

WELCOME, TRAVELERS!

"A Black Paper"

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Col. Charles Young Denied by the Center for Military History

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Long before one president could utter: "Ask not what your country can do for you, but ask what you can do for your country?" Charles Young had already answered the call. Ironically, Col. Charles Young, a legend in his own time Buffalo soldier, was medically discharged from the United States Army in the year John F. Kennedy was born, 1917.

He was proud to be called Colonel Charles Young; he was proud to serve his country, the United States of America. No one could question Charles Young's patriotism, and no one could question that he deserved to move up in the ranks. Until now and by the Center for Military History.

On January 22, 2013 the National Coalition of Black Veterans sent a very compelling letter* to the nation's first African American President requesting that Col. Charles Young receive a presidential proclamation that would bestow on him the honorary rank of Brigadier General. Written by coalition chairman, Charles Blatcher III who is also founder of the National Minority Military Museum Foundation, and by the museum's chairman, Howard D. Jackson, this letter is a literary masterpiece in Black History and should be read by every Black child and every American child, for the fact that Black History is American History.

Apparently, personnel at the Center for Military History cannot read.

You see, the National Coalition of Black Veterans was not asking anything out of the ordinary concerning a presidential proclamation given posthumously to a soldier, as Blatcher and Jackson so movingly cited with monumental facts in their letter. Presidents Harry S Truman, George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton had accorded posthumously such proclamations and honorary titles.

However, the response to this letter was so slow in coming that the Coalition enlisted the aid of Cong. Barbara Lee (D-CA) who dispatched yet another letter to the nation's first Black President, requesting that he bestow the rank of Honorary Brigadier General on a man who had served his country for 32 years.

It was after Cong. Lee's letter that the Center for Military History was charged with looking into the matter.

Fast forwarding: The Center's response to the National Coalition of Black Veterans was not only disrespectful but bordered on a crass naïveté that is repugnant in a 21st Century America, representing the first administration headed by an African American President who also serves as the nation's Commander-in-Chief.

Herein is the response: "... [W]hile Colonel Young did display exemplary conduct and character and made significant contributions to the national defense, there is no evidence that he ever performed duties and responsibilities commensurate with a Brigadier General. Moreover, all evidence indicates that Colonel Young was promoted simultaneously with his peers from West Point."

One has to wonder what evidence would that be for a Black soldier who was only the third African American to graduate from a lily white West Point and who had served his country from 1889 to 1922? One has to wonder if the Center looked at the 'facts' that Col. Young did not receive his promotion because white soldiers did not want to be 'subservient' to a Black man. One has to wonder if the Center looked into the 'politics' of race which used bogus medical claims to force Col. Young into retirement after he requested to be promoted to Brigadier General. One has to wonder if the Center investigated the white officers who put in their requests for transfers so they would not have to serve under a Black Brigadier General or a Black anything for that matter.

And we mustn't forget the hilarious line "...promoted simultaneously with his peers from West Point?" Do tell.

The highly esteemed Center for Military History expounds in classic brush off: "It is worth noting, however, that Colonel Young's official records were destroyed and that CMH has determined it would be impossible to recreate them. The Army is certainly willing to consider any additional, substantive documentation regarding Colonel Young's career that may support a recommendation for honorary promotion. Therefore, I ask that you provide any additional documentation you may have -- such as official military records, commendations, resumes, curriculum vitae, etc. -- to allow a complete characterization of Colonel Young's service."

To which Charles Blatcher III justifiably responded in his letter of July 8, 2013 to the nation's first Black President and Commander-in-Chief: "Officers were not allowed to command white troops. Their promotion opportunities were limited to the needs of the 9th and 10th Cavalries and the 24th and 25th Infantry Regiments. There was no place in the segregated armed forces for a Black General or full colonel. The date Charles Young was promoted to full colonel was the same day that he was forced into medical retirement from the United States Army. We are certain the Center for Military History is aware of the facts of his service and of the era. We request that you grant the honorary promotion in the name of historical redress and social justice."

Now, what part of these facts cited above does the Center for Military History need to translate with the Rosetta Stone? Why doesn't the Center investigate how the records were destroyed? When were they destroyed? After this man who had served his country asked to be promoted? And then to add stupidity to injury and insult, the Center had the audacity to ask for more proof "to allow a complete characterization of Col. Young's service." Of course, the Center for Military History is aware of the times in which Col. Young lived, but the Center has invoked its SOBP—that is, its Standard Operating Black Procedure—which translates into the tactic that if you ignore a Black person long enough, he'll just go away. To which it should be noted that this Black matter will neither be ignored nor go away.

