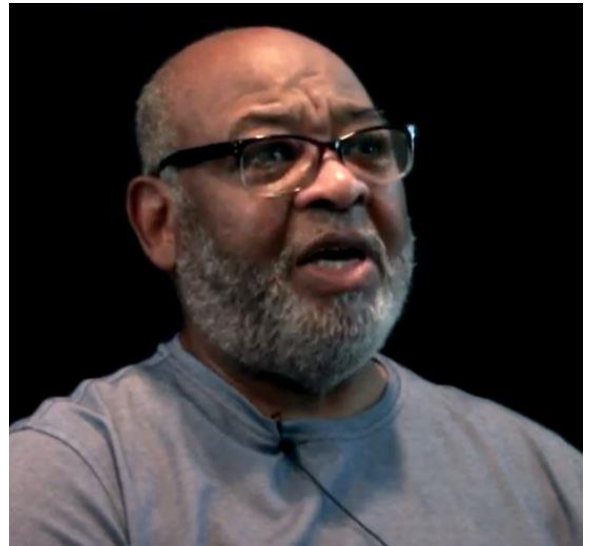


## The USS *Kitty Hawk* Riot, October 1972

Wallace Green joined the Navy in 1971. He was deployed to Vietnam aboard USS *Kitty Hawk*, an aircraft carrier, in October 1972, when a riot broke out aboard that ship. Racial tensions were running high between Sailors aboard the ship, as many of the African American Sailors believed they were being treated poorly and given worse jobs than the white Sailors aboard the same ship. These feelings led to a riot that took place over two nights aboard *Kitty Hawk*. This riot injured a number of Sailors and brought racial tensions in the Navy to the forefront of people's minds (especially elected representatives and the Chief of Naval Operations). Sailors aboard *Kitty Hawk* were being discriminated against—in some cases, their officers didn't even realize they were doing it, but there was something in the Navy called "institutional racism." While race relations did not improve overnight, this riot—and additional events that took place on other ships—helped to point out this issue and encouraged Navy leadership to fix inequality by offering a wider variety of jobs and training to African American sailors.



Watch Wallace Green's oral history to hear about his experiences during the riot. The video is available on YouTube: <https://tinyurl.com/WallaceGreen> or you can click directly on this QR code from your smartphone or tablet (using either a QR reader app or your phone's camera).



### Questions to consider:

1. What is the importance of oral histories? Why do we spend the time to speak with veterans about their experiences?
2. What do you think "institutional racism" is? If you don't know, feel free to look it up. What do you think the *Kitty Hawk's* officers might have done to treat African American sailors differently?
3. Describe Wallace Green's experiences during the riot.

4. As Wallace states, there are conflicting stories about what started the riot. Why do you think there are conflicting stories?
5. How do you think the riot affected race relations aboard USS *Kitty Hawk* afterwards?
6. What are some ways that this riot actually helped to improve race relations in the Navy afterwards? (You might have to do some research to find this answer!)