

African American Women in Persian Gulf Wars

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Abstract

The paper outlines the role, contribution and place of ethnic women minorities, namely, African American women, taking their race, religious and national backgrounds into consideration in Persian Gulf Wars. Methods: Quantitative research method; Comparative research method; Content-analyses. Results: The evidence suggests that 33 percent of women in the military were African Americans. This figure is quite impressive and indicates that women gained the best adaptation to this field. It was the military that became the trampoline that would connect them to American society. Military service gave African American women the following advantages: Career opportunities (the field is dangerous and less demanding); Ability to demonstrate goodness to the country; Adaptation to civil society.

Keywords: African American women, ethnic women minorities, Persian Gulf wars, racial discrimination, sexual discrimination

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Introduction

The Persian Gulf War can be considered as a separate event in American history. This war played an important role in the racial and gender politics. This term became especially relevant in the remembrance of this war. In the Persian Gulf War, the highest number of female military personnel was recorded, especially Afro-American women. There were more reservist women in that war than any other war in the history of the United States.

The patriotic spirit among Americans was so high that even nursing mothers did not hesitate to go to war. It can be said that it was a war of mothers (in many cases single mothers) who left their children and joined the army. It should be emphasized that this war caused some sort of disproportion, which was logically reflected in the army: In terms of gender and racial segregation, the Afroamerican race was:

- 24% of Persian Gulf War squads;
- 30% of land troops;

Out of 35,000 women served in the US Army during the Persian Gulf War, more than 15,000 were Afro-Americans. The numbers are impressive enough and women's involvement is too large to be ignored.

Each of the wars described in the other chapters were characterized by specific characteristics and revealed problems in society. At the same time, each of them, for the Afro-American race, was a means to accomplish specific goals. If I had focused on other wars within the framework of freedom, gender inequality, religious or racial discrimination, the Persian Gulf wars gave me a completely different picture. There was a problem that was less typical of other wars - the highest involvement of the Afro-American race and one of the highest rates of sexual violence.

To get a clear and complete picture of the motivation of women joined the Persian Gulf wars and

the results of their active involvement, I present a brief analysis of the backgrounds, goals, problems and achievements of several African American women.

Shoshana Johnson was born in the Republic of Panama and then, while still a child, moved to the United States. The second-generation veteran was not going to pursue this career at all, but in 1991 she became a JROTC cadet and joined the United States Armed Forces in 1998. At this time Shoshana was a student at the University of Texas at Paso (UTEP) (Johnson, 2010).

On March 23, 2003, he joined the operation to fight for freedom in Iraq. Shoshana was a member of a convoy located in Nasiriyah. Shoshana Johnson and five of her comrades (she was wounded at the moment) were captured by the enemy camp. Later, on April 13, the United States Navy released them. Shoshana returned to the United States and then retired due to a temporary deterioration in health (the official honorable cause of the armed forces).

Achievement: Bronze Star, Military Leadership Medal and etc. In Operation Enduring Freedom US Armed Forces recognized Shoshana Johnson, the First Military and First African American Woman Captured in US War History (Affair, 2019).

Jamaican journalist and writer Barbara Gladon expresses underlines that soldiers are associated with a strong and courageous man. This was before the definition of gender equality changed. Today's soldier men and women must be strong. to the front. "All of this should be followed by a thirst for liberty, right?" (Desnoyers-Colas, 2014).

All African-American women who participated in the Persian Gulf wars were not fully engaged in hot spot operations. After the American Revolution, the country's patriarchal order (executive and legislative bodies) forbade the presence of women in hot spots with guns. However, in the operations of Desert Shield and Desert Storm, small groups of women, as the

scientist Elizabeth Colas tells us, still have little involvement. This is precisely the time when the US attacked Grenada during Operation Urgent Fury in 1983 to save medical students. The same is true for Operation Just Cause in 1989 (the US invaded Panama) to resign General Manuel Noriega¹ (Johnson, 2010).

