

# **Veteran's Legacies: African American Veterans**

## **ABOUT THE PROJECT**

[www.VeteransLegacies.com](http://www.VeteransLegacies.com) is a national database created to collect, preserve and share the stories of military veterans. The online database is accessible to all, providing a personal perspective of those who have served their country. Their stories are told through videos, photos and journaling. In addition to the stories of our WWII veterans, we hope to preserve and share the stories of special populations including the roles of women and minorities on the homefront and overseas for all U.S. military endeavors.

The Mighty Endeavor provides an opportunity for young people, educators, parents, and volunteers of all ages to share in the experience of preserving history. The process will teach and explore methods of researching, interviewing, recording, and documenting history. The work begins with the names of our veterans and then takes one of many paths, depending on the location and status of the individual being researched.

To encourage the timely sharing of the stories of our aging veterans, the Mighty Endeavor engages volunteers, educators and students to conduct research, interview veterans, and upload the interviews images, and biographical information to the database. Through this work, students not only learn about history, but develop a deeper understanding of their own connection to the past while acquiring necessary life skills.

The Veterans' Legacies database exists to collect stories of all veterans, across the country and across the generations. At this time, the database contains 152,000 WWII records, among others. In 2019, we will be uploading an additional 9.2 million records currently in our possession. The tangible result of this work will be a resource that allows the personal and historical exploration of those who serve their country. As important is the respect and understanding fostered through personal connections to these men and women.

## **THE INFORMATION COLLECTED**

We encourage and accept stories, biographies and media from all periods of military history, from a US perspective. All materials collected as part of this project will be uploaded to the Veterans' Legacies website to be stored, shared and preserved for generations to come.

## **Mighty Endeavor for the Classroom**

**Welcome to the Mighty Endeavor! Youth will be finding and interviewing a Veteran and sharing their story on the Veterans' Legacies Website archive.**

To help guide youth in participating in the Mighty Endeavor, follow these simple steps.

The curriculum has all of the resources you need to find a veteran whose story you can share, research the context for their service, conduct an interview, and upload it to the Veteran's Legacies website.

### **Common Core English Language Arts Standards » History/Social Studies » Grade 9-10**

Students who demonstrate an understanding can:

#### **Key Ideas and Details:**

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.3

Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.

#### **Craft and Structure:**

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.5

Analyze how a text uses structure to emphasize key points or advance an explanation or analysis.

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.6

Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

#### **Integration of Knowledge and Ideas**

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.7

Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text.

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.8

Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author's claims.

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.9

Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

#### **Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity:**

##### CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.10

By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 9-10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

**Materials:** The Mighty Endeavor Curriculum, internet access and computers, recording devices such as cameras, phones, tripods for video recording.

**Teacher Tip:**

**Set up:** Look at the Veterans' Legacies Website before beginning the project with youth and familiarize yourself with the simple format for sharing veteran's stories. Consider whether or not you would like to conduct interviews in a classroom setting, or guide students through the steps of finding their own Veterans to interview. Be prepared to contact local Veterans Groups and Organizations in order to introduce the project and find potential participants to share their stories. If you are setting up an interview day with multiple Veterans, create a space in the classroom for each interview to be conducted with enough quiet and space to make your veteran comfortable and create a good sound or video recording. Set up tech and test it before your interviewees arrive, and brief youth about respectful conduct during their interviews.

**Activity Instructions:**

**Step 1. Introduce the Mighty Endeavor and Explore the Website**  
the Curriculum walks you through registration on the Veterans' Legacies Website. Follow the simple instructions to explore the archive of interviews and learn how to create a new bio for the veteran you will interview.

**Step 2. Find a Veteran to Interview**

Youth have the option of interviewing someone they know, or using the resources at the back of the curriculum to contact a veteran's group or organization who can help them make a connection to a Veteran in their community.

**Step 3. Plan**

Discuss as a class how interviews can be conducted for the best results. Where should interviews take place? Make sure that interviews are going to be conducted in a space that is quiet and safe for both interviewers and interviewees. Classroom teachers may choose a day to invite veterans to the school and have youth conduct interviews in small groups, where each youth has an opportunity to ask questions. Once a game plan for conducting interviews has been set, youth can begin step 4.

**4. Research**

Once a Veteran has been scheduled to interview, youth should begin doing research on the specific conflict or time period that your veteran experienced. This research can be done online or at the library, starting with the links, books, and other resources at the back of the curriculum. Having a good sense of context will help students know what to ask and what to expect from their interviews. This research should be documented as they go, with important dates, places, people, and concepts recorded for their final share at the end of the project or for reference right before the interview.

