

THE MIGHTY ENDEAVOR

VETERANS' LEGACIES

PRESERVE * HONOR * EDUCATE

The Mighty Endeavor - African American Veterans Curriculum



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www.themightyendeavor.com

The Mighty Endeavor

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The Mighty Endeavor (Veterans' Legacies) is passionate about three things: Preserving our heritage, Honoring our veterans, and Educating our youth through direct contact with the men and women who have answered the call to serve our country.

PRESERVE OUR HERITAGE: Our goal is to collect and preserve Veterans' personal stories and experiences, through unvarnished firsthand accounts, photos, historical documents and records, imagery, videos, and interviews.

HONOR OUR VETERANS: We honor our veterans' service and personal sacrifice by reconnecting them with their communities. Giving them a voice and an audience to hear it. Ensuring that each veteran's service is given due recognition and respect.

EDUCATE OUR YOUTH: Our inclusive academic curriculum gives students the chance to learn history and to connect with the men and women who have served our nation.

The Mighty Endeavor curriculum is designed to encourage students to learn history directly from the men and women who made it, while helping students learn data entry, journalism, writing, video production, research, and communication skills.

Left untold, these irreplaceable stories will fade away along with the opportunity to honor and learn firsthand from those who can best help us understand the impact of war and the value of service. Sharing these stories gives veterans a powerful opportunity to connect with our youth in a meaningful way.

THE INFORMATION COLLECTED

Veterans' Legacies encourages and accepts stories, biographies, and media from all periods of military history from a U.S. perspective.

All materials collected as part of the Mighty Endeavor will be uploaded to the Veterans' Legacies website to be stored, shared, and preserved for generations to come.

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BACKGROUND ON AFRICAN-AMERICAN MILITARY EXPERIENCE IN THE UNITED STATES

African-Americans have fought for the United States throughout its history, defending and serving a country that in turn denied them their basic rights as citizens. Despite policies of racial segregation and discrimination, African-American soldiers played a significant role from the colonial period to the Korean War. It wasn't until the middle of the 20th century that African-American soldiers began to receive the recognition and equality they deserved.

In the lead up to and during World War II the military establishment continued to maintain that African-Americans soldiers were not as capable as their white counterparts and needed more intensive leadership. Despite the continuing discrimination, more than a million African-Americans volunteered to serve in the Armed Forces in the fight against Hitler.

As the war progressed attitudes began to slowly change. Some African-Americans were trained in elite positions never offered previously, such as the Air Force, and some units were desegregated for the first time at the Battle of the Bulge. In just a few years the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard made significant advancements in the treatment of their African American personnel.

World War II was a watershed for race relations within the Armed Forces, and it marked the beginning of the end for racial separation within military units. In 1948 with the demand for civil rights mounting, President Harry S. Truman ordered desegregation of the Armed Services and equality of treatment and opportunity without regard to race, color, religion or national origin. Reform was slow, however, and it wasn't until 1953 that segregation officially ended when the Secretary of Defense announced that the last all-black unit had been abolished.

The Vietnam War saw the highest proportion of African-Americans ever to serve in an American war. There was a marked turnaround from the attitude in previous wars that black men were not fit for combat - during the Vietnam War African Americans faced a much greater chance of being on the frontline, and consequently a much higher casualty rate. In 1965 alone African-Americans represented almost 25 percent of those killed in action.

Following the Vietnam War and the phasing-out of conscription, the number of African Americans volunteering to join the Army grew exponentially, enlisting at rates far above their share of the population. In general African-Americans account for nearly 25% of all enlisted Army soldiers while making up just 13% of the population.

In 1991, forty years after military segregation ended, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the highest military position in the Department of Defense, oversaw Operation Desert Storm in Iraq. He was an African-American named Colin L. Powell.

GETTING STARTED

STEP 1

GO TO

www.themightyendeavor.com.

Take a few minutes to review this site and learn about the program.

REGISTER OR SIGN IN

Go to

www.themightyendeavor.com.

If it is your first time on the site, click on the blue “**join our community**” button to register.

If you’ve already registered, just sign in using your e-mail and password.