Corey Rayes served as a military adjutant in the United States Armed Forces for 10 years. She graduated in 1986 from the University of Hampton (Virginia), in particular the Armt ROTC. In 1990, Rayes was the first lieutenant in the Armored Division Support Command. Rayes, as an executive officer, was tasked with writing military plans; she was responsible for supplying the divisional weapons and doing everything her unit needed to properly conduct the war line (Desnoyers-Colas, 2014)

Corin Rayes performed her duties brilliantly, though this was not enough for her commander. He did not consider that she would be capable of handling her obligations. He was constantly doubting her abilities. I would say that this was all due to Afro-Americanism, since African American race was always considered as secondary and the mental capacity of its representatives was constantly in doubt.

Before receiving official information, Corin rayes had already been informed that her unit was preparing for war. They went to Europe first and then to Saudi Arabia, the city of Tenth. Rayes was in the position of leader, but as I mentioned earlier, it was not perceived as favorable. He recalls: "I was there for a month, in terrible conditions. We had to dig trenches, not just for ourselves, but for the commander who could not do the job himself because he has some pain in his shoulder. Moreover, he was tall and the trench had to be dug deep. " (Desnoyers-Colas, Marching as to war, 2014). Despite her hard work, she was repeatedly

¹Manuel Antonio Noriega Moreno was a Panamanian politician and military officer who was the de facto ruler of Panama from 1983 to 1989. He had longstanding ties to United States intelligence agencies; however, he was removed from power by the U.S. invasion of Panama.

criticized, even for a minor mistake. The commander repeatedly discriminated against her and tried to do all in his power to suspend Rayes and dismiss her. After a while, the commander was fired, and Corin Rayes took over. Rayes was the first senior female servant in her division (Desnoyers-Colas, 2014).

Motivation/Achievement

To further her career in the division, Corin Rayes used her education at the University of Hampton as a source of inspiration and motivation. Mentors repeatedly said: **“You had to be even better. Be exemplary. Be the best you can, be a good example of yourself. Treat everyone the way you want to be treated”**. Rayes consistently followed this rule. She was trying to fulfill her duties. Her profession was related to leadership both at university and abroad. She had an individual approach to each soldier. Rayes respected the members of her military unit, who treated her with respect and, consequently, did their job well. Rayes herself has never caused serious problems for its team.

One of the strengths of Corin Rayes may be that she never considered herself in real danger. She did not perceive her threat as useful or interesting to her country. She found herself in the military field and, despite many obstacles and difficulties, was able to adapt well. Her activities in this field were mainly administrative, but at the same time she was very risky and responsible. Rayes was able to have herself intergrated in a society admirable for the blacks for centuries. She crossed a line that the US has not allowed to cross for so long, but in a short but big history of the United States.

Corin Rayes is eager to motivate and give advice to women who are planning a military career. She says: “One must be noble. Be who you are. The army always knows when you're real and when you're fake. I had to be "me" because I had to look in the mirror at the end of the day" (Desnoyers-Colas, 2014.)

Gadgette Greathouse went against her parents and still began her service in the US Armed Forces. To get involved in this activity, she completed a short training course in Fort Dix, New Jersey. She was sent to Germany, where she began working as a truck driver. First, it is interesting to discuss her motivation and expectations. Greathouse convinced others and herself that the United States would never declare war on any country. However, things have evolved differently. The sense of American patriotism was so high that she could not be stopped. The brother offered Gadgette to go instead of her, but she refused (Desnoyers-Colas, 2014).

Greathouse was involved in as many special operations as possible. She preferred to be in a continuous movement rather than thinking that she was at the epicenter of the war. Her obligations were dangerous enough. Greathouse was driving the trucks carrying ammunition. This was seen as a good target for the enemis. One of the missions in which the Greathouse participated was called the "Highway of Death". Her assignment was so serious that other soldiers asked her to carry the truck so that she would not turn around. She looked into the war's eyes, the terrible fragments of which never left human memory.

When talking about the involvement of African-American women in various wars, their merits and the great merit of the United States Armed Forces, I would like to compare and contrast a very interesting fact: the war in ordinary climates and the war in the desert. The contribution of women involved in the Persian Gulf wars is somewhat more appreciated, as everyone remembers that a man can handle hunger for up to 30 days and only 3-4 days without water. Greathouse recalls: "We were given a bottle of water and told we would meet in a few days." Here we conclude that the military special operation was conducted in harsh conditions, where the Americans were suffering from a shortage of water in the desert land.

