



THE NATIONAL VETERANS COALITION COLONEL CHARLES YOUNG PROMOTION CAMPAIGN



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Article For Immediate Release 15 February 2012

By: Charles Blatcher, III, founder/ceo of the National Minority Military Museum Foundation
and founder/chairman of the National Veterans Coalition.

Black Veterans on Black History

For three and half decades we have conducted an advocacy to establish a national institution to acknowledge the contributions of Black Americans in the defense of the nation. We were motivated to seek the institutionalization of the history because for far too long the subject has gone without the proper dissemination of facts. The lack of public knowledge allows for ignorance and misrepresentation of the importance of the subject. The contributions are at the forefront of opening the doors of opportunity for Black Americans and other minorities.

In 1770 when the Colonies rose-up in resistance to England, Black patriots were there. There were Black Minutemen among the colonial forces. When the Revolutionary War began, there were Black members of the Continental Army. Viewing the parallels between our military involvement and measured public concessions, the history is the "cornerstone" to our claim and demand for equal rights. It is important to not allow those facts to remain obscured in the minds of the public. It is information that should resonate through our learning institutions. It was our hope that the soon to be National Museum of African American History and Culture would be the venue for the facts.

Our hope was diminished when we were made aware the National Museum had restricted the history to three thousand square feet of display space. This space is insufficient to properly present the longevity and merits of our service over two centuries of history checkered by wars and conflicts. This history covers the periods from the American Revolutionary War in 1776 through the end of the war in Iraq 2011, representing all the branches of the United States Armed Forces.

There is a wealth of photographic materials in the archives of the Imperial War Museum in London England documenting the service of Black American Soldiers in World War II. The information was left behind at the conclusion of the war. We believe the decision to leave the materials were motivated by the racial

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policies of the era. The photographs validate Black participation in the war effort and our right to equal entitlement. The materials were left behind for the British Government to decide its fate. They chose to archive it in their National Museum. We inventoried a large portion of the materials on a research visit to the museum/repository some years ago. It stands vivid in my memory that a few of the photographs were stamped **“Not to be shown in the United States.”** We would like to bring all the images home for display in a facility dedicated to their preservation. There are boxes of materials in the National Archives pertaining to Black participation in the armed services. Some of it has not been seen by the public. We would like to present the content of those files to the public in a permanent exhibit. **“The knowledge of history is useless if it is not shared.”**

The nation needs to recognize the pioneering men and woman who were the first Black Flag Officers in the Armed Forces and the Black Sergeants Majors who have contributed over 3,000 years of combined service to this nation. We must recognize the segregated units/companies/battalions, regiments and divisions who served. We would like to have a facility to display artifacts like a Sherman Tank, P-51 Mustang airplane, howitzer, life size cavalry horses, uniformed mannequins and other artifacts representing all the branches of the services. We need room for the Black Regiments who distinguished themselves serving under the French Government during World War I. There are Black Medal of Honor Recipients, and other decorated sailors and marines who should be recognized in the venue. There are also civic leaders, elected officials and celebrity entertainers whose histories pass through the Armed Forces. We would like to recognize their service within the context of a permanent national presentation. We are well over three thousand square feet.

We applaud and welcome the creation of the National Museum of African American History and Culture. The recognition of our contributions to this nation is long overdue. However, we are disappointed the institution’s scope of interest is so broad that it cannot provide adequate space for our military history to be displayed in the manner we believe it should be presented to the public. We have asked that the three thousand square feet allotted for military history in that facility be designated a temporary display gallery. We have invited the National Museum to join our efforts to raise public awareness of the legendary soldier/diplomat Colonel Charles Young and the Buffalo Soldiers through the installation of their history to open the gallery in 2015. Furthermore, we would like the Smithsonian Institute to establish an annex facility designated for Black Military History. We realize space on the national mall is a scarcity. The National Museum of Black Military History can be established on a local university campus or the former property of Walter Reed Army Base. We are prepared to meet the challenge of spearheading the effort.

To the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institute Dr. G. Wayne Clough, work with us to do the right thing.

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