***Black History moment – Focus Black Military Forces***

***4th Sunday February 23, 2025***

***Presenter:*** Dr. Evelyn Mangin

*Good morning, Wesley Chapel and happy 158th Anniversary.*

*My name is Dr. Evelyn Mangin, and I am retired U.S. Army Soldier.*

*This is your Back History/Herstory Moment.*

***Black Men and Women in the Armed Forces***

***We Served Too***

***Black Men in the Military***

***The Buffalo Soldiers: (1866-)***

The Buffalo Soldiers were an Army Unit created July 28th, 1866, and served until the end of the Korean war. That’s approximately 90 years. Initially this Calvery regiment, of Black soldiers, were prohibited from taking part in direct combat although they included former slaves and veterans from the civil war service. Instead, they were ordered to help settle the western frontier in the United States.

Their Regiment included the first African American Westpoint Graduate, Henry O. Flipper (1877). The Buffalo Soldiers also included the first African American woman to serve in the Army, Cathay Williams, who disguised herself as a male. Williams was later discovered as a woman and discharged from the Armed Forces. The Buffalo soldiers were skilled Calvary men and a woman, who trained military academy soldiers in horsemanship/calvary. They took part in the Spanish-American War, the Philippine War, the Mexican Revolution, and both World Wars.

The Buffalo Soldiers were the first custodians of America’s national parks. The Native American (Indians) were inspired by their bravery and skill and named them the Buffalo Soldiers because of their brown skin, curly hair, and resilience that were like the Buffalo. They were highly respected for their valor and were rewarded with the Distinguished Service Cross and the Medal of Honor.

***The Tuskegee Airmen AKA “Redtails”: (1941-46)***

The Tuskegee Airmen were the first African American military aviators in the United States Armed Forces; and their motto was ‘Spitfire.’

The Redtails, as they were known, because they painted the tails of their aircraft red, included 1,000 Black pilots (fighters and bombers) and support personnel from the United States, Haiti, and Trinidad. They formed the 332nd Fighter Group and the 477th Bombardment groups of the United States Army Air Forces. The Redtails were tasked with escorting bomber aircrafts during WWII.

One of the most prominent Tuskegee airmen was Benjamin O. Davis Jr., the first African American General in the U.S. Air Force, and commander of the WW II Tuskegee Airmen.

Redtails had the lowest loss records of all escort fighter groups during combat in World War II. Because of their skills, the Redtails were in high demand and used for their relentless combat services by allied bomber units in the European Theatre. The units of the Tuskegee Airmen were awarded the Distinguish Unit Citation for combat operations.

**Black women in the military**

*“The Six Triple 8” (1945):*

A unit of black U.S Army Corp Women (BWACs) served during WWII in Europe (England and France). Members of the 6888th trained at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia. Their Motto was “No Mail No Moral.”

WWII Army soldiers suffered from low morale and the will to fight. President Franklin D. ‘Teddy’ Roosevelt, his wife, Lady Bird, and with the encouragement of Mary Bethune, then head of the National Council of Negro Women, ordered the U.S. Army to assemble a postal unit. On February 3, 1945, the U.S. Army ordered 855 BWACs (824 Enlisted and 31 Officers)of the 6888thy Army Central Postal Directory to Europe under the command of Captain and (later Major and LTC) Charity Adams, the highest ranking African American Officer, and LT Abbie Noel Campbell (later Captain and Major) to segregate and distribute an insurmountable backlog of mail to and from soldiers and or their loved ones. The 6888th were given 6 months to complete this order. Although faced with deeply entrenched racial and gender discrimination and lack of support from their superior officers, they set up their own living quarters, a system to identify each soldier and their location, and rerouted the mail so that it was delivered to soldiers and their loved ones at home in 3 months as opposed to the six months they were allotted. Subsequently, the 6888th was sent to France to complete a similar mission and were successful.

75 years later, on Nov. 18th, 2018, a monument was dedicated in their honor at Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas; and on February 20, 2019, the 6888th was awarded the Meritorious Unit Commendation Medal for Meritorious Service during Military Operations from Feb 15,1945 – March 4, 1946. In 2022, 80 years later, President Joe Biden awarded the 855 women of the 6888th with the Congressional Medal of Honor. On April 27, 2023, Fort Lee, Virginia was co-named Fort Gregg-Adams after two Black officers, Lt. General Arthur Gregg, and Lt. Colonel Charity Adams.

Today Women serve in every career-field in the U.S. Armed Forces.