

WEST POINT
Leadership
PROFILES OF COURAGE

February 1st marks the beginning of Black History Month. The following seven inspirational African-American biographies are excerpts from the new book *"West Point Leadership: Profiles of Courage"* that contains a total of 200 inspirational biographies and 1,600 photos. The first African-American graduate of West Point was Henry O. Flipper, who was born a slave in Thomasville, Georgia and graduated from West Point in 1877. The founder and first commander of the legendary World War II Tuskegee Airmen, the first black fighter pilots, was Benjamin O. Davis, Jr who graduated West Point in 1936. At the time of his graduation, the only other African-American officer in the US Army was his father, Colonel Benjamin O. Davis, Sr. (who would retire as Brigadier General). The first African-American four star General in the US Army was General Roscoe Robinson who graduated from West Point in 1951. The military integrated blacks into previously all-white units in 1947, far ahead of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which finally eliminated segregation in the American South. The first African-American Cadet First Captain was Vincent Brooks, West Point Class of 1980. Vincent Brooks is now a four-star General and the current Commander of US Army Pacific Command (USAPAC). The first African-American female graduate was his classmate Pat Locke, who survived the race riots of Detroit while growing up poor in the projects as a little girl, enlisted in the Army and then became the first African-American female to graduate from West Point. A few years after Vincent Brooks and Pat Locke graduated; the first African-American general officer was assigned to West Point when Fred Gordon, Class of 1962, was named the Commandant of Cadets at West Point. The first African-American to command an entire theater of war was General Lloyd Austin, Class of 1975, who commanded the Iraq War and who coincidentally, like Henry O. Flipper, hails from Thomasville, Georgia. General Austin is currently the Commander of US Central Command (CENTCOM) and his area of responsibility includes many of the hot spots of the world: Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Pakistan and Iran to name a few.

It is appropriate tomorrow on the first day of Black History Month, to celebrate these inspirational African-American leaders, who have led, and continue to lead our great nation. The book *"West Point Leadership: Profiles of Courage"* is a great gift for anyone interested in leadership, Army and military history, and the perfect gift to honor Black History Month.



Henry O. Flipper

USMA 1877

- Born a Slave in Georgia
- First African-American Graduate of West Point
- First African-American Officer in the U.S. Army
- Served with 10th Cavalry (Buffalo soldiers) in the Indian Wars
- Assistant to the Secretary of the Interior

Henry O. Flipper is now a celebrated icon at West Point as the first African-American graduate. But the roller coaster life he lived was far from glamorous; it was fraught with challenges, racism, discrimination, and scandal. But it was also a life of achievement, pride, and success. In hindsight, he was a heroic leader who broke down racial barriers. Yet, he died having been found guilty of “conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman.” Although he fought for more than half a century to clear his name while he was alive, he was unsuccessful in doing so. However, ever resilient, even in death he overcame adversity; more than a century later, after being found guilty of his charge, he was posthumously pardoned by President Clinton in 1999 and is now a heroic icon of West Point history.

Born as a slave in Georgia on March 21, 1826, Flipper was schooled in another slave’s home until he started attending missionary school at age 8. After President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, slaves in the North were freed, but in the South, Flipper remained a slave until 1865. In 1869, he was one of the first to attend the newly founded Atlanta University, and the fourth black cadet to enter West Point (on July 1, 1873). The first three did not graduate, and the challenges he faced as the sole black cadet would be daunting. He faced incredible prejudice in an Academy still divided between North and South working toward post–Civil War reconciliation after a war that was in part fought over the slavery issue. Despite West Point’s efforts to integrate blacks into the Academy, the United States was still a society where segregation was the law and blacks did not have full privileges of an American citizen. There

was still an atmosphere of prejudice at the Academy, and Flipper was silenced by many of his classmates who refused to speak with a black cadet. Despite the challenging environment, in 1877, he graduated 50th in his class of 76 cadets and was commissioned as an officer – the first black officer in the United States Army.

He fulfilled his personal dream when he was assigned as a Second Lieutenant in Troop A of the 10th Cavalry assigned to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, leading black soldiers in one of two Cavalry Regiments called “Buffalo Soldiers.” In 1879, he was in temporary command of Troop G as Acting Commander. While at Fort Sill, he was responsible for designing and building a ditch to resolve a drainage problem that was causing a malaria outbreak from stagnant water. The engineering project was so successful, the ditch he designed and built bore his name and was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1977 as “Flipper’s Ditch.”

In May 1880, his unit was assigned to Fort Concho, Texas, in pursuit of the Apache Chief Victorio. In the spring of 1881, Flipper was acting as quartermaster when an event occurred that would change his life. The details of the events still remain unclear even years later. Money was missing from commissary funds, which Flipper discovered and was personally investigating. His new commander had created a challenging and racially charged climate as Lieutenant Flipper was the only black officer in the Army at the time. While investigating the whereabouts of the funds, Flipper lied to his commander in order to buy more time to discover the reason for the loss or the whereabouts of the funds. He was court-martialed for embezzlement and “conduct unbecoming of an officer.” The embezzlement charge was dropped for a lack of evidence, but he was still discharged from the Army for having lied to his commander. He was the first officer in the history of the Army to be charged with conduct unbecoming.

He spent the rest of his life trying to clear his name, although all of his efforts were unsuccessful. He owned his own company for a short time, worked as a translator for the Senate and a special assistant for the Justice Department. He died at age 84, in 1940, never knowing that his name would one day be cleared. During the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, his records were reviewed, and the Army officially evaluated his case in 1976. The evaluation determined that although Flipper had lied, the dismissal was too severe, and he was given an honorable discharge effective June 30, 1882. In 1999, President Clinton pardoned Flipper, restoring his name to the honorable status well earned by an American hero who blazed a trail in history to help end discrimination and reduce racism after the American Civil War.

Even though West Point and the Army were far ahead of society in integrating African-Americans at that time, it was still a very discriminatory and racially charged environment. It is hard to imagine the struggles, racism, and discrimination that Flipper overcame to graduate from West Point in 1877. Every year, on the date of his birth, March 21st, all cadets celebrate “Henry O. Flipper Day.” His bust is displayed in West Point’s Jefferson Library in the Haig Room, deservedly beside other iconic statues and busts of West Point legends: Eisenhower, MacArthur, Bradley, Pershing, Patton, and Schwarzkopf. He is remembered as an American hero, who helped break down racial barriers.



