



# VERG Informer – February 2016

## From the Chair...Celebrating Diversity: Black History is Human History

By: Stacey Moore



Jennifer McDaniel,  
Co-Chair VERG

**"Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome while trying to succeed." -- Booker T. Washington**

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When pondering history, it is impossible not to reflect on specific events or individuals whose impact changed our way of life. There is an endless list of African Americans including President Obama, Colin Powell, and Oprah Winfrey who have impacted the American way of life. February is the time set aside to reflect and celebrate Black History. Jennifer McDaniel, Co-chair of the Veteran’s Employee Resource Group (VERG) has graciously taken time to share and discuss the importance of this celebration.

“I think it is important to celebrate Black History month because all history is important; it shapes who we become. We as human beings are not learning quickly enough that if we are not vigilant, history will repeat itself. Resiliency is proof that anyone can overcome tragedy and come out stronger.”

What one thing would you say to the public in respect to Black History? "Black history is **HUMAN** history; it's a part of all of us. We all need to educate ourselves that all races are in this world together. Successes and failures are shared and not limited to a single group."

As a military veteran, how has history impacted or directed your career? “I believe that everyone draws from their past experiences in order to make choices for their future. You learn about your own strengths and where you can be successful...My military experience stressed to me that the color of your skin is not reflective of your knowledge or abilities—its actions!”

"...I believe that military personnel have been in unique positions because we have had more interaction with people outside of our own race, religion, etc., than the average...those experiences have made us better people, better soldiers, better family members, and much better friends...I am truly grateful for the completely diverse military family that I have been lucky to be part of. I am also grateful for the members of the VERG that add value to my life with their experiences, their dedication, and their willingness to continue to assist fellow veterans."

Who we are today is a collage of the experiences and people we meet throughout our lives. Both giving and receiving enhances one’s life experience. It could be said that not to engage and learn is a travesty and certainly lost opportunity. Take time to celebrate everyone because after all, isn’t America the great melting pot?



*(Excerpt from an essay by Daryl Michael Scott, Howard University, for the Association for the Study of African American Life and History)*

Provided by: Tommy Simpson

### February 2016, Black/African American History Month

**This year's Theme:** [Hallowed Grounds: Sites of African American Memories](#)

The Library of Congress, National Archives and Records Administration, National Endowment for the Humanities, National Gallery of Art, National Park Service, Smithsonian Institution and United States Holocaust Memorial Museum join in paying tribute to the generations of African Americans who struggled with adversity to achieve full citizenship in American society.

As a Harvard-trained historian, Carter G. Woodson, like W. E. B. Du Bois before him, believed that truth could not be denied and that reason would prevail over prejudice. His hopes to raise awareness of African American's contributions to civilization was realized when he and the organization he founded, the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH), conceived and announced Negro History Week in 1925. The event was first celebrated during a week in February 1926 that encompassed the birthdays of both Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. The response was overwhelming: Black history clubs sprang up; teachers demanded materials to instruct their pupils; and progressive whites, not simply white scholars and philanthropists, stepped forward to endorse the effort.

By the time of Woodson's death in 1950, Negro History Week had become a central part of African American life and substantial progress had been made in bringing more Americans to appreciate the celebration. At mid-century, mayors of cities nationwide issued proclamations noting Negro History Week. The Black Awakening of the 1960s dramatically expanded the consciousness of African Americans about the importance of black history, and the Civil Rights movement focused Americans of all color on the subject of the contributions of African Americans to our history and culture.

The celebration was expanded to a month in 1976, the nation's bicentennial. President Gerald R. Ford urged Americans to "seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history." That year, fifty years after the first celebration, the association held the first African American History Month. By this time, the entire nation had come to recognize the importance of Black history in the drama of the American story. Since then each American president has issued [African American History Month proclamations](#). And the association—now the [Association for the Study of African American Life and History \(ASALH\)](#)—continues to promote the study of Black history all year.

**"In recognizing the humanity of our fellow beings, we pay ourselves the highest tribute."**

—Thurgood Marshall, first African American U.S. Supreme Court member

**Veteran Spotlight... Kimberly Lane**

By: Dominique Jinhong

Petty Officer Third Class Kimberly Lane, better known to her friends and family as Kimmy, found herself disabled, homeless, and pregnant following her Honorable Discharge from the Navy. She started her career as a Ship's Serviceman and Boatswain Mate, maintaining security, quartermaster, and navigation duties aboard the USS Acadia, the first male/female integrated Destroyer Tender assigned to a combat zone in the First Persian Gulf War. As she was promoted, she was assigned to the USS Willamette, an Oiler, which refueled other ships while underway.

After five years, she received an Honorable medical discharge with a significant percentage of disability. She attempted to restart her life as a civilian with little success. She had odd jobs here and there, but had great difficulty making the transition from sailor to civilian in any meaningful, permanent way. After a few years of instability, she hit rock bottom; pregnant, disabled, jobless, and homeless. Kimmy reached out to our Washington Department of Veteran's Affairs, whom she recalls fondly, "rescued me." Within a day, Washington Department of Veterans Affairs' transitional housing professionals gave her a permanent home, connected her to a veterans retraining program, and brought stability to Kim and her newborn son's life.