Americans had some logical difficulties in the desert. Namely:

Lack of water, which is directly related to the decrease in energy of the organism;

Sand and climatic conditions that damaged the tanks (difficulties with moving), and climatic conditions (heat) that made it practically impossible to do the job. And the sandstorm that reaches any part of the vehicle and causes functioning problems.

Location - which has its advantages and disadvantages. The enemy is easy to spot, though you can easily be identified. Each movement and step is measured.

Johnson, Greathouse, Rayes, and many other women were in such conditions, and I am going to set an example below. Consequently, the Persian Gulf wars in terms of the involvement of women in color can be considered as separate phenomenon in US history. However, it should also be noted that the desert was considered one of the best places to deploy troops. Jewish military expert assures us that military commanders of the old days considered the desert an ideal place for the battlefield. (Browne, CONFRONTATION IN THE GULF; Disadvantage for the US in the Desert: Fewer Tanks, 1990) An expert's statement indicates that the Persian Gulf Wars must have been severe due to the harsh climate. The words of Greathouse herself indicate: "The trucks were soon out of order, with sand in every part of the vehicle. We were in a very difficult situation. We used to swap one part of the machine and put it in the other." (Desnoyers-Colas, Marching as tro war, 2014).

The special operation was very dangerous. That is why the official states ordered a retreat, which meant withdrawing any tanks or trucks from the battlefield. However, the desire to end the case and the patriotism was so strong that Greathouse refused to back down, getting official Washington angry. They issued a severe written reprimand to Grathouse and her

division, but that did not stop them. They completed their mission completely, and upon their return to Washington, the aforementioned administrative reprimand was abolished, as the United States acknowledged the dire consequences of the unit's withdrawal. Even after returning home, Gadgette Greathouse recounted how days were spent in fear and prayer in order not to be kidnapped and killed.

The contributions of all African-American women (whether administrative or directly on the battlefield) who have contributed greatly to the success of the US Armed Forces are outstanding. However, as I have already mentioned, between these wars, the Persian Gulf Wars are special because of the region's location and climatic conditions. Not to mention the US political course. If the US role and involvement in other wars were necessary, in the case of the Persian Gulf, part of the public and even the military community itself would express some protest against the unjustified military actions of the United States. In particular, Greathouse deeply believed that America would never declare war on another state, but she was disappointed in her expectations. But the wrong course of the country did not change the course of the Greathouse. She was fulfilling the duties which she so willingly undertook. It must be said that during the military mission, Gadgette Greathouse did not face any gender or racial discrimination. However, the brutality of the war in the desert land did not allow military personnel to be divided into gender and race.

Even Janet Pennick's case cannot be avoided. The 44-year-old mother of the United States Armed Forces Reserve and Philadelphia Sheriff's Deputy was automatically recruited during the Persian Gulf War.

He was assigned many duties. In fact, Penick was a unique employee. He was responsible for washing, removing any problems in the baths, sending and receiving mail and sending it to the addressee. However, Penick oversaw medical and military warehouses. As it turned out, Janet Penick was doing

radically different things, both substantially and in complexity (Tarver Ron, 2004).

Unlike other women, Penik did not do anything to prove herself. Her enthusiasm and involvement derived not from the military situation, but from the commitments she made when he worked at the Sheriff's Department.

To illustrate this, I would like to pay your attention to the case: When problems began in the Persian Gulf, Penik was soon promoted. She became the first sergeant in the 304th Civil Affairs Unit. That is where the multifaceted duties that I will talk later. She was not entirely sure of herself, so she turned down the offer because, as she recalls: "I wasn't sure I would do the job myself" (Yvonne Latty, 2004).

Penik does not mention discrimination because she never encountered such a problem. On the contrary, other military personnel did their best to encourage her. It should be emphasized that Penik had no motivation to be engaged in war, but her contribution is not classed as less important. Despite little desire and fear, she fulfilled every single obligation.

