



CIVIL RIGHTS ON DECK



SHAPING YOUR OWN HISTORY: A PATH TO YOUR BEST SELF

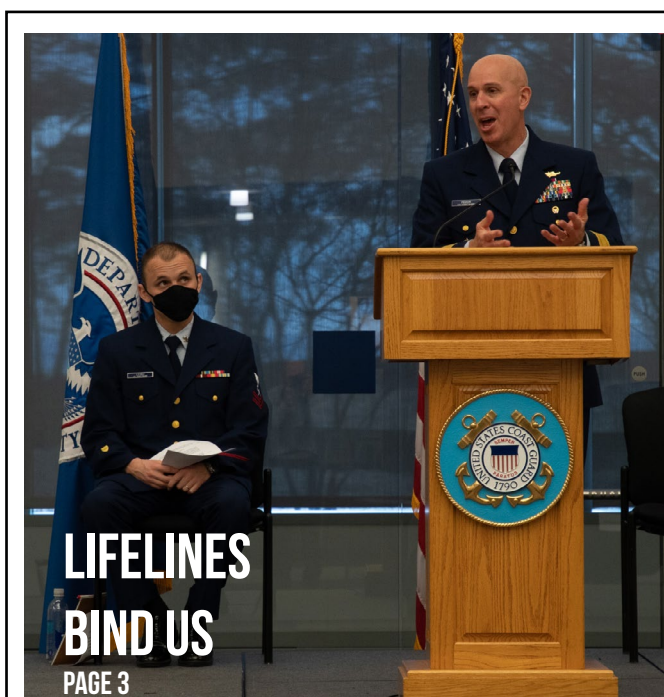
By Patrick Ferraris, Communications Specialist CRD, USCG HQ

“How do we define ourselves?” Army Col. (Ret.) Greg Gadson asked the audience at U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters’ (USCG HQ) Black History Month observance event hosted on a virtual platform. “We should define ourselves as people,” he continued. “As humans that have challenges. That have history.” Gadson is no stranger to defining himself on his own terms, or to sharing his journey and experiences with others. This was his second time speaking to the CGHQ workforce after he visited in 2014. He returned for Black History Month and related his story to the theme of “Black Health and Wellness.” In 2007, Gadson was struck by an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) while deployed in Iraq. During the injury and recovery process, he lost both legs and suffered countless other traumas. “I wanted to give up, I wanted to quit. I couldn’t imagine my life in the state I was in.” Gadson reflected. “I had no blueprint. I had no expectations of what to expect out of life.” The experience tested Gadson’s resolve, but fortified his character. As an important part of his story and personal history, Gadson’s darkest moment allowed him to refocus his commitment to upholding his truest self. “But in all those tears, in all that pity, I really found that wasn’t me. That wasn’t my character. It wasn’t who I was.” Gadson’s story resonates as a reminder that health and wellness mean committing yourself to not only embracing your personal story but helping others to connect with their own histories. “We’re in challenging times... We have to be beacons of light. We have to hold ourselves accountable to being the best that we can be.” His words and experiences demonstrate that our character is defined as much by who we are as by the events and trials that have shaped us. In times of uncertainty and strife, reflecting on individual journeys of character sheds light on how we can learn from our history. “Our history is important, it tells us who we are, it tells us who we can be, it gives us hope of our best and in times it can hearken back to our worst,” Gadson stated. “That’s why it’s important for us to understand and appreciate our history, to learn from it, to grow from it, and to live up to be the best that we can be.” Pictured: Army Col. (Ret.) Greg Gadson. (Photo by Ed Shank.)

COMMAND CHECKLIST RESULTS ARE IN!

Two hundred and seventy-four units completed the Coast Guard’s FY21 Civil Rights Command Checklist, an annual self-assessment required to be completed by locations with 50 or more positions. The result? 92% of these units achieved full compliance with the integration of Equal Employment Opportunity and EO (EEO/EO) principles within their organization. The 92% compliance rate represents an increase over the previous two years; FY19 and FY20 numbers were at 89% and 90% respectively. The tool provides Commanding Officers and Officers in Charge (CO/OICs) with clear and concise requirements for implementation of their Civil Rights programs and ensuring unit compliance with EEO/EO and Civil Rights regulations laws, Executive Orders, and Commandant Instructions. When a CO/OIC completes the checklist, they will answer multiple questions pertaining to performance, protection of Personally Identifiable Information (PII), informational postings and training requirements, general Command support of EEO/EO, and more. Twenty-one units reported one item out of compliance in FY21. No units reported more than one item as non-compliant. Accessibility-related elements are some of the most commonly reported

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RDML Mark Fedor (right) was Executive Champion for CGHQ’s MLK Day celebration. Also pictured is PO2 James Lesko. Full story on page 3.



