Commemorate Black History Month

This February, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) joins the Nation in observing Black History Month and celebrating the contributions of African Americans to our Nation.

As of June 30, 2021, the total VA workforce consisted of over 420,000 employees. The representation of Black males and females was higher than the Relevant Civilian Labor Force benchmarks. Since fiscal year (FY) 2019, the total number of Black employees has increased; while the proportional representation of Black males decreased slightly by 0.41 percentage point, the representation of Black females increased by 0.57 percentage point. The representation of Black employees in VA is largely concentrated in lower grade positions. In the leadership pipeline, Black males and Black females have lower than expected representation. In FY 2021, Black males represented nearly nine percent of the VA workforce; however, only 2.88 percent of GS-15s were Black males. Black females made up 16.34 percent of the workforce; however, only 3.26 percent of GS-15s were Black females (data provided by the Workforce Analysis Team, Office of Resolution Management, Diversity and Inclusion).

For information, visit VA’s Departmental Black/African American Special Emphasis Program webpage or contact Ms. Tynnetta Lee, ORMDI.
Message from the DAS
Harvey Johnson, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Resolution Management, Diversity and Inclusion

VA is committed to ensuring that every employee can bring their authentic self to work and feels a sense of belonging throughout their journey with the Department. Additionally, we recognize that employees’ identities play a role in their VA experiences. To that end, the Veterans Experience Office Employee Experience (EX) team partnered with ORMDI to launch an intersectional approach to improve EX and is seeking VA employees to provide critical insight into their experiences. To participate, please sign up for an Identity Insights interview or focus group.

In commemoration of Black History Month in February, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) shared the surprising stories of a few African American celebrities and their service in our Nation’s armed forces.

From VFW:

Like many [V]eterans whose military service paved a path to success in civilian life, African American [V]eterans have used the experience and discipline they acquired in the military to attain prominent positions in the civilian world.

Here are some of the best-known African American celebrities whose contributions to popular culture and society began after their discharge from the armed forces...

Morgan Freeman enlisted in the Air Force in 1955, harboring dreams of becoming a fighter pilot like those he watched on film. His interest in flying led him to turn down a drama scholarship to Jackson State University in Mississippi prior to enlisting. While in the Air Force, [Mr.] Freeman was a radar technician and eventually rose the ranks to airman 1st class after nearly four years.

He left the Air Force in 1959 and turned his sights back on an acting career, eventually earning his first on-screen appearance during the 1964 TV soap opera “Another World.” [Mr.] Freeman has since gone on to become one of the most recognizable faces and voices in Hollywood, nominated for four Academy Awards and snagging the Oscar for Best Supporting Actor in 2005 for his role in Clint Eastwood’s “Million Dollar Baby.”

Known as the founder of Motown Records in Detroit, Berry Gordy paved the way for what became a revered Motown sound that included pioneers of music like Marvin Gaye, Stevie Wonder, Diana Ross, Michael Jackson, Smokey Robinson, and The Temptations. [Mr.] Gordy, however, spent his early life as a journeyman. He dropped out of school to pursue a career as a boxer, which was cut short after the Army drafted him to serve during the Korean War in 1951.

When his service ended in 1953, [Mr.] Gordy found himself an employee on an assembly line at the Ford Motor Company in Detroit. He began writing music then, which he parlayed into a career by borrowing $700 from his father to form his own company to make and sell records. Motown Records earned the distinguished honor of being the most lucrative and highest-earning African American business for more than 25 years. [Mr.] Gordy was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1988 and awarded the National Medal of Arts by President Barack Obama in 2016...

Before voicing Darth Vader in the “Star Wars” movie franchise, James Earl Jones joined the Army in 1953 following his time at the University of Michigan, where he excelled in the Pershing Rifles Drill Team and Scabbard and Blade Honor Society. He did basic training at Fort Benning, [Georgia], before attending Ranger school and helping to establish a cold weather training command near Leadville, Colorado.

Although [Mr.] Jones considered pursuing a military career, he [was] discharged from the Army as a [first] lieutenant and set his sights on acting. [Mr.] Jones’ acting career is draped in success, as he was just the second male African American actor to receive an Academy Award nomination for his work in “The Great White Hope” (1970). He also starred in critically acclaimed movies that include “Dr. Strangelove” (1964), “Coming to America” (1988), “Field of Dreams” (1989), “The Hunt for Red October” (1990), “Patriot Games” (1992) and “Clear and Present Danger” (1994). He’s received two Tony Awards, an honorary Academy Award, two Emmy Awards and a Grammy Award.
### VA LEADERSHIP DIVERSITY

