



For Immediate Release
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Veterans of War Share Their Experiences at Black History Month Panel

COLUMBUS – The unique experiences of African-American veterans will be discussed by veterans of different eras in a panel discussion sponsored by the Ohio Department of Veterans Services in honor of Black History Month. The panel is set for Tuesday, February 18, at 10:30 a.m. in the Statehouse Museum area. Participants include veterans of World War II to the present day.

African-American veterans of World War II served with honor and distinction in both combat and combat support roles in a segregated military. Their commendable service set the stage for the desegregation of the Armed Forces in 1948 and paved the way for the nearly 240,000 African-Americans who serve on active duty with that same honor and distinction in all branches of the U.S. military today.

The panel discussion features five distinguished veterans:

- John B. Williams, a cavalryman in World War II with the 28th Cavalry Regiment, continuing the tradition of African-American “Buffalo Soldiers” who served on the Plains in the late 1800’s. Mr. William’s unit was later converted into the 1553rd Engineer Heavy Pontoon Battalion, and he served in France and Germany with the U.S. 7th Army and 3rd Army. The process had begun the award the 28th Cavalry Regiment, the 20th Century “Buffalo Soldiers,” with a Congressional Gold Medal for their defense of southern California in the early days of the war.
- Don Elder, who served as an aircraft ground crew chief with the original Tuskegee Airmen in the Army Air Corps for three years following World War II. He was assigned to the 99th Fighter Squadron, as a crew chief of P-47 fighters, in what was then Lockbourne Field in Columbus. He received a Congressional Gold Medal in 2007 as one of the original Tuskegee Airmen.
- Beauford T. Williams, who served in the Army following the Korean War. He later became a professional entertainer.

- Ron Buchanan, a veteran of the U.S. Army who served in Vietnam from June 1967 to June 1968. He later joined the Army Reserves, and retired in 2001 after 22 years of military service.
- Sephan Andrew Frazier, who is currently a Captain serving in the 16th Engineer Brigade of the Ohio Army National Guard. He has been a platoon leader and company commander, and served a tour in Afghanistan.

The stories of these veterans will highlight the different military experiences of generations of African-Americans, and the difficulties and rewards of their service. Their words will provide an insight into the struggles and successes of dedicated people who served the nation and proudly take their place in the ranks of American veterans.

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