

2013 National Coalition for Homeless Veterans Annual Conference  
“Halfway Home: Progress in the Plan to End Veterans Homelessness”  
Grand Hyatt Hotel, Washington, DC

Wednesday, May 29, 2013



**RON E. ARMSTEAD, MCP, LSW  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS VETERANS  
BRAINTRUST**

**“1,000 DAYS AND COUNTING: AFRICAN AMERICAN MALES AND  
INCREASINGLY FEMALE HOMELESS VETERANS”**

*Today, more Vietnam era veterans have now been homeless than troops who died in the original Vietnam War.*

That's over 58,000!

Shaun Donovan, Secretary  
U.S. Department of Housing  
& Urban Development (2010)

# Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent & End Homelessness: 2010



## The Problem

- The number of veterans experiencing homelessness has been declining over the past two years
- 107,000 were homeless on a given night in 2009 as estimated by the VA
- 61% of homeless veterans are between ages 35 & 54
- 96% are male
- The number of female Iraq and Afghanistan veterans experiencing homelessness is increasing, also those who have dependent children
- In general, veterans have high rates of PTSD, TBI & sexual trauma, which can lead to higher risk for homelessness
- About half of homeless veterans have serious mental illness, and 70% have substance abuse problems
- Half of homeless veterans have histories of involvement with the legal system
- Veterans are more likely to live outdoors, unsheltered, and experience long term, chronic homelessness

# Agenda



- Scope of the Problem
- Social Consequences of War
- Issues Forums & Braintrust Sessions
- The Veterans Braintrust
- Looking Nationwide
- Factors Contributing to Homelessness
- Reasons for Discussion
- Ramifications for Barriers to Treatment
- Pilot Study Findings
- Most Recent Study Findings

# Scope of the Problem



- 1975 - according to the Labor Department – *“the unemployment rate for 20 to 24 year old black Vietnam veterans peaked at 31%, marking them as the group with the highest incident of unemployment, after black teenagers”* (Monthly Labor Review, 1979)
- 1978 – a research study by the Washington Urban League, indicated a particular **“mental disorder”** was the most problematic readjustment disability in Black veterans (Washington Urban League Pamphlet, 1978)
- 1978 – the labor market situation for black Vietnam veterans and veterans of other racial minorities was considered worse than that for white veterans. (Monthly Labor Review, 1979)

## Scope of Problem (cont'd)



- 1981 – the ***Legacy of Vietnam Study*** showed that 70% of African American heavy combat veterans remained stressed years after the war...
- 1984 – the ***Black Veterans Working Group*** reported, it is imperative that more culturally-specific approaches be developed toward working with black veterans...
- 1986 – research plans submitted to the Merit Review Board of the VA for the possibility that PTSD may be higher among minorities seeking treatment in VA facilities for addiction disorders was rejected by VA reviewers on the grounds that they did not believe the results, even if replicated, could possibly be of importance to an agency funded to provide health care for all veterans. (Penk & Allen, 1981)

## Scope of the Problem (cont'd)



- 1988 – the year the ***National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Study (NVVRS)*** findings were reported to Congress, an estimated 70,000 male African American veterans of the Vietnam War were found to be suffering from the symptoms of PTSD, as well as the adverse effects that having PTSD imposes on daily living. (**Note:** 82% had not sought mental health treatment from the VA, with the predominant reason offered “*that the veterans felt that he could handle the problem on his own.*”)
- 1988, some 600,000 people were homeless on an average, and almost three times as many in the course of a year, and about 40% of homeless men were veterans. (Urban Institute Study)

## Scope of the Problem (cont'd)



- 1990 – African American veterans make up 8.6% of the veterans population (2,230,229), and represented the largest single group (84% of all minority veterans (CMAO Report, 1991-92)
- 1992 – the seminal report ***Heroes Today, Homeless Tomorrow***, indicated that 250,000 men, one of every three of the single homeless men sleeping on the streets, or in shelters on any given night, are veterans, and 40% are Black. (National Coalition for the Homeless, 1991)



## Scope of the Problem (cont'd)



- 1992 – one of four African Americans earned less than \$10,000, or were extremely low income, compared with just one in ten white veterans (Eclipse, 1996)
- 1993 – the late VA Secretary Jesse Brown testifies that African Americans have a VA Health Care System user rate of 26%, and suffer disproportionate rates of: hypertension, homelessness, kidney dysfunction, respiratory disease, substance abuse, cancer, HIV/AIDs, PTSD and other mental illnesses.
- 1993 – 53% of Black men 25 to 34 (the prime family forming and keeping ages) were either unemployed or earning too little to lift a family of four out of poverty. (Prof. Roger Wilkins, George Mason University)
- 1995 – the unemployment rate for the nation's one and half million African American veterans in the workforce, was about 7%, nearly double the rate for white veterans (Assistant Secretary Preston Taylor, DOLVETS)

## Scope of the Problem (cont'd)



- African American male veterans have a significantly lower labor market participation rate and a significantly higher unemployment rate, combined these factors produce a disparity in income between Blacks and Whites. The median wage for African American veterans is three-fourths that of their white counterparts. Income disparity is another objective measurement for weighting the economic well-being of African American veterans versus their White, or non-Hispanic veterans counterpart.