Pictured: A ZoomText large-print keyboard is an example of assistive technology that provides individuals with a disability the opportunity to complete their duties and succeed. (Photo by Eboni Everson-Myart.)

ACCESSIBILITY THROUGH ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

By Ramon Ayala-Heredia, Regionol Director, Region 2, CRD

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act are laws that require assistive technology be provided as a reasonable accommodation (RA) for employees with disabilities. Assistive technology is defined as any item that helps an individual with a disability perform their job. While a wheelchair is a common example of assistive technology, other examples include adapted computers, speech communication devices, alternative keyboards, screen reading software, and devices with larger buttons. For example, if an employee has a vision-based disability, screen magnification is an assistive technology that would help job performance by enlarging texts or images for easier viewing. Usually, an employer must make a conscious effort to meet the needs of an employee's assistive technology request unless it creates extreme financial difficulties or significantly disrupts how the workplace operates. Requests can be made verbally or in writing

to an employee's first-line supervisor. There are no specific words required and an employee can simply state that they need a specific assistive technology due to a disability. Providing a medical note that describes the disability, how it impacts the employee, and the assistive technology being sought is also helpful. Based on the information provided by the employee and the nature of the workplace, supervisors may offer alternative suggestions for accommodation. One of the most important factors of any provided assistive technology is that it genuinely enables the employee perform the major job tasks of their position. This helps ensure that the employee gets exactly what they need in order to work. Supervisors should consult with their servicing [Civil Rights Service Provider](#) (CRSP) when processing an RA request. Specific details about the RA process can be found in the Civil Rights Manual and the required forms to process an RA request can be found at <https://cglink.uscg.mil/ccf80df4>.



Society of American Indian Government Employees

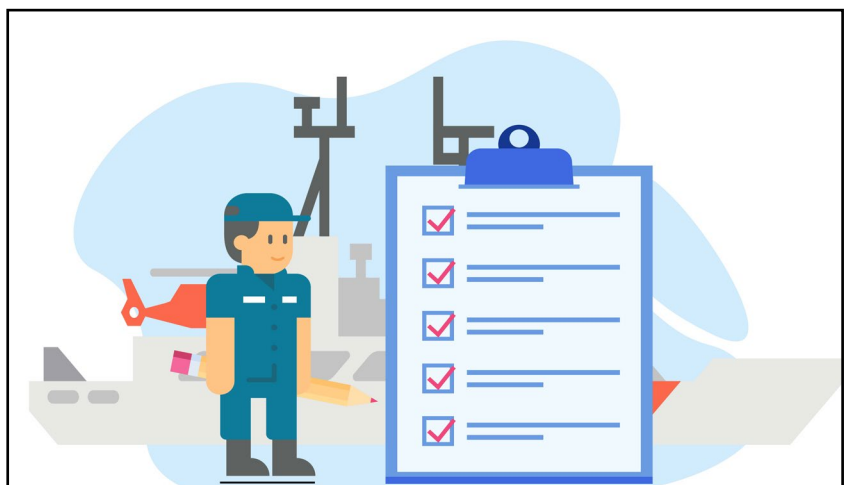
Nominations are now open for the 2022 Society of American Indian Government Employees (SAIGE) Military Meritorious Service Award. Coast Guard service members (active and reserve) and Coast Guard civilian employees who are veterans are eligible for this award. Employees are encouraged to nominate individuals whose actions and attributes have best epitomized the qualities and core values of the Coast Guard. More information about who is eligible and how to nominate them can be found in the [CRD's Award Page](#) and in [ALCOAST 044-22](#). The deadline for submissions is Monday, April 4th.

COMMAND CHECKLIST RESULTS ARE IN!

