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Wandering the Web — African American Vietnam Veterans

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Author's Note: African Americans fought in every United States conflict. For example, **Crippus Attucks** was shot in 1770 fighting against the British. In 1864, African American troops fought valiantly for the Union Army at **Battle of Chaffin's Farm, Virginia**. Fourteen African American soldiers receive a Medal of Honor due to their courage at this battle.¹ Unfortunately, these facts are not widely known. Just as unfortunate, many African American veterans are more likely to be incarcerated and homeless compared to their white counterparts. The following Websites provide information of the contributions of and resources for African American veterans who served in Vietnam. — **ARN**

African-Americans in Combat-PBS — <http://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/feature/african-americans-in-combat/> — PBS aired a program on African Americans in Combat. This program details the history of African Americans in United States wars. Although the Website details the history of various United States wars and African American veterans' participation in them, the Vietnam War changed African Americans' involvement in the military. According to PBS, "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 — in the Vietnam War African Americans faced a much greater chance of being on the frontlines and consequently much higher casualty rate."

African American Heroes — <http://www.goarmy.com/black-history/medal-of-honor.html> — The Army of the United States military featured a Website in which it highlighted African Americans who received the Medal of Honor. *GoArmy.com* listed those servicemen who served and received the MOH from the Civil War to the Vietnam War. These campaigns include the Indian and Spanish American wars. Under each war, a MOH recipient's picture, rank, unit, citation for the circumstances in which the soldier received MOH and the significance of African Americans serving in the military is mentioned.

National Association for Black Veterans (NABVETS) — www.nabvets.org/index.php/about-nabvets/ — provides information concerning military related health and homeless issues, as well as information for imprisoned African American veterans. The NABVETS mission states in part "the **National Association for Black Veterans, Inc.** will provide strategic advocacy on behalf of its membership with Congress, the Federal Administration, state administrations and other agencies and organizations." *NABVETS.org* includes articles of African American veterans and their struggles in and out of the military.

The Vietnam Center and Archive Celebrates Black History Month — <http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/exhibits/blackhistorymonth/> — One of **Texas Tech University's** archive focused on Vietnam veterans. In order to celebrate Black History Month, the Vietnam Center and Archive highlighted the contributions of African Americans in the Vietnam War. Some of the featured veterans are **General Daniel "Chappie" James**, who became the first African American four-star general. Other soldiers that are profiled are **Sergeant Stanley C. Goff** and **General L. Gravelly, Jr.** Biographies of the soldiers and their contributions are cited.

Vietnam Veterans against the War, Inc. (VVAW) — <http://www.vvaw.org/veteran/article?id=2470> — is a pro-veteran, anti-war organization. Their protests against war began in 1967 with the Vietnam War and continue with subsequent wars in the Middle East. **VVAW** publishes a biannual newspaper, which has under gone several name changes, i.e., *First Casualty* and *Winter Soldier*. Currently, it is titled *The Veteran*. In the fall 2013, volume 43, number 2 issue, **Vince Emmanule** wrote an article entitled the "Struggle of African American veterans." In his article, **Emmanule** listed the struggles of African American vets. However, for African Americans, the struggles are compounded due to the higher rates of unemployment, homelessness, and imprisonment compared to their white counterparts. **Emmanule** does not forget female African American veterans "who have been sexually assaulted and are one of the fastest growing segment of the homeless population within the United States."

Vietnam Medal of Honor Recipients

The Medal of Honor (MOH), the recognition for extraordinary courage in battle, is the highest medal that a veteran can receive for military service. This medal of valor was created in 1861 to honor Navy and Marines. The medal is now given to all deserving armed persons. It is incorrectly referred to as the Congressional Medal of Honor. It is called this, because the President of the United States presents the medal in the name of the Congress.

In order for a person to receive this medal of valor, three criteria must be met. They are

- while engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States;
- while engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing foreign force; or,
- while serving with friendly forces engaged in armed conflict against an opposing armed force in which the United States is not a belligerent party. Although this standard was set, to justify giving out a MOH, the conduct (of the soldier) which deserves recognition should not be the simple discharge of duty, but such acts beyond this that if omitted or refuse to be done, should not justly subject the person to censure as shortcoming or failure."²

The following Web pages provide information on the history as well as the recipients of MOH.