The problem of income disparity is one of a long-standing nature and has not lessened appreciably over the last twenty years (Sutton, 1994)

# Scope of the Problem (cont'd)



- 2000 – 2.6 million black/African American veterans represented 9.7%, or the second largest population of veterans, and were concentrated among veteran ages 18 to 64 (12.1%), or 7% of black population (US Census)
- 2002 – the issues forum *Homelessness among African American Veterans* revealed, that Blacks were 47% of the homeless veterans population, and were over 4X as likely to be homeless than other veterans; 1.31X more likely than African American non-veterans to be homeless; 1.43X more likely to be homeless, than poor veterans; and at much greater risk of homelessness than their white counterparts (Late Rep. Julia Carson, D-IN, September 13, 2002)
- 2005 – according to census data, an estimated 2.3 million veteran renter households (out of an estimated 21.9 million households), or about 53% of all veterans renter households nationwide were low-income, and more than half of these low-income households had problems affording their rent. Additionally, more than one-third included a disabled, or elderly veteran. **GAO Report, 2007 (GAO-08-324T)**

## Scope of the Problem (cont'd)



- 2007 – Black veterans were still generally found to have higher nonemployment rates (nonemployment refers to individuals unable to find work, but still are searching for employment..) than white veterans, reflecting dominant national employment trends (Greenberg & Rosenheck, 2007)
- 2007 – the ***Veterans Data Update 2008: Vital Mission Ending Homelessness among Veterans*** reported that there were 154,000 homeless veterans, or an overall reduction in numbers (National Alliance to End Homelessness, November 10, 2009)

## Scope of the Problem (cont'd)



- 2008 – the ***Women Veterans Summit (WVS)*** revealed that veterans of color constituted 71% of the VA homeless women veterans program, and asserted that female veterans are more likely to experience '*severe housing cost burden*' (Debra Lee, VA Presenter)
- 2008 - the issues forum ***Homelessness among Veterans*** indicated that 46 to 48% of homeless veterans were African American (John Driscoll, Pres/CEO, NCHV)
- 2010 - ***Data on Homelessness among African American Veterans*** by National Alliance to End Homelessness, July 8, 2010 (Dr. William Sermons, Director of the Homelessness Research Institute at the Alliance, Presenter)  
<http://www.slideshare.net/naehomelessness/af-am-homeless-vets-6-232010>

# Findings of ...



## Summary

- Veteran status is a protective factor against most economic hardship, including *risk factors* for homelessness
- Protective factor appears to extend to African American veterans
- Veterans experience a higher rate of homelessness than non-veterans
- African American veterans are overrepresented among homeless veterans

## Implications

- African American veterans face multiple *risk factors* for homelessness, which should be factored into policy and practice.
- Only one of these risk factors (veteran status) is explicitly addressed in ***Opening Doors***.
- Better understanding of African American veteran homeless population is needed to effectively end homelessness.

Dr. William Sermons, Director, Homelessness Research Institute at the Alliance, 2010

# Social Consequences of War



- Unemployment
- Broken families or homes (dysfunctional)
- Alcohol and drug abuse (major challenge)
- Lost of self-esteem (or pride) they once had while in the military
- Homelessness (disproportionate)
- Double Fight

Rep. Charles Rangel, D-NY

# Bringing & Caring for our Troops Back Home



- The current unemployment crisis has a disproportionate impact on veterans; young male veterans (ages 18 to 24) are hit hardest with an unemployment rate of 22%.
- Returning veterans who do find jobs earn an average of \$5,736 less a year than their civilian counterparts, according to the VA. The disparity is even greater for veterans with college degrees: They earn \$9,526 less than their civilian counterparts a year.