General Benjamin O. Davis, USAF
USMA 1936

- Commissioned as an Infantry Officer Because the Air Corps Did Not Accept African-Americans
- First Assignment was 24th Infantry Regiment (Buffalo soldiers)
- First African-American General Officer and First African-American Four-Star U.S. Air Force General
- First African-American Military Pilot
- Founder and Commander, the 332nd Fighter Group (Tuskegee Airmen)
- Commander, 51st Fighter Wing Korean War
- Commander, 13th U.S. Air Force

General Benjamin O. Davis is an icon in American history. He attended West Point and graduated at a time when black Americans still endured segregation and discrimination. Despite overwhelming odds against him, he rose to the greatest heights in his fighter plane, his career, and his personal life. He was a trailblazer and a great American hero, who not only helped win our nation's wars, but helped eliminate discrimination and segregation in America. He was the first General Officer in the United States Air Force.

He was the second child born on December 18, 1912, to career Army Officer Benjamin O. Davis, Sr., and his wife, Elnora. Sadly, Elnora died in 1916 giving birth to their third child. His father served as a black Cavalry Officer from 1889 to 1948. His father was the first black General Officer in the United States Army when he was promoted to Brigadier General in October 1940, just prior to World War II.

Davis, Jr., flew as a passenger in a barnstormer in 1926 and fell in love with flight. He was convinced he needed to learn to fly, so he attended West Point in 1932. As a black cadet, he was shunned, roomed alone, and had very little interaction with his classmates. He applied to flight school but was rejected – simply because he was black. There were

no black pilots in 1936 and no black-only units. Instead, he was commissioned in the Infantry and assigned to an all-black unit in Fort Benning, Georgia. He later was assigned to be a Military Tactics Instructor at Tuskegee, Alabama.

Blacks suffered even in the Army under segregation and could not serve in the majority of positions. The administration of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt was under pressure to include blacks in the mobilization of forces in preparation for World War II. A decision was made to create an all-black flying unit, and Captain Davis was assigned to the first class of student pilots. In March 1942, he became the first black military pilot to receive his wings. He was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and given command of the first black pursuit squadron – the 99th Pursuit Squadron.

The 99th Pursuit Squadron first saw action in Operation Torch in the invasion of North Africa in November 1942. They participated in the invasion of Sicily in 1943. Davis was given command of the 332nd Fighter Group being formed in the United States. He returned to the United States to take command and found that opponents, who had political agendas to eliminate all-black units, were lobbying to have his 99th Pursuit Squadron deactivated. Lieutenant Davis fought this decision vigorously and appeared before an inquiry formed by General George C. Marshall, the Chief of Staff of the Army. Meanwhile, the 99th continued to serve in combat and shot down 12 enemy planes over the first two days of the invasion of Anzio.

Lieutenant Davis returned to combat leading the 332nd Fighter Group out of a base in Italy. They escorted bombers on long-range missions into the heart of Germany flying P-47s. Davis was promoted to Colonel in September 1944. While he was serving in Italy as a Colonel, his father was also serving in European theater as a Brigadier General – making their father-son team the two top-ranking black officers in the European Theater.

Davis himself flew many missions in both P-47s and P-51s. He was awarded the Silver Star and the Distinguished Flying Cross for missions over Austria and German. The United States Air Force was formed in 1947 and Colonel Davis's commission was transferred from the Army Air Corps to the United States Air Force. In July 1948, President Truman signed an executive order to integrate blacks into the Armed Forces. This was far ahead of the American public, which maintained segregation for the next 16 years.

In 1953, Colonel Davis was given command of the 51st Fighter Squadron in Korea, where he saw combat again leading a squadron of F-86's in the modern jet fighter age. He returned from Korea and became the first General Officer in the United States Air Force when he was promoted to Brigadier General, the same rank his father had held before him as the first black Army General Officer. For the next 16 years, he served in a variety of positions in the United States and overseas. He was promoted to Major General in 1959 (another first). In 1964, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Davis was promoted to Lieutenant General in 1965 (another first). Much of this success was the result of trailblazers like Henry O. Flipper and his father. Davis and others, like Roscoe Robinson, helped take the baton from former trailblazers and took it to the next level.

He retired in 1970, after the military had been fully integrated in the 1940s and the 1960s had brought about integration into the American public. On December 9, 1998, President Clinton promoted Lieutenant Davis to Four-Star General and pinned on his fourth star. He headed the Federal Air Marshal program and then the Battle Monuments Commission. He

served as an Assistant Secretary of Transportation and helped implement the 55-miles-per-hour speed limit, well below that of his P-51 that he had flown decades before.

He served a total of 34 years in uniform but will be forever remembered for his wartime exploits in World War II as the Commander of the Tuskegee Airmen – the all-black fight squadron with the red tails. He was the first African-American to solo in a military aircraft and to become General Officer in the United States Air Force. He personally helped to bring about the policies that brought down discrimination.

Over the years, the Tuskegee Airmen have come to symbolize all the tragedy, obstacles, and success of African-Americans overcoming the greatest odds to fight for a country that didn't give them full rights. All the Tuskegee Airmen are heroes and Davis was their heroic leader. Hollywood made a film called *The Tuskegee Airmen*, in which Davis was portrayed by Andre Braugher in the 1995.

General Davis died on the July 4, 2002, the year of the West Point Bicentennial. President Bill Clinton, who had pinned on his fourth star only four years earlier, attended the funeral and stated that *“General Davis is here today as living proof that a person can overcome adversity and discrimination, achieve great things, turn skeptics into believers, and through example and perseverance, one person can bring truly extraordinary change.”* A single red-tailed P-51 flew over Arlington National Cemetery to honor the fallen soldier and the first African-American Air Force General.



General Roscoe Robinson, Jr.

USMA 1951

- First African-American Army Four-Star General
- U.S. Representative to NATO Committee
- Commanding General U.S. Army Japan/IX Corps
- First African-American Commander, 82nd Airborne Division
- Commander, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, Vietnam War
- Rifle Company Commander, 7th Infantry Division, Korean War
- Silver Star (two), Combat Infantryman Badge

Roscoe Robinson was the first African-American Four-Star General in the history of the United States Army. He was born in St. Louis, Missouri, on October 11, 1928, during segregation. He was a trailblazer, a leader, and an inspiration to the soldiers who followed him in combat – especially the generations of African-Americans who came after him. He had significant command time in combat as both a Company Commander in Korea and later as a Battalion Commander Vietnam. He was renowned to his classmates, soldiers, and NCOs as being a great leader who people loved and followed.

