

1. Read the following article circle unknown words and make a one page outline of its main points.
2. On the back of your outline, answer the following questions:
 - A. Who was the Black leader who pressured Truman to desegregate the military? What did we learn about this man when we discussed African American in World War II?
 - B. How long did it take the US to deploy integrated combat units after Truman's executive order?
 - C. The author argues that the integration of the armed forces has been one of the most successful examples of the US government's civil rights policy. Why does he think this is true? In your answer you should explain how the following policies were not completely successful: The 14th Amendment, The 15th Amendment, Brown v. Board of Education and the voting rights act of 1965.

The remaining questions are not answered in the article, but ask you to think about how the significance of the issues raised in the article to current events

- D. What arguments do you think might have been used to argue against the integration of the military? How might Truman have responded to these arguments?
- E. What other groups have been denied the right to serve equally in the military? Why do you think these groups have been denied equal military status? Has anything, to your knowledge, been done to ensure or deny the equal treatment of these groups in the military?

How a stroke of the pen changed the army forever: The most important civil rights achievement didn't come from Congress or the Court. It came from Harry Truman.

By Cornelius L. Bynum July 26, 2017

Sixty-nine years ago, civil rights activist A. Philip Randolph celebrated as President Harry Truman signed Executive Order 9981 to desegregate the military. It had been a long journey for Randolph and civil rights advocates on this front. Initially, Truman questioned Randolph's patriotism and loyalty to the nation when, as founder of the League for Non-Violent Civil Disobedience Against Military Segregation, Randolph pressured him to issue this order. But Randolph's refusal to yield, and Truman's calculated look at the political landscape, ultimately convinced the president to take what would be one of the most momentous steps toward achieving a more equal society.

Randolph's efforts have continued to pay off. Unlike other more acclaimed civil rights achievements, which have faced setbacks and successful resistance, E.O. 9981 has proven durable and difficult to scuttle. It directly ended segregation in the armed forces, and the U.S. military slowly began to deploy integrated combat regiments during the Korean War two years later.

In fact, both the speed of military compliance with Truman's directive and the overall intransigence of Jim Crow in every other aspect American society makes the order all the more remarkable. Its fundamental transformation of the U.S. military makes clear that, when racist rationalizations of discrimination, injustice and inequality are stripped away, American institutions can be strengthened by enacting basic principles of inclusion.

In 1947, with tensions ratcheting up between the United States and the Soviet Union, Randolph intensified his demands to dismantle racial segregation in the armed forces. U.S. military leaders, as well as Truman, initially resisted, fearing the ramifications of Randolph's advice to young men, both black and white, to resist the draft in the midst of the evolving Cold War.

But Randolph understood how much of a difference presidential action could make. His 1941 March On Washington Movement had successfully pressured President Franklin D. Roosevelt into issuing an executive order banning racial discrimination in war industry employment. But it failed to achieve its second goal of desegregating military service and training. As the Fair Employment Practice Committee created by Roosevelt's executive order collapsed under pressure from Southern Democrats in Congress, Randolph and other African Americans were determined to see the problem of military segregation addressed.

Truman also recognized the need to take some sort of action in response to this growing grass roots pressure. In 1946, he authorized the first presidential committee on civil rights. This body, which included civil rights activists and labor and religious leaders among others, developed a blueprint for dismantling the nation's racial caste system that specifically called for measures like federal anti-lynching legislation, abolishing poll taxes, ending ballot box discrimination and desegregating the military.

For Truman, though, E.O. 9981 was as much political calculation as it was a display of personal principle. He recognized the difficult electoral landscape he faced in the 1948 presidential election. He had challengers across the political and partisan spectrum. Henry Wallace, the former Secretary of Commerce and Roosevelt's Vice President

from 1941-45, was on his left. The popular and well-financed governor of New York, Thomas Dewey, ran as the Republican candidate. And Southern Democrats bolted the party to support their own candidate, Strom Thurmond.

Convinced by Randolph and others that African Americans would no longer accept Jim Crow in the military and desperate to shore up political support among urban African Americans, Truman issued a directive mandating “equality of treatment and opportunity for all people in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion, or national origin.” Though the pace of full-scale change was slow, the executive order was one of the most significant steps toward equal justice since the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 and the ratification of the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution that abolished slavery in 1865.

Indeed, when considered alongside other milestone civil rights achievements, E.O. 9981 is remarkable for its effectiveness and durability. The 14th Amendment intended to confer citizenship on freed men. It ultimately faltered, prompting enactment of the 15th Amendment banning racial exclusions from voting. However, grandfather clauses and other methods of disenfranchising African Americans largely nullified it in some parts of the South well into the 1960s.

Even the momentous civil rights actions that we collectively recognize as modern landmarks of racial progress fail to match the fundamental and lasting institutional change wrought by E.O. 9981. The Supreme Court’s decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* outlawed racial discrimination in public education, but the nation’s public schools have never fully met the Court’s mandate to desegregate. Even today in schools, neighborhoods, churches and restaurants, there is still a disconnect between the Warren court’s assertion and the lived reality of racially-divided social spaces.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 that intended to prevent voter suppression and disenfranchisement in places that had historically denied African Americans the right to vote has been under a steady assault almost from the day Lyndon Johnson signed it into law. Modern voter suppression efforts across the country and in parts of the South, in particular, are only the recent examples of the long-standing effort to blunt the impact of this milestone legislation from the civil rights era.

In this context, E.O. 9981 stands as a profound and lasting achievement. Regardless of Truman’s motivations for issuing this directive and the military’s initial resistance to it, no other institution in American life has been as successful or effective in making systemic racial integration work. The military, with its clear hierarchy and commitment to discipline, made racial inclusion a direct order, and it then became a reality for troops. This success revealed how inclusion could become an organizational strength, ultimately establishing an institutional blueprint for other branches of government, organizations and corporations. Though there are still serious racial problems that the nation’s armed forces need to address, it is undeniable that E. O. 9981 effected the kind of broad and sustained change rivaled by few other civil rights actions.

As the nation continues to struggle with problems of racial justice and equality — problems starkly illustrated by police shootings of unarmed black citizens and deliberate efforts to purge African Americans from voter rolls, for example — reflecting back on E.O. 9981 seems more than timely. Its wholesale transformation of the U.S. military illustrates the potential for institutions to usher in social change. E.O. 9981 should serve as a bright beacon for making equally important improvements with regard to race, justice and equality in other facets of American life. The benefits of basic inclusion are evident, if only those lessons are heeded today.

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(Accessed on 2.9.18 at https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/made-by-history/wp/2017/07/26/how-a-stroke-of-the-pen-changed-the-army-forever/?utm_term=.026fbc4d48b)