

Service Members, Veterans, and Their Families (SMVF)

Newsletter: February 2026

Happy Black History Month! As we step in February, and celebrate Black History Month, our Same Day Access Program invites you to reflect on the contributions African Americans have made to our country, and the military. This month's newsletter highlights meaningful observances, upcoming events, and stories that explore perseverance, leadership, and American history. Join the SDA program while we honor Service Members, Veterans, and their families throughout the month of February.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Military and Veterans Career Summit

Friday, February 6, 12-3 p.m.

[More Info](#)

Hands, Head, and Heart: 125 Years of Army Nursing

Friday, February 6, 10-12:30 p.m.

[More Info](#)

Supporting Justice Involved Veterans

Tues. February 10, 2-3 p.m.

[More Info](#)

From Knowledge to Action: Responding to Suicide Risk

Tues. February 17, 3:30-5:30 p.m.

[More Info](#)

Facing Military Moral Injury

Wed. February 25, 7-8 p.m.

[More Info](#)

OBSERVANCES

Black History Month

Groundhog Day, February 2nd

Four Chaplins Day, February 3rd

USO Birthday, February 4th

National Salute to Veteran Patients,
February 9-15th

Valentines Day, February 14th

President's Day, February 17th

Coast Guard Reserve Birthday, February 19th

Ramadan, February 28-March 29th



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DEPARTMENT OF
**COMMUNITY &
HUMAN SERVICES**

History and The Military

Using Military Records to learn about your Ancestors by: Nicol Jackson

Genealogy is often described as a journey into the past, and it is much more than simply collecting names and dates. It is the study of real people and the lives they lived. By researching our ancestors, we gain a deeper understanding of our families, our communities, and ourselves. Family history helps preserve stories that might otherwise be lost. Memories fade, records disappear, and traditions change, but genealogy allows us to document and pass down important details to future generations.

For centuries, military service has touched a significant portion of the population. Wars, compulsory service, pensions, and veteran benefits have created extensive paper trails. Even ancestors who served briefly or never saw combat may appear in official records. These documents often contain personal information that may not exist anywhere else. Because military service affected so many families, these records can help fill gaps left by missing census data or early civil records.

Common military documents include service records, draft registrations, pension files, and discharge papers. Together, they may reveal birthplaces, ages, family relationships, physical descriptions, and personal stories through affidavits and witness statements. Pension records, in particular, can provide rich family information, sometimes naming spouses and children. These records are available through national archives, libraries, historical societies, and online databases. When searching, it is important to be flexible with spellings and dates and to explore multiple record types, as an ancestor may appear in more than one source.

Sample DD214 form, which can be requested by clicking this [link](#)

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Military records can be accessed online through several official government websites, depending on the type of record needed. Service members, veterans, and authorized next of kin can request personnel and service records through the National Archives' eVetRecs system, which provides access to DD Form 214 and other separation documents. Medical records may be available through the Department of Veterans Affairs or the Defense Health Agency's MHS GENESIS patient portal for more recent service. Older medical and personnel records are maintained by the National Personnel Records Center. To access records, users typically must verify their identity and relationship to the veteran, and some records may have restrictions based on privacy laws or date of service.

Beyond facts and dates, military records help bring ancestors to life by showing where they served and how their experiences shaped their lives. Incorporating these records into genealogical research can deepen our understanding of family history while honoring those who served.



Family Photos and Military Records,
Courtesy of Nicol Revis Jackson Family Album

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In commemoration of Black history month, this narrative is dedicated to the contributions and sacrifices made by Black veterans.

By Sam Jalloh,

The Buffalo Soldiers: Courage, Service, and Legacy



In 1866, one year after the conclusion of the Civil War, the United States Congress took a monumental step toward integrating its military by establishing six all-Black regiments. These regiments would collectively be known as the Buffalo Soldiers and include two cavalry units: the 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments, along with two infantry units: the 24th and 25th Infantry Regiments. The men who composed these units were a diverse group consisting of formerly enslaved individuals, free Black men, and veterans of the Civil War. Despite a nation that had yet to fully embrace their rights, these soldiers stepped forward with immense courage, discipline, and a commitment to service. Their contributions not only shaped the future of the U.S. military but also highlighted the ongoing struggle for equality and dignity in American society.

Origins of the Buffalo Soldiers

(Photo courtesy from Wikipedia)



The creation of the Buffalo Soldiers was rooted in the Army Reorganization Act of 1866, which aimed to fill the ranks of the U.S. Army following the Civil War.

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The moniker “Buffalo Soldiers” is widely believed to have been bestowed upon these troops by Native American tribes who recognized and respected their bravery. The designation reflected both their physical characteristics particularly their hair texture and their fighting spirit, which mirrored the resilience of the buffalo, a revered symbol of strength and endurance in indigenous cultures.

