



Black Engineer of the Year Awards

“Stars and Stripes” Keynote

Friday, 19 February 2010



General Norty Schwartz

**As Prepared
for Delivery
~20 min.
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Introduction: Service to Our Country

General Lyles, thank you for that kind introduction; and General Wilson, thank you for your attendance at this tremendous event, and for your staunch support of the Black Engineer of the Year awards. General Ward, thank you also for being here; and, please accept my heartiest congratulations on your receipt of the Lifetime Achievement Award tomorrow night. As well, General McNeil, thank you for your ground-breaking courage and leadership. Your years of extraordinary service and impressive accomplishments, in the Air Force and in industry, inspire us all – particularly, this new generation of bright and talented young men and women, who are eager to emulate your example as they continue their own exciting journey toward real and honorable achievements.

Ladies and gentlemen, as I look across this impressive audience, I am especially heartened by the abundant talent, energy, and dedication represented here. I am encouraged that we have come together, with a conviction that diversity is a strategic imperative for our Nation, and something that we must pursue together. Our Commander-in-Chief has rightly sounded the clarion call for service and sacrifice – in or out of uniform. As influential people in the lives of young Americans, we must encourage them toward higher callings, and to set the example for service and sacrifice. Lucrative opportunities in the private sector may be financially rewarding, and it is not an invalid aspiration to accumulate some measure of material wealth. But, the notion of public service provides for a different type of richness – that of personal satisfaction from setting aside pure self-interest for higher purposes, and of gratification from being a part of something larger than one’s self. This wealth is intangible, and you cannot deposit in a bank; but it is certainly real, and meaningful, and needed.



A History of Struggle toward Inclusion and Opportunity

Our ambitious agenda to embrace and attain greater diversity is in the spirit of our Founding Fathers, who realized that “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” are “self-evident truths.” This is a simple proposition that, remarkably, had never been expressed – so elegantly, clearly, and unmistakably – until that monumental occasion in 1776.

But, although the premise itself is straightforward and easy to state, actual fulfillment of equal opportunity has not been effortless. In fact, our Nation’s earliest and greatest aspirations have been difficult to achieve – at times, involving grueling, contentious, and protracted struggles against injustice and inequity. And, although discrimination has largely been vanquished in our institutions, our society continues to pursue what we know is an incomplete endeavor.

In the U.S. military, we strive to be a microcosm of broader American society; but, in fact, we have been the vanguard for full inclusion of women and ethnic minorities, even where some segments of America lagged behind. We now find ourselves as a modest standard for inclusion and performance-based advancement, of which we can be rightly proud.

Today, however, the challenge continues and is more subtle. We still have room for yet greater diversity in the military – not because of discrimination, but because our society is replete with opportunities for our Nation’s young talent, in a wide variety of professions. The competition is intense, so we must adapt if we are to attract, recruit, develop, and retain a talented workforce, comprising members with different backgrounds and perspectives. Secretary Donley and I know that diversity is about strengthening our force and ensuring our long-term viability, so that, in the future, your Air Force is an even more effective steward of America’s trust. Wherever there is talent to be found, we must articulate the message, encouraging careers in public service, if not in the Armed Forces; because today, helping to solve complicated domestic and transnational issues requires the collective strength of our Nation.



Why Diversity is Important: Our Strategic Environment

For all of its benefits, globalization has also resulted in intractable challenges of unprecedented interconnectedness and complexity. Local or regional challenges like political crises, economic recessions, pandemics, or insecurity, can have clear connections and implications to the interests of other countries – even those that are half a world away.

Therefore, devising comprehensive solutions requires a whole-of-government approach, to combine with the efforts of the broader international community. And, for that, we need talented and thoughtful leaders who have a deep and abiding appreciation for other cultures, languages, and customs, which establishes a foundation of strength, legitimacy, and greater efficiency – leaders like Kip Ward. This will be crucial as we increase our efforts to build partnerships and partner capacity around the world.

Therefore, what we mean by “diversity” necessarily includes geographic and socio-economic background; educational experience; linguistic, cultural, and ethnic heritage; philosophical and spiritual perspectives; and any other characteristics and abilities that are relevant to our mission, and consistent with our Core Values of *Integrity*, *Service*, and *Excellence*. Moreover, a diverse workforce is not developed by gathering statistics or identifying shortfalls in particular demographics, merely for their own sake. The American people have placed a solemn trust in the Armed Forces to be stewards of the capacity to influence by the force of arms. Such a consequential undertaking requires nothing less than a credentials-based approach to attracting our Nation’s best and brightest talent. We will afford them equal opportunity, and empower them to take the initiative and make our military even better; but, we also will demand impeccable character, unwavering commitment to excellence, and selfless service. What we offer is a place where talent, dedication, and, yes, a bit of fortune can take one a long way – in my case, a lot of fortune for the son of a typewriter salesman.

