

African Americans in the United States Navy



When she was twelve years old, Michelle Howard told her older brother she wanted to join the Navy. A quarter century later, Commander Howard became skipper of the *Rushmore* and the first African American woman to command a U.S. warship.





More than two football fields long, *Rushmore* launches amphibious operations with helicopters and hovercraft big enough to carry tanks.



Howard went on to lead an amphibious squadron, serve as senior military assistant to the Secretary of the Navy, and achieve flag rank. Rear Admiral Howard commanded Expeditionary Strike Group 2 and Combined Task Force 151 in the Gulf of Aden. In 2010 she was selected to two-star rank and began serving as Chief of Staff to the Director of Strategic Plans and Policy on the Joint Staff.

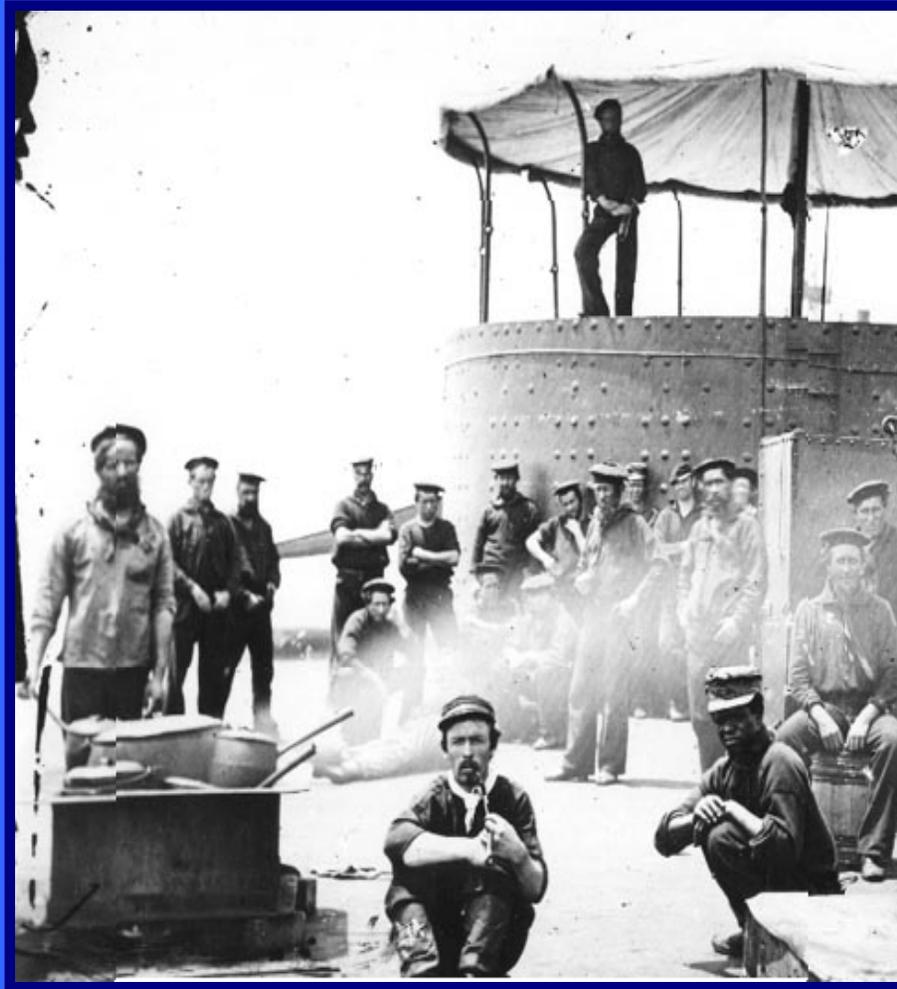
African American Sailors have distinguished themselves at sea from the beginning of our Navy's history.



During the War of 1812, the commander of U.S. naval forces on the Great Lakes considered black Sailors to be “amongst my best men.”



During the Civil War, Black Sailors fought against slavery on every kind of Union warship and included eight Medal of Honor recipients.