**5. Interview: Conducting your interview.**

Recommended questions are included, along with tips for making a high quality recording. Since some youth will be interviewing a veteran found through a Veterans' Organization or Community Center, they may want to conduct their interviews there as well. Libraries are also wonderful spaces for Veterans' and youth to meet and conduct their interviews.

Youth may also choose to add questions to the interview script. Veterans Legacies is a great opportunity for youth to do their own research and to develop communication skills.

**6. Upload**

Upload the recorded interview as a movie, audio, or written or photographic document. Some of the basic

information will complete the bio. Have youth follow the instructions in the curriculum to upload their materials.

### **7. De-Brief and Share**

Take class time to have a discussion about the experience of conducting the interview. Students will share their research from before the interview, some information about who they interviewed, and some highlights of the project with the class.

### **8. Follow Up**

Students should follow up by sharing the complete archived bio with their Veteran via email, phone call, or letter, with a thank you for sharing their story.

## **A BRIEF HISTORY OF BLACK MILITARY EXPERIENCE IN AMERICA**

African-Americans have fought for the United States throughout its history, defending and serving a country that in turn denied them their basic rights as citizens. Despite policies of racial segregation and discrimination, African-American soldiers played a significant role from the

colonial period to the Korean War. It wasn't until the middle of the 20th century that African-American soldiers began to receive the recognition and equality they deserved.

In the lead up to and during World War II the military establishment continued to maintain that African-Americans soldiers were not as capable as their white counterparts and needed more intensive leadership. Despite the continuing discrimination, more than a million African-Americans volunteered to serve in the Armed Forces in the fight against Hitler.

As the war progressed attitudes began to slowly change. Some African-Americans were trained in elite positions never offered previously, such as the Air Force, and some units were desegregated for the first time at the Battle of the Bulge. In just a few years the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard made significant advancements in the treatment of their African-American personnel.

World War II was a watershed for race relations within the Armed Forces, and it marked the beginning of the end for racial separation within military units. In 1948 with the demand for civil rights mounting, President Harry S. Truman ordered desegregation of the Armed Services and equality of treatment and opportunity without regard to race, color, religion or national origin. Reform was slow, however, and it wasn't until 1953 that segregation officially ended when the Secretary of Defense announced that the last all-black unit had been abolished.

The Vietnam War saw the highest proportion of African-Americans ever to serve in an American war. There was a marked turnaround from the attitude in previous wars that black men were not fit for combat - during the Vietnam War African-Americans faced a much greater chance of being on the front-line, and consequently a much higher casualty rate. In 1965 alone African-Americans represented almost 25 percent of those killed in action.

Following the Vietnam War and the phasing-out of conscription, the number of African-Americans volunteering to join the Army grew exponentially, enlisting at rates far above their share of the population. In general African-Americans account for nearly 25% of all enlisted Army soldiers while making up just 13% of the population.

In 1991, forty years after military segregation ended, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the highest military position in the Department of Defense, oversaw Operation Desert Storm in Iraq. He was an African-American named Colin L. Powell.

## GETTING STARTED

### STEP 1

REGISTER OR SIGN IN

Go to [www.veteranslegacies.com](http://www.veteranslegacies.com). If it is your first time on the site, click on the blue “join our community” button to register.

If you’ve already registered, just sign in using your email and password.

Start by reading the overview on the first page. This is the foundation for your participation in the Mighty Endeavor and has important information about what you will be doing and why. Once you’ve read the overview, you are ready to begin.

### **TAKE A SHORT TOUR**

- Using the Find Stories tab, select World War II and then select the Find Stories button
- This will take you to a result page: Search “WWII
- You will see tabs for Images, Videos, Documents and Veteran Bios.
- Select Veteran Bios

### **WHEN YOU GET TO THE RESULTS SEARCH “WWII” ON THE VETERAN BIOS, SELECT A FEW TO LOOK AT**

**These are all good examples of nicely documented bios.**

- Frank Gehrman
- Wally Groce
- Bill Seitz

### **CHECK OUT SOME OF THE VIDEOS**

- Go back to the Find Stories tab, select WWII and then select Videos
- Some of the videos are interviews. You can tell by the thumbnail image of a person. Most of those are interviews with veterans. Some of them are interviews with family members of the veterans, if they have passed away.
- Select one or two of the video interviews to see how they are done.