During the early years of World War II, while in the Boy Scouts, Robinson developed a clear sense of patriotism, readily participating in such home-front efforts as collecting aluminum cans for recycling as part of the war effort. He entered Charles Sumner High School, the first high school for blacks west of the Mississippi River, in 1942. He graduated from high school on January 21, 1946, as salutatorian, the second-highest academically ranked student in his class and class

president. Determined to proceed with his academic career, Robinson enrolled for one semester in the all-black Stowe College. Then, in the summer of 1946, he was accepted to Saint Louis University.

Entering Saint Louis University was a historic event, as it was only two years after the Jesuit institution became the first school on any level in Saint Louis to admit African-American students. With racial integration at Saint Louis University still in its infancy, Robinson entered the school as an undergraduate with the intent of pursuing a degree in industrial engineering. Then, in his second semester, Robinson received a telephone call Principal George Dennis Brantley of Sumner High School, informing him that Brantley planned to nominate him to the United States Military Academy at West Point.

Having watched Robinson's development as a young man, when the families were neighbors, and having observed his outstanding performance as a scholar and leader at Sumner, Brantley was convinced that Robinson would be successful at the Academy. After some rigorous physical and academic tests, Robinson was selected over another local candidate. He began an academic career that would lay the foundation for his eventual prominence as a military hero.

In the summer of 1947, Robinson entered the United States Military Academy at West Point, where he was one of a small number of African-Americans admitted. Robinson took away many things from West Point: a first-rate education (graduating with a bachelor's of science in engineering), leadership skills, a love for athletics, a deep respect for the Academy, and the lifelong camaraderie of his classmates. His graduating class also included four other African-Americans, which, at that time, was the largest number of African-American cadets ever to graduate from the Academy.

He graduated with the Class of 1951 and was commissioned in the Infantry. He went on to lead every size unit from a Platoon to an Army. His first assignment was with the 11th Airborne Division as a Platoon Leader. He saw his first combat in 1952, as a Rifle Company Commander with the 7th Infantry Division in the Korean War, where he was awarded the Bronze Star. Robinson returned to the United States, became an instructor at Airborne School, then served a year in Africa as a military liaison with the United States mission in Liberia.

He attended D.C.'s National War College and then received his master's in international relations from the University of Pittsburgh. In 1968, Robinson again commanded in combat, this time as a Battalion Commander for the 27th Cavalry in Vietnam, where he excelled in a time of significant and intense combat operations during the peak of war. He received two Silver Stars and a Distinguished Flying Cross for his leadership under fire. He then served in Vietnam on the staff of the 1st Cavalry Division.

After leaving Vietnam, he became the Executive Officer to Commander in Chief, Pacific Command (CINCPAC) in Hawaii and then went to Fort Bragg in North Carolina as a Brigade Commander with the 82nd Airborne Division. He returned to the Pacific as the Commander of United States Army Forces in Okinawa before deploying back to Fort Bragg. In 1976, he became Commanding General of his beloved and famed 82nd Airborne Division. His final command was back to the Pacific at Camp Zama, Japan, where he was the Commander of United States Army Japan and IX Corps. His final assignment in the Army was in Europe as a Four-Star General where he served as the United States Military Representative to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

He married Mildred Sims in 1952 at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. They had two children, Bruce and Carol, who had three and two children of their own, respectively. Bruce served as an officer in the Army.

After retiring from the Army in 1986, Robinson served on several corporate boards, including Northwest Airlines and was a trustee for the West Point Association of Graduates. He was asked to sit on several committees for the Department of the Army, in order to take advantage of his talents and experience. He then went to battle again, one last time, this time with leukemia.

In May 1993, General Robinson was awarded the Distinguished Graduate Award from West Point. He had been fighting leukemia for nearly 18 months, receiving the award from a wheelchair, but he stood at straight attention one last time on the Plain at West Point for the playing of the National Anthem. He passed away two months later on July 22, 1993, and was laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery. In April 2000, the South Auditorium at Thayer Hall was named in honor of him as “General Roscoe Robinson, Jr. Auditorium.”

His awards include the Distinguished Service Medal, two Silver Stars, three Legion of Merits, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Bronze Star, and the two Combat Infantryman Badges.

It is impossible to appreciate all the challenges that Roscoe Robinson overcame as an African-American growing up in America under segregation. But he took it all in stride, always with a smile on his face and a positive attitude, and considered himself to be very fortunate. The United States Army is fortunate to have had a leader of such character who helped break down racial barriers and led soldiers of all races, color, and religions. In peacetime and under fire in combat, he proved he was a leader worthy of following.



Major General Frederick A. Gorden

USMA 1962

- First African-American Commandant of Cadets at West Point
- Army Chief of Public Affairs
- Commanding General, 25th Infantry Division (Light)
- Commander, 7th Infantry Division (Light) Artillery
- Commander, 1st Battalion, 8th Field Artillery Regiment
- Master's of Arts, Middlebury College
- West Point Assistant Professor Department of Foreign Languages
- Army Plebe Basketball; Army Men's B-Squad Cross-country (three); Army Men's Track and Field Letterman (four)

In 1987, President Ronald Reagan spoke at West Point:

"The only black cadet in his class, today General Gorden has come back to West Point as Commandant, setting an example for you, and indeed for all young Americans, of what hard work and devotion to duty can achieve. These last two names I mentioned, General Gorden and General MacArthur, call to mind a special moment in the history of this Academy. For it was 25 years ago that General of the Army Douglas MacArthur stood in this spot and addressed the cadets of West Point. And General Gorden, at the time Cadet Gorden, was sitting where you are today. It was a moment Cadet Gorden would never forget. Just days from graduation, he looked around this mess hall and saw war-hardened officers moved to tears by the power of MacArthur's words: 'The Long Gray Line has never failed us.' He said, 'Were you to do so, a million ghosts would rise from their white crosses, thundering those magic words: Duty, Honor, Country.'"

