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U.S. MILITARY A MAJOR SUCCESS IN INTEGRATION AND DIVERSITY, STUDY FINDS As Affirmative Action Debate Heats Up, Military Stands Out in Successful Integration of Wide Variety of Minorities

SANTA BARBARA, CA, June 25, 2003 - According to a new study to be published next week, the armed forces have a long history of successfully integrating minority groups that faced considerable prejudice in the civilian sector. The 64-page study, titled "A History of the Service of Ethnic Minorities in the U.S. Armed Forces" was written by Dr. Rhonda Evans. It will be published by the Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Despite the legal brief filed in February by high-ranking retired military leaders to support affirmative action at the University of Michigan, military spokespersons have claimed that the integration of African Americans in the armed forces has been a one-time exception to the military's reluctance to include minority groups that faced widespread prejudice in the civilian sector. Former General William Nash, for example, claimed in a 1999 National Public Radio appearance that, "The integration by President Truman may well be considered the exception to the rule. We like to talk about the 1950 racial integration but that is really more of an exception than it is the process because the military has essentially over the course of 250 years been behind society." Sixty-three percent of the public opposed racial integration in the military at the time of Truman's 1948 order to dismantle military segregation.

In fact, Evans's study shows that the military has integrated numerous minority groups even when those groups faced widespread hatred and discrimination in the civilian realm. The study concludes that, "from this country's inception, the military has created effective and cohesive fighting units from a fractious and heterogeneous population." Successive large waves of European immigrants resulted in military units with mixed English proficiency; the loyalty of immigrants from enemy nations during times of war has repeatedly been a source of considerable anxiety; and the inclusion of racial and religious minorities in the military has occurred against a wider social backdrop of ethnic hostility, harassment and violence. From a more expansive historical perspective, Evans finds that "the U.S. military has repeatedly been able to attenuate the divisions, antagonisms and distrust that have troubled American culture more broadly. Despite repeated resistance, the U.S. military has throughout its history created cohesive and effective fighting units out of a fractious and diverse collection of civilians, integrating service members with vast differences in cultural background, religious practices, language



and belief systems."

For example, prior to the Civil War, a surge of immigration led to a bitter nativist backlash. For many native-born Americans, the large influx of immigrants posed a threat to the existing social order, and by the 1830s a "native" American uprising began to coalesce. Advocating violence and destruction of the property of Irish, Germans and African Americans, these outbursts developed into the Know-Nothing Movement of the 1850s. Closely linked to anti-Catholicism, anti-Irish sentiment was particularly strong, and mobs at times torched Catholic churches and convents. According to author Timothy Meagher, nativists would "speak of the Irish as a separate race, genetically fixed in their ignorance and moral dissolution." The Irish occupied the bottom rung of the employment ladder, and nativism within unions was rampant.

Despite such prejudices, Evans shows that out of a total of 2.2 million Union soldiers that served during the Civil War, more than 400,000 were foreign-born. Immigrants responded positively to the Union response to secessionist upheaval, and the foreign-born of every nationality enlisted in proportions that exceeded their relative numbers in the population at large. The harassment and discrimination that the Irish faced in civilian life did not preclude their enlistment as soldiers. The Union Army went to considerable lengths to attract Irish immigrants in particular, including enrolling eligible men as soon as they disembarked onto American shores. The Union even sent recruiters to Ireland, and the Confederate Army countered by sending special envoys to Ireland to top the recruiting.

Prior to the World War I, anti-immigration attitudes once again festered and found expression in the "Americanization" movement. Italians were perceived to have criminal tendencies and be prone to violence. An anti-Catholic magazine, *The Menace*, attracted over 5.1 million readers, and a total of 61 anti-Catholic periodicals were in circulation prior to World War I. Anti-Semitism also became firmly established in mainstream American civilian life. In the early 20th century, newspapers and magazines ran anti-Semitic cartoons and editorials, and *Life* magazine writers called New York City "Jew York."

Yet the military placed Americans from a variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds, as well as a number of foreign-born soldiers, into integrated units during World War I. Brigadier General Harvey Jervy explained at the time that, "It is not the policy of the United States Army to encourage or permit the formation of distinctive brigades, regiments, battalions or other organizations composed exclusively or primarily of members of any race, creed, political or social group." Almost 500,000 immigrants would be inducted during World War I, and as many as 75% of them lacked English proficiency. Naturalized citizens and declared immigrants were expected to serve regardless of language skill.



At the time of World War II, Native Americans faced widespread formal and informal discrimination in the civilian sector. They experienced intense housing discrimination, were forced to live in "Indian Ghettos," received lower pay in defense industries than white co-workers, and faced discrimination in public accommodations. In spite of the severity of discrimination and mistreatment, however, Evans shows that Native Americans served successfully in integrated units and that their support for the war was impressive. More than twenty-five thousand Native Americans served during World War II -- a higher percentage, per capita, than any other ethnic group. Native Americans drew particularly difficult assignments, frequently serving as scouts on long-range reconnaissance missions and in commando-type units. They were also heavily represented in infantry and marine divisions. With the exception of the Navajo Talkers, a separate unit that sent messages pertaining to enemy troop movements in Navajo, the War Department continued its policy of avoiding separate units for Native Americans, even though language difficulties and culture shock were concerns.

Evans's study addresses numerous other cases including the successful integration of Korean-Americans in the 1950s. Her study provides compelling evidence that the military's integration of African Americans has not been a one-time exception and that the military is quite capable of integrating distinct religious, racial, and ethnic minority groups even when those groups face widespread hatred in the civilian sector.

The Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military is an official research unit of the University of California, Santa Barbara. The Center is governed by a distinguished board of advisors including the Honorable Lawrence J. Korb of the Council on Foreign Relations, Honorable Coit Blacker of Stanford University and Professor Janet Halley of Harvard Law School. Its mission is to promote the study of gays, lesbians, and other sexual minorities in the armed forces.