In the end, Anderson's leaders escaped any serious consequences.

The captain who conducted the first investigation found that the battery's corrective training was "imposed in an oppressive manner to evade procedural safeguards applying to imposing non-judicial punishment." He blamed the command climate set by Fisher and Amaral, which "resonated throughout the battery."

In the six-week follow-up investigation, a colonel concluded that soldiers in Battery A, and Anderson in particular, "were treated in a cruel, abusive, oppressive and harmful manner."

Devos "was directly responsible for soldiers' well-being and duty bound to foster a healthy environment to maximize their potential," the colonel wrote. Instead, Devos created an "environment of maltreatment and abuse when he allowed unauthorized punitive actions to be imposed."

As battery commander, Fisher's actions "jeopardized the well-being of all his soldiers." He fostered "unacceptable conditions affecting good order and discipline of his unit" and "instead of intervening and taking preventative measures, he stood idle."

As did Amaral, according to the investigating colonel.

<http://www.stripes.com/news/special-reports/suicide-in-the-military/maltreated-and-hazed-one-soldier-is-driven-to-take-his-own-life-1.145941>

The colonel recommended that they all get General Officer Memorandums of Reprimand, a form of administrative action that would likely keep them from being promoted to the next rank.

He also recommended Bruckner and Devos be relieved of duty for cause, and they were reassigned to different positions within the battalion while the unit was still deployed to Iraq.

But the memos of reprimand didn't stick for Fisher and Amaral.

Although the reprimand was ordered by Maj. Gen. Terry Wolff, the battalion commander worked to get the men off the hook.

Lt. Col. Heyward Hutson said he went to bat for Fisher and Amaral because he "didn't think they were culpable enough to end their careers over it."

The memos of reprimand were downgraded to more minor letters of concern and weren't filed in their permanent records. Since they have each moved on to new assignments, their records are unblemished, and both can move up the chain of command without anyone knowing about their misconduct.

Wolff declined to comment on why the reductions were made to Fisher's and Amaral's punishments. Fisher had written Wolff a letter rebutting the conclusions of the colonel's investigation.

In an interview with Stars and Stripes, Fisher said that Anderson's suicide greatly affected the entire battery, and as a leader he considered it a failure.

"I take full responsibility," he said. "I'll live with this the rest of my life."

However, Fisher said that incidents "were blown out of proportion," and from what he understood from his soldiers, the "climate of the battery was exceptional and things were going really well."

In sworn statements, some soldiers backed this up, either praising Fisher's command or expressing neutral feelings.

Fisher said he thought a few soldiers who didn't reflect the majority and had a grudge about other issues used the investigation to voice their displeasure, driving the investigation to go further than it needed to go.

"The picture that was painted in the findings wasn't accurate," he said.

Amaral wrote a letter to the brigade's commander, saying the unit did not have "an alarming issue with corrective training." The problem was junior leaders and their lack of training in how to develop soldiers, he wrote.

Devos is appealing his memorandum of reprimand with the full support of Hutson, who wrote a letter on his behalf recommending the appeal.

Even if the appeal is denied, Devos is high enough up the chain of command to stay in the service without being promoted. So is Bruckner. As a result, the reprimands won't affect their ability to serve 20 years and retire with full benefits.

Amaral, Devos and Bruckner did not respond to requests from Stars and Stripes for comment.

So did senior U.S. Army officials, including Gen. Peter Chiarelli, the Army's vice chief of staff and the man tasked with overseeing the Army's response to the suicide problem.

But attending to the emotional needs of soldiers has long been a declared priority for Chiarelli.

"This generation needs caring and involved leaders," Chiarelli told students at the Army War College in Carlisle, Pa., last October. "[Soldiers] are stressed and tired after nine years of war."

<http://www.stripes.com/news/special-reports/suicide-in-the-military/maltreated-and-hazed-one-soldier-is-driven-to-take-his-own-life-1.145941>

Army spokesman Col. Thomas Collins referred questions about the case back to the chain of command of Anderson's unit.