Fred Gorden was born on February 22, 1940, at the end of the Great Depression and was raised in Atlanta, Georgia,

while the South was still racially segregated. His mother, Mary Ethel, had four children, but since her oldest sister, Gertrude, had no children after eight years of marriage, they agreed on a unique arrangement to have the sister raise the fourth child. Thus Gorden was raised by his Aunt Gert and Uncle Bo – whose given name, Augustus, was also Gorden’s middle name – just one street over from his biological parents and his siblings. In the fifth grade, his aunt and uncle’s marriage broke up, and she moved from Atlanta to Michigan with Gorden following her shortly after the move. After graduating from high school, he attended a year of junior college and knew little about West Point other than the popular weekly television show during the 1950s called *The West Point Story*. Recommended by officials of his high school, Gorden was approached by a local lawyer who was recruiting for West Point. He recommended Gorden to their Congressman as having the competitive potential to attend the Academy. In late May 1958, he went to West Point by bus at his own expense and took the various medical, physical, and college board entrance exams. In mid-June, he received a telegram saying, in essence, “Congratulations you are my appointee to West Point, you need to be there the 1st of July.” Attending junior college on scholarship and facing financial uncertainty about being able to pursue studies at Wayne State University as an architectural engineer, Gorden saw the paid high-quality education as an amazing opportunity but knew little about West Point or the Army and the direction his entire life had just taken.

On his first day at West Point, after going through some traditional hazing learning how to report to upper-class cadets, he found himself in his room looking out over North Area watching other new cadets undergo what he had just experienced and wondering what he had gotten himself into. He remembers also looking at the upper-class cadets and realizing that they too had undergone the same indoctrinating experiences themselves just a year or so earlier. He found strength in knowing that others had gone before him, both white and black cadets. He soon discovered that his Platoon Sergeant Wilbourne Kelley III (USMA 1959) was an African-American, also from Michigan, and another upperclassman nearby was Ira Dorsey (USMA 1960). For a while, Gorden thought he was the only African-American cadet in his class but found that there was one other, Sinclair Parks, when classes started in the fall. Parks, unfortunately, left after first semester, leaving Gorden as the only African-American in a class of more than 800 cadets.

As a Plebe, he found humor in the fact that he received his draft notice while wearing a uniform. Despite the challenges of being a cadet, he found solace in sports and clubs. He played basketball as a Plebe and lettered on the track team as a high jumper, triple jumper, and occasionally long jumping. He joined the cadet choir and glee club, which often allowed him to leave the Academy on additional trips. As a first classman and senior black cadet in the Corps, he often represented the Academy before African-American audiences honoring such predecessor black Academy graduates as Henry Flipper and Charles Young.

As graduation neared, Gorden’s class lived through several surreal experiences. On May 12, 1962, Cadet Gorden was chosen to be part of the Honor Guard for General MacArthur’s speech when he received the Sylvanus Thayer Award and gave what is now considered one of the greatest speeches in American history that President Reagan later spoke of in 1987. One month later on June 6, 1962, President John F. Kennedy provided the commencement speech for the Class of 1962 and prophetically emphasized the future combat that they would experience in Vietnam:

“This is another type of war, new in its intensity, ancient in its origin – war by guerrillas, subversives, insurgents, assassins, war by ambush instead of by combat; by infiltration, instead of aggression, seeking victory by eroding and

exhausting the enemy instead of engaging him.”

President Kennedy drove that day at West Point in his Lincoln Continental Presidential convertible with Superintendent Major General Westmoreland and tragically, would himself be shot by an assassin only 18 months later in Dallas in that same vehicle.

Languages had always come easy to Gorden, who first studied Latin and then Spanish in high school and at West Point. He soon found his language skills to be extremely beneficial to his career and was considering a foreign area officer career. When he graduated 221 out of his class of 601, he had many choices available to him and he chose Panama, where he was assigned to a battery of the 22nd Field Artillery organic to the 193rd Infantry Brigade. He attended Field Artillery Officer Basic, Airborne, and Ranger Schools before heading to Panama. More than one-third of the soldiers in the unit were of Hispanic origin, mostly from Puerto Rico, who naturally gravitated to assignment locations with native culture influences. Whenever VIPs would visit from Central and South America, Gorden always found himself chosen to escort the Spanish speaking VIPs. His love for light Infantry grew to match his Spanish language facility, and these would become his focus over the next three decades. Light Infantry and language skills were essential in his first assignment and would turn out to be the focus of his 35-year career.

It was during this first tour that he experienced his first international incident when the country became inflamed after an incident inside the Canal Zone at Balboa High School over a flag incident, when an American flag was flown and the Panamanian flag was not flown in accordance with protocol. In January 1964, riots broke out across Panama and protesters attacked and fired on American troops. Gorden, his wife, Marcia, and their eight-month-old daughter were living on the local economy and were trapped and couldn't return to base for several days in a dangerous and volatile situation. The excitement and lively debates of the international stage intrigued him. He and his wife chose to return to the United States via a cruise ship to New York, where he stopped at West Point to get some career counseling en route to the Field Artillery Advanced Course, which would later help him return to West Point as a professor.

The keynote address at his Field Artillery advanced course was General Creighton Abrams, who impressed Gorden greatly. Deployments to Vietnam were increasing as General Westmoreland was rapidly increasing United States troop strength, and Gorden's first choice for assignments upon graduation was Vietnam, where he deployed in 1967. Originally assigned to a headquarters unit, he actively worked to get down to a field artillery battery with troops. He was assigned to the 320th Field Artillery, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, with the brigade in Vietnam operating separate from the division back at Fort Campbell at the time. He was First Battalion Assistant S-3 Fire Direction Officer, then Liaison (fire support) Officer with two Infantry battalions and then worked his way down to a battery command. It was in this role as a Battery Commander that he was awarded the Bronze Star for Valor for his battery defense performance during a mortar, recoilless rifle and small arms attack.

The trip to West Point to get career counseling prior to deploying to Vietnam paid off. For his follow-on assignment after leaving Vietnam, he was selected to teach at West Point in the language department, and the Army sent him to Middlebury College in Vermont to receive his master's degree in Spanish language, literature, and civilization, which included an immersion in Spain for a year. Back at West Point, the Gordens enjoyed being with cadets and opened their

home to cadets, their dates, and other guests, especially those on the track team for which Gorden served as Officer Representative.