In his letter, Blatcher further requested that Charles Young should be respected by having the title of Colonel placed before his name on the Charles Young Buffalo Soldiers National Monument, stating: "...The omission of his rank in the title of the National Monument disassociates him from his military history and outstanding service to the nation. As it was stated to me by a fellow senior veteran: 'He was robbed of his promotion opportunity to general during his lifetime. Now it appears he has been robbed of his earned title of Colonel in his death.' We ask that you re-designate the Monument's name to reflect his military association and accomplishments. (Preferable title: Brigadier General Charles Young.)"

In addition to his West Point significance, Col. Young became the first Black military attaché, and was "the first Black soldier promoted to both the ranks of Lieutenant Colonel as well as Colonel," as stated in the Coalition's letter to President Obama.

As a strong advocate of preserving Historical Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), I must point out that Col. Young has too the distinction of having taught at Wilberforce University, the first Black college founded by African Americans themselves; therefore, it is incumbent upon Wilberforce alumni and all graduates of HBCUs to join in the Coalition's efforts give this Black soldier his due.

Others** who have joined these efforts are Lt. General Arthur J. Gregg, Brigadier General Robert Cocroft, Col. Franklin J. Henderson, Captain Joseph Murchison, other notable veterans, historians, and such organizations as Omega Psi Phi Fraternity (of which Col. Young was a member), 761st Tank Battalion and Allied Veterans Association, The African American Patriots Consortium, and the Congressional Black Caucus Braintrust . (Please see full list below). Also, the Commonwealth of Kentucky House of Representatives and the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights were among the numerous resolutions in support of this campaign.

The January 22, 2013 Coalition letter is one of compassion and is symbolic of Messrs. Charles Blatcher III and Howard D. Jackson being 'officers and gentlemen' in making this request on behalf of Black veterans. I on the other hand will not be a lady in asserting that this matter will not be swept under the rug because of an inadequate Center of Military History which has personnel who cannot do its research in a warranted historical context. Therefore, we are requesting that it is truly now time for all African American organizations to come to the aid of Col. Young. Going all the way from the American Revolutionary War, Civil War, Buffalo Soldier, Tuskegee Airmen, World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and wars in between, the Black soldier's blood has been disrespected. Blood from those living and dead.

All African American veterans should crisscross military disciplines to right this wrong and that can be done by calling The Colonel Charles Young Promotion Campaign at 510-467-9242 or email to CNMMMMF@aol.com.

This is the 50th Anniversary of the March on Washington, and Col. Young has not been judged by the content of his character but rather by the color of his skin.

What does Col. Charles Young have to do to get the President's attention: Stand his ground? He's already six-feet under, how much more ground does he need to get a promotion he rightly deserves?

This year also marks the 50th anniversary of America's first Catholic president. Perhaps we can rephrase his famous line to juxtapose with the plight of Col. Charles Young with: "Ask not what this Black soldier can do for his country, but what this country can do for this Black soldier."



*The above editorial and letters are on the Editorial, Letters, Black History, Op/Ed, Black Paper, States, and Military Honorees lanes and can also be downloaded in Adobe PDF format on the Black Information Highway and The Mid-South Tribune ONLINE at www.blackinformationhighway.com. *Welcome, Travelers!*

**Coalition partners are: The National Minority Museum Foundation, Oakland, CA; The American Legion-Charles Young Post #398, NY, NY; The Congressional Black Caucus Braintrust, Washington, D.C.; Los Banos Buffalo Soldiers 9th and 10th Cavalry, Los Banos, CA; The USCG National Association of Former Stewards and Mates, Laurelton, NY; The Buffalo Soldiers Memorial Committee-Inland Empire Heritage Association, Riverside, CA; The Association of the 2221 Negro Infantry Volunteers World War II, Ft. Washington, MD; The 9th Memorial United States Cavalry Association, Marana, AZ; The National Association of Black Veterans, Inc., Milwaukee, WI; The African American Patriots Consortium, Inc., Baltimore, MD; The American Legion-Cook-Nelson Post #20, Pontiac, MI; The 9th and 10th Horse Cavalry Association, Los Angeles, CA; The 555th Black Paratroopers Association, Tampa, FL; 369th Veterans Association, Staten Island, NY; The 715 Veterans Association, Laurelton, NY; Montford Point Marine Association, Inc., Limerick, PA; 761st Tank Battalion and Allied Veterans Association, Chicago, IL.; The African American Gallery of the Ethnic Heritage Museum, Rockford, IL; and the Aces Museum, Philadelphia, PA.