



# THE NATIONAL VETERANS COALITION COLONEL CHARLES YOUNG PROMOTION CAMPAIGN

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22 January 2013

President Barack Obama  
President of the United States of America  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

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Washington DC & National Capitol

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Former US Army

Dear President Obama:

On this day 22 January 1917, Colonel Charles Young, the legendary Buffalo Soldier was medically discharged from the United States Army. He was recalled in 1918 in the grade of colonel after riding 500 miles to demonstrate his fitness to serve on active military duty. The National Coalition of Black Veterans Organizations has come together to advocate his promotion. This letter requests that you issue a Presidential Proclamation elevating Colonel Young to the honorary rank of Brigadier General during Black History Month 2013. (See attached draft Proclamation) We are firm in our belief that the honor we are seeking on his behalf was earned over a career that spanned more than thirty-two years of honorable service to our nation (1889-1922). We are joined in this request by resolutions from the Commonwealth of Kentucky House of Representatives (the birth state of Colonel Young), the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights, the Council of the District of Columbia and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. (See attached Resolutions)

As the third Black cadet to graduate from the United States Military Academy at West Point, Colonel Young's accomplishments were numerous. They included becoming the first Black military attaché, the first Black Superintendent of a National Park, and the first Black soldier promoted to both the ranks of Lieutenant Colonel as well as Colonel. He also distinguished himself in command positions during the Philippine Insurrection and General Pershing's Punitive Expedition. During the latter event, his courageous actions under fire resulted in the rescue of the 13<sup>th</sup> Cavalry. Colonel Young was the highest ranking African American in the military at the outset of the First World War and until his death in 1922. Colonel Young unfortunately lived during an era of racial inequities, which prevented him from leading combat troops during the First World War. This impacted his opportunity for the promotion we are seeking on his behalf.

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Our request does not represent the establishment of a new precedence. In 1925, Brigadier General William "Billy" Mitchell was court martialed, reduced in rank to colonel and discharged from the United States Army. He was charged with "conduct to the prejudice of good order and military discipline and in a way to bring discredit upon the military service." Ten years after his death in 1946, President Harry S. Truman posthumously promoted then Colonel William "Billy" Mitchell to the rank of Major General. Under subsequent administrations similar acts of historical redress has happened by way of Presidential Proclamation. Three and a half decades after their heroic actions, in 1978, President Jimmy Carter issued the Presidential Unit Citation to the 761<sup>st</sup> Black Panther Tank Battalion. This battalion, under the command of General George Patton, served a record one hundred and eighty days in combat. They spearheaded the Allied assault across Europe and were the first armored battalion to reach the Rhine River. They suffered a casualty rate of fifty percent. In 1991, President George H. W. Bush awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor to Freddie Stowers for action in the First World War. Seventy-two years after his death, he became the only Black recipient of the medal from that war. In 1993, President William J. Clinton awarded seven Black soldiers the Congressional Medal of Honor for action in World War II. Other acts of redress have taken place over the years. In 1990, at the behest of thirty-seven members of Congress, President Clinton pardoned Freddie Meeks a surviving member of the sailors' court martialed during World War Two for mutiny in an incident that became known as the Port Chicago Incident. In 1999, President Clinton also issued a pardon to Lieutenant Henry O. Flipper, the first Black graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point. Lieutenant Flipper was dishonorably discharged from the United States Army for conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman in 1882.

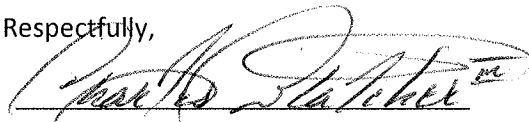
Mr. President, we recognize our request is a small measure compared to many of the items that demand your attention. Although symbolic in nature, it is important because it fills an important void in the legacy of black participation and accomplishments in American Military History. It is equally important because it demonstrates that black veterans are maintaining vigilance addressing the numerous omissions and distortions in how we are presented in the history of the armed forces. For example, there is Dorie Miller, the black sailor who manned an anti-aircraft gun during the bombing of Pearl Harbor and reportedly shot down a disputed number of enemy aircraft. For his actions, he was awarded the Navy Cross while others acts of bravery committed at Pearl Harbor by white sailors were recognized with the Congressional Medal of Honor. The process of historical redress is an exercise that will extend beyond your Presidency. We ask that your contribution to the process come in the form of the honorary promotion we are seeking for Colonel Charles Young.

22 January 2013

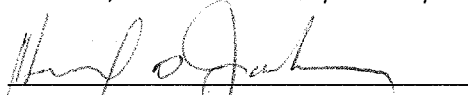
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We extend our congratulations on your re-election. We Salute You.

Respectfully,



Charles Blatcher, III  
Chairman, National Coalition of Black Veterans &  
Founder, National Minority Military Museum Foundation



Howard D. Jackson,  
Chairman, National Minority Military Museum Foundation

Attachment:

1. Draft Proclamation
2. Commonwealth of Kentucky House of Representatives Resolution
3. The Kentucky Commission on Human Rights
3. The Council for the District of Columbia Resolution
4. NAACP Colonel Charles Young Resolution

cc: Congresswoman Barbara Lee, (D-CA)  
The Congressional Black Caucus  
Commonwealth of Kentucky House of Representatives  
The Kentucky Commission on Human Rights  
Council for the District of Columbia- Mayor Vincent Gray  
The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People  
Coalition Partners