"What I can say definitively is that we have a system of justice in which commanders weigh the facts and make determinations on what is appropriate punishment," Collins said.

Anderson's case stands in stark contrast to how the Army dealt with a similar incident in Iraq the year before. In 2009, a private killed himself in a portable toilet and the Army charged two noncommissioned officers with cruelty and maltreatment for subjecting the soldier to ridicule and excessive physical training. They both served a few months in the brig and were reduced in rank.

Yet, a year and half after Anderson's death, all four of the leaders called out in the investigation maintain their leadership positions within the Army:

Bruckner is back in the position of platoon sergeant with the same battery.

Devos, with 2nd Battalion, 307th Field Artillery Regiment, is training National Guard and Reserve soldiers at Camp Atterbury in Indiana before they deploy.

Amaral was promoted and is a battery first sergeant at Fort Carson, Colo., with 2nd Battalion, 77th Field Artillery.

Fisher is mentoring U.S. troops and American allies, ensuring they follow Army doctrine as they train for combat at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany.

"The Army has spoken on this and said it's acceptable," the sergeant who had served with Anderson told Stars and Stripes. "That's the big crime."

Racism

Don't Call Them "Post-Racial." Millennials Say Race Matters to Them

By Dom Apollon

Colorlines.com, 7 June 2011

Editor's note: This essay is the first in a three-part Colorlines series based on a series of focus groups conducted earlier this year by our publisher, the Applied Research Center. Part two will explore the language young people use to discuss racism and part three will highlight innovators working to help young people organize around structural racism. You can [download the full findings of the focus groups at ARC.org](#).

"I think that's a big fat lie," responded Jose, 20, when asked the question so many people want to know about his future: whether the fact that his generation elected the first black president means America is, finally, over race. He's a young Latino man of Mexican descent who works multiple part-time jobs, including painting cars, being a security guard, and doing construction. "It's been a thousand years that racism has been going on, up 'til this date," Jose said. "It's still a whole bunch of things going on."

Andy, a 19-year old white community college student, was more blunt still. "That's a load of crap. There are still racists everywhere," he scoffed. "[It] can still hold you down, and make you less successful. And impact your life."

Jose and Andy are members of what sociologists and journalists have dubbed the Millennial generation. The parlor game of naming and identifying themes for every crop of Americans can be inane, but there's no denying that people are a product of their times—and, in turn, that each generation collectively gives birth to a new cultural, political and economic ethos. Children of the Depression intuitively grasp sustainability and saving. Baby Boomers can't stop thinking about tomorrow. Generation X took its own revolution online. And the young people born after 1980 have been correctly recognized as the largest, most racially and ethnically diverse generation the United States has ever known.

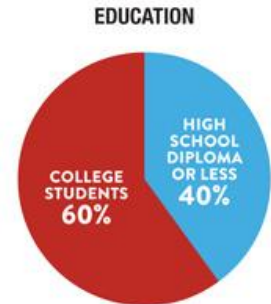
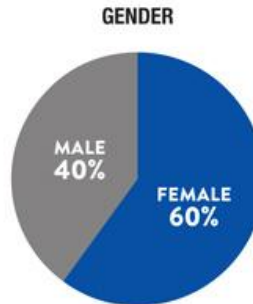
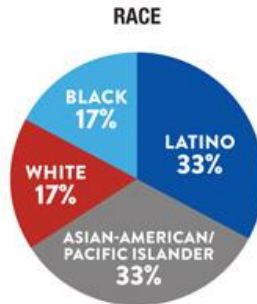
The Millennials have already helped usher in two massive, irreversible changes in the 21st century: the election of the first nonwhite president and the news, as of the 2010 Census, that America is just a generation and a half away from being a majority nonwhite nation. As a result of these tectonic shifts, everybody wants to know what young people think about the country's maddeningly perennial problem: race.