After three years at West Point, staff college, a Field Artillery Branch assignment, and with the Vietnam War ended, Major Gorden deployed for a one-year hardship tour in Korea, where he served as Battalion Executive Officer. Promoted to Lieutenant Colonel, he was made Special Assistant to the Division Artillery Commander after a short time as the Interim Battalion Commander. After Korea, he transferred intra-theater to Hawaii to the 25th Infantry Division (Light) under Major General Willard Scott and was assigned as the Division Artillery Operations Officer (S-3) and later as a Battalion Commander. With the end of the war in Vietnam also came steep force reductions, the end of the draft, and the beginning of the all-volunteer Army in 1973. Among the many leadership challenges, Gorden recalls, were those related to manpower shortfalls in both quantity and quality. It was also a period during which a swirl of anti-war sentiment embroiled the country. Frustrations among Junior Officers were high as the Army non-commissioned officer corps underwent rebuilding, thus presenting formidable challenges to keeping them in uniform. Often recalled as the “Hollow Army,” Gorden recalls the period as being the most resource-constrained, readiness-imperiled environment of any during his service. Still, he relished the responsibility of assuring that he and his soldiers would live up to the reputation gained during Korea as the “automatic eighth” if called to do so.

In 1980, Lieutenant Colonel Gorden was assigned to the Pentagon in the Office of Legislative Affairs, where he had the unique perspective to see the legislative branch working with the military during the Reagan years as the Army turned the corner and rebuilt after the Hollow Army years.

During the Reagan build-up, a new emphasis was put on light Infantry Divisions after Chief of Staff John Wickham drafted a new strategy to build light divisions to confront low-intensity conflicts. Gorden was promoted to Colonel and charged with building the new Division Artillery for the newly configured 7th Infantry Division (Light) out of Fort Ord, in Monterey, California. This role required his leadership and strategic perspective as the role of artillery in the new light divisions was highly debated, which would dictate the mobility of the entire division. The artillery force development community wanted heavy artillery, while Gorden believed mobility and the need to be “light” were key to rapid deployability. In the end, the Chief of Staff of the Army approved equipping light division artillery battalions with 105-mm artillery versus 155-mm heavy artillery, thus setting the precedent that would be followed by the 7th, 10th, and 25th light Infantry Divisions for the next three decades. Promoted to Brigadier General after his successful command, his career was again influenced by his language skills when he was assigned as Director of the Inter-American Region, International Security Affairs, Department of Defense. This was followed by another short assignment in Monterey at the 7th Infantry Division as Assistant Division Commander for eight months.

His former commander, now–Lieutenant General Willard Scott had become the Superintendent of West Point in 1984, and was a fellow Redleg and mentor. He supported the nomination of Brigadier General Gorden as a potential Commandant of Cadets. In 1987, endorsed by then–Superintendent Lieutenant General Dave Palmer, Brigadier General Fred Gorden was selected as the 61st Commandant of Cadets, and the first African-American Commandant of Cadets. In fact, he was also the first African-American General Officer ever assigned to West Point, and also the first African-American assigned to Foreign Languages – neither of which he realized at the time. These significant milestones and

accomplishments notwithstanding, his main focus was on leading all of the 4,400 cadets and the officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers of West Point, regardless of color. In doing so, his leadership also gave inspiration to others who would follow and who, as new Cadet Gorden had years earlier, rationalized to themselves: “If someone else has done this before me, I can do it too,” thereby giving themselves the confidence to overcome challenges and strive for success.

Having been born during the Depression and raised in the segregated South, Gorden helped break racial barriers as a leader in the Army. As the commandant of Cadets, he helped break down gender barriers by selecting Kristin Baker as the First Cadet Brigade Commander or First Captain of the Class of 1990. At the graduation of 1990, the commencement address was testimony to how far the Army had come in both racial and gender equality in a full meritocracy. General Colin Powell, the first African-American Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, presented Kristin Baker her diploma and delivered the commencement. Just a few months earlier, Gorden had been promoted to Two-Star Major General and headed off to Hawaii to take command of the 25th Infantry Division (Light). It was in this role leading assigned and attached non-divisional soldiers operating across the Pacific theater that brought all of Gorden’s skills together. He loved light Infantry and the 25th was the most internationally deployed division of all light Infantry Divisions working with the militaries of all our Pacific allies, such as Korea, Japan, Thailand, Australia, Philippines, and others in that vast region.

His last assignments were in Washington, D.C. As Commanding General, Military District of Washington, he was frequently the Ranking Officer responsible for escorting dignitaries. He escorted the Nixon family to the funeral of President Nixon. He escorted South African President Nelson Mandela to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery. When President Clinton found that the former commander of the Tuskegee Airmen Lieutenant General Benjamin O. Davis (USMA 1936) had not been promoted to full General no doubt due to matters of race, he promoted him in 1996, 30 years after he had retired. Major General Gorden escorted General Davis to the ceremony, and they became close friends until his death in 2002. While we celebrate many of these pioneers, it is often hard to imagine the challenges they faced at the time. General Davis described to Gorden, as he also does in his autobiography, that he had not returned to West Point from 1936 until 1987, the painful memories of being ostracized for four years at West Point as the fourth African-American graduate made returning to West Point undesirable. Major General Gorden closed his career in 1996, retiring as Army Chief of Public Affairs.

Gorden found inspiration from others that motivated him to himself be a pioneer, breaking down barriers and leading men and women in a variety of roles around the world. Many others would follow his leadership, including one of the Tactical Officers whom Gorden led as Commandant – then-Major Lloyd Austin would rise to Four-Star General and command the war in Iraq and the serve as the first African-American Vice Chief of Staff of the Army and then Central Command Commander (CENTCOM). The institutions of America had changed significantly since Gorden was born during the Great Depression and raised in a segregated South. The American military had led much of that progress with pioneers, such as Gorden bravely pushing the limits to ensure fealty to America’s creed that “all men are created equal.”



General Lloyd Austin III

USMA 1975

- Commander, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM)
- Vice Chief of Staff, U.S. Army (VCSA)
- Commanding General, Iraq War
- Commanding General, XVIII Corps
- Commanding General, 10th Mountain Division (Light)
- Silver Star Recipient

General Lloyd Austin is the Commander of United States Central Command (CENTCOM) and one of the foremost Combat Commanders of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts. General Austin has been a proven leader throughout his life and career in the United States Army. He has also been a trailblazer, achieving a number of “firsts” to include becoming the first African-American Vice Chief of Staff of the Army (VCSA), as well as the first African-American General Officer in history to command an entire theater of war.