Repeat the process with the Images and Documents tabs to familiarize yourself with the site and how information is gathered, written, uploaded and displayed.

## GETTING STARTED

### STEP 2

#### SELECT A VETERAN TO RESEARCH

Now that you have looked around the site, you are ready to begin the research.

#### **THERE ARE TWO WAYS TO SELECT A VETERAN**

The person you decide to research may be deceased, so you will get to play detective!

You can research the veteran in many ways to try to get more information about their service and possibly photos, videos, or interviews with family members.

#### **START WITH SOMEONE YOU KNOW**

- a. **SEARCH** the name of someone you know to see whether they exist in the database.
- b. If they do not exist in the database, you can create their bio and do the research yourself (see instructions below on creating a bio).
- c. If they do exist in the database, but there is not much information about them ( just a name, but not photos, ) you may be able to contact the next of kin, or the veteran, to get more info. You may also choose to do an online search for information about this person relating to their service.
- d. To add to an existing bio, open the bio and select the green **EDIT** button to add or change text. Remember to hit the green **SAVE** button after you make any changes.

#### FIND A VETERAN TO RESEARCH AND UPDATE

- a. **SEARCH** the veterans legacies database for people near you.
- b. Go to Find Stories tab on the homepage of [www.veteranslegacies.com](http://www.veteranslegacies.com).
- c. Select WWII under the conflict menu.

**NOTE:** The WWII records in the Veterans' Legacies database are primarily Army records because no other branch of the military has WWII records readily available.

- You may select a branch, or leave it blank
- Type in the name of the **COUNTY** you live in, and select the **STATE** from the drop down menu.

#### **FROM YOUR SEARCH RESULTS, SELECT ONE TO RESEARCH**

#### **SOME RESEARCH IDEAS**

- Google Search or use the Mooseroots site. Here is the link to the army info: <http://wwii-army.mooseroots.com/> (free)
- Ask your local librarian to get you started on your research. Link to the Oregon Library Directory where you can find their local library's address, phone number, and website. Libraries' websites will let you know how to contact your librarian via email, IM/ chat, or text.

## **GETTING STARTED**

### **STEP 3**

In some cases, you may have an opportunity to interview a veteran, or the family member of a veteran.

### **CREATE A BIO**

If you know the name of the veteran you want to research and their name does not appear in the database, you will need to create a bio for them.

The instructions for creating a new bio can be found at <http://veteranslegacies.com/interview>. Once you are signed into the site, select the Add Your Stories tab and select Create Bio from the drop-down menu.

The bio can be as detailed as you want with photos, videos and written documentation. Be sure to select the SAVE button whenever you make any updates or changes.

### **BUILD THE BIO**

This type of information might be easiest to gather if you are now researching a family member or close family friend. Now that you've created the bio for the veteran, you will need to begin collecting photographs, documents, any audio recordings, journals and anything that relates to the person's time in the military.

If you collect photos or material from a family, be sure to get their permission before uploading it to the website. There is information on the site on "How to Interview a Veteran." Go to <http://veteranslegacies.com/interview>.

**NOTE:** Please make sure that you complete the Required Forms as listed on the website at <http://veteranslegacies.com/interview>. After completing the appropriate form, be sure to send the form to the email listed on the website.

Digital video or audio recording and media can be uploaded easily onto the website. Look for tips on getting a great recording, interviewing a veteran, and uploading their stories below and online at <http://www.veteranslegacies.com>.