Or, more accurately, everyone wants to declare what young people think about race. Too many journalists, political commentators, and even researchers have taken the established fact of increased racial tolerance among today's youth and hastily labeled them "post-racial." The conclusion fits neatly with the mainstream political narrative of the Obama era—that race and racism are no longer significant barriers to success in our nation. Mass market publications have outdone one another with trend stories suggesting that Millennials' comfort with diversity—whether in identifying as multiracial or dating outside of their race—is proof of that equity.

At the [Applied Research Center](#), which publishes Colorlines.com, we found this narrative a bit too tidy. So we decided to do something that needs to happen more often: Actually ask young people what they think about race and racial equity in their lives and their futures. We conducted more than a dozen in-depth focus group discussions in the Los Angeles area with 80 young people like Andy and Jose, ages 18 to 25. We will be expanding the research to additional cities later this year, but so far, two themes emerged clearly from these conversations.

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS IN LOS ANGELES AREA

- 16 focus groups, four sessions each with African Americans, Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders, Latinos and Caucasians
- 80 participants (average of 5 participants per session)
- AGE: 18 to 25 years (average age of 20.2 years)



COLORLINES.com

One is that Millennials do believe that race still matters. The majority of people in our focus groups continue to see racism at work in multiple areas of American life, particularly in criminal justice and employment. When asked in the abstract if race is still a significant factor, a minority of our focus group participants initially said that they don't believe it is—and some young people clearly believe that class matters more. But when asked to discuss the impact, or lack thereof, that race and racism have within specific systems and institutions, a large majority asserted that race continues to matter deeply.

Of course, the fact that most Millennials believe race still shapes American life should not mask the very real differences of opinion both across and within racial groups about the *extent* to which it matters. Which is the second theme that emerged from our focus groups: There are real differences in how young people of different races and ethnicities think and talk about this subject. Young people of color are more likely to independently bring up race, resources and access to them, while white Millennials are less likely to make connections across systems like housing and education, and less likely to prescribe political action to fix it.

There's little question that most Millennials struggle to articulate their views on how race and racism operate in their lives. But our focus groups' deeper discussions revealed that a *structural* understanding of racism—of racism as something that grows out of political and economic systems rather than individual animus—is not completely lost on this generation. And that, of course, has serious implications for how they will go about eradicating it from our society.

The Margin of Error on Race Polling

The United States is undeniably becoming more diverse. The [2010 Census found](#) that 39.7 percent of 18- to 25-year-olds are Latino, African American or Asian American / Pacific Islander, and that the population of people of color increased by 80 percent between 2000 and 2010. Preliminary estimates based on these findings project that people of color will become the majority of the U.S. population by the year 2045.

Ever since Barack Obama won the Democratic primary, reporters and commentators have eagerly spun this expected demographic shift together with the president's political ascent to create the story of America's post-race future.

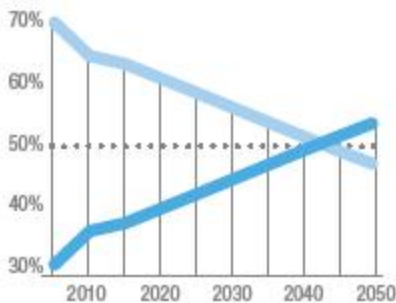
Pollster John Zogby, who has labeled Millennials the "First Global Citizens," [wrote in a post-election op-ed](#), "I anticipate the race issue will diminish as the nation gets more comfortable with [President Obama] as its leader, and as the First Globals are followed by the next wave of young adults, who will be even more accustomed to a multi-racial society." In early February 2008, when then-Sen. Barack Obama was gaining traction in the primaries, the Los Angeles Times published an op-ed by Tim Rutten, who argued that Obama was the beneficiary of young voters eschewing both the polarized "racial identity politics" of the left and the religious, "confessional" politics of the

http://colorlines.com/archives/2011/06/youth_and_race_focus_group_main.html

right. “What the post-racial perspective of this new generation gap may offer us,” Rutten wrote, “is a chance to see that many of the problems we continue to regard as most intractable are rooted in issues of class rather than race.”

