February 2013

African American/Black History Month
"At the Crossroads of Freedom and Equality:
The Emancipation Proclamation and the March on Washington"

This year, we will commemorate the anniversary of two important events that changed the course of this Nation. On January 1, 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation set the United States on the path of ending slavery. A century later on August 28, 1963, hundreds of thousands of Americans of every creed, color and background marched in the continuing pursuit of equality. They gathered at the memorial of Abraham Lincoln, the author of the Emancipation Proclamation, where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his celebrated "I Have a Dream" speech.

These events gave hope to the black community that change was possible. Our Army story is part of the larger story of the American experience and the fight for freedom and equality for all citizens and for this great country. Over the past 237 years, African Americans have selflessly served in our Army, fighting valiantly to help secure peace for the future. Their example of courage and leadership has empowered generations of Soldiers to answer the call to duty in defense of the American way of life.

The United States Army serves as a national leader in embracing the strengths of diversity. We have long recognized the tremendous impact of uniting as brothers and sisters in arms to achieve success, and the importance of taking pause to recognize our fellow Soldiers, Civilians, and their Families in this shared endeavor. During African American History Month, we encourage our entire Army Family to publicly commemorate the significant contributions that help make our Army what it is today – the premiere fighting force in the world. Army Strong!

Raymond F. Chandler II
Sergeant Major of the Army

Raymond T. Odierno
General, United States Army
Chief of Staff

John M. McHugh
Secretary of the Army