Ask and Tell:

How the Gay Rights Movement Invoked the Civil Rights Movement in the Fight for Equality in the Military

Lindsay Sweeney
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Introduction
Civil Right and Gay Rights- Why Couple Them?

Both the civil rights movement and the gay rights movement have themes and strategies that overlap one another. This thesis intends to create a link between the civil rights movement and the gay rights movement in the military to assist the reader in understanding why the gay rights movement echoed the memory of the civil rights movement. Using the military as a specific case study, this project is targeted to examine how each movement struck down discrimination within that institution.

How will that be accomplished? Through examining several accounts of the gay rights movement invoking messages, strategy and rhetoric of the civil right movement, through individual cases and stories, news reporting and publicity points drawn out by gay rights leaders. Fighting for equality in the military demonstrated several instances in which strategy overlapped amidst both movements.

Before elaborating on how the gay rights movement used the framework of the civil rights movement for equality in the military, it is important to acknowledge how similar the arguments were to keep each group out of the military. African American soldiers were not allowed to serve alongside white soldiers during World War II, but they were still assigned as laborers during the war. The fight for desegregation of the military came shortly after President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal and the conclusion of World War II. As blacks served abroad and while they came home from overseas, they realized they were fighting for democracy abroad when they did not even have it at home. According to the Constitutional Rights Foundation, a non-profit and non-partisan organization
committed to education America’s youth on civic participation in a democratic society, “Top military leaders clung to beliefs that blacks were not as good at soldiering as whites. These leaders also continued to justify segregating whites and blacks as necessary for unit cohesion and morale.” Unit cohesion and morale were the main reasons military leaders provided as to why African Americans could not serve side by side with whites. Keeping an effective military, it was argued, meant ensuring that troops were segregated, much like life was in the rest of American society. This justification was used against homosexuals as well. For example, the Family Research Council, an organization that according to its mission statement promotes “faith, family and freedom in public policy and the culture from a Christian worldview,” fought against the inclusion of homosexuals in the military. On their website the Family Research Council cites the 1993 law, “Policy Concerning Homosexuality in the Armed Forces,” and argues “The presence in the armed forces of persons who demonstrate a propensity or intent to engage in homosexual acts would create an unacceptable risk to the high standards of morale, good order and discipline, and unit cohesion that are the essence of military capability.” Further, the Family Research Council states that homosexuals intended to use a repeal of the ban on homosexuals in the military as “a platform to further transform the nation’s moral landscape.” The argument of unit cohesion and military efficacy, as well as morals, was used against both homosexuals and African Americans in the military.

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Organizations against allowing both blacks and gays to serve in the military also asserted that the armed forces were not a “sociological laboratory.” According to Fox News, Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum used this argument when he was campaigning for the Republican spot in the 2012 presidential election. Santorum stated, “I mean, we are talking about people who are, you know, simply different because of the color of their skin, not because of activities that would cause problems for people living in those close quarters.” The article in Fox News compares Santorum’s stance to a quote from the Army Adjutant General’s Office in 1941, which stated, “The Army is not a sociological laboratory. Experimenting with Army policy, especially in time of war, would pose a danger to efficiency, discipline and morale and would result in ultimate defeat.”

Santorum’s words reflected Colin Powell’s stance on homosexuals in the military in 1992 and 1993, which will be explored more in-depth in later chapters of this thesis. It seemed the language of opposition against the civil rights movement followed the gay rights movement, even into 2011.

Leaders in both movements did not stop there to end discrimination in the military. In each movement, the leaders sought to keep their prospective group from serving unless they received equality in the service. For instance, A. Phillip Randolph called on African Americans to practice civil disobedience “against draft registration and military service unless strong safeguards against segregation and racial discrimination are provided in any

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draft or universal military training legislation.”⁴ Comparably, the gay rights movement called for a larger acceptance of gays in the military during the Vietnam War. When homosexuals were drafted into the Vietnam War and the exclusion was bypassed based on a need for troops, the Committee to Fight Exclusion stated that until homosexuals were accepted openly and publicly in the military by the government, “every homosexual has a right and a duty to refuse induction.”⁵ Both movements were calling for open acceptance of gays in the military before either group would wholly respond to draft or service orders. Civil disobedience was an important strategy of civil and gay rights movements.

Bridges were constructed between both movements in individual cases and more broadly throughout the gay rights movement as a whole. These instances will both be discussed in depth throughout the text of this thesis. However, what is most important to take away from the coming pages of research is why this was so. Why did the gay rights movement work to align itself with the civil rights movement? For starters, the civil rights movement was successful—African Americans were able to achieve legal rights in not just the military but also almost all of society. From the 1940s to the 1960s, blacks struck down institutional bans starting with the desegregating military and ultimately achieving voting rights, housing rights, marriage rights and protection against discrimination. Following the framework of a successful movement looked promising to the leaders of the rising gay rights movement. Moreover, homosexuals were able to identify with blacks because both were human rights issues. In the 1940s, African Americans questioned why they were fighting for democracy for others when they were not able to fully take part in democracy

⁵ Randy Shilts, Conduct Unbecoming, (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 1994) p. 66.
at home. The Vietnam War in the 1960s and 1970s raised the same questions for homosexuals. They were serving valiantly, particularly in cases like Sergeant Leonard Matlovich and Colonel Margarethe Cammermeyer, but unable to enjoy the very freedoms at home they were fighting for abroad. Drawing analogies between the two positioned the gay rights movement to be a legitimate movement fighting for human rights the same way civil rights leaders had done for African Americans. Being able to echo a movement that made a lasting impression in the minds of Americans was the way in which gay rights leaders hoped to position themselves to achieve similar success. If it worked for civil rights, it seemed logical to use it to fight for similar human rights for gays.

This introduction serves as only the tip of the iceberg for the examples and cases of similarities between the two movements in their campaigns to achieve equality in the military. The analogies between the two, regarding rhetoric, strategy, and tactics are invaluable to understanding the ways in which each movement had an impact on history as a whole. In the coming pages, this thesis will address more specifically how the gay rights movement echoed the civil rights movement, citing specific examples and instances of strategy to obtain equality in the military, and the reasons they chose to do it.
The Civil Rights Movement had to be innovative with the ways in which it fought for the rights of African Americans in the military. Its innovation in tactics was particularly important, as racism and discrimination were felt strongly in the years of and following World War II. Two of the main tactics the Civil Rights Movement utilized to strike down segregation in the military and federal jobs during and after World War II were public demonstration and bringing legal challenges centered on equality. Being able to grab public attention through the media became an important strategy of civil rights leaders like A. Phillip Randolph and Walter White. However, to understand the events that led to the desegregation of the military in the years closely following World War II, it is important to recognize the experience of blacks in the military in the years leading up to WWII.

Historically, black servicemen and women were accepted in larger numbers during times of shortage or need in the armed forces. For example, five thousand blacks, both free and enslaved, served in the military during the American Revolution. They pledged their allegiance to whichever side granted them the promise of acquiring their own freedom, which was largely the British. Approximately 5,000 black men enlisted with the Continental Army until General George Washington barred further recruitment of black soldiers in 1775. It was not until the winter of 1777-1778 when Washington’s troops shriveled to
18,000 following a season riddled with disease and desertion. The need for soldiers during wartime outweighed previous jurisdiction against allowing blacks to serve.

The War of 1812 saw participation from black soldiers on sides of the British and Americans as well. At the beginning of the war, the U.S. forbade the recruitment of black soldiers, but according to PBS, a “chronic shortage of manpower compelled the navy to accept any able-bodied man.” Britain again promised independence to enslaved black men who would serve in their favor. More than 4,000 slaves were freed by the British at the war’s end. This was the largest emancipation of slaves until the American Civil War. The opportunity of freedom enticed African Americans to serve on the side of Britain, while shortages again required the U.S. to call on black troops to enlist.

During the Mexican American War (1846-1848), African Americans largely served as servants for white officers. Most of the servants were male, but female servants were scattered as well. According to Robert E. May, author of Invisible Men: Blacks and the U.S. Army in the Mexican American War, some enslaved blacks were able to sneak past government regulations and enlist as soldiers. If they were discovered as slaves posing as free men, they were often given dishonorable discharges. May wrote, “Countless other blacks, because they were expected to hold the reins of their masters’ horse, found themselves risking their lives in battle even though not formally enrolled as soldiers.” Blacks also served as cooks, entertainers and launderers for U.S. soldiers. Moreover, several

slaves crossed over to enemy lines in order to achieve freedom, according to May.⁸

Although not officially enlisted as soldiers, blacks did have a role in the Mexican American War, and also fled again to the other side for freedom.

According to Jon E. Taylor, author of Freedom to Serve: Truman, Civil Rights, and Executive Order 9981, military segregation truly began in the Civil War. Unlike previous wars, blacks were allowed to serve as soldiers. During this time, 168,000 black troops were commanded by white officers in the Union army and segregated into separate black units, while 30,000 black sailors served in integrated units in the Navy. Following the conclusion of the Civil War, four black units were created: the Ninth and Tenth Calvary, and the Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth Infantry. As slavery was outlawed after the Civil War, blacks served in subsequent wars, based again on the need to fill a shortage of soldiers. At the beginning of World War I, African Americans numbered 368,000, or slightly over 13 percent of the enlisted population. Throughout the war, their numbers hit as high as 404,000 enlisted. The numbers decreased substantially after the United States left the battles in Europe. The Navy, for example, only had 441 black sailors in 1932.⁹ By 1941, fewer the 4,000 African Americans served in the U.S. military, with only 12 becoming officers.¹⁰

When the US considered entering World War II, and later entered the war after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the War Department examined the mistakes in race relations

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from World War I. Some of these mistakes included a racially unbalanced Army. The percentage of black to white service members did not reflect the percentage of blacks to whites in the general population. Further, the War Department felt there was a need for more officers in charge of individual black units, as it was believed that black soldiers needed more training and attention than typically provided to a given unit. Ultimately, the department decided blacks needed to have equal representation in the military in proportion to the population, which was nine percent at that time, in all black units where they were qualified to serve. Further, the War Department needed to provide these units with equal resources. These resources included training, quartering, clothing, and leadership.\footnote{Taylor, Freedom to Serve, 14-15.}

Over one million African American men and four thousand African American women served in the armed forces during the Second World War. Nearly 500,000 African Americans saw combat abroad.\footnote{Ibid, 22.} For these men and women, the mistakes from World War I were not immediately mended. The era of Jim Crow and deeply seeded racism were still evident in their everyday lives. According to Richard M. Dalfiume, author of Military Segregation and the 1940 Presidential Election, these concerns swelled at the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) National Convention. In 1940, the NAACP declared the integration of the Armed Forces a major campaign issue, and the organization concluded that it would only support candidates who shared the same pro-integration view.\footnote{Richard M. Dalfiume, “Military Segregation and the 1940 Presidential Election,” Phylon, 1\textsuperscript{st} Qtr., 1969, 44-45}

\footnote{Taylor, Freedom to Serve, 14-15.}
Although President Franklin D. Roosevelt wanted to integrate the armed forces in 1940, he was met with strong military and Southern political opposition. Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox said integration would “weaken morale and fighting effectiveness” of the military. In a time of war, having an effective military was at the highest of priorities for the nation’s security. According to Dalfiume,

Segregation was a necessity, the armed forces reasoned, because separation was the general rule throughout American society. Because of these attitudes, the commanding officers of most of the branches of the armed services wanted as few Negroes as possible. When it was not possible to restrict them completely, Negroes were assigned mainly to labor duties.

Thus, even when blacks were given the chance to serve, they were forced to do the most unwanted tasks in the service, such as custodial jobs. Equal opportunity was not necessarily present once they were inside the perimeters of the armed services, reflecting much of what life was like on the outside.

As African Americans’ desire to serve grew, media attention began surrounding the issue. In May 1940, *The Plaindealer* (a historically black newspaper) published an article in which a former African American soldier called on Roosevelt to end discrimination in the Army. He argued that out of 140,000 black soldiers, only five are officers. In asking Roosevelt to end the discrimination, he writes about his own stellar career in the Army, saying, “I speak not from hearsay, but from actual experience, having served nearly 12 years in the United States Army, holding Four Honorable Discharge, Character: ‘Excellent’ and by carefully analyzing the unwritten law handed down in the service and enforced by the War Department as well as those prescribed by laws.” Further, this soldier writes, “I

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have served my country and stand ready to do so again, but I do know and believe that the Negro is being unjustly treated and that a word of influence from you will do much to aid the relieving of the conclusion and would bring about much needed representation in the Military and Naval services WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION."16 Highlighting his desire to continue to serve his country, he argues that African Americans were equally as capable of serving their country well, and were willing to do so. This article touches upon the language of the Double V campaign, which was a movement by black newspapers to achieve equality and democracy at home and overseas. According to Felice Piggott of the New York Public Library, "The Double V Campaign became a symbol of pride for Black Americans during a time when Jim Crow's [sic] laws were prevalent and so many of the rights that soldiers fought for abroad were denied them at home."17 Through calling attention to the discriminatory practices it was slowly becoming more evident that World War II would become a fight for victory at home and abroad for African Americans.

In September 1940, the Selective Service and Training Act was passed, which had two anti-discrimination clauses in it. Notably, it was the first peacetime draft issued by the government of the United States.18 The act gave all men between the ages of 18 and 36 the freedom to serve in the military, yet gave the armed forces the final say on who would be admitted to serve. The act read, “any person, regardless of race or color, between the ages of eighteen and thirty-six, shall be afforded an opportunity to volunteer for induction into the land or naval forces of the United States for the training and service prescribed in

16 “Ex Soldier Asks Roosevelt to Stop Discrimination in the Army,” The Plaindealer, May 24, 1940.
18 Taylor, Freedom to Serve, 15-16.
subsection (b).” Although this seemed like a victory on the surface, it still allowed blacks’ lives in the military could still be dictated by prejudice. This can be seen in subsequent statements within the act. It read “no man shall be inducted for training and service under this Act unless and until he is acceptable to the land or naval forces for such training and service and his physical and mental fitness for such training and service has been satisfactorily determined.” In other words, the military still had the final say in which volunteers could serve and which could not, making it ambiguous as to whether or not blacks would be willingly accepted. Furthermore, the act stated that “no men shall be inducted for such training and service until adequate provision” was made regarding shelter, hospital and supplies. Since blacks were segregated in society, medical facilities and housing was segregated as well. The Selective Training and Service Act of 1940 appeared to be a triumph for civil rights, but in reality it was not. A similar double edged sword would reappear decades later during the gay rights movement’s fight for inclusion in the military.

Civil Rights leaders Walter White, A. Phillip Randolph and T. Arnold Hill met with the President in September to urge him to desegregate the armed forces. While the President assured the three he would press more deeply into the issue, Roosevelt released a policy on October 8 stating that the War Department was not to “intermingle” whites and other races in the same regiments. It read that, “it is the opinion of the War Department that no experiments should be tried with the organizational set-up of these units at this critical time.” The three leaders called this a “stab in the back” to democracy.

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20 Taylor, *Freedom to Serve*, 15-16
Unable to change where the Roosevelt administration stood, Civil Rights leaders were faced with a new set of challenges. If drafted into the military, what were young African Americans supposed to do? Would they report to the service? Some young men declined entering the armed forces. In January 1941, the Chicago Defender (a historically black newspaper) published an article titled “Balks Call to Arms; Cites Jim Crow” in which a young African American man named Ernest Calloway announced he would not “respond to Uncle Sam’s call to arms if he has to serve in a Jim Crow [sic] army.” In a letter written to the draft board, Calloway wrote: “I cannot accept the responsibility of taking the oath upon induction into military service, under the present anti-democratic structure of the U.S. Army...until such time that my contribution and participation in the defense of my country can be made on a basis of complete equality.” Calloway's refusal for service was intended to draw attention to a discriminatory policy, and push to change the policy in order to provide equality for all races in the armed forces.

A strong notion is made in this article that Calloway was not going to be the only one to refuse his service to the armed forces. Before Calloway's objection, in October 1940 J.G. St. Clair Drake, Jr., secretary of the Conscientious Objectors Against Jim Crow, had “issued a call to Negro draftees in the Chicago area to join the fight for democratization of the nation's armed forces.” The group also disclosed in the article its plan to establish “the legal right of Negroes to claim exemption from military service on the ground of conscientious objections because of the jim crow[sic] policy in the armed forces.” Drake had received national attention in October when he wired his objection to the discrimination in the armed forces to President Roosevelt and the director of the selective service project, Dr.

注21 “Balks Call to Arms,” Chicago Defender, January 11, 1941.
Clarence A. Dykstra. Further, Drake stated his coalition was willing to “go to jail, or go to court” to win their point, and that some will “flatly refuse to join any national defense program, be it military or civil, so long as discrimination exists.”\(^\text{22}\) Drake’s stance on declining military service without equality for blacks and whites alike attracted media attention, igniting a spark that would soon set the media ablaze into a campaign for democracy abroad and democracy at home for African Americans.