Today, 11 years later, Kimmy is a success and her son is thriving. She's now married to a trauma surgeon and has a meaning full career overseeing Administrative Services for Safety and Security for Annie Wright Schools in Tacoma. While Kimmy's story is powerful, Washington Department of Veteran's Affairs hears these narratives often. It takes all of us pulling together across all branches of service to create the safety net that our fellow veterans need and deserve. Kudos to Kimmy and Washington Department of Veteran's Affairs!

**Upcoming Events**

The following are upcoming events of interest:

- **Lunch & Learn Events:** The next event will take place on **April 18, 2016** from 11:30am to 1:00pm at the Tumwater AGO; Stay tuned for more information.
- A day of recognition: **March 30, 2016** has been set aside as a day to **welcome home Vietnam Veterans**.
- The VERG will participate in **Public Service Recognition Week** (PSRW) in May. More information will be published in upcoming issues.
- **The [Drexel House Veterans' Housing Groundbreaking event](#)** will take place on **March 3, 2016**. The Drexel House was designed to reduce homelessness in Thurston County. If interested, you can also purchase a brick with proceeds going towards these efforts. **VERG Members are encouraged to attend!**

## Department of Health really cares about Veterans! Supporting the 2016 Thurston County Homeless Census

Provided By: Tommy Simpson, via Lauren Rodriguez

The following is a note of thanks to the Department of Health, Veterans Employment Resource Group or VERG, for their donation of clothing, shoes and other items, in support of homeless veterans and other vulnerable adults and youth in and around Thurston County. Scores of agency staff donated newly purchased, and used clothing that was shared with both the Spokane VA and the Drexel House of Olympia/Thurston County.

“...We want to thank you so much for the generous donation of clothing from your wonderful team! The clothing was a HUGE hit! It didn't last long, as dozens of individuals enjoyed going through and picking out some favorite items on the evening of January 27th and the morning of January 28th at the Artesian Commons. We can't thank you and your team enough for getting this together--it was a really valuable...particularly because everything was in such good condition, it was obviously a real treat for everyone.” – Lauren Rodriguez.

### DOH VERG:

Bruce Dempsey – Executive Sponsor  
Tommy Simpson – Chair  
Kimberly Moore – Vice Chair  
Barb Ericcson - Secretary

### Recognition of key DOH VERG members:

Jeff Kulp - Spokane Region, Edwin Hill, Kim-Boi Shadduck, Sonia Ferguson, Shawn Thomas, Amina Ahmad, Linda Riggle, Irina Tiginyanu, DeLynn Chiong, Cher Williams, Matthew Reid, Chrystal Averette, Skyler Jones, Jo A. Hill, Nikkita Cortes, Rachel Lopez and Donna Thorson.



Tommy Simpson and Fellow DOH Staff prepare to donate clothing for homeless veterans.

## Why Washington? Why do you work in state government?

Provided By: Mark Sullivan

### Why Washington? Why do you work in state government?

Earlier this week, Governor Inslee shared a message with all state employees asking why you do the work you do. Please consider sharing your story. Why do you do what you do? What makes you passionate about your work and the people you serve?

Submit a short video (1-2 min.) or essay (300 words or less) about why you work for the state of Washington or your agency and why you stay. The top ten video/essay contest entrants will be recognized during Public Service Recognition Week.

### How to submit your story?

1. Remember to get permission from your supervisor before recording your video or writing an essay during work hours, on state property, using state resources or in your official uniforms.
2. Make sure that you are following proper safety precautions.
3. Read these [contest rules](#).
4. Submit your video or essay by visiting <http://des.wa.gov/whywashington>.

If you have any questions, email [whywashington@des.wa.gov](mailto:whywashington@des.wa.gov)

## Resources

[Click here](#) to read more information about HB 2040. HB 2040 is a campaign related to increasing employment for veterans. As part of these efforts, the Employment Security Division implemented the [YesVets](#) program on February 1, 2016. Employers can fill out the **YesVets** new hire form with information on their newly hired veteran and receive a decal they can display within their agency.

[Click here](#) and check out The Onward to Opportunity program. It is a no-cost career skills service that offers training and credentials to transitioning service members and active-duty spouses. Employers can also partner with this program in various ways.

[Click here](#) to follow us on Facebook.

[Click here](#) to follow us on Twitter.

[Click here](#) to see all the current open jobs listings across the state enterprise.



**The time is always right to do what is right.”**  
—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

**Communications**  
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- Rocio Ochoa-Geesaman (LNI)
- Angie Hong (DNR)
- Wayne Gilbert (UTC)
- Bill Allman (HCA)
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DO YOU HAVE IDEAS OR INFORMATION TO DISSEMINATE? SUBMIT YOUR INFORMATION WITH A COMMUNICATIONS REQUEST AND THE COMMUNICATIONS TEAM WILL TAKE ACTION!

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