

WOL NEWSLETTER

24 March 2023

Way of Life Alumni Group

THE 80'S LADIES



Some of you may be familiar with the first three black male graduates from the class of 1963, but how many of us know the names of the first three black female graduates?

On June 28, 1976, a group of 157 brave and pioneering women joined the Cadet Wing.

Ninety-seven of them would go on to graduate in the Class of 1980. Only three of them were black. Col. (Ret) Gail Colvin, Dr. Gwendolyn Knuckles, and Dr. Beverly Turman-Handy (pictured above) were the first black women to graduate from USAFA. Their achievements inspired and motivated others to follow in their footsteps, and their legacy continues to inspire us today.

63 to Me!



Charles Charles Vernon "Chuck" Bush (AKA BG1), Col. (Ret) Isaac Sanders Payne IV, and Roger Bernard Sims were the first black (male) cadets at the Air Force Academy who graduated in 1963. They were the first of us to sacrifice their college experience to endure a hostile environment some of us have only seen in movies. Since then, we've hailed pilots, astronauts, Rhodes Scholars, ivy leaguers, CEOs, real estate moguls, and so many more. Their legacy of overcoming adversity opened doors for all of us in the Way of Life Alumni Group. That's why we started the campaign "63 To Me." What does "63 to me" mean to you? Send us a 1-2 minute video from now until July 31, expressing your interpretation of the phrase. Or post it on your own feed and tag us! Check out our Facebook page for an example! We can't wait to see your videos!

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The Future is Female

As of January 2023, there are only 21 active duty black female pilots/unmanned pilots in the Air Force including. There are 29 rated black female aviators to include Combat System Officers and Air Battle Managers. Pictured above are 7 of the 21 black female pilots who attended Accelerating the Legacy '23.

From left to right: Andrea Coleman- JSTARS, Thessa Washington- C-130, Jazmind Hill ('14)- KC-135, Chyd Sackey ('18)- KC-135, Nichole Evans- C-17, Rhea McFarland ('17)- C-17, Kelsie Owens ('20) - C-17

HONORING BLACK AVIATORS

From February 15 to 19, 2023, the 89th Airlift Wing's 3rd Annual African American Heritage Flight successfully completed their 5-day training mission. Over 40 Airmen participated in the heritage flight. Along they have they visited Texas Southern Univ. and Accelerating the Legacy '23. They delivered Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. CQ Brown, Jr. and his wife, Mrs. Sharene Brown to JB Charleston to deliver opening remarks at the Legacy Dinner banquet, officially starting the BHM event Thursday, Feb. 16



Maj Saj El-Amin '10 and the crews of the 89th Airlift Wing participated in multiple events to honor Black History while inspiring minority youth to pursue aviation.

ACCELERATING THE LEGACY '23 RECAP

From February 16-18, more than 600 Total Force Airmen, U.S. Air Force Academy cadets, and Air Force ROTC cadets attended the three-day Black History Month aviation heritage event, "Accelerating the Legacy" at Joint Base Charleston. The annual event, which honors the legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen, aims to develop today's aviators and empower the next generation of Airmen and aviators. The guests of honor for this year's event were retired Lt. Col. James Harvey, an original Tuskegee Airman, and Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. CQ Brown, Jr. At the "Legacy Dinner," Brown spoke to attendees and discussed the impact of the Tuskegee Airmen on his career and the importance of providing opportunities for all Airmen. Harvey then joined Brown on stage for a fireside chat, where they shared stories and discussed the characteristics that have led to their success. The second day of the event included professional development seminars on career development, diversity and inclusion, and the future of the force, as well as mentorship panels with commanders, command chiefs, and first sergeants.



Capt Nic Young '14 (C-17), Accelerating The Legacy Board President, and Capt Naomi Alston '16 (MQ-9), WOL Alumni Group Vice President, pose with original documented Tuskegee Airman Lt. Col James Harvey.