Throughout their service, Buffalo Soldiers encountered significant challenges, including systemic racism and discrimination. They faced segregation, inadequate resources, and a culture that often undervalued their contributions. Nevertheless, these men exhibited professionalism and steadfast determination, earning the respect of their peers and superiors alike through their exemplary service rather than their station in society.

Service in the Spanish-American War

In 1898, during the Spanish-American War, Buffalo Soldiers proved integral to the military efforts in the Caribbean, particularly in Cuba. The 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments fought valiantly alongside Theodore Roosevelt’s Rough Riders during the legendary charge up San Juan Hill. Their bravery at this pivotal moment was instrumental in achieving a critical victory for American forces. This performance helped to dismantle the prevailing racial stereotypes of the era, demonstrating unequivocally that valor and competence transcend race.



Unsung Heroes of National Parks.

The first African American Park Rangers. Retrieved from Buffalo Soldiers Parks Conservancy Archives

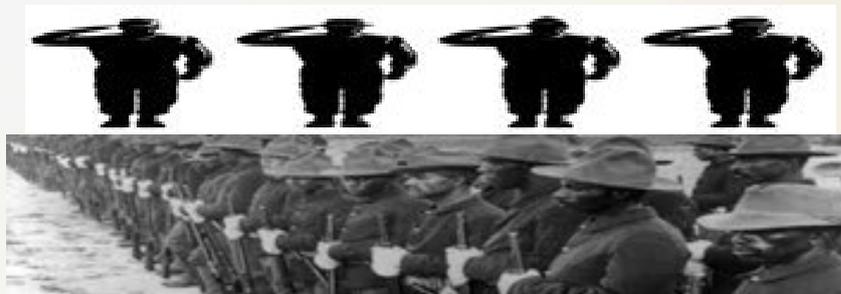
Beyond the battlefield, Buffalo Soldiers carved out an extraordinary legacy as some of the earliest park rangers in United States history. Before the establishment of the National Park Service in 1916, these soldiers were tasked with protecting the natural wonders of Yosemite and Sequoia National Parks. They were responsible for building trails, enforcing rules, and safeguarding the country’s rich natural resources. Their pioneering role in conservation and park stewardship highlights a lesser-known aspect of their service that extended far beyond military engagements, showcasing their dedication to civic responsibility and environmental preservation. Parks Conservancy Archives

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A Legacy of Honor and Progress.

[SJ1] The first African American Park Rangers.



Modern U.S. soldiers saluting a historic Buffalo Soldier silhouette

Throughout their storied history, over two dozen Buffalo Soldiers received the prestigious Medal of Honor for their acts of heroism. However, perhaps their most significant contribution was their unwavering perseverance amidst the injustices they faced. Their service helped challenge and gradually dismantle segregationist policies within the military, laying the groundwork for the eventual integration of the U.S. armed forces in 1948. They were not merely soldiers; they were trailblazers who exemplified dignity, discipline, and an indomitable will in the face of adversity.

Why Their Story Matters Today

As we reflect on their remarkable legacy during Black History Month, the story of the Buffalo Soldiers serves as a powerful reminder that progress is often forged in the fires of courage both on the battlefield and in the

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everyday struggle for equality. Their unwavering commitment to duty transformed the landscape military service and continues to resonate and inspire new generations. Their legacy invites us to honor excellence, confront injustices, and acknowledge that true patriotism encompasses the pursuit of a nation's highest ideals even when those ideals remain out of reach.



“We fought two wars one against our enemies, and one against prejudice.”
Buffalo Soldier Veteran.



As we commemorate Black History Month, we celebrate the Buffalo Soldiers not just for their remarkable acts of bravery but also for the profound and lasting impact they have had on American history. Their story is more than just a chapter in military history; it is a vital part of the broader narrative of America's ongoing journey toward justice and equality.

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About the author of the article