POPULATION PROJECTIONS BY RACE

WHITE
PEOPLE OF COLOR



Sources for Years 2000 and 2010:
U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File, Tables PL1 and PL2; and Census 2010 Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File, Tables PL1 and PL2.

Source for Years 2015 - 2050 projections: Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Table 8. Projected Components of Change by Race and Hispanic Origin for the United States: 2010 to 2050 (NP2008-T8) - Release Date: August 14, 2008.

COLORLINES.com

Zogby and Rutten are hardly alone in drawing these conclusions and trumpeting them. The loudest proclamations have come predictably from right wing commentators like Bill Bennett, who declared Obama’s election an end to “excuses” about educational achievement among kids of color, and the Wall Street Journal editorial board, which suggested “we can put to rest the myth of racism as a barrier to achievement in this splendid country.”

But the post-race idea is popular among more sober analysts as well. The Pew Research Center reports that “more than two decades” of its surveys confirm that Millennials are more tolerant: “In their views about interracial dating ... Millennials are the most open to change of any generation.” Pollsters have been asking similar or identical questions about interracial dating continuously for about five decades, providing comparative data to demonstrate very real generational changes in attitudes over time on an historically painful issue. However, it is a great—and unjustified—leap from there to the assertion that members of the diverse Millennial generation are “post-racial” simply because they date each other, or don’t object when others do.

In fact, these sorts of surveys, and the media response to them, illustrate a large part of the problem in accurately gauging what young people think about race and racism in their lives: polling agencies generally demonstrate a lack of understanding of how racism functions on a systemic level. As a result, pollsters simply aren’t asking the right questions. Often, researchers (at least the ones who garner the most national press) are asking narrow questions about race relations and diversity to gauge attitudes toward race. Those sorts of questions miss the point, so it’s no surprise that the responses they generate seem to miss

it, too.

Racism in the Obama Era

Among the 80 racially and ethnically diverse young people who participated in our 16 focus group sessions, conducted between October 2010 and February 2011, a large majority believes that race still matters in society, President Obama notwithstanding. Typically, young people did acknowledge that the 2008 election signaled racial progress, given our nation’s history. As Alice, a 23-year-old college student of Taiwanese descent, put it, “Ten to 20 years ago people would never imagine us to have a black president. So I think it’s moving in a good direction.” It’s the rest of her statement that so often gets overlooked: “But racism is definitely still around.”

Harold, a 22-year-old African American youth organizer, elaborated on the same point. “It took a lot of white people to get [Obama] elected, but [racism]’s definitely not over,” Harold said, quipping, “He’s kinda like Oprah.” Harold contrasted Obama’s individual success with more

http://colorlines.com/archives/2011/06/youth_and_race_focus_group_main.html

general indicators of African American male success in contemporary society, saying, “There are very few [black] men in four-year universities. And there are so *many* in prisons.”

Harold was not the only participant to consider the president an exception—as opposed to the rule—for what outcomes can be expected more broadly for African American men or other people of color. There were young people of all races who viewed Obama and/or his election as a special case. In contrast to many commentators on election night, young people in our focus groups largely recognized that the way race does or doesn’t operate in a presidential election can be very different from how it operates in more common arenas. “[Ok, so] about the presidential part, [race] don’t matter. But there are other parts,” said Vicente, a 19-year-old unemployed Latino.

Still, there was significant variation between our focus groups, which were arranged by race, in how young people see race playing out in the Obama era. Interestingly, black youth often felt they’d been backed into just the kind of defensive space that commentators like Bennett ascribed for them.