If you’re willing to demand the same of yourself as you do of others, then we have a place for you in the military. Just ask Larry Spencer, whom I would



like to publicly congratulate for his recent Senate confirmation for promotion to lieutenant general in the United States Air Force. A Washington D.C. native, Larry is a thoughtful and talented leader, who will be recognized tomorrow evening for career achievement, and who will soon go to work as one of Admiral Mike Mullen's principal staff officers. We are very proud of Larry and his impressive list of achievements.

Diversity: A Strategic Imperative

Moving forward with our diversity strategic roadmap, we are taking real measures toward enduring change, especially in the senior officer and senior executive levels, where there is a noticeable lack of diversity. It likely will take us years to realize full and meaningful diversity at the upper ranks – a few decades, even, when we consider that it will take 25 years or more to develop future general officers and senior executives from this year's class of college freshmen. So, in addition to attracting talent, we must also retain it.

Toward that end, we are building upon what we already have achieved in ensuring diversity in our accessions, as we further design initiatives and programs in the Air Force that will stand on their own, and outlast the people who put them in place. This is essential, because, as I previously mentioned, the contest for finite talent is fierce – a reality that is indicative of an innovative, endowed, and productive country such as ours. So, we in fact are grateful to have this challenge. Through an ambitious outreach program, the Air Force will vie for the passion, aptitude, and skill of America's finest, against many competing avenues of service to our Nation. Therefore, we must be clear in our goals, and communicate our intent in precise and compelling ways.

Our strategic roadmap addresses these and other courses of action. The "Air Force in the Community" program, for example, underscores the importance of education, citizenship, leadership, and physical fitness in the development of well-rounded individuals who would have enormous opportunities in the Air Force. Our strategy will also include institutional commitment through the establishment of a diversity action committee and oversight council, as well as facilitated senior leader summits on diversity; and,



it will establish milestone goals and timelines, to hold leaders accountable – including me.

As we now prepare for how our Nation and our Joint teammates will rely on us, our rich history informs, but our promising future inspires. Ours is of high-tech systems for which we will require innovative and forward-looking talent – systems like

- Predator and Reaper remotely-piloted aircraft, which provide unprecedented situational awareness of the battlespace;
- like F-35s and F-22s, which will afford control of the air and freedom of action, providing limited threat of air attack;
- like the Wideband Global Satellite Communications system, which, with only two satellites on orbit, has already more than doubled the wideband capacity of the entire existing constellation.

Our future also depends on the superior and sustained performance of all Airmen, who provide these and other capabilities. And, it will feature increased global engagement, achieved by constructive dialogue and productive partnerships to accompany and enable our trademark *Global Vigilance, Reach, and Power*.

Conclusion

Our Air Force heritage is one of believers and dreamers who often faced adversity and criticism for their ideas, and who had to overcome institutional skepticism and inertia. Air and space power pioneers – like Billy Mitchell, Jimmy Doolittle, Hap Arnold, and Bennie Schriever – are joined by other venerable figures who pushed boundaries other than scientific or technological, like:

- Benjamin Davis, Jr., of the legendary Tuskegee Airmen, the first African-American to earn the rank of brigadier general in the U.S. Air Force; and
- Daniel “Chappie” James, also a Tuskegee Airman, and the first African-American to reach the rank of four-star general in the United States military.

And, who could forget Lee Archer, who, by defeating Nazi Germany fighters in the skies over Hungary – then, by founding a venture capital firm – also



helped to vanquish segregation in our society? And, Jeanne Holm – the first female one-star general in the Air Force, and the first female two-star in the Armed Forces – who valiantly fought against the injustice of relegating women to a “separate” category of service? We still feel a profound sense of loss from their recent passing – for Colonel Archer, back in January, at the age of 90; and, for General Holm, just four days ago, at age 88. They, along with General Davis and General James, are but a few on a distinguished roster of visionary leaders and legends, to whom we owe a debt of gratitude for the richness of diversity that is invaluable to our strength and vitality today. Just two days ago, Air Force senior leaders met at the Benjamin O. Davis Conference Center at MacDill Air Force Base, where we discussed our future, to include, among other important issues, bolstering a diverse and effective team of Airmen. What better venue than that, to inspire our vision and inform our efforts? I am encouraged by the possibility of a future of more brilliant leaders like our early pioneers – prospects that bode well for our military and our Nation.

Diversity is at the very heart of the American Dream, and of the promise of equal and nearly boundless opportunity. Our undertakings today to broaden it in our Armed Forces, and in turn strengthen our institutions, depend, in no small measure, on your commitment to and support for noble public service, by persuasively communicating to and mentoring youngsters of enormous promise. I am sincerely grateful for your continuing efforts in this endeavor, and I wish you all, for the sake of the Nation’s security, the very best for future success in encouraging those with talent to apply it in common cause. Thank you.