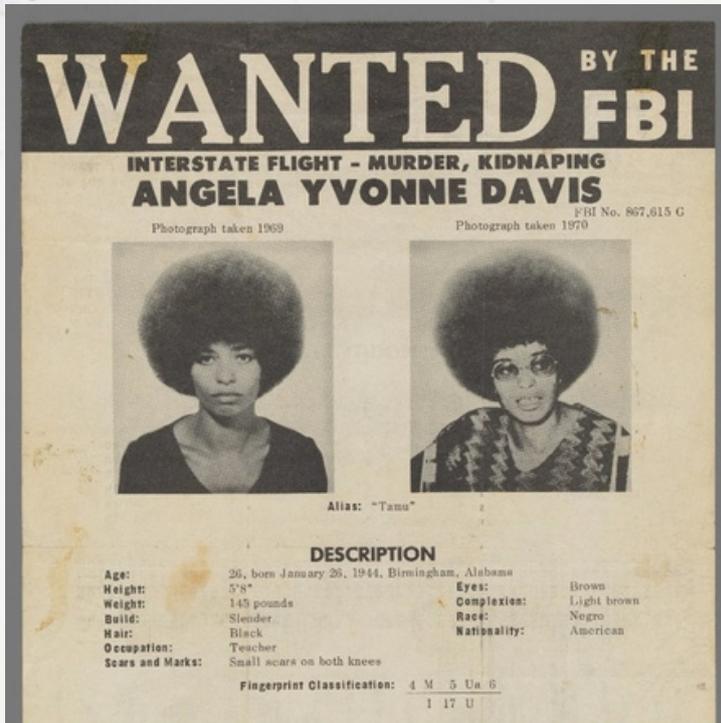
Sam Jalloh is currently pursuing a Master of Social Work (MSW) at the College of Humanity and Social Science, Grand Canyon University. He has dedicated an impressive 14 years of his career to the City of Alexandria, where he has served as direct support staff in a residential program aimed at assisting individuals with intellectual disabilities. After earning his bachelor's degree with a concentration in counseling, specifically focusing on drug, chemical, and substance abuse addiction, Sam has continued to enhance his expertise in the field.

At present, he is involved with Safe Haven, which has recently been rebranded as the Riley Place, located at 115 North Patrick Street which serves individuals with mental and substance abuse issues. In addition to his role there, Sam is also an intern with Same Day Access (SDA), where he is gaining valuable experience within the City of Alexandria's Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS). His dedication to supporting vulnerable populations reflects his commitment to making a meaningful impact on the community.

References:

1. [Library of Congress](#) – Buffalo Soldiers historical photos
2. [National Archives](#) – Military service images
3. [National Park Service](#) – Buffalo Soldiers in national parks
4. [Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture](#)

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Women, Race and Class by Angela Davis

by: Nerina Cella

Women, Race and Class is a compilation of over 13 essays highlighting the American women's liberation movement and exposes the sexism, racism, and classism endured by women of color in the process. Davis also brings up that women of color were forced to participate in the fights for war. This was the entry point for their

male counterparts to begin indulging in rape and violence towards this population. Historically, this book discusses the creation of the women's rights movement from the time of slavery, and points how the working class Black and Brown women in America endured the brunt of the fight.

During the 1960-1970s there were a series of movements and protests evolving including a "never ending" Vietnam war, the women's rights, civil rights for African American citizens and gay rights movements as well. The heaviest material discussed in this book involves the real and cruel living conditions of slaves, and how women of color endured the most rape and violence throughout the Vietnam War. "The overall impression of the Vietnam War furnished a further example of the extent to which racism could function as a provocation to rape. Because it was drummed into the heads of U.S. soldiers that they were fighting an inferior race, they could be taught that raping Vietnamese women was a necessary military duty. They could even be instructed to "search" the women with their penises" (Davis, 177).

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Davis continues with an analysis of the intersection of three topics: slavery and the post-civil war, the Civil War and post-war Reconstruction era, the end of the 19th century, and how the start of a new century has continued to marginalize women, but the fight continues. Davis wanted to shed light on the major contributions and important lives that have put in the work in this fight for women's suffrage. Davis wants to point out and show readers that as a society, there needs to be accountability for past mistakes, and a demonstration of solidarity within our society. This goes beyond the need to consider factors that go beyond one's own desires and interests.

Interestingly, Davis discussed how the birth control movement began with the 19th-century thanks to the idea of "voluntary motherhood." Although Davis believes that reproductive rights like birth control and abortion are a "fundamental prerequisite for the emancipation of women" (Davis, 202), she criticizes the overall movement's racist history. She discusses the birth control movement extensively in Chapter 12 to discuss eugenics' influence on the movement, which included sterilization abuse and later disabled the abortion rights campaign. There were Black, Native American, and Puerto Rican women reported being sterilized without their consent after undergoing routine medical procedures or after giving birth. Others say they unknowingly signed documentation allowing them to be sterilized or were coerced into doing so. This was a movement to allow women of color and working-class women the opportunity to decide if childbirth is something they want to go through.

Mrs. Angela Y. Davis is a professor, activist, author and philosopher. Davis is famous for her lifelong activism, particularly during the 1960s and 1970s, during which she was wrongfully arrested on charges of murder and kidnapping and placed on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted list in 1970. Davis wrote *Women, Race and Class* less than 10 years after her release from federal incarceration; this work is a pioneering example of what we now know as intersectional feminism. Other well-known works by Davis on race, gender, and class include *Women, Culture & Politics*, *The Meaning of Freedom: And Other Difficult Dialogues*, and *Abolition. Feminism. Now.* Her writing draws frequently on abolitionist and Black feminist theories and practices, as well as Marxist analysis.

References/Work Cited:

Davis, Angela Y. *Women, Race & Class*. Vintage, 1983.