Discrimination in government jobs, especially in the defense industry, also became a large issue for African Americans during World War II. With the nation mobilizing for war, factories and industries increasingly needed large numbers of workers to be able to mass-produce wartime products. Initially, African Americans were often refused jobs in factories and wartime industry. They were unable to reap the benefits of the increasing amount of employment opportunities, while the remainder of the population was able to take advantage. According to John Morton Blum, author of *V Was for Victory*, “…during the months of American preparation for war before Pearl Harbor, months characterized by both soaring industrial production and the growth of the armed services, blacks found themselves excluded from the rising prosperity of the nation and from the opportunities for advancement and command within the Army and the Navy.” It had become clear that both at home and abroad, the opportunities for African Americans were severely limited. Moreover, Blum gives examples of places in which African Americans were abandoned:

In the South, where much defense industry located, the National Youth Administration could not enroll blacks in work-study programs because there were no technical schools for blacks and local practice kept blacks out of schools for whites. Elsewhere, the president of North American Aviation admitted that his firm would not employ Negroes, a policy the International Association of Machinists endorsed. The United States Employment Service, a federal agency, continued to fill

\(^\text{22}\) Ibid.
“white only” requests from employers of defense labor. Its “general policy,” the service announced, “with respect to the Negro situation had been to operate according to the social pattern of the local community.” That policy reinforced local discrimination against or apathy toward blacks.

In the midst of the heightened discrimination in wartime jobs, President Roosevelt was making promises to governments in Europe, much to the frustration of blacks in America. According to Blum, "'We Americans,' Roosevelt had told the European democracies, 'are vitally concerned in the defense of your freedom.' But black Americans, with ample cause, had an urgent concern for freedoms of their own, so long denied.”

It became clear that there were two faces to the democracy Roosevelt was talking about: what was perceived and what was actually occurring.

In an attempt to combat discrimination in wartime industry, A. Phillip Randolph and Walter White planned a March on Washington for July 1, 1941. They expressed this plan explicitly in a letter to President Roosevelt on June 3. An event like this would have been very public, and would have allowed for a lot of coverage from the media. Marching on Washington was not an original idea by Randolph, but was indeed made popular by the civil rights movement. The first March on Washington was quite literally a march that began in Ohio and ended on the steps of the Capitol. Jacob Coxey led a group of 500 men better known as Coxey’s Army to Washington in 1894 to demand the government begin hiring them to work on public projects. He was arrested. Subsequent marches occurred, such as the National American Woman Suffrage Association’s 1913 demonstration for voting rights for women. Randolph’s march, planned for 1941, inspired perhaps the most influential March on Washington to date. In 1963, Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his

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famous “I Have a Dream” speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial during the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. According to *TIME*, this march was “one of the most historic and memorable D.C. protests in American history,” making “the idea of a march on Washington as a political tool truly [come] to pass.” Ignited by the civil rights movement, marches on Washington would become a popular form of protest for anti-Vietnam protests, gay rights activists, world peace demonstrations and many other causes for years to come.²⁵

Randolph’s march grabbed the attention of the White House. As reported in the *Chicago Defender*, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt attempted to get the men to call the march off by writing a letter to them on June 10 stating their group was “making a very grave mistake at the present to allow this march to take place.” The First Lady also warned that any such demonstration may anger Congress, and push back any progress already made, including an inquiry into equality in the military. In the letter, Mrs. Roosevelt showed her clear concern for blacks, as Randolph called her “a real and genuine friend of the race, a fact attest to by both her statements and actions from time to time.” To follow-up, Mrs. Roosevelt attended an unannounced meeting with White and Mayor La Guardia of New York City on June 13, a few weeks before the march was scheduled to occur. After meeting with Mrs. Roosevelt, the two men responded to the White House’s requests to call off the march with a demand for an executive order barring discrimination in wartime jobs.⁹ If not, the march would go on. The *Defender* argued that, “Failing in the attempt to put the soft pedal on the job march, the cabinet and the White House will have to resign themselves to this particular spectacle which will show the world through a purposeful and forceful

propagandizing the situation of the Negro, that all is not so well in the great United States.”

Backed into a corner, President Roosevelt was presented with two options: he could either allow the march to take place and risk masses of attention being brought to the race problem in the United States while the nation was in the midst of an international crisis, or he could concede to White’s and Randolph’s demand for an executive order. On June 25, 1941, just four days after the Defender published their article predicting the outcome of such a march, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 8802, which “stated that defense industries that received government contracts must employ workers without regard to race, creed, color or national origin.” With this executive order, Roosevelt also created the Fair Employment Practices Commission to oversee it carried out. In response to Roosevelt’s decision, Walter White stated that, “there has never been issued in America an executive order affecting Negroes in this country since the Proclamation of Emancipation by Abraham Lincoln.” For the Civil Rights Movement, working to reform the system to achieve equality by means of public demonstration and forceful propaganda proved to be rather efficient.

The ability to fully take part in democracy was an important freedom that Civil Rights leaders sought to acquire. According to Dalfiume, “Although the most important bread and butter issue for Negroes in the late 1930’s and early 1940’s was employment discrimination, their position in the armed forces was an important symbol. If one could not participate fully in the defense of one’s country, one could not lay claim to the rights of

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a full-fledged citizen.” Despite their victory in achieving equal employment opportunities in wartime jobs, the Civil Rights movement still intended to work on striking down discrimination in the military to achieve their goal. The black press, beginning in 1942 with the Pittsburgh Courier, launched the Double V campaign, calling for a victory in democracy at home and abroad. As other newspapers joined the cause between 1942 and 1943, they each “demanded that African Americans who were risking their lives abroad receive full citizenship rights at home.”

The support for the Double V Campaign was highlighted in the Courier. On June 13, 1942, the Pittsburgh Courier headlined, “Five Newspapers Join VV Campaign” and cited newspapers from Washington, D.C. to Ohio as supporters. The newspaper advertised “Double V Campaign Material” as being available, listing buttons, window stickers, emblems, and copies of their “Yankee Doodle Tan” song. A contest, awarding a $50 prize, for the person who could tell the paper what the “Yankee Doodle Tan” song meant to them was advertised as, “Here’s your chance to tell American what the ‘Double V Song,’ ‘Yankee Doodle Tan,’ Means to You!” Outspoken and visible, the Double V campaign crept into every facet of black American life, from ornaments to wear on a jacket, to songs and even venues to meet up with fellow campaigners. Clubs for the Double V opened up across the United States, one notably advertised in the Chicago Defender as making a “real go of the Double V.”

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28 Dalfiume, Military Segregation, 43.
31 “Miller and Walden Open Double V Club,” The Chicago Defender, January 22, 1944.
fighting for their democracy at home, and they were trying to have a good time while doing it.

As the campaign gained national attention within the black community, people began writing to newspapers to show their support for the Double V campaign. In one letter to the editor of the Chicago Defender in 1942, a man expressed his grave concern that African Americans may miss the opportunity for victory at home. The writer called on people to vote for leaders who also share the desire to fight for equality for blacks. He wrote that if people fail to vote for those candidates who represent them, then they are letting democracy slip. He said that, “The Double V is our challenge. We must win victory in the war and victory at home. The victory at home is the V we must guard carefully. For if we win all the wars and lose victory in our democracy, then we have lost all. The war effort is...compared to the fight for our democracy.”

The Double V Campaign impassioned people domestically to take part in government and fight for any kind of victories for the movement, such as getting elected officials into office who represented their causes. The campaign extended outside of the warzone and into the lives of people living on the home front.

Even collegiate newspapers joined in on the cause. In 1942, Princeton’s newspaper, The Princetonian, garnered attention after it ran an editorial story with the headline, “White Supremacy at Princeton.” On March 27, 1943, the Chicago Defender highlighted Princeton’s race issues and the attempts of their student-run newspaper to call attention to them in an article titled “Princeton Students Lose Double-V Skirmish But Color Bar Fight Goes On.”

The Defender stated that Princeton’s newspaper ran an editorial that cited Princeton’s lack

32 “Vote for Victory” (letter to editor,) The Chicago Defender, May 2, 1942.
of admittance of Negro students, asserting it was the last institution outside of the deep South to have this bar in place. The article read, “In proclaiming its devotion to democratic principle, it is time for Princeton to put up or shut up.” Despite internal backlash from University leadership, the Princetonian received the support of Harvard’s The Crimson and Governor Edison of New Jersey, calling on Princeton to admit “negro students.” It became evident that the Double V campaign succeeded in grabbing the attention of the white media and community, particularly in the eyes of the younger, educated population. The movement’s innovative tactics proved fruitful.

In 1945, Roosevelt’s presidency came to a close when the President died unexpectedly, leaving Vice President Truman to lead the country to the end of the war. The fight for military rights was far from over for African Americans. As Americans began coming home from World War II, the fight for desegregation became unavoidable. The Double V campaign and Executive Order 8802 had sparked a hunger for equality for African Americans that was not yet satiated. Truman’s presidency would see some of the fiercest battles for equality in the military and society, and some of the biggest landmarks for desegregation.

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Chapter 2
Civil Rights: The Truman Years

When Harry Truman took the presidential oath on April 12, 1945, he had the great responsibility of bringing the country out of World War II. Following in the footsteps of deceased President Roosevelt, Truman had major wartime decisions to make in the wake of the passing of the country’s beloved leader. However, he also had another issue to tackle at home: civil rights leaders were pushing for the full and equal inclusion of blacks in the military. Enough though World War II was coming to a close, the spotlight on desegregating the military did not falter for civil rights leaders. President Truman’s time in office would see some of the most trying and rewarding times for the civil rights movement. In decades to come, the gay rights movement would apply the civil rights movement’s tactics of bringing violence to the attention of political leaders and refusing military service unless able to serve equally in the armed forces.

The reasoning for keeping troops segregated in the military was centered on military efficacy and troop morale. Many armed forces officials argued that keeping troops segregated was the only way to ensure success in the military and in war. According to Morris J. MacGregor, author of *Integration of the Armed Forces, 1940-1965*, “These opinions were clearly evident on 8 December 1941, the day the United States entered World War II, when the Army’s leaders met with a group of black publishers and editors.” Despite top military officials, like General George C. Marshall, voicing their distaste for the slow progress of race relations in the military, a representative of the Adjutant General delivered
a strong speech against integration. Colonel Eugene R. Householder, Assistant Adjutant General, stated, “The Army is made up of citizens of the United States” who share similar views on African Americans to the rest of the population, and “Military orders, fiat, or dicta, will not change their viewpoints.” Moreover, he stated that, “the Army is not a sociological laboratory; to be effective it must be organized and trained according to the principles which will insure success. Experiments to meet the wishes and demands of every race and creed for the solution of their problems are a danger to efficiency, discipline and morale and would result in ultimate defeat.”

Despite the push for full inclusion in the military, high-ranking military officials did not all necessarily share similar sentiments. The same arguments would be used against allowing homosexuals to serve openly in the military in decades to come.

In the latter half of Roosevelt’s presidency, the fight for desegregation in the military gained increasing national attention. In 1942, the War Department had formed an Advisory Committee on the Negro Troop Policies called the McCloy Committee, run by John J. McCloy. In 1943, the committee ordered the removal of “Whites Only” and “Negroes Only” signs at base post offices and movie theaters. On February 29, 1944, the committee released a pamphlet entitled Command of Negro Troops, which did not desegregate the military, but reminded officers (who were predominantly white) that they were responsible for the actions, behaviors and performance of their black troops. The pamphlet read:

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“The Germans have a theory that they are a race of supermen born to conquer all peoples of inferior blood. This is nonsense, the like of which has no place in the Army of the United States—the Army of a Nation which has become great through the common effort of all peoples.”

The comparison of discrimination in the U.S. armed forces to the oppression inflicted by Nazism in Germany would be made time and time again by the civil rights movement. In later decades, leaders of the gay rights movement would also use this comparison. Although the military had not been desegregated, civil rights leaders were able to pin point and fight the discriminatory practices in the armed forces.

At the end of 1944, the shift in the attitude of leaders in the military came into the public eye. The Chicago Defender published an article on December 2, 1944 headlining “Eisenhower Blasts Slander Against Negro Troops as Harmful to War Aim.” General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the commander of the Allied troops, wrote a letter to a staff sergeant in response to “derogatory remarks about Negro troops appearing in letter to Stars and Stripes, a servicemen’s paper.” The staff sergeant, George Woods, Jr., wrote a letter to Eisenhower following the Stars and Stripes column. He stated, “The United States troops, either white or colored, must be considered as conduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline and offenders must be promptly punished.” Woods wrote that this was “in the interest of military efficiency.” Here, the staff sergeant used the military’s own argument for exclusion of black soldiers as a reason for punishment against those who made prejudiced remarks against black troops. General Eisenhower’s response came just over a week later, and agreed with Woods. Eisenhower wrote, “the publication of statements that are derogatory to the accomplishments in this war of any American group or race is harmful to the war effort” and “that it is the duty of the good soldier to perform

well whatever task may be given to him, in the front line or the rear area.” 37 This article demonstrates that the Army was taking a middle-of-the-road approach: while they were not endorsing desegregation, they were rejecting outright prejudice actions and comments in the military. Eisenhower’s main focus was winning the war abroad, but this statement appeared to show mild support for equality. With this as his central objective, his statements may have been an effort to keep morale of African Americans up in order to continue his troops’ success on the front lines. His comments on prejudice inside the military resonated with the African American population at home as well. Integration in the military became a hot topic as the months led up to Truman’s inheritance of the presidency.

The push for desegregation became increasingly important in the beginning years of Truman’s presidency. Walter White, Secretary of the NAACP, stated that the fight for military integration became more important between 1940 and 1945 than ever before. Membership in the NAACP swelled during this period. By the war’s end, one million black veterans were ready to speak out against discrimination and abuse in the military, determined to put an end to these atrocities in a post-war society. 38 Clearly, the movement was rapidly gaining momentum.

As troops returned home from Europe and Asia, it became increasingly clear that African American unrest in the military would not be swept aside. On July 3, 1945, approximately a month before the war’s end, The Washington Post published an article that included a general’s praise for “Negro troops.” In the article, General Raymond G. Kehann is quoted as saying “the Negroes ’have the same courage, the same fear and the same fighting

38 Taylor, Freedom to Serve, 37.
spunk as any other soldier. They are quick to learn and eager to perform.’” The general also stated that black soldiers “can give and take and they are about the best disciplined in the Army.” This article gave civil rights leaders what they needed: testimony from a source, likely to be trusted by whites and service members alike, that black soldiers were just as capable as whites. National media were picking up on the tactics of the military to disparage black soldiers, and commentators were highlighting arguments condemning the practice of segregation.

The discriminatory practices of the military had also reached an international audience. Walter White sent President Truman a letter on April 19, 1945, requesting a timeframe on when Truman would be available to discuss race relations. Moreover, the letter announced that the NAACP would be attending the United Nations conference in San Francisco as an advisor to the United States. A human rights provision granted by the U.N. charter was established at the conference, but in fear of the provision creating issues in the South for the US, a stipulation was included. The stipulation prevented the UN from intervening “in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of the State concerned.” Essentially, the United Nations could take a stand on human rights issues within a given country, but they were unable to intervene in such issues. This clause satisfied leaders in favor of segregation inside and outside of the military. The stipulation strengthened the powers of Jim Crow practices in the southern United States and in the military.

40 Taylor, Freedom to Serve, p. 56.
Despite what appeared to be a defeat in the United Nations, some progress was made at home. A questionnaire was sent out to commanders, by the War Department, at home and abroad regarding the performance of black troops. The questionnaires came back with negative and positive feedback, and it resulted in a conclusion that the issues plaguing the black soldiers’ performance boiled down to one issue: segregation. In September 1945, the Department of Defense established the Gillem board to draft a post-war policy on blacks in the military. The board was chaired by Lieutenant General Alvan C. Gillem. The final report read, “The board declares that its recommendations were based on two complementary principles: black Americans had a constitutional right to fight, and the Army had an obligation to make the most effective use of every soldier.” The Gillem board met again in January 1946, and released *The Utilization of Negro Manpower in the Postwar Army Policy*, approved by Eisenhower. The report read in part:

Negro manpower in the postwar Army will be utilized on a broader professional scale than has obtained heretofore. The development of leaders and specialists based on individual merit and ability, to meet effectively the requirements of an expanded war Army will be accomplished through the medium of installations and organizations. Groupings of Negro units with white units in composite organizations will be accepted policy.

Further, the report included an increase in the number of black troops, and instructions to promote more black officers to be in charge of black units. However, it did say that “negro [sic] units will be stationed in localities and communities where attitudes are most favorable and in such strength as will not constitute an undue burden to the local civilian facilities.” Thus, it was understood that black troops could not serve everywhere because of prejudice attitudes and opinions of the general population. According to the report, it

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41 Ibid, 57-60.
would be effective until October 27, 1947, unless “sooner rescinded or superseded.” The next time something would trump the instructions in this report would be in 1948.

Jim Crow was still a reality for African Americans in the United States. In 1946, racial violence erupted in the South, with cases notably against African American veterans. In February 1946, Isaac Woodward, a war veteran, was returning home on a bus from Georgia to South Carolina. At a rest stop, the bus driver felt Woodward’s bathroom break had taken too long. He called the police. When the police arrived, they beat Woodward so badly it damaged both of his eyes. After facing trial, the officer responsible for blinding Woodward was acquitted of charges. The Chicago Defender commented on the matter, “In Columbia, S.C., that white policeman was naturally acquitting for blinding Negro Vet Isaac Woodward.” Racial violence against veterans was not just happening, but perpetrators were getting away with it.

