

Black Soldiers in Defense of America

Calvary units roamed the Western Frontier

Editor's note: The following is part of a continuing Black History Month series on African Americans in the U.S. military.

BY RON WEBER
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

African-American soldiers in the U.S. military have been honored for bravery since the founding of the Republic.

The first African-American soldier to receive the Medal of Honor was Sergeant Emanuel Stance. The honor was bestowed in 1870 for his use of military flanking maneuvers, along with his bravery in battle.

From the end of the Civil War to around 1890, the Buffalo Soldiers, composed entirely of African Americans, roamed the Western Frontier, earning their name from the Indians who noted their curly hair and unshakable bravery. The soldiers gained national attention and many medals for their abilities.

A monument dedicated to the Buffalo Soldiers opened in 1992 at Fort Leavenworth, Kan. Gen. Colin Powell, who was the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the time, spoke on the great pride he had in following in the footsteps of these brave soldiers.

Henry Ossian Flipper was the



Actor Hasan Davis portrays York of the Lewis and Clark expedition.

first black graduate of West Point and an officer in the regular Army. Flipper fought for four years with the 10th Calvary in the West, a decade after the Civil War.

Racism reared its ugly head when Flipper was falsely charged with "embezzling public funds," and forced out of the military. Often successful black businessmen or military personnel were subjected to such treatment. Flipper became a successful engineer, used his skills in Spanish to help interpret important land documents, and helped build a railroad to in Alaska.



Sergeant Emanuel Stance was the first African-American soldier to receive the Medal of Honor in 1870.

Sadly, it would be a hundred years before the United States Army reversed its stand and gave Flipper an honorable discharge posthumously. The action meant a lot to African Americans in civilian life, public careers, and military service.

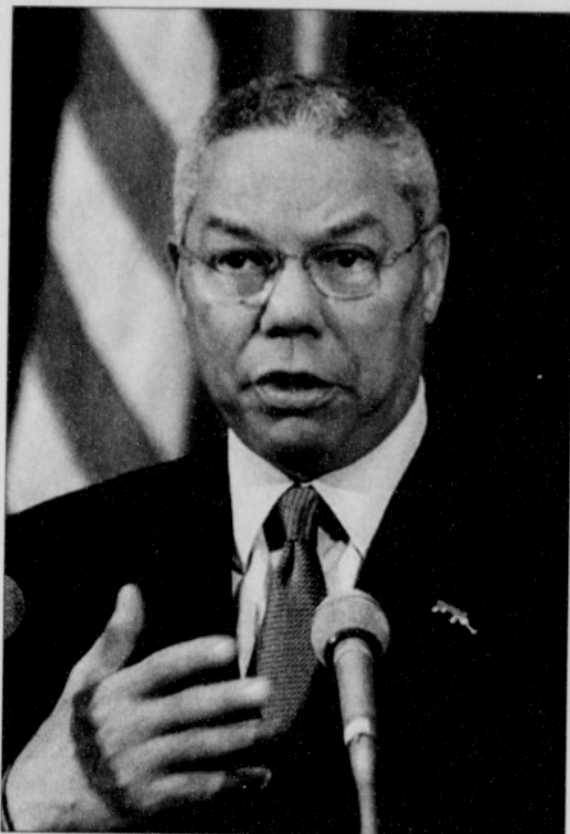
Much of our nation does not have a full understanding of how pivotal the role of the black soldier was in the expansion of the United

States.

More than 25,000 African-American soldiers made up the 9th and 10th Calvary units and the 24th and 25th

The 9th and 10th Black Calvary Regiments and the 24th and 25th Black Infantry Regiments were immediately employed, along with Teddy

Roosevelt's Rough Riders. Black units fought heroically in the Battle of Los Guasimas, at El Caney and on San Juan Hill. During the taking of the hill at San Juan, black troops advanced in front of white soldiers shooting at the Spanish, putting their lives in peril. Roosevelt complimented the black unit's bravery and then recanted it, fearing the white soldiers might look like cowards.