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non-compliant items, with seventeen units reporting challenges in this area. Accessibility refers to affording individuals with disabilities the same opportunity to access services, technology, or information similarly to a person without a disability in an equally effective manner. Other items reported included pending training fulfillment and completion of the annual Defense Organizational Climate Survey (DEOCS). If a unit has any trouble understanding or meeting the needs of certain items within the checklist, Civil Rights Service Providers are available throughout the year to offer assistance and help units achieve compliance. Implementation of the

Command Checklist ensures the Coast Guard meets the elements of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's (EEOC) Management Directive-715 (MD-715) which is used to establish and maintain effective programs of EEO. Civil Rights tools like the command checklist strengthen the Service's commitment to ensuring a respectful, diverse, and inclusive workforce that is free of discrimination.





Civil Rights Directorate

Dr. Terri Dickerson

Director

CDR Charlene Forgue

Executive Assistant

Mr. James Ellison

Senior Advisor

CDR Alessandra Penswater

Division Chief

Mr. Michael Brenyo

Division Chief

Mr. Eduardo Zayas

Division Chief

Mr. Patrick Ferraris

Communications Specialist

Contact Information

2703 Martin Luther King Jr.
Ave., S.E.
Washington, DC 20593-7000
Phone: (202) 372-4500
Fax: (202) 372-8303

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EMBRACING DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.'S LESSONS THROUGH LIFELINES

By Patrick Ferraris, Communications Specialist CRD, USCG HQ



The total workforce from U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters (USCG HQ) commemorated the life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on Jan. 25, 2022. The holiday, celebrated annually on the third Monday of January, encourages the Nation to reflect on Dr. King's messages and the principle that all men and women are created equal. Rear Adm. Mark Fedor, MLK Day Executive Champion, kicked off the event and tied King's messages about equality, justice, and togetherness to a concept familiar to the Coast Guard: lifelines. "Lifelines are those things on the sides of ships that help prevent people from falling overboard when seas get rough," Fedor said. "King lived in rough times and wrestled with a huge division in the Nation. Instead of being divisive, or taking one side over the other, he created lifelines." Fedor noted that such lifelines were used by King when connecting people so the nation can move forward together. Lifelines can also be created throughout communities through volunteering, public service, and promoting peaceful social change, all of which connect to MLK Day's recurring theme of "A Day On, Not a Day Off." The event's keynote speaker, Ms. Mercedes Chambliss (pictured), Chief of Volunteer Services, New Jersey Veterans Affairs, contributed thoughtful dialogue that kept with the spirit of this volunteering and serving others: "King's ask of service, generosity, and the willingness to do the right thing is something that we can use in our daily lives," Chambliss remarked. "As volunteers coming from different cultures and backgrounds, we learn from each other and we work together collectively with a common goal in mind: to serve others."

READINESS REPORT: CLIMATE SURVEY IMPROVEMENTS ON THE WAY

Beginning this month, the Office of People Analytics (OPA) will launch quality of life improvements to the Defense Organizational Climate Survey (DEOCS) 5.0. The utilization of DEOCS, a confidential management tool that measures climate factors related to readiness, can help commands identify issues of equal opportunity and organization effectiveness and in turn, establish an inclusive workplace. Throughout the year, upgrades will be made to the registration portal, survey access and security, as well as an improved interactive dashboard. [Civil Rights Service Providers](#) (CRSP) are available to provide guidance for DEOCS strategies, administering the survey, interpreting results, or providing assistance with focus groups to further identify command climate concerns. [Watch](#) a "Readiness Report" video that highlights why it's important for service members to complete their unit's climate survey.



RECOGNIZING WOMEN WHO CARRY THE TORCH OF HOPE

By Juan Torres, EEO Program Specialist, CRD, USCG HQ

March is Women's History Month, a time to honor the achievements and contributions of women who shape the Coast Guard and our Nation. This year's theme is "Providing Healing, Promoting Hope" which pays respect to the numerous ways that women have alleviated hurt while sowing aspirations and dreams for the future. It honors caregivers, healers, healthcare professionals, and all women who dedicate their lives to the betterment of others and how their actions promote hope for the future. All personnel are encouraged to participate in events recognizing Women's History Month by organizing programs that highlight the women of our Nation and the Coast Guard. All activities should follow established COVID-19 guidelines for in-person gatherings and use virtual collaboration platforms and tools as necessary.