In Columbia, Tennessee, racial violence became an issue as well. What began as a dispute between a white radio repairman, and a black veteran and his mother quickly boiled over into a white mob attacking the veteran and his mother in their home. During the mob’s attack, four police officers were wounded by gunshots. Highway patrol was called in, and over the next two days black businesses were ransacked and residents were terrorized. Forty-two black residents were arrested. When the NAACP intervened, attorney Z. Alexander Looby called on Double V Campaign language to fight his case. Double V was no longer just a political slogan used by the NAACP, but a movement that seeped into the

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consciousness of ordinary black veterans and citizens, and perhaps to some whites to some extent as well. At the trial, Looby said:

> We have spent millions, yea billions of dollars to preserve democracy on earth; and why was democracy threatened? If I remember correctly, it was because of the existence of a so-called master races...we sacrificed thousands of our young men in the flower of youth...we did all of that that democracy shall not perish but take root and grow and cover the earth...but how can we go to the United Nations and demand and insist on democracy in other countries when we don't practice it ourselves? This question is before us.\(^4\)

Twenty-three out of the twenty-five black defendants on trial were acquitted by the jury, marking a significant victory for the NAACP.\(^4\) The Double V campaign had not disappeared with the end of the war, as the comparison to Nazism had not yet passed either. Both of these arguments, as previously mentioned, would be used in the gay rights movements’ fight to openly serve in the military.

Perhaps the most significant act of violence that unified civil rights leaders occurred on July 25, 1946 in Monroe, Georgia. After his release from jail, Roger Malcolm, his wife, brother in law, a veteran, and his pregnant sister in law were all stopped in the road by a mob. The mob “executed” the two couples with a “hail of gunshot blasts.” In the coming days, the NAACP and the National Negro Council together held protests outside of the White House. Over forty civil rights groups banded together to form the National Emergency Committee Against Mob Violence (NECAMV) in August 1946. The NECAMV and Walter White wrote a letter to Attorney General Tom Clark contending that a lynching crime had been committed in Monroe County. They also scheduled a meeting with the President to discuss racial violence on September 19. According to an account in Taylor’s book, after the President had been briefed, he “got up from his chair and said, 'My God! I

\(^4\) Taylor, *Freedom to Serve*, 64.
\(^4\) Ibid, 65.
had no idea that it was as terrible as that! We’ve got to do something!” The next day, Truman urged Clark to investigate whether civil rights laws were violated in Monroe County. A grand jury concluded that it was unable to identify any persons who participated in murders that violated the civil rights statutes.\textsuperscript{46} Although the crimes were not brought to trial, the civil rights leaders succeeded in getting the attention of major political leaders in regards to racial violence and issues in the nation.

Significant victories for the NAACP and the report on \textit{The Utilization of Negro Manpower in the Postwar Army Policy} did not erase the prejudice in the military. For black service members, Jim Crow’s wrath was felt as heavily in the military as it was in the rest of society. Some states began combating Jim Crow on their own. In 1947, New Jersey adopted a new constitution that read, “No person shall be denied the enjoyment of any civil or military right, nor be discriminated against in the exercise of any civil or military right, nor be segregated in the militia or in the public schools, because of religious principles, race, color, ancestry or national origin.”\textsuperscript{47} Governor Driscoll attempted to integrate the National Guard in New Jersey, a measure that was noted as “praiseworthy” by the \textit{Chicago Defender}. The article notes that the “abolition of Jim Crowism” in the military would “be a major step” toward achieving the ideals at home that African Americans had fought for in war abroad.

Further, the \textit{Defender} stated:

“No program of civil rights can become effective and meaningful until the democratic principles upon which the program is based are practiced by the government itself. Jim Crowism in the military has been used as justification for Jim Crow practices in civilian life. Bigots argue pointedly, if Uncle Sam can do it, so can we.”\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid, 68-69.
\textsuperscript{47} N.J. State Constitution, art 1., sec. 3.
Clearly stated in this article, the military was one of the first stronghold civil rights leaders needed to strike down in order to achieve equality and desegregation in the rest of society. The message it would create would be powerful. Although it would be an important victory for African Americans to be able to serve side by side with white soldiers, the desegregation of the military became largely symbolic for the movement as a whole to move forward with achieving equality in all aspects of life.

New Jersey was not the only place where the military’s race record was being examined. In February 1948 the Army ordered a restudy on segregation. In The Washington Post on February 6, it was reported that the information was released in a letter to New Jersey’s governor from the Secretary of Defense’s staff. The letter stated that the Army planned to examine the Army, National Guard and Reserves nationwide. Issues arose with Driscoll’s policy in New Jersey’s National Guard because, according to the article, the National Guard was a part of the Army of the United States, and did not fall under the jurisdiction of the state at hand. Moreover, the article drew attention to A. Phillip Randolph’s discontent for Truman’s stance on civil rights. Randolph stated that the President refused to use his “full authority to abolish segregation and discrimination promptly by executive order” and instead “shifted the responsibility to the Secretary of Defense.” Despite the Army’s decision to reexamine its race policy, in Randolph’s eyes, an order to desegregate the military was unlikely to come from Truman’s desk.

In response to continued segregation in the military on a national scale, as well as a lack of action from the President, Randolph and other civil rights leaders had to find creative ways to draw attention to the issue at hand. In April 1948, Randolph called for a

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campaign of civil disobedience in the military. He announced to the Senate Armed Services Committee that he would pledge himself to “openly counsel, aid and abet” both white and black soldiers who were against the “Jim Crow compulsory system” of the armed forces. Moreover, Randolph stated, “I personally will advise Negroes to refuse to fight as slaves for a democracy they cannot possess and cannot enjoy.”

Language from the Double V Campaign carried into the years of Truman’s presidency in new ways of protest against the segregated military.

Randolph did not fall short on his threats of civil disobediences if the demands he listed were not met. In June 1948, he announced the formation of the League for Non-Violent Civil Disobedience Against Military Segregation. The goal was to get Truman to deliver an executive order to desegregate the military. Randolph gave Truman a deadline of August 16, 1948. After that date, black youth across the country would be strongly encouraged to disobey their military reporting orders. Until then, Truman had hesitated on the executive order in fear of losing the upcoming election without the support of Southern Democrats who would surely protest the desegregation of the military. His commitment to civil rights had been strong thus far, but it did come with a high political price. In 1947, Truman’s advisor Clark Clifford delivered his memorandum to the President. In the memorandum, Clifford told Truman that unless there was real progress with civil rights, he would not attract black votes in the election of 1948. Clifford called on Truman to take “measures to protect the rights of minority groups,” despite the cost of Southern Democrats.

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51 Taylor, Freedom to Serve, 92-93.
On July 22, 1948, Truman received a letter from Leon Henderson. Henderson was the national Chairman for Americans for Democratic Action. In the letter, Truman was urged to issue an executive order to desegregate the military “so that the armed forces of the world’s greatest democracy may become in truth the world’s most democratic armed forces.”\textsuperscript{52} Again, the language of the Double V Campaign appeared. Using the notion that America was not truly democratic until all citizens enjoyed this freedom was a common tactic of the civil rights movement that would be used in an effort to push the hand of Truman and other political leaders regarding desegregation of the armed forces.

Truman’s position on civil rights was caught between the racist imprints of his youth and desire for equal opportunity. Although he occasionally used racial slurs in private correspondence, he was consistently composed on the matter in public. According to his biographer Alonzo Hamby, President Truman once snapped at a black journalist for questioning his stance on civil rights. According to Hamby, “He retorted, a bit sharply and defensively, ‘I will give you some advice. All you need to do is read the Senate record of one Harry S. Truman.’”\textsuperscript{53} In September 1946, Truman organized a presidential committee to examine the issue of racial violence. His minority affairs aide David Niles and Attorney General Clark suggested he broaden to committee to examine the overall status of civil rights. In 1947, Truman named a committee consisting of prominent civil rights activists to do just that. This decision, according to Hamby, “was likely to advocate major adjustments

\textsuperscript{52} Taylor, \textit{Freedom to Serve}, p. 96.
to the status quo.”\textsuperscript{54} Thus, Truman’s action regarding equality in the military would not come unfounded in the near future.

Before Randolph’s deadline passed, Truman answered his demands. On July 26, 1948, President Truman issued Executive Orders 9980 and 9981. Executive Order 9980 outlined “regulations governing fair employment practices within the federal establishment.” It read that, “All personnel actions taken by Federal appointing officers shall be based solely on merit and fitness; and such officers are authorized and directed to take appropriate steps to insure that in all such actions there shall be no discrimination because of race, color, religion, or national origin.”\textsuperscript{55} Executive Order 9981 struck down segregation in the military, and created a presidential “committee on equality of treatment and opportunity in the armed services.” It read that “there shall be equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion or national origin. This policy shall be put into effect as rapidly as possible, having due regard to the time required to effectuate any necessary changes without impairing efficiency or morale.”\textsuperscript{56} At a press conference on July 29, Truman was asked to clarify his order. According Hamby, at the press conference, Truman was asked, “does your advocacy of equality of treatment and opportunity in the Armed Forces envision the eventual end to segregation?” Hamby wrote that Truman gave an “unequivocal” yet simple response of “Yes.” Following Truman’s executive orders, it was clear that “the president all but forced A.

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\textsuperscript{54} Ibid, 366. \\
\textsuperscript{55} Harry Truman, “Regulations Governing Fair Employment Practices Within the Federal Establishment,” Executive Order 9980, July 26, 1948. \\
\textsuperscript{56} Harry Truman, “Establishing the President’s Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services,” Executive Order 9981, July 26, 1948.
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Phillip Randolph to put his draft-resistance movement on the shelf.” Mounting pressure had finally succeeded in doing exactly what it was supposed to do: the strategies and tactics implemented by civil rights leaders had finally pushed Truman to desegregate the military.

Although the Executive Orders were issued, it is important to note that it was not immediately a success. According to Hamby, “The integration of the armed forces would not occur overnight. The process over the next two years would be resisted at almost every turn by army leaders skilled in bureaucratic Fabian tactics.” Hamby also notes that “in the summer of 1948, what loomed large was Truman’s commitment—one that in fact he would keep despite the misgivings of the military.”

It would be a tough battle to actually implement the desegregation of the armed forces.

Truman did indeed keep his commitment to desegregating the military. Following his Executive Order, he met with leaders of the armed forces to check on plans and progress for integration. Further, the President’s Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services (or the Fahy Committee) met on January 12, 1949. Truman was blunt in the fact that he wanted concrete results. At the meeting, Truman outlined that he wanted the Committee to study all areas of the federal government, not just the military, and inform him “of anything that’s lacking, and make any suggestions that you deem necessary for improvement of the situation.” Further, Truman wanted “it done in such a way that it is not a publicity stunt.” The President also requested that the final report be in before the closing of Congress, that way necessary suggestions could be placed into law before the following year. He told the committee the power of the executive branch enabled him to issue executive orders, and following the one to desegregate the military,

57 Hamby, *Man of the People*, 452.
58 Ibid.
they “might as well make a complete program of it,” extended to all branches of the
government. He said,

I want concrete results—that’s what I’m after—not publicity on it. I want the job
done and I want to get it done in a way so everybody will be happy to cooperate to
get it done. Unless it is necessary to knock somebody’s ears down, I don’t want to
have to do that, but if it becomes necessary, it can be done.59

Truman was committed to the fight to fully end discrimination in not just the military, but
the federal government. The Fahy Committee worked hard over the coming months to have
each branch of the service comply with Truman’s orders, consulting cadets from West
Point and reviewing plans of each branch to integrate.60

On May 22, 1950, the committee released its final report to President Truman,
entitled Freedom to Serve: Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services. In
the report, they concluded, “Equality of treatment and opportunity in the armed services is
right, it is just, and it will strengthen the Nation. That is true throughout our entire national
life.”61 According to the Washington Post, Truman commended the “success of a two year
effort to provide greater equality of treatment and opportunity for Negroes in the armed
services and said it showed his civil rights program [was] workable.” The Fahy Committee
“firmly believe[d]” African American soldiers would experience equality of treatment and
opportunity in the armed services.62 The committee’s efforts were a huge triumph for civil
rights, as it appeared the military would be one of the first place African Americans would
be able to enjoy equal treatment. After achieving success in their battle against the armed
services, civil rights leaders were able to switch their focus to other institutions, such as

59 “Transcript of meeting of Fahy Committee with President Truman,” Records of the
President’s Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services,
60 Taylor, Freedom to Serve, 99-103.
61 Ibid, 104.
education and transportation. The Fahy Committee’s influence reached further than just the civil rights movement in the 1940s and 1950s. The gay rights movement would later borrow the name of this report, and issue a pamphlet of their own to promote equality in the military during the 1990s and early 2000s.

Despite the Fahy Committee’s efforts, integration did not happen as quickly as civil rights leaders had hoped. Full desegregation was not apparent or evident until the Korean War. According to Walter White, the Korean War accelerated the process by putting racial issues on a global scale during the ongoing Cold War. The civil rights movement and desegregation efforts left a strong foundation for the gay rights movement to build their campaign. The borrowing of tactics, rhetoric, and language, as well as unique battles being fought by the gay rights movement will be explored in coming chapters. Civil rights leaders had achieved Double Victory in the military for the short term, and gay rights leaders sought to have similar successes.

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Chapter 3
Gay Rights: Vietnam

Executive Order 9981 and the desegregation of the military opened an era of opportunity for civil rights leaders to continue to triumph against Jim Crow and discriminatory policies in the United States. It also marked the beginning of many other groups’ fights against prejudice. These groups, such as the Chicano movement, the women’s movement, and the gay rights movement called on the rhetoric, tactics, language, and strategy of the civil rights movement. The gay rights movement in particular used the lessons and framework of the civil rights movement in order to strike down legal prejudice, more specifically in their battle for full inclusion in the military.

The legacy of Executive Order 9981 resonated as the civil rights movement progressed into the 1950s and 1960s. In 1952, Truman decided he would not seek re-election. During the final months of his presidency, he was outspoken on civil rights issues. At a speech in Harlem on October 11, 1952, Truman told the crowd that Congress had only acted on two out of ten civil rights recommendations made by the president. He also highlighted his civil rights record, beginning with the push to end segregation in the military and establishing a Fair Employment Board for the Civil Service Commission. He said, “These are examples of how your federal government—under a Democratic president—stands behind the constitutional guarantees of human rights. The federal
government could do a better if we had strong civil rights laws—and we must never let
down in fighting for those laws.”

Truman certainly did not back down in his last days of the presidency. On December
2, 1952, his new attorney general J. Howard McGrath filed court documents in support of
five black students. This later became known as Brown v. Board of Education. Desegregating the military was a significant blow to striking down racism with laws that
continued throughout the 1950s and 1960s. In December 1955, Rosa Parks refused to give
up her seat on a bus to a white man in Alabama, sparking a bus boycott. The NAACP won a
Supreme Court case in November 1956 desegregating the bus system. The 1960s faced sit-
ins at lunch counters to bring down discrimination in public places, “Freedom Rides” on
interstate buses from the north to the south, and acts of civil disobedience led by Dr. Martin
Luther King, Jr. led nationwide. Ultimately, the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom
in August 1963 gave way to King’s famous “I Have a Dream” speech, which became iconic
for the movement. Following this era of activism, President John F. Kennedy signed the
Civil Rights Act of 1964, ending segregation and discrimination based on race, color,
religion, or national origin. Mass protests regarding voting rights in Selma and
Montgomery, Alabama during the following year led President Lyndon B. Johnson to sign
the 1964 Voting Rights Act. The victory of desegregating the military ignited the process
of civil rights leaders taking larger action to desegregate other areas of society and find

64 Jon E. Taylor, Freedom to Serve: Truman, Civil Rights and Executive Order 88901, (New
65 Taylor, Freedom to Serve, 199.
66 Clayborn Carson, “Montgomery bus boycott to the Voting Rights Act,” Encyclopedia
Britannica, updated December 23, 2013,
http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/119368/American-civil-rights-
movement/288198/Montgomery-bus-boycott-to-the-Voting-Rights-Act
equality under the law for African Americans across the nation. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, civil rights leaders sought to win more battles against Jim Crow as they did with the military.

The civil rights movement also gave inspiration to other minority movements across the country. According to Juan F. Perea's essay in the *Virginia Journal of Social Policy and Law*, discussing the effects of the civil rights movement, the civil rights movement was successful in inspiring other minority movements of the time. He wrote, “It invoked and embodied high moral ideals of racial equality and justice, and it persuaded Americans to enact legislation to secure some greater measure of those ideals. The success of the movement is inspiring itself, and has also served to inspire other human rights movements.” The Chicano movement was one of the movements that “occurred in tandem, and occasionally intersected, with the African-American Civil Rights Movement.” Racial minority movements were able to both work with and learn from the African American civil rights movement.