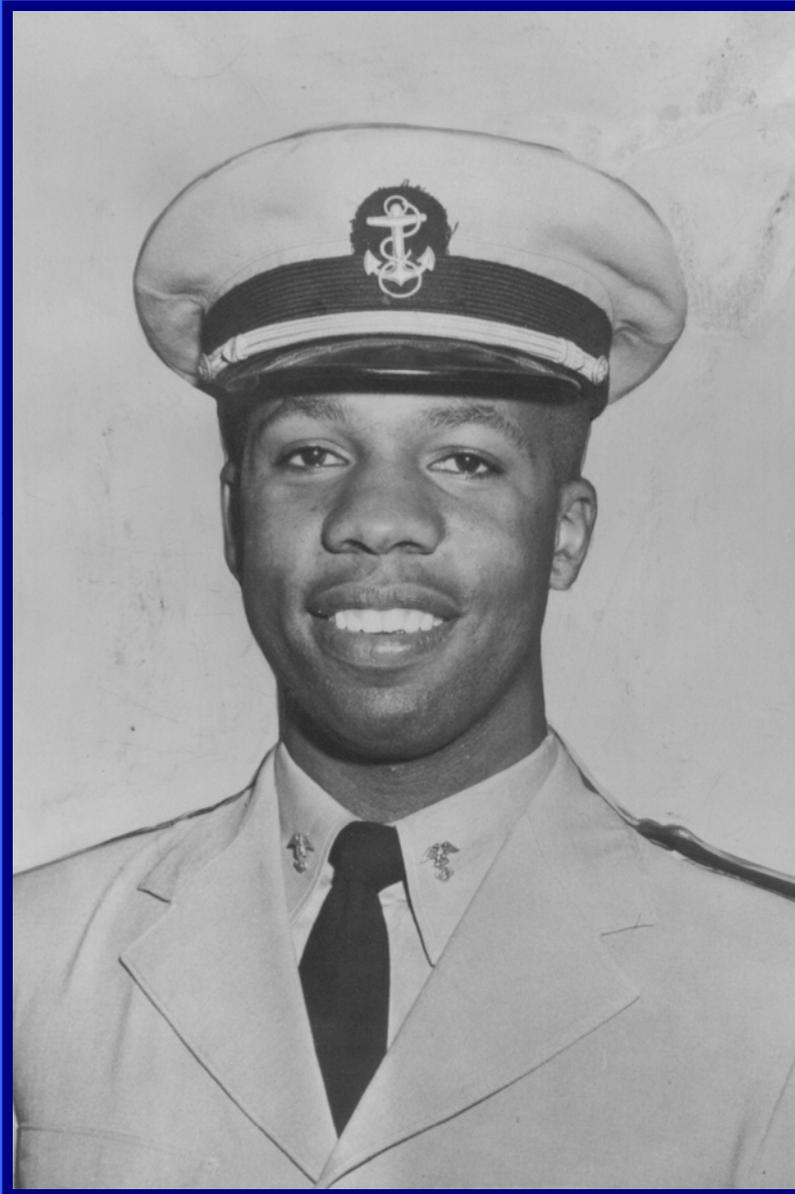
Landsman John Lawson was awarded the Medal of Honor for heroism aboard USS *Hartford* during the Battle of Mobile Bay, 5 August 1864. A member of the ship's berth deck ammunition party, he was seriously wounded in the battle but remained at his post and continued to supply *Hartford*.

**Mess Attendant 2nd
Class Doris “Dorie”
Miller machine-gunned
Japanese planes during
the 7 December 1941
attack on Pearl
Harbor; he received
the Navy Cross for his
courage and became
one of America’s first
national heroes of
World War II.**





Lieutenant (j.g.) Harriet Ida Pickens and Ensign Frances Wills became the first African American officers in the WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service) program in December 1944.



In June 1949 Wesley A. Brown became the first African American graduate of the United States Naval Academy.

In 2008 the U.S. Naval Academy opened the Wesley Brown Field House, the first U.S. service academy building named for an African American.





