



*Remarks by Major General Phillip R. Anderson,
Commander, Mississippi Valley Division,
at the Kickoff for African American History Month,
Vicksburg District, 14 February 2000*

Col. Crear - Mayor Walker - Dr. Tolliver --

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good morning. I'm delighted for this opportunity to speak to you on this occasion celebrating African Americans.

Although February is called "African American History Month," this month, we are not just celebrating black history, we are celebrating American history.

The story of African Americans in the United States should **not** be relegated to just one month out of the year.

African American history and culture permeates our society and should be celebrated all year round. Every month of the year, the Corps of Engineers, the Army, and the Department of Defense appreciate the advantage that our diverse work force brings us.

The importance of a diverse work force might best be likened to an artist painting a picture. If the artist had only blue paint and a blue canvas, he couldn't produce much of a picture.

Most of us would agree the most beautiful paintings are those where many textures and colors are used to create a complex, rich image.

This relates to the work force, as well. The most effective work force includes a broad spectrum of employees, differing in race, color, sex, national origin, and so forth.

[PAUSE]

By discussing our social and cultural differences and learning more about the experiences of others, we are making diversity a competitive corporate advantage and creating a more effective work force.

To overcome misunderstandings and to continue to make diversity a corporate advantage, we must act as a strong family where differences of opinion are respected, consideration for others is valued and practiced, and open communication is the norm.

Everyone here knows that within most families there are differences among the members. It is these individual differences that make each of us unique and may, at times, cause family tension.

However, in a family bound by love, human dignity, respect for others, and open dialogue, individuals will set aside their own agenda for the good of the whole. This is what I see as critical for the Mississippi Valley Division.

Simply stated, we must live by the golden rule,
"Do unto others as you would have them do unto
you."

This is a practice that should be used throughout
the Division, and each of us must reflect upon our
communications with others to ensure its
effectiveness.

I'd like to leave you with another thought --
America has long been known as the great melting
pot. I believe, however, that today it's more
like a wonderful tossed salad where every
ingredient retains its own color, taste,
texture, etc.; and when mixed together makes for
a unique and robust combination of flavors.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak. I look forward to hearing the other speakers today and encourage you to participate in the other events throughout the month celebrating African American History.