Moreover, the women’s rights movement benefited directly from the civil rights movement. The 1964 Civil Rights Act included protection from employment discrimination based on sex, which later paved the way for Title IX addition of the Education Amendments in 1964, which gave women equal opportunity in college sports. It also gave headway to the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978, which stated pregnancy discrimination was a form of sex discrimination. According to Ruth Rosen, author of *The World Split Open: How the*

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68 Mary E. Guy and Vanessa M. Fenley, “Inch by Inch: Gender Equality Since the CRA of 1964,” *Review of Public Personnel Administration* Oct. 31, 2013, 5-8, Accessed: [http://rop.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/10/30/0734371X13510379](http://rop.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/10/30/0734371X13510379)
Modern Women’s Movement Changed America the African American civil rights movement certainly played a big role in the women’s movement. In an interview with PBS, Rosen said,

The civil rights movement for justice and for economic equality actually influenced two women’s movement, one in the 19th century, when the abolitionist movement inspired a women’s right movement and suffrage movement, and then again in the 20th century, when women who had been member of the civil rights movement, the union movement founded NOW, and when younger women who had been part of the civil rights movement founded the Younger Women’s Liberation Movement.69

Women, like other groups fighting for their rights, advanced their cause from the civil rights movements in two major ways. First, the rights of women were recognized through legal measures. Discrimination based on sex was outlawed in the 1964 Civil Rights Act. In order to solidify the words in the act, measures were passed later to protect pregnant women from being discriminated against. Laws regarding education came soon to follow. After participating in the civil rights movement, women were able to utilize their learned skills in order to move forward in fighting for their own rights. Whether this was by mass protest, such as marching on Washington, or organizing young people, the women’s movement undoubtedly found inspiration in the civil rights movement.

Sexual minority groups also saw the effectiveness of the civil rights movement, and sought to apply it to their own cause. In an article in *Social Identities, Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture*, it is argued that “the work of comparing and contrasting homosexuality and Blackness began decades before the civil rights movement of the 1950s, [but] it was certainly strengthened by the emergence of a civil rights ‘master frame’ during this era.” Further, since African Americans were the first to be recognized as a minority

group, other minority groups gained status “by proving that, like African Americans, they had experienced longstanding political and economic discrimination and that their status was immutable or unchangeable.”\(^{70}\) Thus, homosexuals were able to apply the “master frame” tactics, language, rhetoric and strategies of the civil rights movement to their own movement for equality. This took place in during a period of increasing visibility to the discrimination against homosexuals: the peak of the civil rights movement.

In the 1950s, homosexuals were discriminated against in government jobs. The rationale used was that homosexuals could be easily blackmailed and were a security risk as a result. Further, the American Psychiatric Association considered homosexuality a mental illness until 1973.\(^{71}\) In April 1953, 19 government workers lost their jobs on “moral charges,” according to the *New York Times*. In the same article, the *Times* reported 54 people were declined jobs based on security clearance, which was not uncommon in this period.\(^{72}\) In 1952, the *Times* reported the State Department had discharged 126 “perverts,” a word used to describe homosexuals, since January 1, 1951.\(^{73}\) Homosexuals would not see clearance for most federal jobs until the 1970s.

The 1960s became an important time for homosexual rights. The 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom intersected the gay rights movement. Senator Strom Thurmond accused Bayard Rustin, one of the key organizers of the march, of being


homosexual. Instead of backing away from Rustin, King and Thurgood Marshall stood by his side. A. Phillip Randolph called a press conference and attested to Rustin’s character. According to Linda Hirshman, author of *Victory: The Triumphant Gay Revolution*, “a prominent homosexual was attacked and survived.”

Perhaps, however, what is more impressive is how he did it. With the support of civil rights legends, Rustin built the bridge between homosexuals and blacks, and each movement’s fight against discrimination.

The 1960s was also a period where homosexuals had a difficult time socializing with one another. Private clubs and bars were established in New York City that catered mostly to homosexuals. Unfortunately, the venues could not sell alcohol because they were privately owned and did not have liquor licenses; they also did not have cabaret licenses, so people could not dance. The New York Police Department shut down these clubs by stating they served alcohol without a liquor license. On June 28, 1969, homosexuals fought back against police who raided the Stonewall Inn and arrested patrons of the bar. The Stonewall Riot was violent: people threw bricks at the police who tried to haul them off to jail. Police had to barricade themselves in the Stonewall Inn while the riot occurred outside until backup arrived. The rioting went on for days, as homosexuals filled the streets at night to continue to protest against riot police.

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76 Hirshman, *Victory*, 96-104.
and charged into the crowd. Homosexuals were finally fighting back against their oppressors and it was only the beginning.

The Stonewall Riots of 1969 is often considered the birth of the gay rights movement. Following that hot summer night, Gay Liberation Front chapters formed around the country. Present at the Stonewall Riots were several gay veterans, notably Roberto Reyes-Colon. According to Shilts, Reyes-Colon recalled feeling “anger that had replaced his shame and humiliation” about his discharge from the Air Force. He was a “decorated Vietnam veteran and had risked his life for his country.” In his mind, the police “so personified the prejudice that had shaped the past few years of his life.” With Stonewall, the gay rights movement would thrust forward, and the fight for equality in the military certainly would not be left behind.

During the 1970s, government jobs became a hot topic for homosexual rights. And again, the military turned out to be an important battle. However, much like the civil rights movement, inclusion in federal jobs became the first area in which leaders sought to eliminate prejudice. However, to understand where the movement was going, it is important to first understand where homosexuals stood in the U.S. military throughout history.

Homosexuals long served in the military, and were faced with many different forms of discrimination. As far back as the Revolutionary War, according to Randy Shilts, author of Conduct Unbecoming, homosexuals were important members of the United States’ armed forces. Baron Frederich Wilhelm Ludolf Gerhard Augustin von Stuben, one of Europe’s

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“leading military prodigies,” helped shape the drill practices that trained the Continental Army against Britain. In the royal court of King Frederick II of Prussia, he was a known homosexual. Without Stuben’s ability to reorganize the forces and train them properly, the United States may not have gained independence from Britain. Although Stuben was an important part of the Continental Army, it still did not permit homosexuality in its forces. Just two weeks after Stuben’s arrival, Lieutenant Gotthold Frederick Enslin was dismissed from the military after being found in his bunk with another man. Approved by General Washington, Lieutenant Enslin was the first known homosexual to be discharged from the U.S. armed forces. Clearly, homosexuality had not been accepted within the ranks of the military. 79

Gay soldiers also graced the battlefields during the Civil War, even as celebrated Confederate generals, according to Shilts. However, the first time homosexuals were punished in the military was during World War I. Sodomy was included in the Articles of War as a specific felony, whether it was regarded as assault or consensual. According to Shilts, “Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, homosexuality was dealt with as a criminal act, a move that saw huge numbers of gay sailors and soldiers imprisoned.” The purge of homosexuals was condemned, and at a Senate subcommittee meeting in 1920, homosexuality was considered an illness more than it was a crime. By the time World War II came, homosexuality was treated as an illness, and those soldiers with “homosexual tendencies” were not permitted to serve in the military. Military psychiatrists were given the first guidelines in 1942 on how to separate normal behavior from homosexual tendencies. By 1943, homosexuals were officially banned from all branches of the military.

79 Shilts, Conduct Unbecoming, 7-11.
a move that in that time was considered an “enlightened and even compassionate treatment of homosexuality.” \(^{80}\)

In *Conduct Unbecoming*, Shilts argues that the ban was written to be flexible for times of shortage or need. He also argues that rationale behind the policy changed with the times. Moreover, Shilts writes,

> There has not been a military operation in the last half-century in which gay soldiers have not played a part, very often with honor. In World War II, gay soldiers died on the decks of the USS *Arizona* in Pearl Harbor and spilled their blood on the sands of innumerable South Pacific islands. They died at Inchon and in the rice paddies of Vietnam. In more recent years, they parachuted into Grenada, suffocated in the rubble of Marine barracks in Beirut, and dug foxholes in the shifting sands of Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Kuwait. \(^{81}\)

In order to grasp how the gay rights movement built its fight for inclusion of homosexuals in the military based in part off the battles of the civil rights movement, it is important to look at the history of the movement before President Clinton promised to strike down the ban in the 1992 election. The years throughout and surrounding the Vietnam War launched the beginning of the campaign for equality in the military, modeling itself off of tactics from the civil rights movement, in hopes to strike success following the recognition of the Stonewall Riots of 1969.

The fight for inclusion in the military was preceded by a fight for inclusion in federal jobs. From the 1950s forward, gay rights activist Frank Kameny sought to end discrimination in federal jobs. *The Advocate*, a historically gay newspaper, reported Kameny said, “The Civil Service Commission declared war on me in 1957. On July 3, 1973, I won.” Kameny, like many others, had been released from his government job for being a homosexual. On July 3, 1972, the Commission released new regulations regarding the

\(^{80}\) Ibid, 14-16.
\(^{81}\) Ibid, p. 17.
employment of homosexuals. The guidelines stated, “Court decisions require that persons not be disqualified from federal employment solely on the basis of homosexual conduct. The Commission and agencies have been enjoined not to find a person unsuitable for federal employment solely because that person is a homosexual or has engaged in homosexual acts.” Instead, they had to establish a connection between homosexuality and their ability to perform in their job. While the policy covered 90 percent of the 2.6 million federal civilian employees, it did not extend to the military or the Pentagon’s system of security clearances.\textsuperscript{82} Much like the civil rights movement had done, gay rights leaders first succeeded in their battle against federal employment and then moved forward to a war against the military’s discriminatory policies.

Prior to the Stonewall Riots and decision on federal jobs, attention was gathering around the exclusion of gays in the military. As the nation escalated its involvement in Vietnam, increasing numbers of homosexuals were being recruited for service. This alarmed gay rights leaders like Don Slater, who launched the Committee to Fight Exclusion of Homosexuals from the Armed Forces. In those days, Slater’s strategy was, ironically, to “keep gays out of the military until the armed forces openly accepted them.” He wrote that, “If homosexuals are to be drafted, we insist that it be done under a publicly acknowledged policy change regarding their fitness, and that it be conducted according to uniform national standards rather than under the secret and divergent judgments of local induction center personnel.”\textsuperscript{83} On April 16, 1966, the \textit{New York Times} covered Slater’s national campaign to end discrimination in the armed forces. Slater stated that there were 17

\textsuperscript{82} David L. Aiken, “Gay is Now Okay in 2.6 Million Federal Jobs,” \textit{The Advocate}, July 30, 1975, pp. 4-5.
\textsuperscript{83} Shilts, \textit{Conduct Unbecoming}, 66.
million homosexuals in the country who were “eager to fight for their country,” and “an end to the ban would ease the shortage of manpower available for service in Vietnam.”

According to the article, “The campaign on military policy, Mr. Slater said, will focus on distributing leaflets to the public and encouraging people to write to the President.”

Among those pamphlets would be instructions on how to implicate oneself as a homosexual, which would in turn deny a person the right to serve in the military.

According to Shilts, heterosexuals who did not wish to go to Vietnam were using these tactics as well. In 1970, the New York Times cited this movement of civil disobedience and new militancy to reflecting the civil rights movements strategies. The Times reported, “Civil disobedience by blacks particularly, seems to have served as a model.” In the same article, Michael Kotis, president of the New York Mattachine Society, stated, “We are all fighting for equal rights as human beings...We owe [sic] a great debt to the blacks—they were the pioneers.”

Analogous to the civil rights movement’s strategies, gay rights leaders were calling for a similar civil disobedience. Leaders were telling homosexuals to reject serving in an organization that would not accept homosexuals openly and freely, the way blacks were not granted equal rights in the military during the 1940s.

In the 1970s, the nation was absorbed in protesting the Vietnam War. On April 24, 1971, approximately 200,000 people rallied to protest the Vietnam War in Washington, D.C. The message was, “‘Enough—out now.’”

85 Shilts, Conduct Unbecoming, 67.
rest of the population. According to Randy Shilts, "It was elemental: To be gay and an activist in 1971 meant to be against the war." Don Slater was using the military policy against itself to keep homosexuals from being sent to Vietnam. In his letters to the recruiting offices regarding recently drafted homosexuals, he would write, “Fair play would seem to demand that the finding that he is ‘acceptable’ for military service should be reviewed in the light of your policy excluding homosexuals from the service, or that your policy should be reviewed in light of your acceptance of him.” His letter kept every one of his clients out of the war. The draft was largely held in discontent with the population, homosexuals included. Just as African Americans shared similar sentiments with the rest of the population in the 1940s about winning the war, homosexuals shared sentiments with the rest of society in the 1970s: they wanted out of the Vietnam War.

The 1970s also met some of the most widely publicized legal challenges to the exclusion of homosexuals in the military. In 1972, the Navy faced its first case where a sailor discharged on grounds of homosexuality actually fought back. Petty Officer Third Class Robert Martin had a clear record with the U.S. Navy prior to his less than honorable discharge proceedings. When given his discharge orders, Martin decided to sue the Navy. Martin was not alone in thinking the discharge was unfair. Congressman Ed Koch of New York called the discharge “’cruelly out of date’” and scolded Defense Secretary Melvin Laird, saying it should be “upgraded to honorable” and there was “no need to gratuitously punish [homosexuals] with an undesirable discharge.” Moreover, Martin’s attorney “went ballistic” over “the quality of evidence used in the hearing.” He stated, “No Nazi court ever acted on evidence of a lower standard,” and that he had “never seen a case where concepts of ‘due

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89 Shilts, *Conduct Unbecoming*, 154.
process’ were so ignored.” Martin’s case generated publicity within the gay community, yet he was still only given a general discharge. According to Shilts, “In the end, the case was noteworthy because Robert Martin was the first sailor to fight the Navy’s ban on gays.” Similar to tactics used in the civil rights movement, homosexuals were challenging the institution of the military under the court of law. More importantly, however, they were using similar language. Much like civil rights leaders compared the tactics in the military to Nazism, those fighting for the inclusion of homosexuals in the military were as well.

During the same time, a marine was ousted from the military as a homosexual. Frank Kameny again appeared in the media to challenge the military’s ban and the dishonorable discharge of Lance Cpl. Jeffrey Arthur Dunbar. According to the *New York Times*, “Kameny said that homosexual groups and the A.C.L.U. planned to appeal the discharge given to Corporal Dunbar.” The movement against discrimination in the military was heating up. However, in order to pursue the battle further, the gay rights movement needed a figure as iconic as Rosa Parks was to the civil rights movement to stand up to a discharge board. An individual with an unblemished record in the military would surely grant credibility to the gay rights movement for equality in the military, much like Rosa Parks was able to do so for the civil rights movement to end segregation in transportation.

A Rosa Parks appeared at the movement’s doorstep, but in the form of a tall, mustached Air Force Sergeant. Perhaps one of the most well known cases of homosexuals fighting back against the military’s dishonorable discharges was that of Leonard Matlovich.

90 Ibid, 173.
91 Ibid, 174.
In March 1974, gay rights activist Frank Kameny was searching for a test case, or an individual with a “model military record who had been kicked out of the military for being gay.” Kameny planned to take this case against the ban to the Supreme Court. Matlovich reached out to Kameny. Matlovich's military career included “the Bronze star, a Purple Heart, two Air Force commendation medals, and a recent Air Force Meritorious Service Medal, had done three tours in Vietnam, and had altogether eleven years of unblemished service.” Much like Rosa Parks, Matlovich presented the perfect opportunity to use a law-abiding individual with a clean record to fight discrimination. David Addlestone volunteered to be the attorney on the case, and warned Matlovich that his entire life would change. Addlestone was not sure they would win. Despite hearing Addleston’s warnings, Matlovich told the attorney and Kameny, “I cannot go on living like this…I can't be a hypocrite.”

Matlovich’s feelings of hypocrisy were founded in the fact that he was a race-relations instructor for the Air Force. Born in the South, Matlovich had a history of racial prejudice in his past and his family. However, his experience in the Air Force struck down these notions, particularly during Vietnam. During his service, “Matlovich learned that almost everything he had been taught about black people from his earliest days in South Carolina was entirely wrong.” His evaluations as a race-relations professor were always high, with 93 percent of his students giving him ratings of eight or above. According to the New York Times, Matlovich was “one of the best race-relations instructors in the United States Air Force.” According to Shilts,

Every day, he reminded his classes of the plea of his new hero, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., that they judge people by the “content of their character,” not only by the

93 Shilts, Conduct Unbecoming, 194-199.
color of their skin. Slowly, week after week, the words sank in, not only to his students but to Matlovich himself.94

If Matlovich was campaigning for race awareness and equality, how was he dealing with not able to be treated equally himself? Matlovich’s battle with preaching for fairness and non-discrimination while also hiding who he truly was to be able to serve in the armed forces, coupled with inspiration from the civil rights movement, played a large role in his decision to fight the ban against gays.