General Austin was born in Mobile, Alabama, and raised in Thomasville, Georgia. He was just 11 years old when the Civil Rights Act of 1964 banned segregation. Seven years later, he entered the United States Military Academy at West Point as a Plebe, 94 years after the first African-American graduate, Henry O. Flipper, also a native of Thomasville, Georgia, received his diploma and commission as an officer in the United States Army.

Austin joined the military, in part, because he was inspired by uncles, cousins, and other relatives who also served. Some of them fought in Vietnam, and they would come home from training or yearlong tours overseas, and he looked up to them and admired them and he wanted to follow in their footsteps. While a cadet at West Point, Austin played rugby and was also a triple jumper on the track team.

After graduating in 1975, Second Lieutenant Austin was commissioned in the Infantry. He completed Airborne and Ranger Schools before heading to Germany and his initial assignment with the 3rd Infantry Division (Mechanized) as a Rifle Platoon Leader and later as a Scout Platoon Leader in 1st Battalion, 7th Infantry.

Austin spent much of his career assigned to the 10th Mountain Division (Light). Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, where he commanded at the Company, Battalion, Brigade, and Division levels. He also served as the 10th Mountain Division (Light) Division's Operations Officer in G3. He earned two master's degrees: one from Auburn University in education and the other from Webster University in business management. He is also a graduate of the Army War College. After completing his studies at Auburn, Austin was assigned to West Point, where he served as a Company Tactical Officer.

Brigadier General Austin was serving as the Assistant Division Commander for Maneuver for the 3rd Infantry Division (Mechanized) at Fort Stewart, Georgia, on September 11, 2001, a position he held for the next 21 months. As the ADC(M), he played a key role in the planning effort in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He ultimately helped spearhead the division's invasion of Iraq in March of 2003. In doing so, he became the first African-American to lead a division-size element into war. The assault into Baghdad was, as expected, a bloody battle. Austin was awarded the Silver Star, our nation's third-highest award for valor as a result of his actions during the invasion. In part, his award citation reads, "[Brigadier General Austin] continually placed himself and the division tactical operations center at the key point of the battle to provide command and control to the division on a fast-paced and violent battlefield. [His] gallantry in combat and relentless determination to defeat the enemy reflect great credit upon himself, the 3rd Infantry Division, and the United States Army."

After the invasion and liberation of Iraq, Austin was promoted to Major General and he subsequently took command of the 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry), with duty as Commander, Combined Joint Task Force-180, Operation Enduring Freedom, Afghanistan. He is one of few General Officers to command in both Iraq and Afghanistan, and he is the first African-American to serve as a United States Army Division Commander in combat. During that deployment, General Austin worked tirelessly to help bring stability to the country of Afghanistan, and he oversaw efforts to develop the Afghan military and police forces.

Austin next served as Chief of Staff for General Abizaid (USMA 1973) at United States Central Command in Tampa, Florida. More than three decades earlier, then-Cadet Abizaid had been Austin's squad leader in Company G-1 at West Point. On December 8, 2006, Austin was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant General, and he assumed command of the XVIII Airborne Corps at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Then, in February of 2008, he became the second-highest-ranking commander in Iraq, taking command of Multi-National Corps-Iraq (MNC-I), replacing Lieutenant General Raymond Odierno (USMA 1976). General Austin, in so doing, became the first African-American General Officer ever to command a Corps in combat. As Commander of MNC-I, Austin directed the operations of approximately 160,000 joint and Coalition Forces from more than 20 countries. He did so during a tumultuous period that included Prime Minister Nuri Kamal el-Maliki's push to wrest control of the key port city of Basra from Sadrist militias, a unilateral operation mounted by the Iraqi Security Forces.

However, early on the offensive stalled when Iraqi forces faced heavy resistance from the Mahdi Army inside the city of Basra. The Iraqi forces were under significant duress, Iraqi senior leaders to include Prime Minister Maliki, and the members of his Cabinet were trapped in an increasingly precarious situation in the heart of Basra. Seeing an opportunity, General Austin made the decision to maneuver forces to support them on the ground. In the end, this joint U.S.-Iraqi endeavor, referred to as the “Charge of the Knights,” stabilized previously contested parts of Iraq and enabled Maliki to garner much-needed political support for his newly established, democratically elected government.

As Commander of MNC-I, then—Lieutenant General Austin led positive change in Iraq while effectively expanding partnering efforts with the Iraqi forces. Over the course of 18 months, United States and Coalition Forces severely weakened militias and insurgents throughout Iraq, capitalizing on the gains achieved through the surge in forces. This ultimately relieved pressure on the Iraqi government, thus enabling Maliki the opportunity to build capacity and strengthen key institutions.

In August of 2009, Austin relinquished command of XVIII Airborne Corps, and he assumed the position as Director of the Joint Staff at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. Then, in September of 2010, he was promoted to the rank of General, becoming the Army’s 200th Four-Star General Officer and the sixth African-American in the United States Army to achieve the rank of General. He assumed the position of Commanding General of United States Forces Iraq (USF-I), likewise becoming the first African-American in history to command an entire theater of war. In doing so, he joined a very distinguished group of West Point graduates that includes Generals Grant, Pershing, MacArthur, Eisenhower, Ridgeway, Clark, Westmoreland, Abrams, Schwarzkopf, Petraeus, Odierno, and McChrystal.

During that 15-month deployment, General Austin focused efforts necessarily on the continued development of the Iraqi Security Forces while simultaneously coordinating the transition of missions and the retrograde of people and equipment back from theater after nearly a decade of war. It was a herculean effort, historic in scale and well executed by United States forces in a remarkably short period of time. The overall effort required the transfer of hundreds of bases and infrastructure to the Iraqis and the removal of thousands of troops and millions of pieces of equipment from Iraq. At the same time, United States forces continued to defend against attacks by a hostile enemy determined to hinder progress.

On December 15, 2011, General Austin, together with Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta and General Martin E. Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, led a flag casing ceremony at the former Sather Air Base in Baghdad marking the end of Operation New Dawn and thus the end of the United States military mission in Iraq. General Austin’s efforts and the efforts of the servicemen and women he led were critical to the success of United States and Coalition forces and the enduring stability, security, and prosperity of Iraq. Together, they set the conditions for a continued strong partnership between the two nations.