## **TECHNICAL TIPS FOR RECORDING AN INTERVIEW USING A RECORDING DEVICE**

### **Pay Attention to Formatting**

- Make sure to use a tripod, or set the phone down near the person you are interviewing so that you can both see and hear them. You may have access to a smartphone or to
- Make sure they are not backlit, or that there is more light in a camera with which to front of them than behind them. If a strong light is behind the record your interview. Most interviewee, then they will look like a silhouette, and you will smartphones will allow you not be able to see their face on the video. to record both video and sound easily.
- Do your best to make sure that there aren't too many outside noises that will make it difficult to hear.
- Be sure to charge your phone or camera before the interview so that you have the power to capture the whole thing.
- Capturing sound only is another option, you can place the re- All of the recordings and recording device closer to the interviewee to hear them clearly. documents that are uploaded to the website will need to be in digital format. Make sure you can get your recording onto a computer.
- If you are conducting your interview in a public place, like the local library, ask the librarian for tips on the quietest place to go. Be sure there are chairs for you and the Veteran you are interviewing and set up your camera before they arrive. Phones and digital recording devices will be easier to transfer directly to the website than non-digital recordings.
- Make sure to be looking at the device as it records so that you can fix any problems quickly and be sure that the recording is going smoothly. You may want to invite a helper to be the camera person while you interview.
- If the Veteran you are interviewing brings objects or photographs to share, make sure to have them or a helper hold the photo or item up so that the recording device can see them too. If the interviewee points to a photo to talk about what is going on in it, make sure that the camera can see the photo as they discuss it.
- Ask permission to take a digital photo of the documents or mementos after the interview to share on the website. You can take do this after the interview has been recorded.

## **SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR VETERANS**

### **STEP 1**

**TIPS AND SUGGESTIONS** Any materials you gather, as long as you try your best to be accurate and respectful, are very valuable!

While recording your interview, be sure to remain silent while your subject is speaking and responding. Pay special attention not to interrupt them or rush them as they might take a few moments to think of what they are going to say.

The Mighty Endeavor is a special project because it allows you to upload interviews and other documents easily to the website.

Below are some tips and suggestions for how you might prepare for an interview and the kinds of questions you might ask. These are not strict rules, but may serve to help you to make the most of your experience.

#### **WRITE OUT THE QUESTIONS YOU WOULD LIKE TO ASK AND CONSIDER THE ORDER YOU ASK THEM IN**

Start with some simple information, like name, where your veteran served and when, and in what branch of the military they served.

#### **LET THE VETERAN TELL HIS OR HER OWN STORY**

The questions suggested here are only meant as a loose guideline. You may want to give the person you are interviewing the questions in advance of the interview. This way, you will have more time to listen to their stories and will still have the information you need to add to the website along with your interview. You will also be able to change your questions so that they make sense for the person you are speaking with. For example, if you know that the person you are interviewing was in a certain branch of military, you can ask them about that branch.

Often interviewees are more comfortable if they know what kinds of questions you might ask.

#### **PREPARE YOURSELF**

Read about the war(s) the veteran served in and review maps and atlases. You can look at other interviews on the website, or ask your local librarian for help in identifying appropriate books, articles, and other resources.

# SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR VETERANS

## STEP 2

### QUESTIONS TO GET STARTED

Here are suggestions for the kinds of questions you might ask when interviewing veterans who served in the United States armed forces.

Use the equipment that you have available and don't be intimidated to conduct an interview, even if you have never interviewed anyone before.

*Just before you give the interview, record yourself giving the date and place of the interview; the name of the person being interviewed; his or her birth date and current city in which they live.* Start the interview by asking the veteran to state his or her name. Then ask the veteran to state the war (s) in which they served, branch of service, and rank(s).

### BASIC QUESTIONS

- When did you enlist?
- Where were you living at the time?
- Why did you join?
- Why did you pick the service branch you joined?
- What do you recall from your first days in service?
- What did it feel like?
- Tell me about your boot camp/training experiences.
- What was it like?  
Were/Are you the first woman in your family to serve?

### MILITARY EXPERIENCES

- Which war(s) did you serve in?
- Where exactly did you go?
- Do you remember arriving and what it was like?
- Tell me about a couple of your most memorable experiences.
- What was your job/assignment?
- Did you see combat?
- Were you awarded any medals or citations?
- How did you get them?

## **SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR VETERANS STEP 3**

### **SAMPLE QUESTIONS CONTINUED**

You may also be interviewing the living community members who have friends or family that served, or simply have information to share about time during a conflict and how it shaped their lives.

Let the interviewee know where they will find the interview, and that you will notify them when you have shared it so that they can see it too!

#### **LIFE DURING SERVICE**

- How did you stay in touch with your family?
- What was the food like?
- Did you have plenty of supplies?
- Did you feel pressure or stress?
- How did people entertain themselves?
- What did you do when on leave?
- Where did you travel while in the service?
- Do you recall any particularly humorous or unusual event?
- Do you have photographs?
- Who are the people in the photographs?
- What did you think of officers or fellow soldiers?
- Did you keep a personal diary?

#### **AFTER SERVICE**

- Do you recall the day your service ended?
  - Where were you?
  - What did you do in the days and weeks afterward?
  - Did you work or go back to school?
  - If you went to school, was your education supported?
  - Did you make any close friendships while in the service?
  - Did you join a veterans organization?
- What would you tell another woman about to enlist?