With the guidance of Kameny and Addlestone, Matlovich wrote his letter identifying himself as a homosexual to the Secretary of the Air Force. On March 6, 1975, Technical Sergeant Leonard Matlovich delivered his announcement to Captain Dennis M. Collins. In the letter, Matlovich wrote, "I will be glad to answer any questions concerning my personal life if reasons are given detailing how the questions relate to specific fitness and security concerns rather than the generally unconstitutional provisions of AFM 39-12 relating to the discharge of homosexuals." In other words, Matlovich would only answer questions about his personal life if they were directly correlated with his ability to serve effectively. He concluded, “I consider myself to be a homosexual and fully qualified for further military service. My almost twelve years of unblemished service supports this position.” When handing the letter to his Captain, Matlovich had him sit down to read it. Collins asked Matlovich what the letter meant. “This means Brown versus The Board of Education,” Matlovich told him.95 The story was later reported in a feature piece by the New York Times, which also highlighted that Matlovich essentially grew up on Air Force bases from Georgia

94 Ibid, 186.
95 Ibid, 203-204.
to Guam. Clearly, Sergeant Matlovich understood the significance of his letter and how it would impact the only life he had ever known. Moreover, Matlovich’s words demonstrated a clear understanding of how his actions echoed the events of the civil rights movement only a few decades before.

It seemed like overnight, Matlovich became a superstar in the gay community and a well-known figure for the general population. In September 1975, Matlovich’s face appeared on the cover of Time Magazine with a headline that read, “I Am a Homosexual.” The article inside, “The Sexes: The Sergeant v. The Air Force” quoted Matlovich’s comparison to Brown v. Board. It also exposed his optimism about being able to be “out.” Standing in front of tens of thousands of people gave him hope, because “just two years ago I thought I was the only gay in the world.” Now, “It was just great pride to be an American, to know I’m oppressed but able to stand up there and say so.” Matlovich had been propelled into the limelight, both in the national media and within the gay population.

The media attention on Matlovich brought with it echoes of the civil rights movement. Highlighting his three tours in Vietnam, a Purple Heart and high efficiency ratings, a Washington Post article in October 1975 demonstrated comparisons of the civil rights movement to the gay rights movement. In the article, Matlovich stated he hoped to one day be able to sing out about equality and actually have it. As a figure for the gay rights movement, Matlovich is described as having “the kind of conservative image many homosexuals believe is needed if the civil rights of gays are to become a popular cause.” Matlovich draws a more explicit connection. He stated, “I think it’s our time in history...This

may be a resurgence of the civil rights movement. The time and the issues have met. It’s not me that’s the issue.”\(^98\) Clearly, Matlovich understood what was at stake. By invoking messages and parallels to the black civil rights movement, one which was still fresh in the memories of the nation from less than a decade earlier, Matlovich and gay rights leaders were trying to draw attention to the importance of their own fight to end discrimination.

Matlovich’s trial was covered nationally as well. On November 9, 1975, the *New York Times* ran an article with the headline “The Case of the Gay Sergeant,” in which Matlovich expressed deep regret for his anti-integration stance years before. Matlovich also stated that if he found a homosexual to be a security risk, he would certainly turn that person in, and if he had the choice, he would be heterosexual. However, he was acceptant of what he was. The article highlighted the trial, and the individuals on the board who claimed they felt homosexuality was wrong or immoral. Moreover, it presented many of the defense’s arguments. One defense witness in particular, John Money, head of psychohormonal research at Johns Hopkins, provided such intricate testimony that “by the time [he] was finished testifying, there wasn’t an empty notebook in the place, nor an unscrambled brain.”\(^99\) Matlovich’s trial would prove to be intricate and confusing, much like the experience was for Matlovich as a whole.

Gay rights leaders understood the powerful effects media attention could have on their campaign, just as it had an important effect for civil rights leaders. In fact, the National Gay Task Force, an organization seeking to promote the rights of homosexuals from the ground up, encouraged people to speak out to the media about their feelings. In an


advertisement to join their cause in The Advocate, the Task Force tells homosexuals, "Work on public relations for the local gay community. Support the gay media. Send letters to the editors of papers and magazine. Get on radio and TV editorial opinion spots. Call in to radio and TV talk shows with gay questions and comments." Raising the issue of gay rights into the media helped create public awareness. In doing so, the gay rights movement hoped to sway public opinion in favor of supporting gay rights in the same way civil rights leaders had.

After the first day of Matlovich’s hearing, Addlestone was exhausted. Matlovich wished to testify of his own behalf, “typically invoking Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr., to explain that homosexuality was another civil rights issue.” Addlestone did not believe it would work. Shilts explains:

“Don’t you understand what it is these people think?” Addlestone finally exploded. “They think you’ll go into the showers and grab people by the genitals. They think you’ll sneak around the barracks at night, that you’ll be on your knees giving blow jobs in the latrine.” Matlovich was speechless. Addlestone tried to explain. “They’ve got all these fears. You’ve got to overcome their fears.”

In Addlestone’s mind, and in the mind of the board, comparing the homosexual fight to civil rights would not win Matlovich’s case. It would be a longer, more complex struggle to alleviate fear.

In Addlestone’s closing arguments, he reaffirmed Matlovich’s “‘twelve years of unblemished service.’” He also stated that there was no case made about his ability to serve his country efficiently being compromised. After nearly four and a half hours of deliberation, the Administrative Discharge Board determined Matlovich would not be

100 “Four Important Steps for Gay American from the National Gay Task Force,” The Advocate, August 27, 1975, 5.
101 Shilts, Conduct Unbecoming, 237.
rehabilitated for the Air Force and was “subject to discharge for unfitness.”102 The
*Matlovich Decision* was important national news, and would later make it to the
“Headliners” section of the *New York Times*, citing that the Air Force panel recommended a
general discharge.103 Leaving the courthouse, crowds of reporters were looking for quotes
for their stories. Matlovich pulled a coin out of his pocket and said aloud, “It says ‘two
hundred years of freedom’… Not yet. Maybe someday. But not yet.”104 Matlovich’s word
rang with language of the Double V Campaign that had so proudly been used by the civil
rights movement. Although the country claimed freedom for all, in the eyes of the gay rights
movement, those freedoms were not guaranteed to every citizen.

Following Matlovich’s hearing and discharge, servicemen and women were
discharged around the country. A few days after the trial, an ex-Marine stopped an
assassination attempt against President Gerald Ford in San Francisco. In an article from the
*New York Times*, Ford’s savior, Oliver Sipple, was a homosexual who had not yet come out
to his family. His recent media attention changed that, and he went through painful phone
calls with family members explaining the recent press surrounding his deed. According to
the *Times* article, when questioned about his sexuality, Sipple said, “My sexuality is a part
of my private life and has no bearing on my response to the act of a person seeking to take
the life of another.” The event had outed him as a potential homosexual, taking away any
last pieces of privacy the former marine had. As a result, the article also said he will “think
twice before he does any good deed again.” More interestingly, however, was the
connection the article made to the case of Leonard Matlovich. Acknowledging the recent

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102 Ibid, 238.
104 Ibid, 240.
decision to discharge Sergeant Matlovich on grounds of homosexuality, the article states, “Homosexuality is a sin, not a crime. To practice it is to break all moral codes, but no constitutional laws.”\textsuperscript{105} Sipple’s actions were deemed heroic, but they outed him as a homosexual before he was ready. The Matlovich trial was resonating in gay life beyond the military and into basic practices of being a human being: saving one another from harm. Just as Matlovich had been shamed and discharged for his homosexuality following three tours protecting democracy in Vietnam, Sipple had been publicly outed for his homosexuality trying to save the President.

Following Matlovich’s case came the 1976 case of Ensign Vernon “Copy” Berg, who grew up much like Matlovich in a military household. Berg was a chaplain in the U.S. Navy who was facing discharge on grounds of homosexuality. Berg’s father, Commander Vernon Berg, testified at his son’s trial in his defense. He told the board that he was having difficulty understanding the differences between homosexuals and regular people, citing that he knew many homosexuals who were high in the ranks. Commander Berg warned the room of their blind prejudice to condemn his son. He also challenged the notion of homosexuals disrupting unit cohesion. According to \textit{Conduct Unbecoming} Berg’s testimony went as follows:

“Knowing Marines as I do, Berg said, “why would a given unit of Marines, once they know a man, live with him, fight with him, watch friends die with him, what do they care about what he does in his bedroom? It becomes unimportant, like color, or like male or female...I have had all sorts of men come to me and say, ‘..Why can’t we all love each other as human beings and accept each other as we are?’” The commander also questioned the ability to be able to distinguish homosexual tendencies between regular. When he held a fellow dying Marine in his arms, he asked, does that make him a homosexual? “Where does emotion and love stop and perversity take

up?” he questioned the room. Commander Berg’s comments not only challenged the Navy’s misunderstanding of homosexual tendencies, but also took efficacy and unit cohesion head on by using examples of other differences within a unit, including race.

Ultimately, “Copy” Berg was dismissed from the Navy. In its decision, the board read, “It is the opinion of this board that such separation should be under other than honorable conditions.” Although Berg’s case was lost and he was forced to leave his life in the service behind, the movement gained a momentum in the 1970s that it had not had before. Challenging the courts drew national attention to the issues of gays in the military. Leonard Matlovich toured the country, delivering speeches he opened with, “When I was in the military, they gave me a medal for killing two men and a discharge for loving one.” In a 1977 suit, Berg’s discharge was upgraded to honorable after further legal action. Following Berg’s footsteps, in 1980, Leonard Matlovich reached a $160,000 settlement with the Air Force following a suit with the US Court of Appeals. It upgraded his discharge to honorable.

The movement gained steam through borrowing from tactics of the civil rights movement: calling for civil disobedience, keeping homosexuals out of the service unless equally recognized, challenging the law in court and challenging what exactly unit cohesion meant. Using the civil rights movement was important because it was still present in the minds of many in the country. About a decade prior to the beginning of Matlovich’s trial,

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106 Shilts, Conduct Unbecoming, 258-259.
107 Ibid, 264.
108 Ibid, 251.
violence erupted in city streets as blacks fought for the same freedoms gays were hoping to achieve. If gay rights leaders were able to draw a connection between the two, it would potentially resonate more broadly than simply fighting for equality on their own. Gay rights leaders were asking similar questions civil rights leaders did: Why was democracy being fought for abroad, but not at home? What was the issue with allowing a minority group to serve freely in the military? If that group served just as well as the majority, what difference did it make? Particularly in the cases of Matlovich and Berg, gay rights leaders asked: Did a stellar record for a homosexual really elicit a less than honorable discharge? This question would follow the movement into the 1980s and 1990s. Despite its momentum in the 1970s, the movement’s push for inclusion in the military would take a back seat as another epidemic grasped their full attention: the AIDS crisis of the 1980s.
Chapter Four
The 1980s: AIDS, Funding and the Military

Coming off an era of high gay rights activism in the 1970s, it seemed the fight against discrimination in the military would continue to prosper for the gay rights movement. However, another large issue took the spotlight at center stage: AIDS invaded the gay community like no disease had ever done before. It affected the gay community in notably large numbers; gay men were disproportionately victims. The civil rights movement did not have a disease to battle that the gay rights movement could learn from. The gay rights movement needed to find answers on their own.

According to Linda Hirshman, author of Victory: The Triumphant Gay Revolution, “AIDS was the making of the gay revolution.”\(^\text{111}\) For most of the beginning of the epidemic, the government and gay organizations did “next to nothing” to help alleviate (or cure) the effects of the “fatal, heavily homosexual, disease.” Eventually, the movement mobilized the government to provide resources to help meet its needs. By the end of 1983, 1,500 people had died from AIDS in the United States.\(^\text{112}\) Furthermore, the disease became a worldwide health crisis. The New York Times reported in November 1983 that the disease had affected people in 33 countries worldwide. Rates had doubled in Europe, but the United States was seeing the most heavily reported cases, according to the Times.\(^\text{113}\) As for identifying those

\(^{112}\) Hirshman, pp. 229-235.
infected accurately, it was not until 1985 that a test to diagnose HIV/AIDS underwent the process of becoming patented.\textsuperscript{114}

According to Hirshman, lobbying the government for AIDS research funding was a civil rights movement unlike any before it. She wrote, “What had started when a gay Stonewall patron threw a brick at a policeman in 1969 ended with gay activists leveraging the government to spend billions looking for a cure for a fatal, heavily homosexual disease.” During the early stages of discovering the disease, nothing was really done about it. Having the government step in to help combat the epidemic was unheard of in comparison to other social movements. According to Hirshman, the revival of the gay movement itself was inspired by the AIDS movement.\textsuperscript{115}

After five years, “a reasonable amount of money started to flow from the National Institutes of Health” and possible treatment options, like AZT, had been added to the discussion on AIDS. AIDS spending hit $450 million by 1988.\textsuperscript{116} The AIDS movement enabled more gay people to come out and identify themselves as homosexuals. Coming out as homosexual meant caring about and showing support for fellow homosexuals who may have the disease. According to Hirshman, “Seeing themselves as morally upright caregivers, gay activists were poised to rise up.”\textsuperscript{117} Tragically, caring for the sick and dying is what gave so many people the courage to identify themselves as homosexuals. Getting the federal government involved was a major step in identifying the importance of finding out the cause and treatment for the disease. According to Hirshman, Larry Kramer put the AIDS

\textsuperscript{114} Hirshman, 251.
\textsuperscript{115} Hirshman, 228-232.
\textsuperscript{116} Hirshman, 257.
\textsuperscript{117} Hirshman, pp. 245-247.
epidemic into perspective. Hirshman writes, “You are victims, he told the reader, this is a civil rights movement, come out and push back, using techniques of direct action.”

Despite the progress, discrimination still existed and quite loudly. In March 1986, William F. Buckley, Jr., editor of the *National Review*, published an op-ed for the *New York Times* entitled “Crucial Steps in Combating the Aids Epidemic; Identify All the Carriers.” In the op-ed, Buckley suggested tattooing all the individuals infected with AIDS so that they are easily identifiable. He wrote:

> Everyone detected with AIDS should be tattooed *[sic]* in the upper forearm, to protect common-needle users, and on the buttocks, to prevent the victimization of other homosexuals.

> You have got to be kidding! That’s exactly what we suspected all along! You are calling for the return of the Scarlet Letter, but only for homosexuals!

> Answer: The Scarlet Letter was designed to stimulate public obloquy. The AIDS tattoo is designed for private protection. And the whole point of this is that we are not talking about a kidding matter. Our society is generally threatened, and in order to fight AIDS, we need the civil equivalent of universal military training.

Outraged, many homosexuals compared the suggestions in this op-ed to the practices of the Nazis in World War II Germany, and the identifying numbers tattooed on the arms of Holocaust victims. Previously, flyers were passed around Greenwich Village equating silence on the issue of AIDS to imminent death. The flyers and posters, which accompanied them, had the pink triangle that Nazis had pinned on homosexuals. It became an assertion that “gays [would] not be taken silently to their death.” Although "many in the movement fiercely opposed the Nazi analogy...one thing no one wanted to be in the late twentieth

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118 Hirshman, pp. 253-254.
century was the silent dead Jews of Europe."\textsuperscript{120} Moreover, the article calls for the civil equivalent to universal military training, something the civil rights movement had fought long and hard for in decades prior. Much like the civil rights movement did in the 1940s and 1950s, gay rights leaders invoked memories from atrocities committed by the Nazis during the Holocaust. Comparisons to Nazism propelled the gay rights movement to become fighters instead of victims to oppression.

AIDS allowed gay rights leaders to call on some of the civil rights movement’s lessons and tactics, and also to create their own strategies to combat the fatal disease. The disease allowed significant progress to be formed, as government intervention gave many leaders hope. It also created an era of increasing stigma and discrimination against homosexuals. While giving the movement momentum, it also damaged the movement’s headway in the military.

The AIDS epidemic, while energizing the gay rights movement, also gave way to ample resistance from opponents of gay rights. The AIDS epidemic did not leave the armed forces completely forgotten. For supporters of the ban on homosexuals, it was often used as a scapegoat to keep gays out of the military. In July 1985, the \textit{Washington Post} reported that the military was considering screening for AIDS to combat the disease from spreading. This was the same year the first test was patented. They would examine the possibility of discharging those who tested positive. The article reported that, “Homosexual activist groups asked to appear before the board to protest any use of the blood test as a screening device, saying that it is unreliable and will be used to discriminate against homosexuals.” Jeff Levi, political director of the National Gay Task Force, took a stance against the testing.

\textsuperscript{120} Hirshman, pp. 257-259.
He said that, unless the person is trying to donate blood, he has “very little faith that this is being done to protect the general health of the military population...They're using this as a guise for discrimination.” ¹²¹ In the 1980s, the disease was predominately found in homosexuals, and there was little known about what caused it or where it came from. For gay rights leaders, AIDS was perceived as being used as a reason to push closeted gays out of the armed forces.

While the military and health experts debated how to approach the disease, language from the era of the civil rights movement appeared. This time, however, people who were opposed to allowing AIDS-positive service members to serve in the military used it. Colonel Edmund Tramont, a military microbiologist, stressed that testing for the AIDS virus could help protect troops' health as well as assure military readiness. Despite protests from Levi based on arguments of breached confidentiality,¹²² it was clear the military intended to use similar arguments as the ones used against African Americans in the 1940s. Describing a measure as essential to military effectiveness or readiness proved successful in the fight against integration of black troops in the military. Military officials exercised this argument again in the fight against keeping those infected with AIDS out of the military, which were predominantly homosexuals.