On December 18, 2011, General Austin transmitted the final assessment to Secretary of Defense Panetta, General Dempsey, and General Mattis, Commander of United States Central Command, declaring the completion of the transfer of mission to the government of Iraq or United States Mission-Iraq and the successful reposture of all USF-I personnel

and equipment out of Iraq. This message essentially ended Operation New Dawn. In part, it stated, *“Through the commitment and sacrifice of all those who have served in Iraq and the thousands who have made the ultimate sacrifice, Iraq is now a sovereign nation, free from the bonds of tyranny. Iraq has the opportunity to emerge as a secure and self-reliant leader in the region. It is now incumbent upon the people of Iraq to take advantage of this opportunity.”*

In 2003, at the start of the war, General Lloyd J. Austin III was a One-Star General, bravely leading American’s soldiers in the invasion of Iraq. Eight years later, as a Four-Star General, he successfully directed the completion of the mission in Iraq and the full withdrawal of United States forces. You might say he was the first one in and the last one out.

General Austin is married to his bride of 31 years, Charlene.



General Vincent K. Brooks

USMA 1980

- First African- American Cadet First Captain
- Commanded at Company, Battalion, Brigade, Division, Army Levels
- Commander Arcant and 3rd Army
- U.S. Central Command Spokesman during Invasion of Iraq in Operation Iraqi Freedom
- Army Basketball Player
- Commander, U.S. Army Pacific Command

On May 28, 1980, the famous West Point Class of 1980 assembled in Michie Stadium for graduation. That day was a seminal event in the history of the United States Military Academy and was widely publicized for two major reasons. For the first time in history, 62 women were graduating from West Point, and the highest-ranked cadet in the Corps of Cadets, Vincent Brooks, was to be the first African-American First Captain in West Point history. Brooks faced a tremendous amount of media coverage for both his own accomplishments and that of his classmates in this groundbreaking class, and he performed superbly in the public spotlight. Twenty-three years after graduation, the American public would again see Brooks – this time as a One-Star Brigadier General public spokesperson for Central Command during the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, and again, he performed superbly in the public spotlight.

Brooks was born in Anchorage, Alaska, to a military family. His father, Leo Brooks, was an Army Major General who had obtained his commission through ROTC at Virginia State in 1954, and his mother was an educator. Brooks, his older

brother, Leo, and his sister, Marquita, grew up as “military brats” on various military posts around the world. Brooks attended two years of Thomas Jefferson High School in Alexandria, Virginia, before attending Jesuit High School in Carmichael, California, for his junior and senior years. Brooks was recruited to play basketball at West Point by Army Head Coach Mike Krzyzewski (USMA 1969), who would go on to become the winningest coach in NCAA history (including 20 wins at West Point with Cadet Brooks on the team.) Brooks originally wanted to become a doctor, but when his brother entered West Point in 1975 and returned home for Christmas during his Plebe year, Brooks saw the changes that the Military Academy had on his brother and decided to follow him to West Point to become an Army Officer.

The Class of 1980 faced challenges that no other class had faced in the past. One-hundred-and-nineteen women entered with the class on R-Day in 1976 and only 62 would graduate four years later. The challenges faced by the class were unique, adding women was a logistical challenge (adding bathrooms, additional physical classes, etc.), but more importantly required a major cultural change to a previously male-dominated environment. The Class of 1980, both male and female, would be more sensitive to all-minority issues because of the challenges, pressures, and experiences that they all faced in this integration process.

When it came time to pick the Cadet First Captain, Brooks was the natural pick. He had been an Army basketball player, making varsity in his Plebe year. He was very calm under pressure and very popular with his classmates and faculty. Brooks joined the ranks of famous First Captains, including Pershing (1886), MacArthur (1903), Wainwright (1906), Westmoreland (1936), and Dawkins (1959).

African-Americans had been attending West Point for more than 100 years and by 1979 were fully accepted and integrated into the Corps. The first African-Americans to graduate from West Point had been trailblazers who lived lonely lives, often being silenced by their classmates and living alone for their four years, including Henry O. Flipper (USMA 1877), Colonel Charles Young (1889), and General Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. (USMA 1936). By the time the military was integrated in 1947 by President Truman, West Point had already done so many decades prior. Even so, in 1979, when Brooks was named First Captain of the Class of 1980, he still received anonymous hate mail from the public because of the color of his skin (although the amount was far less than expected). By being named First Captain, Brooks helped complete the journey that former slave Henry O. Flipper had started more than 100 years earlier and would forever show Americans that African-Americans could succeed in any capacity at West Point. At the conclusion of the ceremony, Brooks ordered “Class dismissed!” and the class threw their hats in the air and joined the Army as Second Lieutenants.

Upon graduation, Second Lieutenant Brooks was commissioned in the Infantry, graduated from Ranger School (while a cadet) and Airborne School, and chose the 82nd Airborne as his first assignment. He would command at every level from company through Army. All of his commands were forward deployed with two Company Commands in Germany during the Cold War, Battalion Command south of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) in Korea from 1996 to 1998, Brigade Command in 2001 in Kosovo, Division Command as the 1st Infantry Division Commander in Operations Iraqi Freedom and New Dawn in 2010, and Army Command of ARCENT/3rd Army Middle East and Central Asia from 2011 to the present.

Brooks holds many firsts at West Point and in the Army: He was the first African-American First Captain at West Point; he was the leader of the first class at West Point to include women; he is a member of the first family to have three African-American General Officers in two generations (his father was an Army Major General and brother was an Army Brigadier General and former Commandant of Cadets at West Point); in 2002, he was the first member of the Class of 1980 to be promoted to Brigadier General.

The Iraq War lasted for more than eight years, and Brooks was involved from the beginning through the end.

To the public, he was the face of the original invasion as the USCENTCOM Chief Operations Spokesperson in 2003 at the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He was described by one journalist from a major international cable news organization as “the only U.S. government official regularly talking to the international audience...” He then served as Deputy Commanding General of the main effort (Multi-National Division-Baghdad) during the “Surge” from November 2006 to December 2007. In 2010, he served as the United States Commander of the nine Southern Iraq provinces, and, in December 2011, he commanded ARCENT and 3rd Army until 2013 when he was promoted to Four-Star General and took command of the Army Pacific Command.

His wife, Carol, is also from a military family (her father was an Army Colonel). They met while their parents were both stationed at Fort Lee, Virginia, in 1980, while Brooks was a new Second Lieutenant on Christmas leave before reporting to his first unit at Fort Bragg a month later. They were married two years later during their first assignment with the 82nd Airborne, Fort Bragg, North Carolina.