Participants in a focus group of African American college students, for instance, felt that white people were trying to get them to “stop whining” about racism. “I feel like since Obama has become president, Caucasians want to put it in your face,” said one participant. “We hear it in class, from professors with a PhD. That’s the scariest thing,” said Stacie, who grew up in a lower-income household in South L.A. Earl, who was also in that session, agreed. “I had a prof say that because we had a black president, he felt racism was ending, and that we don’t really have a racist country,” the young man recalled, twisting his face into an incredulous look. “I brought up the comment that also there’s the idea that [white voters] felt guilty.”

Earl also expressed a sentiment that distinguished him and other young people of color from whites in our study: concern about the increasingly hostile tone of the political climate, as reflected by white conservatives and the tea party movement. Two comments are worth quoting at length:

Ever since Obama came into office, I’ve noticed that the political climate has become really racist and racial too. First, it was kind of towards blacks, and now we are having issues with the borders and “let’s hate the Mexicans.” And 9/11—“Oh, we still hate the Muslims.” And white people, there are groups of white people that are, like, “Yeah, let’s embrace this racist attitude we have,” and now it’s becoming okay to say some of these things in a political nature in media. And, wow, this is insane.

—Theresa, 24, biracial (Filipina and white) college graduate

In my political science class, I’m hearing whites go off. They seem very angry. They kinda feel threatened.... The tension is there, you can feel it. It’s just interesting. They say stuff about immigration, where their money for taxes is going. They feel they should go to their schools, not schools in L.A. or Long Beach. They feel like their money should stay in their community. They don’t feel the need to help others. They feel like ... why should they be penalized for our sufferings, basically.

—Ed, 24, Filipino American, part-time student, part-time product developer

Reactions similarly differed across racial groups when asked about the demographic projections for the U.S. population. Notably, the white participants in our study generally did not respond in depth when asked how they felt about the nation’s shifting profile and gave comparatively dispassionate responses. The responses of a group of white Millennials who are not in college, for instance, ranged from “it will be good [to have] more diversity” to “[it] will lead to more tolerance” to “there will be more conflict, but eventually things will cool down.” But as a whole, this group expressed a vague sense of optimism. “I don’t know anybody who’s angry/worried about it,” said one person.

Among young people of color, however, the topic generated much more spirited discussions. Reactions ranged from concern over the racist backlash against President Obama and anti-immigrant sentiment in today’s political climate to a minority view of sympathy for the loss of

http://colorlines.com/archives/2011/06/youth_and_race_focus_group_main.html

whiteness in the traditional American identity. Some also articulated a disbelief that the changing demographics would come with a change in material circumstances for people of color.

For instance, Daniel, a part-time junior college student in a Latino focus group, argued that having more people of color in the U.S. won't necessarily bring about equity. "It's pointless if we're not moving forward. If we're not getting the higher education. We could keep on having immigrants coming over, but it's pointless if we're stuck in the same place." African American college student Stacie made a similar point:

In terms of who holds power more politically, economically ... as far as, like, land, homeowners, things of economic value? And that really make the economy turn, and that kinda thing? We are not on the radar for that as much as we should be.

Sofia, a 21-year-old college student whose parents are from Costa Rica, similarly remarked that a demographic shift toward majority status for people of color is "not necessarily a great thing. The rich are getting richer. And the poor are getting poorer. It could just be a little bit of white people who are very wealthy, and we could have a lot more poor people, too."

Criminal Injustices

Our focus group participants' responses make clear that, while most Millennials believe that race still matters in our society, there's a wide variation in how they see it playing out in a world with a black president and a coming demographic majority of people color. But our discussions also delved into the more detailed ways in which race impacts life by focusing on the intersections of "Race and..." several key systems in our society—from public schools to criminal justice to employment to immigration. Those discussions made clear Millennials of different racial/ethnic groups also think in different terms about the *extent* of race's impact. Young people of color typically had no problem labeling the criminal justice and employment systems as "racist," for instance, while whites tended to believe there were simply some racist *individuals* within those systems. (I'll describe this difference in more detail in a second essay on our findings next week.)