In September 1985, *The New York Times* published an article covering ways the military intended to protect its troops from the devastating disease. “AIDS is a fatal disease that destroys the body’s immune system, leaving it vulnerable to infections and diseases. It has been found primarily among active homosexuals, drug abusers who use intravenous

drugs and people who receive transfusions of blood or blood products,” the Times wrote. Although no official policy had been issued to combat AIDS in the forces, a military doctor assured the Times that they were not singling anyone out, or “using proposed testing as a way of screening out homosexuals, the most common AIDS victims.”123 The question of whether homosexuals would be singled out was at the forefront of the minds of many, despite reassurance that the policy was not intended to do so. The long-standing ban on homosexuals from entering the armed forces had received ample attack in the 1970s, weakening some of the oppositions reasoning behind barring gays from serving. It did not take long for AIDS to be cited as a reason to keep homosexuals out of the military.

By the end of October 1985, the military's stance on AIDS had been established. The Department of Defense planned to screen all 2.1 million service members for the disease. Anyone in the military who was found to test positively for the virus and admitted to homosexuality or drug use would be discharged from the forces. Such people would get an honorable discharge, the Department of Defense promised. Jeff Levi again stated that there would be no guarantee people would be open about how they may have contracted the virus, which would hurt the military's containment of the disease. Moreover, he said, “the policy had confirmed that the AIDS testing would be used to screen out homosexuals from the military.” Robert L. Gilliat, one of the Pentagon’s health affairs officials, confirmed this fear by stating, “I think it was decided in light of the general policy that there's no place for homosexuals on active duty in the armed forces.”124 There is no denying AIDS was an important issue for the military to tackle before it spread. However, what would happen

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with heterosexual men and women, who were not drug users, if they contracted AIDS? It appeared by the end of 1985 that AIDS would help fuel the military’s crusade of discharging homosexuals from duty.

During the summer of 1986, statistics came out that black recruits were facing the AIDS virus in larger numbers than whites. According to Henry Chinn, founder of the Black Men’s Association in Boston, “Black men [were] at high risk for everything and AIDS [was] no exception.” Some attributed the higher number of black males affected by AIDS to intravenous drug use, which was a large problem in the country, and bisexuality. At a conference on AIDS and blacks, it was shown that black recruits exposure to AIDS was four times that of whites.\textsuperscript{125} Activists for black rights were once again intertwined with gay rights, as the health issue affected both groups in large numbers. Since people with AIDS were being discharged from the military, blacks were again facing the same struggle as homosexuals being discharged from the military in large numbers. AIDS led the movements to cross paths in a fight for inclusion in the military again.

In October 1986, the \textit{Washington Post} ran an article further clarifying the military’s policies on AIDS. Those wishing to enter the military would be denied should they test positive for the virus, while those who were already in the service would have two options. If the individual showed symptoms of the disease, they would be discharged. However, if they appeared healthy, they would be allowed to remain in the service, but “restricted from assignments to ships, deployable units or bases abroad.”\textsuperscript{126} Although no clear link was made to homosexuals in this article, coupled with previous statements by Pentagon

officials, it became clear to see the Defense Department intended to keep homosexuals out of the military and AIDS testing would be another way to do it.

It did not take long for gay rights leaders’ assertions to prove true. Daniel K. Watson was discharged from the military after being found to have AIDS. A judge had ruled that Watson engaged in “attempted sodomy” after reports of Watson being seen in a car “engaged in sexual contact” with another man. The judge threw out the AIDS related charges, stating the Navy violated AIDS screening regulations by attempting to use it as evidence in a criminal proceeding. However, the case highlighted the “legal, medical and emotional issues facing the military as it [attempted] to carry out the largest AIDS-screening program in the world.” The military’s screenings were bringing forth many “ethical concerns” as the military tried “to balance its readiness needs against individual’s rights to privacy and medical confidentiality.” Confidentiality had been leaving “gaping holes for dismissing members who admit to doctors that they are homosexual or use illegal drugs.” According to one military doctor quoted in the article, he was supposed to turn in every person who came in and admitted his or her homosexuality, which left little patient-physician confidentiality. Moreover, the article raised concerns regarding the loss of medical care should an individual admit their homosexuality when screened for AIDS.

According to the *Times*:

> The Pentagon’s decision last year to test all recruits, active duty and reserve forces for the AIDS virus drew sharp criticism from gay-rights activists and civil-rights activists who said they feared the program would become a witch hunt to expose and discharge homosexuals—who are prohibited from serving in the armed forces.\(^{127}\)

AIDS had proven to expose gay military personnel and discharge them, when they otherwise could have still served their country. As time moved forward, it would become more difficult to serve while infected with AIDS—whether the individual who contracted the disease admitted homosexuality or not.

By the end of 1987, officials in the Department of Defense decided that “sensitive, stressful” jobs would be off-limits to those who were infected with the AIDS virus. The new policy came with revelations that stated AIDS deteriorated mental functions, and could put someone in a position where he or she would be “harmful to himself or others.” This finding outraged Jeff Levi, who stated, “The military should be testing for impairment, not infection.”

Much like civil rights leaders challenged the military to judge African Americans on their abilities to serve their nation and not on the color of their skin, Levi was instructing the armed forces to search for job incapability rather than an excuse like AIDS to remove homosexuals from their posts in the military. Gay rights leaders saw this as a direct hit on homosexuals, barring them further from jobs in the military based on the stigma of AIDS.

In 1991, the federal government officially made the direct connection between AIDS and ousting gays from the military. A federal judge backed the expulsion of a midshipman from the Naval Academy in Annapolis, citing the ban on homosexuals as a “justifiable weapon against the spread of AIDS.” He used the Center for Disease Control’s statistics that “59 percent of all reported AIDS cases were the result of sex between men.” He also added that despite past discrimination, homosexuals “were not entitled to special legal protection now, in part because of the clout they have gained by lobbying for federal funding for AIDS.

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research.” In other words, the judge was using the gain of federal funding for AIDS research against the gay rights movement. Paula Ettlebrick, who was the legal director of Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, a gay rights group, charged the judge with creating a bias against gays. She also drew direct parallels to civil rights, citing the unequal treatment of blacks in the military until 1948. Ettlebrick said, “This is not about [homosexual] conduct at all...It’s blatant discrimination.” The Human Right Campaign Fund, another gay rights group, agreed with her, stating that competent gay and lesbian members of the military should not be discharged based on sexual orientation.129 In what appeared to be clear discrimination against homosexuals, the government had finally put the final nail in the coffin for the debate on homosexuals in the military. It seemed unlikely that homosexuals would be able to serve openly, without discrimination, especially considering the stigma the AIDS virus had given them. For gay rights leaders to turn the movement around, it would take someone from outside the group to stand up for homosexual rights in the military. In less than a year, the conversation would appear before them, and they would be presented with an opportunity to argue their case again.

The AIDS virus had opened Pandora’s box for the gay rights movement, but not all hope had been lost for their fight for equality. Despite being able to occasionally draw on the civil rights movement as a parallel, gay rights leaders were largely left on their own to strategize on how to battle the discrimination coming from the disease. During this time, there were achievements for the gay rights movement as a whole: they had received federal funding to research the AIDS virus (which largely affected homosexual men) and the virus had put them on a national stage for equal rights and medical treatment.

However, it did draw major setbacks in their campaign for equality in the military. It would not be until Bill Clinton’s campaign for the presidency that the gay rights movement could again give a strong push for equality in the military.
Chapter 5
Striking down the ban in the 1990s: Margarethe Cammermeyer and Clinton’s Campaign Promise

At the end of the 1980s, gay rights leaders were still battling for more treatment and information about AIDS. However, the military issue was rising again as well. As major cases of discharged homosexuals hit mainstream media, attention was drawn to the movement to drop the ban in the armed forces. Further, major politicians began taking a stand on the issue as well. The 1990s would become a time of hot debate for the issue, and the echo of the civil rights movement would continue to appear as gay rights leaders fought for their own rights.

As seen in the 1970s, an exceptional military career would not prevent homosexuals from facing discharge. Margarethe Cammermeyer experienced the battle for inclusion in the military first hand. In 1989, Cammermeyer scheduled a meeting to gain top security clearance in order to be able take courses at War College. The courses would be the final step necessary for Cammermeyer to be able to compete for the position of a general and Chief Nurse of the Army. This was a career-long goal for her. During the interview, the agent asked Cammermeyer about her sexuality and she stated she was a lesbian. She did not realize how greatly this would change the rest of her life both inside and outside the military.130

Following the interview, Cammermeyer fought a harsh battle for five years to remain in the military openly. After admitting her homosexuality, the interview became an interrogation, which resulted in the agent returning with a statement for Cammermeyer to sign. According to Cammermeyer,

As I was investigated and discharged, this statement served as the basis of my prosecution. My four words had begun an ordeal...I tried to shake off the feeling that the military I loved would now become my adversary.131

The investigation leading to Cammermeyer’s ultimate discharge included a listing of her “achievements, promotions and excellent evaluations” she had received. In a letter on March 18, 1991, Cammermeyer was given the options of resigning or requesting an administrative hearing regarding her discharge.132 She chose the latter.

Much like gay rights leaders did with Matlovich’s unblemished record in the 1970s, leaders used a similar tactic in the 1980s. According to Beth Bailey, the author of The Politics of Dancing: The Politics of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” and the Role of Moral Claims, Cammermeyer was “perhaps the most perfect symbol since Rosa Parks.”133 Rosa Parks, a seamstress and member of the Montgomery chapter of the NAACP, was an icon for the civil rights movement. After refusing to give up her seat on the bus for a white passenger, Parks was promptly arrested. Her case and trial sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycott to end segregation in transportation, and gave fuel to the civil rights movement.134 Parks’ record was nearly flawless, and trying such a woman for this crime seemed uncanny to those

131 Cammermeyer, Serving in Silence, 4-5.
132 Ibid, 257.
involved with the civil rights movement. Similarly, Cammermeyer’s record in the armed forces was pristine. The comparison between the two created a direct link between civil and gay rights.

Cammermeyer’s legal team's strategy was to demonstrate the flaw in the Department of Defense’s argument that inclusion of homosexuals would provide an inability for “Military Services to maintain discipline, good order and morale.” Despite her own career being testimony itself of how homosexuals could prove to be excellent soldiers, Cammermeyer’s legal team had to get creative with further strategies.135 One of their tactics would be to include both the Crittenden and PERSEREC reports (1957 and 1988, respectively) commissioned by branches of the armed forces. The Crittenden Report stated that, “homosexuals are neither more or less talented than the general norm of the population. A sampling of exclusively homosexual persons will show roughly the same intelligence quotient, GCT, and education distribution as does the general population.”136 Both of these reports stated there was a lack of evidence to conclude homosexuals would weaken morale or efficacy, or be a national security risk.137 If the reports debunked the reasoning behind the ban, why did the government still bar homosexuals from the military? These reports echoed similar findings in reports issues by the Fahy Committee and the Gillem Board. Cammermeyer's legal team hoped to use the arguments in the Crittenden and

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135 Cammermeyer, Serving in Silence, 260.
137 Cammermeyer, Serving in Silence, 261.
PERSEREC reports as the basis of their case, and thus win her reinstatement into the National Guard. Cammermeyer’s hearing began on July 14, 1991.  

During Cammermeyer’s hearing, a psychologist discussed how often times, people identify as heterosexual in order to appear “normal” within the majority of society, and avoid the negative consequences of becoming an outlier. Much like the civil rights movement and other homosexual service members before, the witness drew a parallel to Nazism:

This is not an uncommon phenomenon for people who are members of stigmatized minority groups. In Hitler’s Europe, it was not uncommon for members of the Jewish religion to attempt to pass as non-Jews because the consequences of being a member of that particular religious minority were, as we know, fatal.

Although blacks were not necessarily considered psychologically abnormal in the same way homosexuals were, there is a similarity here: comparisons to Nazism. This tactic was also used by the civil rights movement and intended to draw attention to the injustices committed against homosexuals by creating a link to the most horrific genocide in history. Cammermeyer’s lawyers were certainly drawing on the civil rights movements’ ideas, whether they realized it or not.

When the hearing was opened to the public, people who had worked with Cammermeyer attested to the high levels of morale and discipline within her unit. These witnesses were intended to play a crucial role in having Cammermeyer’s discharge recanted. A New York Times article even mentioned that Guard officials said “they would keep [her] on if they could” but were forced to abide by the policy regarding homosexuals currently in

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138 Ibid, 263.
139 Ibid, 271.
The testimonies also involved people demonstrating that the ban was based on old myth, and recent wars had proven that “unit cohesion was never better.” Dr. Lawrence Korb, former Assistance Secretary of Defense for Manpower, Reserve Affairs and Logistics under Ronald Reagan, compared the ban on homosexuals to the ban on blacks in the 1940s. When President Truman had issued an executive order for integration in the armed forces, officials within the government felt it would be a disastrous move. According to Cammermeyer’s memoir, Serving in Silence, “Dr Korb pointed out, once the military was given this directive to change, it became a model for the rest of society.” Dr. Korb’s testimony drew a valuable connection between both the civil rights and gay rights movement, further demonstrating the influence the earlier had on the latter.

Moreover, the media exhibited the link between the African American and homosexual struggles as well. A New York Times stated, “Homosexuality in uniform may be the last social taboo facing the military. Blacks were integrated into the armed forces in the 1940s...Gay-rights advocates say they believe that the taboos surrounding homosexuals within the military also will fail.” In the article, assistant defense secretary Christopher Jehn noted that the comparison to African Americans in the 1940s and 1950s had been made, but was not legitimate because homosexuality was a chosen action whereas blackness was simply something people were. Cammermeyer's attorneys and other civil rights leaders attempted to bridge the experience of blacks in the military to that of homosexuals in order to strengthen her case against the military. However, government officials attempted to

142 Ibid, 271.
belittle this comparison. It would be a long fight for gay rights leaders, as they would see this counter argument come up in the near future as well.

Ultimately, Cammermeyer was discharged from the Army, despite her flawless record with the service. Ironically, excellent reviews of her career were read by the board as they gave their decision to dismiss her.\textsuperscript{144} She was not officially discharged until June 11, 1992.\textsuperscript{145} Shortly after her discharge, an Op-Ed in the \textit{Times} referred to her as “one of the finest nurses and health officers in the military.” Moreover, the editorial states that the head commander of the Washington National Guard wept openly when she was dismissed. The piece asked, “Who wouldn’t shed tears over the idiocy and waste of such a policy?”\textsuperscript{146} According to the \textit{Washington Post}, Guard officials did not want to release Cammermeyer, and planned to write to “Secretary [of Defense] Richard B. Cheney to protest the dismissal.”\textsuperscript{147} Cammermeyer knew the policy was a waste of talent in the military as well. Her fight against such discrimination was not over: her legal team intended to pursue the case through civil court. Throughout Cammermeyer’s process to overturn her discharge and prove the ban unnecessary, she received significant press coverage from the national media. The media became an important tool for civil rights leaders to gain visibility for their movement. Challenging the government and receiving media attention was a tactic that proved successful for the civil rights movement, and gay rights leaders hoped it would prove the same for them.

\textsuperscript{144} Cammermeyer, \textit{Serving in Silence}, 276.
\textsuperscript{145} Cammermeyer, \textit{Serving in Silence}, 288.
Immediately following her hearing, Cammermeyer did not hear from the media for about two weeks. This was concerning to Cammermeyer, until she began receiving phone-calls from reporters like Randy Shilts, author of Conduct Unbecoming. Shilts was the first to call Cammermeyer. More media attention soon arrived. In May 1992, the New York Times published a feature piece of Cammermeyer. In the article, Cammermeyer “said she would challenge her dismissal in federal court, and her lawyers have expressed the hope that her case may ultimately overturn the 49-year ban on homosexuals in the military.” Her attorney called her an “asset to the service,” as most of the witnesses in her trial had tried to prove. Further, her attorney stated that, “People tend to demonize the other side, but when you see the other side is a gray-haired soldier, it changes things.” Cammermeyer’s attorneys hoped her story would change the way people viewed homosexuals in the military if they could identify with Cammermeyer as a person rather than a homosexual who had been discharged from the military.

The coverage continued through June, as the New York Times compared the case of Leonard Matlovich in the 1970s with Cammermeyer’s experience. The article called on the “Armed forces [to] meet the 20th century,” and questioned how long “will we continue to support one of America’s best-known institutions as it, not simply by custom but by regulation, engages in the rankest forms on discrimination?” If this was not explicit enough for those thinking of segregation a few decades earlier, the article took it a step further. The article was able to highlight the civil rights connection by stating, “this is also the argument once used to keep black soldiers in segregated units, a bit of military history that seems

148 Cammermeyer, Serving in Silence, 281.
unthinkable today.” Cammermeyer’s case had not only achieved in having her related to as a human being before a subject of discharge, but also drawing a parallel to the civil rights movement’s legacy.