Major (Retired) Priscilla “Pat” Walker Locke

USMA 1980

- First African-American Female Graduate of West Point (By Order of Merit)
- Co- Captain Army Women’s Gymnastics Team
- Enlisted in the Army at age 17
- Raised in poverty in the projects of Detroit/ lived through the “Race Riots”

Growing up in the extreme poverty of inner-city Detroit, Priscilla “Pat” Walker Locke was determined to better herself through education and service to the nation. Locke credits her West Point experience and education with “saving her life” by affording her the chance to overcome the challenges of her childhood; and today, she continues to serve as a role model to both women and minorities.

Locke grew up in the projects of Detroit, living in her grandmother’s apartment, which she shared with her mother – who was only 15 when she gave birth to Pat – and many other family members. During Detroit’s 1967 race riots, Locke, who was 10 years old at the time, had her first exposure to the United States Army. Soldiers of the 82nd Airborne Division were deployed there in order to stabilize the city. Locke remembers a young paratrooper who walked her and her friends through the streets of Detroit to ensure that they could travel safely. In 1973, Locke was 17 when she saw a sign in an Army recruiting station that read, “Join the People who’ve joined the Army.” The Sergeant on duty had just closed the station for the evening but allowed her to sleep in the inner foyer until he returned in the morning. That next day, Locke was on a plane headed to basic training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. Incredibly, upon her arrival, she spotted the same Soldier from the 82nd Airborne Division who had helped guide her and her friends safely through the race riots. This once ally and protector of a scared 10-year-old girl, was now an intimidating drill sergeant who was intent on transforming Locke into a professional Soldier. After basic training, Private Walker was assigned to Fort Polk, Louisiana.

In 1975, Congress authorized the admission of women to the service academies for classes entering in 1976. In the wake of this decision, the Army scrambled to find qualified female applicants. Locke was identified as one and joined 19 other

enlisted women to attend the United States Military Academy Preparatory School (USMAPS) at Ft. Monmouth, New Jersey. Of the 20 women entering USMAPs in January 1976, only six entered West Point – Locke was one of them.

On July 7, 1976, the Corps of Cadets received its first-ever female members when 119 women entered as part of the Class of 1980. Lieutenant General Sidney Berry (USMA 1948), the Superintendent at the time, had publicly contemplated resignation over the policy. When women were admitted, he did not in fact resign, but his statements – which he later retracted with regret – had created a command climate that was openly hostile to the incoming females.¹ Some alumni, faculty, and the upper classes acted on that hostility claiming that it was a “disgrace” for women to be at the Academy and that it was ironically their “duty” to run out as many females as possible.² Most of the female cadets had come from middle to upper middle-class backgrounds and had stable families. Other than Joy Dallas, the only other African-American female cadet, Locke initially found that she had little in common with her female classmates.

Despite the challenges of cadet life, Locke understood that her West Point education and experience was the greatest opportunity of her life and she never once thought about quitting. Locke did, however, experience open hostility from a small number of faculty members. In one instance, a paper she prepared and was authorized to submit for two different subjects received a “B” from one professor, while another professor (who had made it evident that he wanted to see her out of the Academy), gave the paper an “F.” Once his intent was publicly identified, her professor retracted the failing grade.

Like Henry O. Flipper, Benjamin O. Davis, Roscoe Robinson, and other pioneering African-American cadets before them, Locke and Dallas were breaking the gender barrier as well. The other 117 female cadets were white women who could at a minimum relate to each other and the vast majority of white male cadets. Locke and her first-semester roommate, Danna Maller, had little in common and did not speak for the first three weeks. Attempting to break the ice, Maller reached out noting she could relate to Locke’s status as a minority since she too was a minority as a Jewish cadet. Locke burst out laughing and the two connected, beginning a friendship that continues to this day.

Always an athlete, Locke became a member of the newly formed women’s gymnastics team and was eventually selected as Co-Captain along with her classmate Kathy Snook. As a Plebe, Locke once found herself alone in a tunnel with an upperclassman who unsuccessfully tried to physically haze her since there were no witnesses. She never reported him, and to this day, Locke believes this to be a “trivial” incident that she and other females had to experience in order to pave the way for other women, and in no way reflects on the values of West Point, which she holds in the absolute highest regard.

Along with the entry of women to the Academy in 1976, West Point also faced a major cheating scandal that same year leading to the dismissal of several members of the Class of 1977. This scandal exacerbated an already hostile, and sometimes toxic environment. In 1977, Berry retired and was followed by LTG Andrew J. Goodpaster (USMA 1939). The highly respected Goodpaster had recently retired as a four star general yet he voluntarily returned to active duty at a lower rank in order to serve as the 51st Superintendent and to help West Point both recover from the cheating scandal and facilitate the integration of women. His selfless leadership was inspirational and directed the Academy through a difficult time.

In 1980, 62 females completed their journey as West Point's first female graduates – among them were Pat Locke and Joy Dallas. Locke's journey was even honored as she was awarded the Key to the City of Detroit. While Andrea Lee Hollen holds the distinction as the first female graduate by order of merit (class rank), Locke is the first African-American female graduate by that same metric. Commissioned into the Air Defense Artillery, a combat arms branch open to women, Locke also selected Fort Bliss, Texas as her first assignment.

While on a field training exercise at Fort Bliss, she met her eventual husband Mike Locke, also an Army officer, and they were married in 1987. Unfortunately, Locke had suffered serious injuries in 1983 when she fell from a building. Her immediate injuries included bilateral detached retinas, which were surgically repaired, and spinal damage, which would manifest its severity over the next several years. It was these longer-term injuries causing damage to her back, neck, and spinal cord, however, which would eventually force her to medically retire as a major-promotable in 1995 with 100% disability. They would not, however, hamper her desire to help those less-fortunate around her.

As her husband rose to the rank of colonel and commanded a brigade, Locke continued to serve the Army family as the head of his unit's family readiness groups and as an Army Family Team Building master trainer. On January 9, 1993, Pat and Mike gave birth to their daughter, Sarah. Eighteen years later, Sarah entered West Point as a member of the Class of 2015, making her the first daughter of an African-American female graduate to attend West Point. As of 2013, more than 372 African-American females have graduated from West Point. Locke's efforts and outreach continue as she actively engages members of under-served and under-represented communities so that one day each of them may also have the same opportunity she did to become leaders of character.

These excerpts are from the best-selling book "*West Point Leadership: Profiles of Courage*" now available on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).