"When I first heard that they invited me to the war, I was shocked. I knew the regular army was being recruited, but I could not imagine that my unit would be involved. I didn't think I was competent enough to do it, and I didn't know how much I would be able to do," Penik recalled (Latty Yvone, 2004). However, Janet Penic was able not only to mobilize and calm herself, but also to women who were nervous about recruiting their husbands. I think in this case, the psychological factor played a big role. A sort of campaign to comfort other women has sparked a dormant motivation. She became more focused on what she was doing and became fully involved in all ongoing activities. Penic's first success is related to Fort Bragg, the training that prepared her for traveling to Saudi Arabia. Standing on the ground from the board, according to Penic, the shooting of the SCUDs was in progress. For six months, she had been looking forward to getting out

of the situation and leaving the place. Every day was filled with a terrible fear. Penic recalled: "You can't tell anyone how you were suffering from avoiding buffalo's hair to get into your mouth, leaving alone other details of the special operation" (Latty Yvonne, 2004). I think Janet Penic is not the best example of an African-American woman's involvement in wars, but her contribution is not able to be ignored. She says she was very proud of what she did in Saudi Arabia, though she would never repeat it again. Her unit was sent to Somalia from there, but Penic refused. Returning to the United States, she arrived at a training base sending trained personnel to the Persian Gulf. Penic agitated that no one should be let go. She emphasized that during her 21 years in the military, she always felt good, though she did not like wars.

Penic's view as an ordinary soldier's is absolutely understandable, but her position as a military officer's seems a bit unclear. Negative attitudes can be classed as natural ones, but in case of Penik, a military person cannot be regarded as any ordinary member of civil society. She was a soldier never dreaming of being a general. The army is responsible for the security of the country and needs less of persons with similar psychics and ideologies. She was completely unprepared for the situation. The country's foreign policy and course often require unpredictable actions and one must be always ready.

The case of Jacqueline Cofield is noteworthy for her contribution to the issue of equality of women in military units.

Objective

Her history relates to 24 years of service in the Air Force. She retired as a Senior Sergeant. Her desire to pursue a military career comes from childhood. Even in school, she considered it necessary to be enlisted in the regular army. Interestingly, at first, Cofield imagined herself as cost guard, though she did not know how to

swim. Then she saw the announcement and took a route to the Air Force. (Desnoyers-Colas E. f., 2014). The motivation of Cofield is distinctly outlined. From her early years Cofield saw herself as a coast guard. When analyzing adequately her abilities and skills, she made a decision to become an Air Force officer. Even though, during the World War II, the Air Force was less likely to welcome the coloured in ranks.

By 1990 she had 10 years of experience in the Air Force. She was a Staff Sergeant at the F-16 Fighter Wing at Torrejón Air Base, Spain. Cofield was at the epicenter of the event when Operation Desert Shield began. Her group was assured that the next trip would have been planned to Italy, though they were sent to Qatar. Two other women were enlisted in the Cofield unit. However, Jacqueline Cofield held the highest military rank among them. Strangely enough, Cofield was pleased with her military activities in Qatar. Her responsibilities included managing the Unit Control Center, namely: personnel management and daily reporting. Cofield tried to motivate staff daily with these words: "Forget your fear, do your work. When it's your turn, it's your turn" (Desnoyers-Colas, 2014).

Cofield and Penick are two radically different examples of women of color involved in the Persian Gulf wars. Where one was absolutely demotivated and bound by the rule of law in the country, the other - absolutely formed and highly motivated until adulthood. If Panic had given a way to fear and panic, Cofield wouldn't have known it at all. Despite the fact that Afro-American women display particular patriotism because of their past, large-scale ideological differences persist between them.

The second point that attracted the attention of the Persian Gulf War was the issue of single parenthood. Interesting statistics were also revealed: There are approximately 55,000 single parents in the US Armed Forces: 37,000 men and 18,000 women. During the Persian Gulf War, there were 16,000 single parents and 12,000 military couples. At a time when the

mentioned people could be prevented from engaging any form of military action, they did so differently: in their view, the war was not an excuse to abdicate - whether it was compulsory or voluntary. It is clear that the issue of sex equality is absolutely protected, whether you are male or female. They did their homework in the same way, regardless of the fact that they were nursing mothers (Eisenstein, 1994).

As an example, let's take the example of Courtney Solter, which is extremely interesting. Serving in the United States Armed Forces was her childhood dream. However, her plans were not realized. She was planning to enroll in the Air Force after graduating high school. The military has expressed a desire to contract with Courtney. However, some factors also quickly emerged. Courtney had a young son she had to leave with a nurse. An Air Force recruiter refused to work with her but an infantry recruiter agreed. The desire to work in the Air Force was so great that Solter acted inappropriately. When filling in the application form, she hid the fact of having a child because it was related to a number of problems. This type of action was classed as a crime. However, she was asked whether she wanted to stay in the army after all of the above. Courtney replied that she wanted to stay. The case ended, and the woman was hired as a supply specialist. Courtney Solter lived in constant fear. In addition to trainings they were obliged to instill fear in themselves. The Armed Forces believe fear is necessary to survive.