Unlike many of her fellow service members before her who had fought the military's gay ban, Cammermeyer was successful in challenging her discharge. In June 1994, a ruling in her favor stated that the Pentagon was to reinstate Cammermeyer. Her discharge, according to the judge, violated the Constitution’s equal protection clause. Although this decision came after “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (which will be explained in the following chapter) was instated, Cammermeyer became one of the few service members able to serve openly until her retirement.

Important gay rights groups took special interest in Cammermeyer’s case. For example, Cammermeyer’s case was fought by Lambda Legal Defense and Education, which was described by the Los Angeles Times as “the gay equivalent of the National Assn. for the Advancement of Colored People...lobbying for unprecedented change in the way American law and society treat homosexuals.” Nationally, Lambda was known to be an important organization for fighting for gay rights. Through comparing the organization directly to the NAACP, the Los Angeles Times gave Lambda a powerful edge. Being associated with one of the strongest civil rights groups in history was highly important to Lambda’s image, and the image of the gay rights movement for equality in the military as a whole.

Around the same time that Cammermeyer was fighting her battle with the military, the gay rights community as a whole was fighting for full inclusion in the military. In 1991,

“gay and lesbian reservists across the country were cleared by their unit commanders to serve in the Persian Gulf after stating their sexual orientation,” according to The Wall Street Journal, despite the Pentagon stating that “no change in policy [had] occurred.” This drew attention to the inconsistencies with the Department of Defense’s ban on homosexuals. In fact, it drew more attention to the need to fight the ban. For example, “some gay-rights attorneys say after the war they will be looking for openly gay people who served in the Gulf and who are willing to go to court to test the military’s ban...the issue for court to decide in such cases will be whether the military can enforce the ban after knowingly allowing the gay person to risk his or her life in combat.”

Much like African Americans argued in the 1940s and 1950s, how could the military ask its troops to risk their lives defending democracy abroad if they were not receiving the full benefits and protections of democracy at home? Double V Campaign language resounded again in the gay rights movement, this time through questioning the intentions of the Department of Defense and the Gulf War.

The Gulf War had brought a new visibility to issue of gays serving in the military. Despite the ban on gays in the military, some homosexuals who were “out” received approval to fight in the Gulf War. According to the Washington Post, a San Diego based reserve member was granted permission to serve in the Gulf even though she was a known lesbian. The Post reported, “court decisions on the issue have been misses, with one Army sergeant reinstated after showing he was allowed to reenlist despite widespread knowledge that he was gay.” Further, the Post stated decisions like this “appear[ed] to

contradict U.S. military policy against homosexuals on active duty.” Exceptions to the rule became confusing. Undoubtedly, the need for troops in a war overseas blurred the lines of the Pentagon’s policy. Quite different from this case, some soldiers faced more discrimination than they had before the war. One Air Force Officer who marched in a gay pride parade had his discharge put on hold for questioning regarding security clearance. According to Captain Greg Greeley, he was grilled by Air Force officials on whether or not he compromised classified materials, and on his homosexuality. Instead of being discharged, Greeley was “shut in a room for several hours” and claimed the Air Force was “trying to ruin [his] life.” The two individuals met differing fates regarding the military during the Gulf War.

In response to the coverage of Greeley’s case, an opinion piece was sent in The Washington Post challenging the Department of Defense’s ban on the military. In the piece, the writer questions whether anyone asked the Department of Defense why “homosexuality is basically incompatible with military service.” The piece asserts that “unless the Pentagon can invent a sound defense of its attitude toward homosexuality, it should change that attitude.” For gays during the Gulf War, it seemed their lives were going to be polarized one way or the other: their homosexuality was deemed worthy of service in the war, or they were scrutinized more than ever. The inconsistencies regarding homosexuals in the Gulf War certainly brought attention to the issues of gays in the military and ignited the fight to end discrimination in the military during the early 1990s.

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The Gulf War made the issue of gays in the military quite visible and gay leaders sought to bring their fight against discrimination to the front door of the Department of Defense. Following an example made famous by the civil rights movement, gay leaders rallied to draw attention to their fight to serve openly and equally in the military. In a march on the Pentagon, protestors spoke out against the military’s ban on gays. According to Greg Scott, a leader of the Queer Nation group, homosexuals were in the military and “serving well and honorably” but not with the dignity they wanted to. Very similar to the civil rights movement, the gay rights movement was able to orchestrate a march on the government and receive press coverage about it. By pushing themselves onto a more visible, national level in both the eyes of the government and the public, the gay rights movement was creating fuel for itself to try to continue to foster and grow.

When it came to the military, “activists knew that President Truman’s integration of the military in 1948 had been invaluable to the racial civil rights movement. All they needed was a Harry Truman,” according to Linda Hirshman, author of Victory: The Triumphant Gay Revolution. As Bill Clinton became a strong presidential candidate, gay rights leaders were not entirely sure he would fit the model for their spokesperson. Other candidates seeking the nomination had stronger records advocating for gay rights. Yet, Hilary and Bill Clinton won the hearts of many gay rights activists through taking a strong stance on AIDS research and gays in the military. Identifying with the gay rights movement helped Clinton’s campaign funding and support. In a May 1992 rally, leaders introduced

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Clinton as “our Harry Truman.” The promise of Clinton aiding the gay rights movement happened before his presidency began.

Elemental to Clinton’s connection with the homosexual community was his friendship with David Mixner. In Mixner’s memoir, he mentions his longtime friendship with Clinton, prior to his campaign for the presidency. In September 1991, Mixner began working with Clinton to position his stance on gay rights in order to receive the homosexual community’s support in the upcoming election. Mixner hoped “the friendship between Bill, Hillary,” and himself “could serve as a building block for ushering the Clintons into the White House and the gay and lesbian community into a society of freedom.” With Clinton, Mixner hoped to not only win the White House but also win back the gay community’s dreams, hopes and lives. Mixner worked with Clinton throughout his campaign, positioning him to swiftly gain the support of homosexuals by committing to ending the ban on gays in the military and also prohibiting discrimination on federal jobs. Hillary Clinton won the hearts of gays through a deep understanding for AIDS, and Mixner made sure Clinton was kept up to date on the most recent facts and figures. A Harry Truman figure did not seem far-fetched when Mixner was working with Clinton on the campaign trail.

The media picked up on the friendship Clinton had formed with the gay community, and they began reporting that Clinton could get up to 72 percent of the homosexual votes in the 1992 election, according to the New York Times. After Clinton won the election, media outlets began to heavily cover his decision to oust the ban on gays in the military.

What seemed to be a simple campaign promise turn into a media firestorm for the president elect. Clinton faced opposition from leaders in the military rather quickly. In November, a *New York Times* article mentioned that military leaders were opposed to Clinton’s plan early on. Further, it the article stated, “his decision, which touched off a cry of protest from military leaders, presents the first clash between his campaign promises and the reality of running Government.” 161

At a Veterans Day ceremony in Arkansas in November 1992, Clinton reaffirmed his commitment to striking down the ban on homosexuals in the military. He planned to meet with gay leaders to figure out how exactly to begin the process. According to an article in the *Baltimore Sun*, “Revoking the ban would be one of the most far-reaching social changes imposed on the armed services since President Harry S. Truman ordered blacks integrated into the military in 1948.” 162 Gay rights leaders like Mixner were seeing their efforts come through. Their striving for a Truman figure to end discrimination in the military aided in comparing the homosexual battle to the civil rights battle in the 1940s and 1950s. The news media drew a direct parallel to civil rights in regards to desegregating blacks and whites, and full inclusion of homosexuals amongst heterosexual soldiers.

Gay rights leaders invoked the language of the civil rights movement so heavily in the 1990s because they believed it would produce results. During Cammermeyer’s trial, the Gulf War and Clinton’s campaign, the movement used the language, strategy, and tactics heavily in order to hopefully “end the nightmare Reagan-Bush years.” 163 Much like in the 1970s, leaders hoped that creating a strong connection between the successful civil rights

movement and the on-going gay rights movement would make their movement equally as successful. The framework was there and they sought to work within it to achieve equality.

So how, after a campaign promise to end discrimination against homosexuals in the armed forces, followed by homosexual endorsements for a presidential run, and statements to the military, did President Clinton end up issuing the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell, Don’t Pursue” policy? Promises to overturn something engrained in an organization’s culture are not left without protest. Clinton’s promise to blast the ban away was met by firm opposition from some of the most powerful and influential people in the government, including General Colin Powell and Senator Sam Nunn. Shortly after taking office, Clinton agreed to hold off on the executive order, first allowing for Pentagon officials to draft a policy of their own. According to a *New York Times* article from January 21, 1993, until an official policy was put into effect, “the military will be directed less formally to stop asking recruits about their sexual orientation and discharging people from the armed services when they are found to be homosexuals.” Homosexual leaders advised that if Clinton did not issue an executive order, it would, “undermine Mr. Clinton’s campaign promise” to drop the ban in the military once and for all. However, mounting pressure built up against Clinton from military officials. It was certainly going to be a tough road for Clinton to travel, but he reiterated his commitment.

A week later, on January 28, 1993, the *Times* reported Clinton’s promise had changed. Compromise, it seemed, was Clinton’s only option. President Clinton was allowing Secretary of Defense Les Aspin to draft a policy regarding homosexuals in the military for Congress to vote on. According to a Pentagon official interviewed by the *Times*, the proves

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would only “see Congress ultimately reaffirm the ban.”\footnote{Thomas E. Ricks and Jill Abramson, *The New York Times*, “Clinton Agrees to Compromise on Military Ban,” January 28, 1993.} It appeared at the beginning of Clinton’s first term in 1993 that his campaign promise looked unlikely to hold up within the rest of the government. In the next chapter, the opposition’s arguments will be examined, as well as gay rights leaders’ attempts to counter these arguments, which ultimately led to a policy of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.”
Clinton’s promise to open the military to homosexuals met some of the fiercest opposition from within the military itself. Senator Sam Nunn, chairman of the Armed Services Committee, commended the President on his efforts to use his executive powers to change policy. However, Senator Nunn added, “The Constitution makes it very clear that Congress also has a responsibility.”\(^{166}\) It became evident Nunn was not going to let Clinton write off the exclusion of gays in the military so easily. Clinton’s campaign promise would face considerable scrutiny within other branches of the government. Shortly after Nunn’s assertion, Congressional hearings began to exhibit public views on the issue. The President, recognized “the importance of the hearings,” according to an article in the *New York Times*. The *Times* reported that the hearings would be a “critical opportunity to influence public opinion.”\(^{167}\) The opposition, however, would not be so easily swayed.

Senator Sam Nunn’s stance on homosexuals had grabbed the attention of the public eye. In December 1992, revelations emerged that two of Nunn’s aides identified as homosexual ten years ago. It was reported Nunn fired both of them at that time. Coming forward in 1992, the two aides urged President Clinton “not to name Nunn to a major post in his administration.” In statements and demonstrations, gay activists charged Nunn as having a “discriminatory attitude that should have no place in the administration of a president who has vowed to end such bias.” His actions against homosexuals indicated that

he actively supported discrimination, according to the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. Both sides of the argument, for and against lifting the ban, were receiving backlash and praise through coverage in the media.

One of the most influential opponents of ban included one of the most important figures in the military. General Colin Powell, the first African American chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was among the fiercest critics of Clinton’s campaign promise. Powell struck down any connection between the civil rights movement and gay rights movement. During a hearing before the Committee of Armed Services before the House of Representatives about the Policy Concerning Homosexuals in the Armed Forces, this was not forgotten. Floyd Spence, a representative from South Carolina, reminded the committee of Powell’s words. Before the committee, he stated:

There is not—as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Colin Powell, so eloquently reminded us—an analogy between lifting the ban and the integration of the Armed Forces following World War II...You cannot legitimately draw parallels between skin color and gender on the one hand and sexual orientation and behavior on the other.

Powell’s words against the parallel between the two resonated loudly and were cited time and time again by the opposition. By having one of the most prestigious African American men in the government discredit this comparison, the opposition was able to gain substantial ground against gay rights leaders.

Powell’s stance on homosexuals in the military was not necessarily based in prejudice against the group. Despite being told that his “reasoning would have kept [him]

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169 Policy Concerning Homosexuals in the Armed Forces, hearing before the Committee on Armed Services, United States House of Representatives, 103rd Congress, First Session, May 4-5, 1993, statement of Honorary Floyd Spence.
from the mess halls, a few decades ago,” Powell stood by his words. In his memoirs, Powell describes conversations he had with Senator Barney Frank, who was in favor of allowing troops to serve openly. Powell cited that he would have to make separate accommodations for homosexuals who were “out” and heterosexuals because some heterosexuals “choose not to have to be in close proximity because of different sexual preferences.” Further, Powell claimed that “‘Skin color is a benign, non-behavioral characteristic...Sexual orientation is perhaps the most profound of human behavioral characteristics. Comparison of the two is a convenient but invalid argument.’” He also stated that some civil rights leaders were angry that the gay rights movement “hijacked” the black crusade for their own community’s purposes.\textsuperscript{170} Thus, what Powell was arguing was that skin color could not be controlled, but behavior could be. If gay rights activists tried to compare the two, it simply would not work and, in Powell’s mind, may belittle the achievements of African Americans. Blacks fought being discriminated against for something that was out of their control. Since behavior is something one can control, Powell used it as a mechanism to keep the comparison of civil rights to gay rights as irrational.

Powell’s words had also grabbed media attention. In a \textit{New York Times} article, it was noted that Powell, aside from the President, may have been the most important person in the military debate “because he [was] the chief of chiefs, because he is black, and does not have to be told about discrimination, and because he command[ed] respect throughout the nation.” Further, Powell’s words are closely examined. The article highlighted how Powell called skin color “benign” and referred to sexuality as more complex. Black soldiers were already in the military, just segregated. Summing up Powell’s words, the article noted that

“blacks had long since been given the opportunity to serve and showed their worth—but that homosexuals should continue to be denied the chance.”\textsuperscript{171} By cutting the link to the civil rights movement, General Powell had begun tearing away at the strategies of the gay rights movement.

Powell was not the only person to feel homosexuals should be kept out of the military. The \textit{New York Times} reported in November 1992 that “other top military officials” agreed with Powell’s arguments, and “public and private responses to the President-elects statements suggest that a major confrontation is brewing between Mr. Clinton and the military leadership, one that could sour the new Commander in Chief’s relationship with his top officers.”\textsuperscript{172} Before Clinton even stepped foot into the Oval Office, he was having issues holding onto his commitment to striking down the ban against homosexuals in the military, and Powell was not the only one fighting him.

Despite the support Powell had received from other leaders for his words, many people also disagreed with his stance. Powell’s opposition was heavily centered in the youth population, as demonstrated at Harvard University. In 1993, the General delivered the commencement speech to the graduating class at Harvard. Before even arriving at the University, it was been clear what type of atmosphere Powell would be delivering his commencement speech in. In February 1993, Harvard English professor Elaine Scarry wrote a column for the \textit{Los Angeles Times} that connected civil rights and gay rights. She also reflected on Powell’s impending speech. In the column, she wrote, “This [debate on gay rights in the military] is borne out by the history of military rights in this country, which is

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closely entwined with civil rights. To have one is to have the other; to lack one is to lack the other.” Further, Scarry wrote, “Are we really being asked to believe that our soldiers are brave enough to face armed enemies but will somehow fold if they have to inhabit the same space as a gay soldier? If a heterosexual soldier cannot bear to look in the face of someone different from himself, shouldn’t he be disqualified from the much more difficult duties of protecting the country?” Indeed, her attitudes were shared by much of Harvard’s population. Powell was met with respectful disagreement regarding his stance on homosexuals in the military, as thousands of students and audience members carried 8,000 pink balloons into the ceremony. The balloons read, “Lift the Ban.” According to the students, each balloon was to represent one individual who had left the military, whether through discharge or resignation regarding homosexuality, since Powell became chairman in 1989. Peaceful protests, both in print and in person, were great strategies of the civil rights movement. Utilizing youth to demonstrate against discrimination was a tactic as well. The gay rights movement executed such strategies similarly against Powell in 1993 at the university’s commencement.

At the same Senate hearing that Powell’s views on homosexuals in the military were reiterated, support was also delivered for overturning the ban. Retired Colonel Lucian K. Truscott III of the Army showed his support of Clinton’s initial pledge to overturn the ban. According to the Colonel, he served with as many as 15 gay men in his rifle company. Nobody cared, according to Truscott; what they really cared about is whether they could

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173 Elaine Scarry, “Separate Is Unequal for Gays, Too: Emancipation, women’s suffrage, 18-year-old vote were all linked to the right to serve in the military,” *The Los Angeles Times*, February 16, 1993.
rely upon the person next to them to handle the wartime situations. As long as the individual can handle the demands of war, he stated:

...we don't care if he is white or black or brown or red or yellow. We don't care if he is a Christian, Jew, Muslim, or Atheist. We don't give a damn if he is gay. We wouldn't even care if he were a she...So the issue before you isn't about gays. It is about equality, about equal rights. I am proud of the fact that the armed services led the way in the integration of blacks into our society, and I am proud of having been in the Army when we did.

