

EIGHTH UNITED STATES ARMY



Observance Message Black History Month

Black History Month – created by historian and educator Carter G. Woodson – was originally known as “Negro History Week” when first observed in 1926. He chose the second week in February to coincide with Frederick Douglass’ and Abraham Lincoln’s birthdays. Throughout the 20th Century, the event evolved and in 1976, President Ford announced Black History Month as a national observance. Years later, Congress passed Public Law 99-244 in 1986 which designated February as National Black History Month.

President Harry Truman signed Executive Order 9981 in 1948 integrating the military and mandating equality of treatment and opportunity. However, desegregation was not complete for several years, and all African-American units persisted for several years. The Army disbanded the last all African-American unit in 1954 one year after the Korean War. Since the end of military segregation and the creation of an all-volunteer Army, the American military has seen the representation of African-Americans in its ranks rise dramatically.

The history of African-American employment in the federal government began with the arrival of thousands of African-American workers in Washington, D.C., after emancipation and the end of the Civil War. However, it was not until the 1960s when the implementation of effective equal employment opportunity laws and policies that led to meaningful representation by African-American workers in the federal workforce.

Today, more than one out of every five Soldiers is African-American and serve in all branches and all ranks from Private to General. African-American Civilians account for nearly 16% of our Department of the Army Civilian workforce and serve in every career field and at all grade levels.

During Black History Month, we join the rest of the nation to recognize the important contributions African-American make in every aspect of our society and we honor the African-American Soldiers and Civilians whose service keeps Eighth Army strong.

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