There is, however, one particularly striking point of agreement: a super-majority of all races/ethnicities in our study said that racism continues to be a significant problem in the criminal justice system. All but 10 percent of focus group participants circled criminal justice when asked, in a post-session survey, "In which of the following areas of society, if any, do you do you think racism is still a significant problem? Options: Educational system; Employment; Housing; Criminal Justice system; Health system; Other_".

Even a handful of white participants felt comfortable labeling criminal justice as such. Andy, the 19-year-old junior college student, asserted that criminal justice is the "most racist system ... on every level." His friend Jon, who initially was one of the very few participants who did not believe race still mattered in the Obama era, said there was "definitely more prejudice" and "white cops are usually more mean."

But while white young adults tended to focus their comments on racial profiling and speak about things that they'd heard about, people of color, particularly African Americans, often spoke in starkly personal terms. Donnell, a 24-year-old African American who is a part-time sales rep, offered a representative comment:

I've never seen anything correct about the criminal justice system, so I really don't know what [it] is. I got pulled over two days ago for no reason. Right on the corner [in South L.A.] where I lived for over 20 years. And that's not the first time, and I know it won't be the last.

Besides criminal justice, employment was the only other choice that a majority across racial/ethnic groups agreed is an area where racism continues to be a significant problem. On education, a majority of all young *people of color* groups believed that racism continues to be a significant

http://colorlines.com/archives/2011/06/youth_and_race_focus_group_main.html

problem, whereas only a minority of white Millennials agreed. A majority of whites and Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders believed that racism is still significant in housing, while less than a third of Latinos and African Americans circled this sector in the post-session survey.

Class, Culture and Action

Typically, all of our focus groups, regardless of racial and ethnic make up, had at least one participant who believed firmly that class is a more important factor than race in predicting individual and/or group outcomes in society. Though they never explicitly described it as such, these individuals viewed the racial demographics of the socioeconomic classes in our society as coincidental.

“I feel like it has more to do with money than race,” said Makeda, a 20-year-old black college student who is the daughter of Ethiopian immigrants. “I feel like all these tie more into how much money you make. ‘Cause if you have more money you can go to better schools. You can avoid going to jail. Have a better job. Get better health care. Live in a nice home.” Edward, a 23-year-old unemployed, Chinese American college graduate, agreed. “Especially looking at that educational system. When [I was] applying for colleges, USC was among them, and the very first interview question is, ‘How are you going to pay for tuition?’ ” he recounted. “I mean in this country, money does, in fact, talk.”

From this point of view, the fact that the upper class consists overwhelmingly of white people, while people of color are greatly overrepresented in the ranks of the poor, is either an historical accident or currently irrelevant.

The American Dream defines aspiration in the U.S. The idea that ability and hard work will lead to material success for every individual is a dominant cultural and political ethos, regardless of race and class. Indeed, with all that divides our country, it is perhaps the most unifying belief. So it is not surprising that many participants in our focus groups emphasized the importance of individual effort and of education in changing the racial disparities they identified.

This was particularly true of the white participants and those young people of color who said class is a more important factor than race in shaping the 21st century United States. Both of these groups also tended to remark that society is “not perfect” and that individuals of color have the choice, and even “special” opportunities or “advantages,” to overcome most challenges they face.

Some of the young people of color who suggested that individual initiative was the key factor to success in our society used themselves or people they knew as proof that it could be done. Some college students, like Rajni, challenged their peers who, for instance, decried racially disproportionate educational resources:

Maybe the way of allocating money isn't fair, but I think that coming from a school that is, y'know, kinda low income, we had—if people wanted to succeed, we had resources to succeed. My roommate's from Inglewood, and she got [to college]. My other roommate [is from] the bad district of Long Beach, and she's [received an academic scholarship] ...So, I feel like the resources are there, it's just changing the motivation in the kids who are there. You have to inspire them to want to do better and use the resources they have.