Start by reading the overview on the first page. This is the foundation for your participation in the Mighty Endeavor and has important information about what you will be doing and why. Once you’ve read the overview, you are ready to begin.

TAKE A SHORT TOUR

- Using the “Find a Veteran” tab, go to “Select a Conflict”, or any of the other options to begin your search. Then select the “Search Records” button.
- This will take you to a results page.
- You will see a tab for “Veteran Bios”.
- Select “Veteran Bios”.

WHEN YOU GET TO THE RESULTS, SELECT A FEW PROFILES TO LOOK AT

These are all good examples of nicely documented bios.

- Frank Gehrman
- Wally Groce
- Bill Seitz

CHECK OUT SOME OF THE VIDEOS

- Go back to the “Find a Veteran” tab, go to “Select a Conflict” and choose a conflict of your choice. Then select the “Search Records” button.
- Once you’re at the results page, select “Videos”.
- Some of the videos are interviews. You can tell by the thumbnail image of a person. Most of those are interviews with veterans. Some of them are interviews with family members of the veterans, if they have passed away.
- Select one or two of the video interviews to see how they are done.

Repeat the process with the **Images and Documents** tabs to familiarize yourself with the site and how information is gathered, written, uploaded and displayed.

GETTING STARTED

STEP 2

The person you decide to research may be deceased, so you will get to play detective!

SELECT A VETERAN TO RESEARCH

Now that you have looked around the site, you are ready to begin the research.

THERE ARE TWO WAYS TO SELECT A VETERAN

IF YOU ARE STARTING WITH SOMEONE YOU KNOW

- a. Search the name of someone you know to see whether they exist in the database.
- b. If they do not exist in the database, you can create their profile and do the research yourself (see instructions on the next page to create a profile).
- c. If they do exist in the database, but there is not much information about them (i.e. just a name, and no photos) you may be able to contact the next of kin, or the veteran, to get more info. You may also choose to do an online search for information about this person relating to their service.
- d. To add to an existing profile, open the profile, and select the **EDIT** button to add or change text. Remember to hit the green **SAVE** button after you make any changes.

“FIND A VETERAN” TO RESEARCH AND UPDATE

- a. Search for a veteran near you under the “Find a Veteran” tab on the home page of www.themightyendeavor.com.
- b. Select the conflict menu (WWII, Korea, etc.).
NOTE: The WWII records in the database are primarily Army records because no other branch of the military has WWII records readily available.
- c. You may select a branch, or leave it blank.
- d. Type in the name of the **COUNTY** you live in, and select the **STATE** from the drop down menu.

FROM YOUR SEARCH RESULTS, SELECT ONE TO RESEARCH

You can research the veteran in many ways to try to get more information about their service and possibly photos, videos, or interviews with family members.

SOME RESEARCH IDEAS

- **Google Search** or use the **Mooseroots** site. Here is the link to the army info: <http://wwii-army.mooseroots.com/> (free)
- Ask your local librarian to get you started on your research. Library websites will let you know how to contact your librarian via e-mail, IM/chat, or text.
- Think about your ancestry. Try searching your last name in the database by going to the “Find a Veteran” tab, and typing in the “Veteran’s Name” section.

GETTING STARTED

STEP 3

In some cases, you may have an opportunity to interview a veteran, or the family member of a veteran.

CREATE A PROFILE

If you know the name of the veteran you want to research and their name does not appear in the database, you will need to create a profile for them.

The instructions for creating a new profile can be found at www.themightyendeavor.com.

Once you are signed into the site, select the “**Share a Veteran’s Story**” tab and select “**Add a New Veteran’s Story**” from the drop-down menu.

The profile can be as detailed as you want with photos, videos, and written documentation. Be sure to select the **SAVE** button whenever you make any updates or changes.

SHARE A VETERAN’S STORY

Now that you’ve created the profile for the veteran, you will need to begin collecting photographs, documents, any audio recordings, journals and anything that relates to the person’s time in the military.

This type of information might be easiest to gather if you are researching a family member or close family friend.

If you collect photos or materials from a family, be sure to get their permission before uploading it to the website. There is information on the site regarding video tutorial release.