During the Korean War, Lieutenant (j.g.) Jesse L. Brown of Fighter Squadron 32 on board the aircraft carrier *Leyte* (CV 32) became the first African American naval aviator to fly in combat.



A person who is motivated and hard working, and has the honor, courage, and commitment to serve can achieve his or her dreams in the Navy, regardless of gender, race, creed, color, or ethnic origin.



Raised in Washington D.C., J. Paul Reason decided to enter the U.S. Naval Academy because it seemed the most economical way to get an excellent education.

Admiral Reason made the Navy his career. In 1996 he became the first African American four-star admiral and assumed command of the Atlantic Fleet, comprising nearly 200 warships, 1,400 aircraft, and 122,000 personnel. What advice would he give young people? “Conquer education,” Reason said. “Be known as a good performer. And be a person of principle.”





The Navy's Blue Angels flight demonstration squadron puts on shows for audiences around the world, performing precision aerobatic maneuvers in F/A-18 jets capable of flying more than 1,200 miles per hour.



Commander Keith Hoskins spent three seasons with the Blue Angels. Born the youngest of six children and raised in Parkville, Missouri, Hoskins became a jet fighter pilot because his father encouraged him to dream big. “Regardless of who you are, what your color is,” Hoskins said, “the military will honor and credit those who perform.”

Vice Admiral Adam Robinson, center, is the first black Navy Surgeon General and Chief of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery.



After graduating college, Robinson entered a program which offers a medical education in return for service as a commissioned officer.

Today his responsibilities include a \$3 billion annual budget and medical care for Sailors, Marines, and their families around the world.





Commander Roger Isom grew up with eight siblings in a house without indoor plumbing in rural Monticello, Florida, where his father did carpentry and Roger worked on farms to help support the family. Although Isom never thought he could be a military officer, a Navy recruiter convinced him to do just that.

After graduating from the U.S. Naval Academy, Isom served on board seven different submarines. On 3 August 2006 he became the commanding officer of the Gold crew of the fleet ballistic missile submarine *USS Wyoming* (SSBN 742).





Between tours at sea, Commander Isom earned two masters degrees. In 2009 he received the Black Engineer of the Year Award for Career Achievement in government. “I feel blessed to have had the opportunity to experience what I once perceived as an impossible option,” he said.



The Navy offers unparalleled opportunities for all Americans, regardless of race, creed, color, or national origin.

Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Ade Luna, right, and Tech Sergeant Carletta James with local children during a medical civil assistance project in the Caribbean, November 2008.





**Senior Chief Michael
Bowe-Rahming
prepares for a training
dive aboard the rescue
and salvage ship USS
Safeguard (ARS 50).**



Lieutenant Constance Denmond conducts a weapons safety check for members of the visit, board, search, and seizure aboard the guided missile destroyer USS Porter (DDG 78), March 2009.



**In 2009
B.J. Penn became
Acting Secretary
of the Navy, the
first African
American to hold
that position.**



Members of a special warfare boat team from USS *Whidbey Island* (LSD 41) begin an interdiction mission in the Gulf of Oman during Operation Enduring Freedom, April 2004.

Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) Airman Alicia Lucas logs aircraft movements in hangar deck control aboard the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS *John C. Stennis* (CVN 74).



**Astronaut and Navy
Captain Winston E. Scott
goes for a “walk” during
a space shuttle mission,
c. 1997.**





Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Gary Roughead speaks with Sailors from the precommissioning unit of the guided missile destroyer *USS Gravelly* (DDG 107), named in honor of Vice Admiral Samuel L. Gravelly Jr., the first African American flag officer, July 2009.

**Information Systems
Technician 3rd Class
David Clark, assigned to
the visit, board, search,
and seizure team of the
guided missile destroyer
USS *Porter* (DDG 78),
participates in a training
exercise.**





Vice Admiral Mel Williams Jr. , left, Commander, U.S. 2nd Fleet, greets Rear Admiral Victor G. Guillory, Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command, U.S. 4th Fleet.

In the foreseeable future there will be no more “firsts,” for the day will come when a black man or woman will have served in every Navy billet.