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, America faced new difficulties. In November 2002, the Solter unit was called. She was getting ready to go. As she says, even Christmas was celebrated prematurely. Her unit was involved in a special operation on January 26, 2003, and arrived in Kuwait on January 27. It was Courtney's first challenge, she was on a plane for the first time (letting alone a destination), the flight lasted 23 hours, the zone was turbulent.

The conditions were so difficult and unacceptable that Solter had some shock. "There was

nothing more than dirt and tents around," she recalled (F.Desnoyers-Colas, 2014). They had no beds, and had to distribute their tents with fuel and ammunition units. Even under these conditions, the woman maintained her motivation and tried to make her contribution to the US. Armed Forces. While others were comfortable with the arrangement, Solter did not raise such issues at all. She was constantly thinking about how to prepare for the next step - to go to Baghdad. In early February, Courtney was part of the logistics team. Although she had just learned to drive a motor, he was driving a Humvee. She was the only woman to be honored driving a humvee-type vehicle. An example of Courtney Solter can be compared to Shoshana Johnson's experiences and accomplishments in March 2003.

The most difficult third point that distinguishes this war was the high percentage of sexual violence. The Persian Gulf wars put American society at the forefront of the problem. In the wars mentioned, sexual assault occurred in the form of other wars. Take, for example, the Vietnam War, where sexual violence was perpetrated by the enemy, and during the Persian Gulf wars, American soldiers violated all permissible norms of ethics and humanity and went beyond limits.

The Persian Gulf wars showed that the enemy itself was not as dangerous as the American soldiers who had been treating the women of their own country atrociously, and the Afro-American women were no exception. These wars gave them the least opportunity to adapt to civil and military society. On the contrary, it was the war that forced the US to set up post-traumatic clinics and centers on the basis of the grave consequences.

The Persian Gulf wars gave the African-American women the least opportunity to fulfill their obligations as the vast majority of them, in combat, sought not to think about the well-being of the country and set new tasks, but to deal with the trauma and stress that they found not so easy to deal with.

In the case of the Persian Gulf wars, racial discrimination meant nothing compared to sexual discrimination. Captain Corin Rayes stated: "The men here are like sheep lambs, supporting each other. Men will always remain men. Testosterone is no less prominent in the war, and African American women were no exception" (Desnoyers-Colas, 2014).

Conclusion

It can be said that the proportion of Afro-Americans in the military population is much larger than the civilian population. This was due to the fact that the race found much more potential in the military. When Talking about Afro-Americans in general, I naturally mean women here. The evidence suggests that 33 percent of women in the military were African-Americans. This figure is very impressive and indicates that women have the best adaptation to this field. It was the military that became the trampoline that would connect them to American society. Military service gave African American women the following advantages:

- Career opportunities (the field is dangerous and less demanding);
- Ability to demonstrate goodness to the country;
- Adaptation to civil society.

It is noteworthy, that when the President Bush was asked a question why Afro-Americans were so much dominated in the Persian Gulf wars, he responded that it was the best way to work and enjoy equal rights worldwide. However, I think the President was not at all sincere in answering this question, as the overwhelming number of African Americans reflects not on the loyal attitude of the States, but on having no way rather than using the service of the citizens seeking civil rights for two centuries. Although, they could not reach their objectives. Everything is much simpler: The wars, in particular the Persian Gulf confrontations, were characterized by extreme cruelty (for exp: climatic conditions), which minimized the level of competition.

The inertia of the white race has increased the demand for Afro-Americans service.

For the first time in the history of the United States wars, gender was classified in the following way: the army was divided into men and women. This war was the basis for the eradication of racial and gender discrimination as it changed the perception of woman's essence. Having a khaki dressed woman next to a khaki dressed man on the battlefield, became a common occurrence for civil society. This is what became the watershed of the war after which Congress lifted restrictions on female combatants.

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