Some white participants, meanwhile, explained racial disparities as a function of not only individual initiative, but also “cultural” factors. Twenty-year-old college student Mirna pointed to an exchange she had with a Mexican American friend:

She was saying, basically, she wants to move in with her boyfriend, and her mom is going crazy, she is saying, “You are doing the typical Mexican thing where you are gonna move in and get married, and your husband is gonna have to pay, and you are, like, just gonna pop out a bunch of kids,” and, like, she was telling me that that is kind of, like, what somewhat like Mexican ethic. So if you are

http://colorlines.com/archives/2011/06/youth_and_race_focus_group_main.html

gonna have, like, people who do that, they are not gonna make as much money, they are just gonna keep, you know, the income inequality is just gonna keep going.

All of these ideas are crucial to understand because they also shape how this generation will choose to act upon racism and racial injustice. Perhaps not surprisingly, those who put stock in individual efforts to overcome the racial disparities they see at play also largely threw up their hands at solutions.

“I think that this is the best it is gonna get,” reflected Courtney in one of the white focus groups. “I think that somebody can probably think of something better than I can somewhere down the line. But as of right now this is doing pretty well, even though it is sometimes racist because of the individual aspect of it, but how are we really gonna fix that?” In fact, the most common response among white focus groups to the question of how change happens was that “time” would improve conditions.

This sentiment also came up in people of color focus groups, but there was typically a greater range of perspectives offered. In fact, to the degree that the Millennials articulated urgency around creating racial justice, it came perhaps predictably from people of color. And it was among these action-oriented individuals where the gap between Millennials and the conventional wisdom about race in the age of Obama was largest.

Harold, the 22-year-old African American high school youth organizer, for instance, drew a starkly different lesson from Obama’s election than did mainstream political and media commentators. “It was masses of people that got Barack Obama elected,” he pointed out. “You need to organize, like, masses of people. Any major movement or change involves masses of people.”

PART TWO: Next week, Dom Apollon will further explore the ways in which young people of different racial and ethnic groups define contemporary racism. “While white Millennials tend to focus upon individual-level racism, young people of color are more likely to think in terms of groups and have less trouble describing entire systems as racist,” Apollon explains. “But regardless, institutional and structural racism are rarely the first definitions that come to mind for Millennials of any race or ethnicity.”

You can also hear more thoughts from the young people in the focus groups by watching Dom Apollon’s [Reporter’s Notebook video](#).

Racism remains an issue in Cuba, officials say

Juan O. Tamayo

Miami Herald, Jun. 03, 2011

WASHINGTON The Cuban government will soon cast a media spotlight on the issue of racism on the island, although some programs to improve the lives of black Cubans had to be cut because of economic restraints, a Havana official said Thursday.

Heriberto Feraudy, who heads the quasi-official Cuban Commission against Racism, also said the popularity of Afro-Cuban religions is soaring and indicated that Raúl Castro's economic reforms may not help blacks as much as whites.

Feraudy, who served 15 years as ambassador to five African nations, and Esteban Morales, a well-known Havana economist who writes often on race, addressed a conference on the issue sponsored by the Center for International Policy, a think tank.

Their unusually frank comments — for decades Cuba officially denied the existence of discrimination on the island — seemed to reflect the growing concern over race issues as the country drops some of its socialist policies and embraces more private enterprise. Feraudy and Morales — both black — argued that the Fidel and Raúl Castro governments have done more for Cuban blacks since 1952 than any other government in the previous centuries.

“The problem of a division in Cuba (due to racial issues) is not possible,” said Morales, who was reportedly suspended from the Communist Party last year after he wrote a column complaining about the island's burgeoning official corruption.

But both also agreed that racism persists on the island, and that the issue needs to be discussed and confronted even though “many people” in Cuba argue that the Castro revolution did away with racial discrimination. Feraudy said some programs adopted under Fidel Castro to help blacks “had to be terminated” because of a shortage of resources — he gave no further details — but added that his commission is pushing for a broad discussion of the race issue.