**Fiscal Year 2021**

**LESS THAN EXPECTED REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AND MINORITIES IN LEADERSHIP GRADERS COMPARED TO THE FY21 ONBOARD**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VA FY21</td>
<td>38.01%</td>
<td>61.98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GS 1-9</td>
<td>31.30%</td>
<td>68.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GS 10-12</td>
<td>33.78%</td>
<td>66.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GS 13</td>
<td>30.67%</td>
<td>69.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GS 14</td>
<td>45.77%</td>
<td>54.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GS 15</td>
<td>59.05%</td>
<td>40.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>62.48%</td>
<td>37.52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Minority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VA FY21</td>
<td>56.42%</td>
<td>43.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GS 1-9</td>
<td>49.36%</td>
<td>50.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GS 10-12</td>
<td>60.48%</td>
<td>39.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GS 13</td>
<td>68.74%</td>
<td>31.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GS 14</td>
<td>71.24%</td>
<td>28.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GS 15</td>
<td>62.26%</td>
<td>37.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>76.02%</td>
<td>23.98%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**VA has higher representation of White females, Black and Asian males and females, NHPI females and AIAN males in SES than the government average.**

Government SES data provided by OPM and is current as of FY2020.

Over the last **10 years**, the representation of women and minorities has **increased**!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hispanic or Latino</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander</th>
<th>American Indian or Alaska Native</th>
<th>Two or More Races</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gov’t SES</td>
<td>3.14%</td>
<td>1.58%</td>
<td>52.97%</td>
<td>25.17%</td>
<td>5.41%</td>
<td>5.06%</td>
<td>2.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VA SES</td>
<td>1.93%</td>
<td>0.58%</td>
<td>48.36%</td>
<td>27.66%</td>
<td>7.93%</td>
<td>6.00%</td>
<td>3.29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MD-715 Table 1 & 4; includes permanent and temporary employees in pay status and excludes Manila and medical residents, unless otherwise indicated. VA SES data includes Title-38 equivalents. Title-38 nurses are coded to GS equivalent grades.
Participate in the Barriers Analysis

VA ORMDI partnered with MITRE to conduct a barrier analysis and report with findings and recommendations to assist VA in improving the diversity of the SES career field.

The goal is to have an action plan to improve diversity of the SES career field. To produce a complete barrier report with analysis, findings, and actionable recommendations, we need to include input from a diverse, cross-section of senior leaders and GS13-15 employees.

Request:
Volunteers to participate in interviews and focus groups in February
- **Interviews:** SES (30 minutes)
  - Gain insights into career journey and advancement to SES
- **Focus Groups:** GS13-15 (50 minutes)
  - Solicit perspectives on career development opportunities and experiences for building one’s leadership portfolio to date

POC:
Ryan Pugh (ORMDI) and Andrea Johnson (MITRE) at VABarrierAnalysis@va.gov

*Space is limited and will be filled on a first come, first served basis!*
Federal Asian Pacific American Council Civilian Awards
Nomination Period Closes February 18

The Federal Asian Pacific American Council (FAPAC) is accepting nominations for the Civilian Awards, Uniformed Services Awards, and Distinguished Public Service Scholarship through Friday, February 18, 8:00 PM EST. Visit the FAPAC Awards webpage for full criteria and eligibility requirements before following your Administration’s or organization’s nomination processes. The awards will be presented during the 37th National Leadership Training Program to be held at the National Conference Center in Leesburg, Virginia, May 9-13.

Training
Leadership VA

The Human Capital Services Center (HCSC) is excited to announce that the Leadership VA (LVA) program will be accepting applications for the Class of 2022 through February 18, 5:00 PM EST. Through interactive sessions, workshops and assignments, LVA participants receive 360 hours of state-of-the-art leadership training, relevant to the VA enterprise. You are eligible to apply if you:

- Are a GS-13 through GS-15 or Title 38 equivalent and have worked at the GS-13 level for a minimum of 52 weeks by the time the application window closes.
- Occupy full-time, non-temporary employment status.
- Maintain an overall performance rating of “Fully Successful” or above.

To apply, you must:

- Be endorsed by your supervisor and Senior Executive Service member.
- Be available to participate in two virtual and two residential weeks of the program, in addition to completing all self-paced activities during the intersession weeks.
- Follow all instructions on the application.

If you have further questions, please email lva@va.gov.

The Audacity to Fail Podcast

The Audacity to Fail Podcast: misStepping Into Success focuses on discovering leadership wisdom through experiences with failures and missteps. The podcast dives into conversations and stories from VA leaders as they share how failure activates a growth mindset, is an important part of learning and provides motivation for improvement. In season two’s opening episode, Dr. Shari Dade is joined by Mr. Amjed Baghdadi, the assistant director for operations at the Central Texas Veterans Health Care System in Austin. Mr. Baghdadi provides administrative oversight for the Austin outpatient clinic, as well as prosthetics, voluntary, chaplain and MyVA Experience services. For this conversation, Mr. Baghdadi shares a story of failure and the audacity it took for him to continue making steps toward success and learning. Listen in to uncover the key lessons that were hiding behind this leader’s missteps. The series is also available on the Talent Management System.