Just as integration had its issues, the Colonel continued, so will striking down the ban on homosexuals. However, according to Truscott, the issues would dissolve just as they did with desegregation. Colonel Truscott’s direct parallels to the civil rights movement and the desegregation of the armed forces challenge Powell’s assertions that the two are not the same. Support statements like the one from Colonel Truscott demonstrated that veterans had experience serving with gays, and were open to including them fully in the armed forces.

The hearings saw further support from another veteran, Colonel Karl Cropsey. In his statements before the committee, Cropsey revealed that he was gay and had been with his partner for over 20 years. He also reminded the committee of similar prejudices that were felt about allowing blacks to serve alongside white troops. The retired colonel said, “Like it or not, it is important to remember that racial integration—the military’s last big, outside imposed culture shift did not come quickly either. We have no reason to expect our military to accept sexual integration any more quickly.” With this, he also pointed out the historical inconsistencies within the armed forces’ policy on homosexuals. He stated, “Although the military has a long tradition of accepting and keeping known homosexuals as long as they do

175 Policy Concerning Homosexuals in the Armed Forces, hearing before the Committee on Armed Services, United States House of Representatives, 103rd Congress, First Session, May 4-5, 1993, statement of Ret. Col. Lucian K. Truscott III.
a good job, especially when the manpower needs of wartime are paramount,” adding, “It was once unthinkable that black and white soldiers would serve together...We have moved beyond these prejudices. It is time to move beyond the one against gay men and lesbians.”

Support from veterans who served through integration, and their direct comparisons to that, fostered additional merit to the effort to overturn the ban.

In June 1992, the Department of Defense issued a report on homosexuality in the military. In the report, “Defense Force Management: Statistics Related to DOD’s Policy on Homosexuality,” it was found that the Department of Defense “annually expelled an average of 1,500 men and women between 1980 and 1990 under the separation category of ‘homosexuality’.” Further, the Department of Defense found the “major psychiatric and psychological organizations in the United States disagree with DOD’s policy and believe it to be factually unsupported, unfair, and counterproductive.” They also found public opinion towards homosexuals was increasingly favorable.

Gay rights leaders continued their fight for equality in the military. Despite the growing opposition of military leaders, the report’s statistics seemed to favor homosexuals’ fight for inclusion in the armed forces.

Shortly after Clinton took office, the NAACP announced its support of a gay rights march in Washington scheduled for April 25, 1993. Ironically, one of the largest and most well respected civil rights groups was going against the stance of Powell, one of the most influential men in the government. According to the organization, they had always been at the “forefront in the struggle for equal rights,” and gay and lesbian rights were no exception. A coordinator of the march stated it was “a call to arms, not just for the gay, lesbian and bisexual community but to every citizen who opposes discrimination, who will

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not remain silent while the Constitution is replaced by fundamentalist doctrine.” Moreover, the article highlights the high attendance rate at the gay rights march in 1987, and stated that organizers anticipated nearly a million for this march.\(^\text{178}\) The civil rights movement had benefited greatly from their marches on Washington, particularly in receiving massive amounts of publicity for both instances. Further, A. Phillip Randolph was able to force Truman’s hand on an executive order to desegregate the armed forces when he threatened an impending march on Washington if nothing had been done. More than just following the lead of marching on Washington, the gay rights movement had received the endorsement of civil rights leaders, making the connection between both of the movements even stronger.

According to the Campaign for Military Service, an organization looking to rid the ban on gays in the military for good in 1993, the ban itself was extremely outdated. Headed by Chai Feldblum, they sought to propose more progressive alternatives to the ban on homosexuals and later “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.”\(^\text{179}\) In Campaign materials, the organization sought to bring attention to how unjust the ban was. According to the Campaign, the ban itself was based on a “psychiatric belief...that homosexuality was a mental disorder.” However, the psychiatric community had long since rejected that belief. Moreover, according to the Campaign, “even military leaders now acknowledge that many gay men, lesbians and bisexuals currently serve, and have historically served, with valor and


merit.” Further, the Campaign stated that the Department of Defenses’ claims that allowing gays to serve openly in the military would undermine the morale and cohesion of troops. The Campaign claimed, “The military’s argument [was] based on simple discrimination.” Following this, the organization made a direct correlation to the civil rights movement. The Campaign stated the assumptions made by the Defense Department were “identical to the ones used to argue against integrating African Americans into the military.” Through creating a direct link to the civil rights movement, the leaders of the gay rights movement tried to strengthen their argument against the ban of gays in the military.

When Clinton entered office, the “military ban was, at that point, not enacted into law; it was instead subject to executive authority and Clinton could have ended it with the stroke of a pen.” This is something organizations like the Campaign for Military Service were seeking to use in their favor. However, Clinton’s ability to do away with that quickly ended. By attempting to negotiate with Joint Chiefs of Staff even before entering office, Clinton had drawn more attention to the issue than it originally had. Clinton was known to be a draft dodger, as he avoided service in Vietnam, so he simply did not speak the same language as the military. Clinton said he detested the war “with a depth of feeling [he] had reserved solely for racism.” With an issue already established, Clinton wanted to avoid heightening any conflicts with military leaders. Moreover, Nunn’s hearings on the

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180 Chai Feldblum Papers, Campaign for Military Service, Talking Points of the Ban, 1993. Located at Cornell University’s Rare Manuscript Collection Archives.
181 Feldblum Papers, Campaign for Military Service, Fact Sheet: Gay Men, Lesbians and Bisexuals in the Military.
policy had opened a door of debate, addressing both the civil rights issues of the ban as well as the “moral . . . touching upon deeply held religious and philosophical beliefs,” according to Beth Bailey, author of *The Politics of Dancing.*\(^{184}\) In the end, arguments of unit cohesion were mentioned so frequently that it seemed impossible to break them down. Rather than eliminating the ban with an executive order, Clinton’s plan had spiraled out of his control.

The media also sensed a change in Clinton’s actions on the gay ban. On July 16, 1993, *The Washington Post* ran a story that essentially outlined the upcoming ban. According to the *Post,* “The new policy would bar the military from asking the sexual orientation of recruits and prohibit members of the services from most forms of disclosure that they are gay or lesbian. Homosexual conduct would remain prohibited.” However, the article notes that no party was entirely satisfied with the policy. William Rubenstein, director of the American Civil Liberties Union, declared that the ban “clearly frames a First Amendment question about freedom speech” by not allowing gays to openly admit their sexual orientation and still serve. On the other end of the spectrum, Republic Senator Dan Coats stated that the Department of Defense and the President were trying to “finesse a solution” that would result in “having an inconsistent policy and open it up to endless litigation.” The article also stated that gay civil rights groups were unhappy with the policy and believed Clinton had gone back on his promise to lift the ban.\(^{185}\)

Shortly after Clinton had been sworn into office, Powell suggested a “practical compromise” where the military “could stop asking about sexual orientation when people

\(^{184}\) Bailey, 102.

enlist” and homosexuals could serve so long as their sexual lives remained private. Powell knew this compromise would be seen as discriminatory and a surrender by Clinton to many homosexual leaders, but he felt it was fair.\textsuperscript{186}

In the end, Clinton compromised. On July 19, 1993, the Clinton administration delivered “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell, Don’t Pursue” as the newly modified policy on homosexuals in the military. The policy would, “tolerate homosexuals in the military only if they remain silent and chaste, but [would] halt aggressive efforts to root them out.” Alluding to arguments used against the allowing homosexuals to serve openly, Clinton stated, "We must and will protect unit cohesion and troop morale” General Powell agreed, stating the policy was something everybody could “live with.” According to the \textit{New York Times}, the White House stated, “this will lead to significant advances for homosexuals in the military. It will clearly state that individuals cannot be asked about their sexual orientation nor will they be required to reveal it. It will clearly create, we believe, a zone of privacy in the military.”\textsuperscript{187}

For many, Clinton’s campaign promises had failed the gay rights movement. Shortly after the law was passed, a challenge arose to confront the policy head on. In 1995, six members of the military who identified as homosexuals charged that the law was unconstitutional. The attorneys on the case stated that, “This law intends to discriminate. The only question is whether that discrimination can be justified.” The defense argued that free speech was being violated by forcing homosexuals to stay quiet about their sexuality should they desire to serve. Moreover, the defendants in the case compared their struggle

\textsuperscript{186} Powell, 572.
to “that of blacks who fought to integrate the armed forces during the 1940s and 1950s,”
saying that the arguments against homosexuals were quite similar to those against blacks.
Although the trial had not started yet, Colin Powell’s stance on the difference between
homosexuality and race appeared once again.\textsuperscript{188} Despite the opposition, gay rights leaders
were not giving up on the bridge between the two movements. The gay rights movement
still hoped to pick up steam using the civil rights movement’s tactics and strategies.
Fostering the connection between the two movements and using the framework of the civil
rights movement kept the gay rights movement in the public eye during the 1990s.
Although members of the federal government felt the two movements were quite separate,
the gay rights movement continued to draw on the civil rights movement to attempt to
strengthen its arguments against “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.”

Furthering the connection between civil and gay rights, the Service Members Legal
Defense Network published a pamphlet titled, “Freedom to Serve.”\textsuperscript{189} The pamphlet’s title
was an echo of a report made during the fight to desegregate the military. The report
detailed a five-year plan for including gays in the military and making legal services
available for homosexuals. More notable, however, were the comparisons to civil rights
made by those veterans featured in the pamphlet. For example, Corporal Denise Liggett is
pictured saying, “Many of the same arguments used against lesbian and gay service
members were used against African Americans and women. I know that soon every
American will be able to served based upon true merits: leadership, loyalty, ethics and
discipline.” Further, much of the language in the pamphlet reflected that of the Double V

\textsuperscript{188} Frances A. McMorris, “Policy on Homosexuals in Military Faces Its First Challenge in a
\textsuperscript{189} Accessed through Frank Kameny’s Papers, Box 55, Library of Congress, December 16, 2013.
Campaign language from the civil rights movement. For example, Paula M. Neira, a Navy nurse, stated, “When my country asked me to go to war to defend another people against aggression in the name of freedom, I willingly went. No one loves the Navy or our nation more than I do.” Making a more direct connection to the Double Victory campaign, Frank Kameny is quoted as saying, “During World War II itself, I knew for what I was fighting. Over the years since, I have come to know even better for what I have fought. I remain on the front lines and with equal certain of victory, because now, as in World War II, we are right and our enemies are wrong.”

Despite losing a battle to “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” gay rights leaders and organizations still had hope for equality in the military, and still called on the civil rights movement for language, rhetoric, guidance and lessons for future battles.

Gay rights leaders had hoped Bill Clinton would be their Harry Truman, a man capable of desegregating the military and launching the gay rights movement into new heights. Unfortunately, Clinton did not meet their expectations. Clinton's ability to deliver on campaign promises had fallen short to the homosexual community, as he compromised with other leaders to begin a policy that down the road would create greater problems than ever imagined.

Conclusion: A Victory

On July 22, 2011, President Obama signed the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” ending an era of discrimination against homosexuals in the military. The gay rights community had finally defeated their opponents in the military. But what took nearly 20 years to repeal the law?

In the latter half of the 1990s, the issue of gays in the military heated up once again. In 1999, Private Barry Winchell was beaten to death with a baseball bat in his bunk after months of anti-gay harassment by his fellow service members. Gay rights leaders charged this as “grave flaws” in the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy and cited the case as a hate crime. Just as violence had stirred up questions regarding protection under the law for blacks during the civil rights movement, this instance brought the debate on homosexuals in the military back into the public eye. The gay rights community and politicians in favor of lifting the ban were again scrutinizing the military’s policy on homosexuality.

Following the conviction of Winchell’s killer, gay rights leaders sought to pressure President Clinton to end the ban on homosexuals during his final year in office, according to the New York Times. Leaders called on the military to “move into the 21st century.” The homosexual community had strong support from important political figures. According to the Times, Hillary Clinton was outspoken about the effects of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.” At a

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fundraiser in SoHo, Clinton said the policy had been a failure and that “Gay and lesbians already serve with distinction in our nation’s armed forces and show not face discrimination...Fitness to serve should be based on an individual’s conduct, not their sexual orientation.”\(^{193}\)

Despite their efforts, the ban stood until Clinton’s last days and through both terms of President George W. Bush’s presidency. According to ABC, Bush was expected to adhere to the policy throughout his presidency. This was not unfounded, as Bush’s record on gay rights was not necessarily progressive. His first Secretary of State was Colin Powell, who had constructed the framework for the ban, and his Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld said “the priorities were in other areas” for him.\(^{194}\) It was clear that the Bush administration would not budge on gay rights issues, especially not in the military.

In 2009, President Barack Obama was sworn in as the nation’s first black president. In a speech before the Human Right Campaign, a gay civil rights advocacy group, Obama promised to end “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.” According to the *Huffington Post*, Obama said, “My expectation is that when you look back on these years you will look back and see a time when we put a stop against discrimination ... whether in the office or the battlefield.” The Human Rights Campaign stated they had never seen a strong ally in the White House.\(^{195}\) The gay rights movement had finally found their Harry Truman.


Two years later, Obama delivered on his promise. It is important to note that Obama himself is a symbol that echoed the language, lessons and tactics of the civil rights movement. As the nation’s first black president, Obama held a strong stance on gay issues. In 2008, he applied King’s words about civil rights to the gay rights movement. He said, “If we’re honest with ourselves, we’ll acknowledge that our own community has not always been true to King’s vision of a beloved community...We have scorned our gay brothers and sisters instead of embracing them.” Indeed, Obama echoed the words of a man who paved way for his own career in order to highlight the importance of the gay rights movement. By invoking the words of perhaps one of the most influential speakers of all time, President Obama was able to elicit strong support for the gay rights movement and the eventual end to “Don't Ask, Don't Tell.”

The country would have never dreamed of segregating the military by race during the time when the gay rights movement was fighting to end its own ban. By echoing the civil rights movement’s battle for desegregation, gay rights leaders hoped the population would see the connection between the two, and soon realize that discrimination against homosexuals in the military was equally as prejudiced. The gay rights movement invoked many of the lessons, tactics and language of the civil rights movement. For the civil rights movement, the desegregation of the military was a glimpse of where society was headed on civil rights as a whole. The integrated military represented the first great victory for the civil rights movement during their push for equality in the middle of the twentieth century.

The gay rights movement hoped to echo that and achieve equality for their own movement in doing so.

During the 1970s and 1980s, legal challenges to the ban on homosexuals in the military were presented. Borrowing the tactic from the civil rights movement, the gay rights movement sought to use successful and highly acclaimed military personnel to prove homosexuals were equally as capable of serving well as heterosexuals. In doing so, the movement received massive amounts of media attention. Moreover, gay rights leaders challenged the ban by engaging in civil disobedience. If they were not allowed to serve openly, why were gays being drafted to Vietnam? Why fight for freedom in a foreign land without being able to have it at home? The civil rights movement also used fight over seas Refusal to fight for democracy over seas without receiving the same freedom at home. Gay rights leaders used both of these tactics in hopes of gaining national attention for their cause just as the civil rights movement had during the 1940s and 1950s.

The civil rights movement used the media as one of its greatest strategies for not just desegregating the military, but for battling racism in almost every area of society. Recognizing this, the gay rights movement utilized the media also. During and following legal challenges, the lives of gay service members challenging the ban made its way into the headlines nationwide. Being able to create visibility for the gay rights movement through the media became important just as it was during the civil rights movement.

During the 1990s, the gay rights movement thought Clinton would overturn the ban with the stroke of a pen. Following the Gulf War, homosexuals were more visible in the military. It seemed like the instinctive time to act, just as the civil rights movement had pushed forward following World War II. The gay rights movement followed in suit of the
civil rights movement, utilizing tactics made popular by African Americans, like marching on Washington. Gay rights leaders did this because their predecessors had been so successful in garnering acceptance from society. The fight for civil rights was proved to be one of the most influential in American history. Gay rights leaders hoped to engage in similar tactics in order to mark the importance and influence of their own movement.

The gay rights movement was blocked by an important African American military figure, General Colin Powell. He argued race and sexual preference were separate in that sexuality was rooted in behavior and race was not. As an individual who grew to such prestige in the military because of the African American civil rights movement, his opinion was one of significant merit. By arguing race was not the same as sexuality, Powell destroyed the link between the two for most of the 1990s. Increased visibility occurred again at the end of Clinton’s presidency, but to no avail.

Drawing analogies between the two movements positioned the gay rights movement to be a legitimate movement fighting for human rights the same way civil rights leaders had done for African Americans. Being able to echo a movement that made a lasting impression in the minds of Americans was the way in which gay rights leaders hoped to position themselves to achieve similar success. The civil rights movement was so powerful and successful in achieving equality under the law, and gay rights leaders hoped to draw a connection between the two movements in order to achieve equality within the law for homosexuals. If it worked for civil rights, it seemed logical to use it to fight for similar human rights for homosexuals. Gay rights leaders hoped to draw the connection between the two movements to show the arguments against homosexuals in the military were similar to the ones used against blacks in the military. The gay rights movement aspired to
achieve the same success and popularity as the civil rights movement through borrowing its tactics, language and strategy, particularly in its fight to overturn the ban on homosexuals in the military.
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