NOTE: Please make sure that you complete the **Required Forms** as listed on the website at www.themightyendeavor.com. After completing the appropriate form, be sure to send the form to info@veteranslegacies.com.

Digital video or audio recording and media can be uploaded easily onto the website. Look for tips on getting a great recording, interviewing a veteran, and uploading their stories below and online at www.themightyendeavor.com.

TECHNICAL TIPS FOR RECORDING AN INTERVIEW

USING A RECORDING DEVICE

You may have access to a smartphone or to a camera with which to record your interview. Most smartphones will allow you to record both video and sound easily.

PAY ATTENTION TO FORMATTING

All of the recordings and documents that are uploaded to the website will need to be in digital format. Make sure you can get your recording onto a computer. Phones and digital recording devices will be easier to transfer directly to the website than non-digital recordings.

- Make sure to use a tripod, or set the phone down near the person you are interviewing so that you can both see and hear them.
- Make sure they are not backlit, or that there is more light in front of them than behind them. If a strong light is behind the interviewee, then they will look like a silhouette, and you will not be able to see their face on the video.
- Do your best to make sure that there aren't too many outside noises that will make it difficult to hear.
- Be sure to charge your phone or camera before the interview so that you have the power to capture the whole thing.
- Capturing sound only is another option, you can place the recording device closer to the interviewee to hear them clearly.
- If you are conducting your interview in a public place, like the local library, ask the librarian for tips on the quietest place to go. Be sure there are chairs for you and the Veteran you are interviewing and set up your camera before they arrive.
- Make sure to be looking at the device as it records so that you can fix any problems quickly and be sure that the recording is going smoothly. You may want to invite a helper to be the camera person while you interview.
- If the Veteran you are interviewing brings objects or photographs to share, make sure to have them or a helper hold the photo or item up so that the recording device can see them too. If the interviewee points to a photo to talk about what is going on in it, make sure that the camera can see the photo as they discuss it.
- Ask permission to take a digital photo of the documents or mementos after the interview to share on the website. You can take do this after the interview has been recorded.
- See The Mighty Endeavor Video Tutorials for more assistance.

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR VETERANS

STEP 1

The Mighty Endeavor is a special project because it easily allows you to upload interviews and other documents about Veterans to the website.

TIPS AND SUGGESTIONS

Any materials you gather, as long as you try your best to be accurate and respectful, are very valuable!

While recording your interview, be sure to remain silent while your subject is speaking and responding. Pay special attention not to interrupt them or rush them as they might take a few moments to think of what they are going to say.

Below are some tips and suggestions for how you might prepare for an interview and the kinds of questions you might ask. These are not strict rules, but may serve to help you to make the most of your experience.

WRITE OUT THE QUESTIONS YOU WOULD LIKE TO ASK AND CONSIDER THE ORDER YOU ASK THEM IN

Start with some simple information, like name, where your veteran served and when, and in what branch of the military they served.

LET THE VETERAN TELL HIS OR HER OWN STORY

The questions suggested here are only meant as a loose guideline. You may want to give the person you are interviewing the questions in advance of the interview. This way, you will have more time to listen to their stories and will still have the information you need to add to the website along with your interview. You will also be able to change your questions so that they make sense for the person you are speaking with. For example, if you know that the person you are interviewing was in a certain branch of military, you can ask them about that branch.

Often interviewees are more comfortable if they know what kinds of questions you might ask.

PREPARE YOURSELF

Read about the war(s) the veteran served in and review maps and atlases. You can look at other interviews on the website, read about different battles online, or ask your local librarian for help in identifying appropriate books, articles, and other resources.

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR VETERANS

STEP 2

Use the equipment that you have available and don't be intimidated to conduct an interview, even if you have never interviewed anyone before.

QUESTIONS TO GET STARTED

Here are suggestions for the kinds of questions you might ask when interviewing veterans.

Just before you give the interview, record yourself giving the date and place of the interview; the name of the person being interviewed; their birth date and current city in which they live.

Start the interview by asking the veteran to state their name. Then ask the veteran to state the war(s) in which they served, branch of service, and rank(s).