The Congressional Medal of Honor Society (CMOHS) — <http://www.cmohs.org/medal-history.php> — was formed on August 5th, 1958 by **President Dwight Eisenhower** who signed legislation created by Congress. According to the CMOHS Website, two of the goals are "to form a bond of friendship... among all holders of the Congressional Medal of Honor" and "to protect, uphold and preserve the dignity and honor of the medal at all times and on all occasions." Under the menu tab "Recipients," CMOHS has a database in which the MOH veterans who fought in Vietnam can be discovered by typing in the keywords "Vietnam War" in the search box labeled "conflict." The recipients are listed alphabetically via surname. After selecting the link named "view," the site includes the name, picture, citation, rank, city and state of enlistment, branch, as well as the unit of the recipient.

The Home of Heroes — http://homeofheroes.com/moh/war/17_vietnam.html — lists Vietnam veterans who received the MOH. It provides the number of Vietnam veterans who received the Medal. The site illustrates the number of recipients via military branches. At the writing of this bibliography, 258 Vietnam soldiers received the MOH. Of the 258 Vietnam vets, 172 veterans served in the Army. The veterans are categorized under the military branch they served. Next, the site indexes the veteran's name alphabetically via surname. Adjacent to the recipient's name is the city and state in which they entered service. Each veteran has a link, which provides a citation of the conspicuous act in which the Medal was merited. Other MOH Websites cite Home of Heroes as their source. The Webmaster is **C. Douglas "Doug" Sterner**, a Vietnam veteran.

Military Awards for Valor-Top 3 – U.S. Department of Defense — <http://valor.defense.gov/recipients/army/MedalofHonorRecipients.aspx> — is maintained by the Department of Defense (DoD). This Website lists the United States Army's recipients of the Medal of Honor. The list is in alphabetical order by surname. The information includes name, rank and the war or conflict the soldier received the Medal. Military Awards for Valor includes recipients that dates back to the Indian Wars. DoD provides a disclaimer stating the Website may not include all the recipients of MOH. In order to obtain accurate information, the branch in which the soldier was enlisted should be contacted. DoD does not provide a link detailing the event in which the soldier received the Medal.

Stars and Stripes — <http://www.stripes.com/> — provides "independent military information." According to the Website, it is referred to as the "hometown newspaper," authorized by the Department of Defense, yet possess First Amendment protection. Conducting a keyword search using the terms "Vietnam Medal of Honor recipient," various news stories published in "Stars and Stripes" appear. The article entitled, "Vietnam: Valor for a lost cause?" features a Vietnam vet who received the MOH.

Vietnam Medal of Honor Recipients — <http://www.history.army.mil/moh/vietnam-a-l.html> — is "a service of the U.S. Army Center of Military History." It records Vietnam veterans who received the Medal of Honor (MOH). A MOH veteran can be found by conducting a name. Each citation provides a picture of the soldier, the date he or she received the medal, i.e., posthumously, and a short

continued on page 10



Take a closer look at....

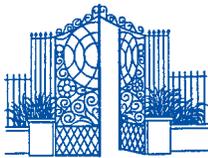
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Wandering the Web
from page 8

paragraph of the war-time incident that merits the issuance of the medal. Each citation includes a link to the **Congressional Medal of Honor Society** Website, which provides the same information.

Virtual Wall — <http://virtualwall.org/valor.htm> — resembles actual memorial walls. The founder of the **Virtual Wall** is **Jim Schueckler**, who is a Vietnam War veteran. He created this site in 1997. Another Vietnam veterans as **Kenneth Davis** has added to the site. According to the "About Us" section, the **Virtual Wall** became an "official partner with the Library of Congress." In the menu, under the "Height of Valor" indexes the veterans who received various medals. Since the MOH is the highest military award given, it is listed first.

This Website is organized in alphabetical order via surname. The three initials before the name of soldier, i.e., specialist four (sp4), sergeant first class (SFC), private first class (PFC) is the rank of the enlisted. Once the link is selected, further information about the recipient includes the rank, unit, a picture as well as where the veteran is located on the virtual wall. 🌸

Endnotes

1. <http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2007/BlackHistoryMonth/Timeline.html>
2. <http://www.cmohs.org/medal-history.php>

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