



Throughout U.S. history Blacks have fought diligently in the U.S. military. Members of the 396th Infantry (dubbed the Hell Fighters by the Germans they fought) earned the Croix de Guerre for gallantry in action in World War I.

Number of Blacks joining military increases

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There has been an increase in the number of Blacks joining the military in the last ten years, U.S. Army recruiter Sergeant M.T. Hicks said.

In the Army the percentage of Black enlisted persons is greater than that of white enlisted persons. In 1980, black reenlistment was 1.7 times greater than that of whites according to an independent study, "Symposium: Race and the United States Military."

Today's Army is different from the Army twenty years ago.

"Today's Army is more sophisticated, said Sergeant First Class Joseph Rodriguez of Durham. There is more technology and career opportunities."

The idea that the Army is "full of illiterates" is a myth, Rodriguez said, "created by the news media . . . higher education is pushed."

Rodriguez, a high school dropout, joined the Army thirteen years ago. He now has an Associate Degree in general academics.

Sergeant First Class Bob Martin, an U.S. Army Recruiter, said the Army has approximately 360 jobs; twenty are combat arms, the remainder employs technical skills.

The tanks, Rodriguez said, are equipped

with lasers and computers.

There are no quotas, Rodriguez said. "If you qualify, you get the job. Promotions go to those who want to better themselves.

"A minority can expect whatever he is after, if he goes after what he wants: ambition is the key. (Minorities) can be very successful in the Army," Rodriguez said.

UNC-CH sophomore Kovac Bynum, a cadet Captain in the Army ROTC program at Duke said he expects to get experience and a marketable skill from the Army.

"The administrative type branch (I plan to specialize in) will make me a bit more marketable and help me to apply my knowledge in a practical sense," Bynum said.

What people don't realize is that there are specialized branches that allows one to concentrate in an area of interest," Bynum added.

Rodriguez said that education in a particular field does not end after Advanced Individual Training.

Advanced Individual Training (AIT) is the period after enlistment when a recruit learns his military job.

People join the military for different reasons. Rodriguez said the economy and career opportunities are two reasons.

Sergeant Phillip Gonzales said people join the military for a job and money for education. He cited the VEAP as an example.

"The Veterans Educational Assistance Program is similar to the GI Bill Gonzales said. But now the soldier plays an active part. For every dollar a soldier puts in the fund, the Army will put in two." The maximum contributory amount per month by an individual is \$100.

The Army contributes \$200. Educational bonuses are available which could raise the total amount contributed by the Army. If a soldier changes his mind about continuing his education, he can withdraw his total contributed sum.

Also while on active duty individuals have the opportunity to continue their education instead of waiting until the end of their enlistment as with the VEAP. The Army pays 75% of the tuition costs.

Bynum said he joined the Army because it was something unusual to him.

"No one in my family had been associated with the military," Bynum said.

He said he hopes to contribute something to the academics and mission accomplishment of the military.

A concern of most minorities, civilian and military, is discrimination. Rodriguez said discrimination is not as evident in the military as it is in civilian life.

Martin said the military is constantly being watched for discrimination.

"An out and out racist will not stay in the

military long," said Martin who worked with the Army's Equal Opportunity Program.

The Equal Opportunity Program, started in 1971, functions to ensure equal recognition of minorities and to better race relations. The EOP plans programs, seminars, exhibits, etc. to educate people about race relations, Martin said. For example, the military has a week commemorating Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. worldwide each year and it also recognizes Black History Month.

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Wallace said he believes that helping the students now will increase the availability of black faculty in the future. Programs to aid black students, who are seeking Ph.D's, are presently in the developmental stage.

Samuel Williams, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, is currently trying to develop a program to work with undergraduates to encourage them to go into doctoral programs.

"We are a University community. We have so much talent on this campus that I'm sure that if we utilize that talent — students can play a large part," Wallace said. "It is important for young people to insist that they have a diversity of faculty," he said.