#### **LATER YEARS**

- What did you go on to do as a career after serving?
- Did your military experience influence your thinking about war or about the military in general?
- If in a veterans organization, what kinds of activities does your post or association have?
- How did your service and experiences affect your life?
- Is there anything you would like to add that we have not covered in this interview?

#### **FINALLY**

- Thank the veteran for sharing her recollections and for their service.

## UPLOADING INFORMATION TO THE VETERAN'S LEGACIES WEBSITE

### **REGISTER AND LOGIN**

Go to [www.veteranslegacies.com](http://www.veteranslegacies.com) and register with your email address and a password.

### **STEP 1**

The Veterans' Legacies website is an archive for preserving the experiences of American Veterans of any war.

#### **FIRST, GO TO "FIND STORIES"**

Select a Conflict to search. You can also look up a story by military branch, county, or state. Take a look at the amazing pictures, videos, documents and bios that have been uploaded already. Maybe this will inspire you to conduct more interviews and learn more about veterans in Oregon and across the US.

#### **UPLOAD YOUR INTERVIEW**

Photographs, documents like interview transcripts or photographs of historical artifacts can also be uploaded here.

#### **GO TO THE "ADD YOUR STORIES" LINK**

The link is at the top of the page and a drop-down menu will give you the option to upload media or create a bio.

#### **START WITH "UPLOAD MEDIA"**

Another menu will appear, giving you the option to upload a video, image, audio file, or document.

- Make sure that the files you want to upload are on your computer, titled so that you can find them.
- Click on the "Video" option and you will see a window that allows you to upload the video in either mp4 or webm. Format at up to 64MB file size.
- Click on the "Choose Video" button and browse for your video clip.

#### **FILL IN THE DESCRIPTION OF YOUR INTERVIEW**

Along the right side you'll find areas to enter:

- the title of your clip
- a description of your clip
- the branch of the military that the interviewee served in
- the "Conflict" or specific war the interviewee fought in
- the "Theater" or geographic location where they were stationed during the war
- the content source, or where you got the interview
- the date and place of the interview with your own name as the interviewer

## UPLOADING INFORMATION TO THE VETERAN'S LEGACIES WEBSITE

### STEP 2

Once you have uploaded your content, others will be able to find it on the website and learn about the veteran whose information you have shared.

Go back to "Add Your Stories" to add a bio and more content.

### CREATE THE VETERAN'S BIO

On the "Add a Bio" page, you will be adding the biographical Here you will add information for the veteran that you interviewed.

- Upload a picture, which can be a current photo or a person you interviewed. If photo from the time of their service
- Add their Military Branch, Conflict, and other them that the information important information about their service.

If possible, please check with information about the you have prepared to add here is accurate. World War II veterans are a generation who served from 1939 to 1945, and many of them are no longer with us. It is very important to find them and ask about their experiences now, before it's too late, and share it in the most accurate and thorough way possible.

Together, we can preserve their legacy and build this archive for others to learn from in the years to come.

### Oregon Veterans' Homes

<https://www.oregon.gov/odva/Vets-Homes/Pages/default.aspx>

### Veteran's Centers

#### Vet Center

Bend:	<a href="#"><u>Central Oregon Vet Center</u></a>
Eugene:	<a href="#"><u>Eugene Vet Center</u></a>
Grants Pass:	<a href="#"><u>Grants Pass Vet Center</u></a>
Portland:	<a href="#"><u>Portland Vet Center</u></a>
Salem:	<a href="#"><u>Salem Vet Center</u></a>

**National Association for Black Veterans:** (503) 412-4159

## **Wounded Warrior Project**

<https://www.woundedwarriorproject.org/mission/meet-a-warrior>

## **Army Strong Community Centers** <http://www.arfp.org>

The center connects those geographically dispersed Families with support resources in their own community. The center offers information, referrals and is dedicated in assisting and supporting service members, retirees, veterans, and Family members for all branches of the military, active and reserve.

Military Times has put Clackamas Community College on the list for top college for veterans in its Best for Vets: Colleges 2016 rankings.  
[vetinfo@clackamas.edu](mailto:vetinfo@clackamas.edu).

**REFERENCE BOOKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE ON FEMALE VETERANS  
LINKS AND SUGGESTED RESEARCH ARCHIVES AND WEBSITES**