BASIC QUESTIONS

- When did you enlist?
- Where were you living at the time?
- Why did you join?
- Why did you pick the service branch you joined?
- What do you recall from your first days in service?
- What did it feel like?
- Tell me about your boot camp/training experiences.
- What was it like?

MILITARY EXPERIENCES

- Which war(s) did you serve in?
- Where exactly did you go?
- Do you remember arriving and what it was like?
- What was your job/assignment?
- Did you see combat?
- Were there many casualties in your unit?
- Tell me about a couple of your most memorable experiences.
- Were you awarded any medals or citations?
- How did you get them?
- Did you sustain injuries?
- What were the circumstances?

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR VETERANS

STEP 3

Let the veteran know where they will find the interview, and that you will notify them when you have shared it so that they can see it too!

SAMPLE QUESTIONS CONTINUED

You may also be interviewing the living community members who have friends or family that served, or simply have information to share about different wars and how it shaped their lives.

LIFE DURING THE WAR

- How did you stay in touch with your family?
- What was the food like?
- Did you have plenty of supplies?
- Did you feel pressure or stress?
- Was there something special you did for “good luck”?
- How did people entertain themselves?
- What did you do when on leave?
- Where did you travel while in the service?
- Do you recall any particularly humorous or unusual event?
- Do you have photographs?
- Who are the people in the photographs?
- What did you think of officers or fellow soldiers?
- Did you keep a personal diary?

AFTER SERVICE

- Do you recall the day your service ended?
- Where were you?
- What did you do in the days and weeks afterward?
- Did you work or go back to school?
- If you went to school, was your education supported by the G.I. Bill?
- Did you make any close friendships while in the service?
- Did you join a veterans organization?

LATER YEARS

- What did you go on to do as a career after the war?
- Did your military experience influence your thinking about war or about the military in general?
- If in a veterans organization, what kinds of activities does your post or association have?
- How did your service and experiences affect your life?
- Is there anything you would like to add that we have not covered in this interview?

FINALLY

- Thank the veteran for sharing their recollections and for their service.

UPLOADING INFORMATION TO THE MIGHTY ENDEAVOR WEBSITE

The Mighty Endeavor website is an archive for preserving the experiences of American Veterans of any war.

Once you have uploaded your content, others will be able to find it on the website and learn about the veteran whose information you have shared.

REGISTER AND LOGIN

Go to www.themightyendeavor.com and register with your e-mail address and a password.

GO TO "SHARE A VETERAN'S STORY"

- Select "Add a New Veteran's Story" from the drop-down menu.
- Fill in the basic information about the veteran - name, branch of service, conflict, state, etc.
- Create a "Headline". Typically this can be as simple as the veteran's name and rank.
- Add "Biography Details" - i.e. create a short text narrative (summary about the veteran). Include the date and place of the interview with your own name as the interviewer.
- Scroll down and add as many details as you can about the veteran's rank, battles, medals, theaters, campaigns, and units by selecting from the drop-down menus.
- You can upload your video or audio interview, along with photographs of veterans, documents, or photographs of historical artifacts.
- Click on "Choose Files", this is to select files from your computer to be uploaded to the database.
- Click on the "Save Profile" button.

NOTE: You may also add files, images, videos, etc. by clicking the "Share a Veteran's Story" tab and selecting "Upload Media" from the drop-down menu.

WEBSITES AND SUGGESTED RESEARCH ARCHIVES

The Price of Freedom: Americans at War

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/militaryhistory/>

A Smithsonian virtual exhibit that features a variety of artifacts from different periods of the war. The visitor is able to examine the object and read a description. Included in the exhibition are weapons, pin-ups, and government orders.

The U.S. Army and Matters of Race During WWII (PBS)

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/alaska/peopleevents/e_army.html

A Survey of the African American struggle to break through racial barriers in WWII. Includes a link to Truman's executive order to desegregate the military.

The National Archives

<https://www.archives.gov/research/military/>

The Library of Congress Virtual Archive

<https://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/>

The Veterans History Project

<https://www.loc.gov/vets/>

REFERENCE BOOKS

Atkinson, Rick. *An Army at Dawn: The War in Africa, 1942-1943.*



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