Gen. Colin Powell speaks of the great pride he has of following in the footsteps of the Buffalo Soldiers.

Infantry Regiments. Battling for decades against hundreds of thousands of Native Americans and Mexicans the Buffalo Soldiers kept the western frontier as safe as could be under the circumstances.

If not for the Buffalo Soldiers the loss of life and property for the white settlers would have been a lot worse than it actually was. The black man was a feared opponent for Native Americans. Black was a color many Indian warriors painted themselves before or after a battle. Those who did well in battle were marked in black as heroes.

Since the times of the Lewis and Clark Expedition in the early 1800s, the natives looked up to the black man. When William Clark brought his slave York through Indian country, warriors tried to wash off the black on York's skin. As it would not come off, they believed he was not only the leader of the expedition but also the bravest man they had ever seen. York was also extremely tall and muscular which added to his legend among Native Americans.

After the battleship "Maine" was sunk in the harbor at Havana in February 1898, with both black and white soldiers on board, the call came to give more respect and honor to African-American soldiers.

He concocted a lie to argue that he had to shoot at the backs of black soldiers to get them to join the assault on the hill; a tale that both black and white soldiers alike knew was not true.

John L. Pershing, the commander of the 10th Calvary, put the importance of the African-American regiment in perspective when he was quoted as saying "We officers of



Henry Ossian Flipper was the first black graduate of West Point.

the 10th Calvary could have taken our black heroes into our arms. They fought their way into our affections and into the hearts of the American people."

When the black soldiers returned home, many were met by celebrations in their honor. However some were assaulted or killed by jealous whites who would not admit the black soldier was every bit as good as a white soldier in combat.



Members of the U.S. 10th Calvary, composed entirely of African Americans, camped out in Sidney, N.Y. in 1911.



African American Health Coalition, Inc.

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Wellness Within REACH Activity Calendar

****All classes are free of charge!**

Aerobics

Mallory Ave. Christian Church
Mon, Wed, Fri, 6-7am, Pierce • 5:30-6:20pm, Granville • 6:30-7:30pm, Nickerson

Humboldt Elementary
Tue, Thu, 6-7pm, Keller

Low Impact Aerobics

Daniel's Memorial Church
Tue, 7:15-8:15pm, Granville

Water Aerobics (Contact AAHC)

Salvation Army
Matt Dishman

African Dance

Matt Dishman
Sat, 10-11am, Addo

Body Conditioning

Wild Oats Market
Sat, 9:30-10:30am, Nickerson

Salsa

Salvation Army
Mon, 6:30-7:30pm, Henry

Stretching/Body Sculpting

Matt Dishman
Tue, Thu, 7-8am, Lois

Tai Chi

Salvation Army
Wed, 6:30-7:30pm, Lyles

Walking Group

Peninsula Park
Sat, 12:30pm, Woods

Weight Mgmt./Conditioning

U. of Portland Indoor Track
Tue, Thu, 9-10am, Hasan

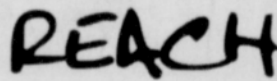
Yoga

Wild Oats Market
Tue, Thu, 7:30-8:30pm, O'Rourke

Daniel's Memorial Church, 1234 NE Killingsworth (12th & Killingsworth)
Humboldt Elementary, 4915 N Gantenbein
Mallory Avenue Christian Church (Gym), 126 NE Alberta

Matt Dishman, 77 NE Knott
Peninsula Park, 700 N Portland
Salvation Army, 5325 N Williams
U. of Portland Indoor Track, 500 N Willamette
Wild Oats Market, 3535 NE 15th

****Must be 21 or older to participate. Please contact AAHC before showing up to the first class and for more information at 503-413-1850 or kdempsey@aahc-portland.org. Please receive approval from your doctor before beginning exercise class.**



Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health
A Program of the African American Health Coalition, Inc.
Sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)



Contact AAHC at 503-413-1850 or visit our web site at www.aahc-portland.org

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