Cuban state television will soon launch a one-year run of programs on Africa and its importance to the island, he said, and the parliamentary National Assembly of People's Power has agreed to take up the issue in one of its coming sessions.

Morales joked that some Cubans, “even at some levels of power,” argue that all race problems in Cuba disappeared after 1959 because the revolutionary government outlawed discrimination “and we are very good people.” Now racism is a “democratic issue that we must discuss in Cuba” with all of civil society, he added. But the discussion must be handled carefully to avoid simply raising concerns without providing answers.

Feraudy noted that Raúl Castro has called for an increase of blacks in top positions and that the Central Committee of the ruling Communist Party selected last month showed a 10 percent increase in the number of black and mestizo members.

But he indicated that he agreed with widespread concerns that Castro's proposals to boost the economy by allowing more private enterprise and slashing government payrolls subsidies would hit blacks harder than whites. Whites receive more remittances from abroad, which could be used to start one the newly legalized businesses, because most exiles are white, he noted.

Feraudy's committee was created two years ago by the government-controlled Cuban Union of Writers and Artists (UNEAC) as black dissidents began using the language of black U.S. activists to attack the Castro governments.

Sexual Assault / Harassment

Report reveals sexual assaults at veterans facilities

BY Gregg Zoroya

USA Today, 8 June 2011

There were 284 cases of alleged, attempted or confirmed sex assaults at [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) medical facilities from January 2007 to last July, according to a government investigation report released Tuesday.

Men and women were victims. Patients and employees were among those assaulted or who committed abuse. The crimes ranged from inappropriate touching to rape, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) study found.

Investigators blamed the assaults on a host of problems, including haphazard security measures, too few VA police and no program for assessing potentially dangerous patients. There was also a failure to report crimes to higher leadership for corrective systemwide action and to the VA inspector general.

Last week, the [House Veterans' Affairs Committee](#) introduced legislation that would require the VA to track all sexual assaults and better assess those at risk of committing crimes.

"It's just inexcusable in veterans hospitals what is going on," said Rep. [Ann Marie Buerkle](#), R-N.Y., chairwoman of the panel's health subcommittee and co-sponsor of the legislation. Sexual abuse "just can't be allowed to happen. It's got to be stopped. It's got to be addressed right now."

The VA is reviewing the study and taking corrective steps, said [Josh Taylor](#), VA press secretary. An operations center established in 2009 has improved the tracking of crime, he said.

"We are taking steps to expand and improve our reporting of allegations and to provide more secure facilities," Taylor said. "We take all allegations seriously and investigate them thoroughly."

The department operates 152 medical centers, treats 6 million veterans and is the largest integrated health care system in the nation, Taylor said.

The patient population now contains more young and female veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, along with veterans with histories of incarceration, the GAO report says.

The report says VA "clinicians raised concerns about the safety of women veterans in a VA residential mental health facility that housed both women veterans and veterans who have committed sexual crimes in the past." The report did not identify this facility.

VA regulations require that all potential felonies be reported to the inspector general, but the GAO study found that the office did not learn of 42 rape cases.

The VA relies on clinicians to assess a patient's risk of committing sexual assaults, based in part on patients revealing their own criminal histories. The result is an incomplete record of a patient's dangerous past, the study found.

In one case, the VA did know that a patient was a publicly registered sex offender.

"VA needs to really take some decisive action now to try to mitigate future incidents or prevent them," said Randall Williamson, the senior investigator in the case.

Investigators visited five VA medical centers and found panic alarm systems that did not work, closed-circuit surveillance cameras that were not being monitored and understaffed police offices.

"I am just aghast at what the report shows," said Rep. [Jeff Miller](#), R-Fla., chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee. "We've got to make sure that there are no more patients or employees still in the system in the position to do irreparable harm to more veterans."