Rangel Rallies to Bring our Troops Home  
on 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of War in Afghanistan  
(Press Release, October 7, 2011)



# On Veterans Day, 2011



- The job market has turned badly against the men and women who fought in Iraq and Afghanistan. Their [rate of unemployment](#) was 12.1 percent in October, vs. 9 percent for the U.S. overall.
- The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics employment data indicates that while the job market is slowly improving for most Americans, it's moving in the opposite direction for Gulf War II veterans (defined as those on active duty since 2001). The youngest veterans, age 18 to 24, had a 30.4 percent jobless rate in October, way up from 18.4 percent a year earlier. Non-veterans of the same age improved, to 15.3 percent from 16.9 percent.
- However, for some groups, the numbers look a good deal worse: **for black veterans aged 18-24, the unemployment rate is a striking 48 percent.**

(The BLS provided **Bloomberg Businessweek** with hundreds of pages of data beyond what's easily found on the Internet; if you want to analyze the numbers yourself, they've posted them for [October 2011](#) and for [October 2010](#) here.)

# U.S. Conference of Mayors 2011 Status Report on Hunger & Homelessness



## **Characteristics of Homeless Adults**

The survey cities were asked to provide information on the characteristics of homeless adults in their cities. The cities reported that, on average:

- 26 percent of homeless adults were severely mentally ill,
- 16 percent were physically disabled,
- 15 percent were employed,
- 13 percent were victims of domestic violence,
- 13 percent were veterans, and
- four percent were HIV Positive.

Because these are not mutually exclusive characteristics, the same person may appear in multiple categories.

# The Washington Post

by Courtland Milloy, Published: December 11, 2011



## **Black women were hit hard with job losses in economic crisis**

- According to a recent study by the National Women’s Law Center, black women have lost more jobs during the recovery – 258,000 – than they did during the recession – 233,000. Put another way, black women represented 12.5% of all women workers in June 2009. But between then and this June, Black women lost 42.2% of jobs lost by women overall.
- While the nation’s overall unemployment rate declined from 9 to 8.6% last month, the unemployment rate for Black women increased from 12.6% to 12.9, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- Worse, more than 150,000 black women gave up looking for work last month. Counted out of the job market, they were categorized as simply “discouraged workers.”
- According to a recent study by WOW, about 42% of women – including 62% of African American women and 66% of Hispanic women – do not have enough income to pay for basic household expenses.
- Further, Donna Addkison, President & CEO of Wider Opportunities for Women says, “we’re not just talking about households moving from crisis to catastrophe.” The deprivation experienced by children in these homes means the loss of jobs and income will have a multi-generational ripple effect.”

# Homeless Women Veterans: Actions Needed to Ensure Safe and Appropriate Housing, December 2011 (GAO-12-182)



## Introduction

- As more women serve in the military, the number of women veterans has grown substantially, doubling from 4% of the veterans population in 1990 to 8% (or an estimated 1.8 million) today.
- The number of women veterans will continue to increase as service members return from the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- Some women veterans are at-risk of homelessness because: they have disabling psychological conditions, such as PTSD & Major Depressive Disorders often resulting from experiencing MST, or are **single mothers** facing challenges with readjustment to civilian life.

# Homeless Women Veterans: Actions Needed to Ensure Safe and Appropriate Housing, December 2011 (GAO-12-182)



## Summary Findings

- Data on the characteristics of homeless women veterans are limited to those who have been in contact with VA. **While HUD captures data on homeless women and on homeless veterans, neither HUD nor VA collect detailed information on homeless women veterans. Specifically, they lack data on the characteristics and needs of these women on a national, state and local level.**
- Homeless women veterans face barriers when accessing and using veterans housing, including lack of awareness of these programs, lack of referrals for temporary housing while awaiting placement in GPD & HUD-VASH housing, limited housing for women with children, and concerns about personal safety.

# Black Women Struggling with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

by Arielle Loren, April 11, 2012



- Dr. John D. Moore, a Professor of Health Sciences at the American Public University System, shares, “I have worked with some African American women who have returned from different overseas operations and have reported they were reluctant to seek out treatment for PTSD or other mental health issues because they feared they would be looked at as **‘weak’** by others.”
- African American women have become infamous for always wearing the “**strong woman complex**,” which has hurt them particularly in the realm of mental health and sexual trauma. But in the military, strength is certainly something that’s cultivated and encouraged to be exemplified. Women, in particular, constantly feel the pressure to measure up to their male counterparts, especially in combat zones, and African American women in the military experience another layer of pressure, as many are **breadwinners** for their families back home.
- “African American women particularly those I have worked with report intense concerns about being **‘kicked out’** of the military. We have to remember that many women today serving in our Armed Forces are the **breadwinners** for their family and that much of the small pay they receive is sent back home to support loved ones,” says Dr. Moore.



Recent studies by the Department of Defense reveal that black female veterans are disproportionately being left to fend for themselves. According to follow up studies, black women who are sexually traumatized in the military are one of the fastest growing segments of the homeless population.

Sexual assault is one of the military's most vicious secrets for women, a recent New York Times profile shows. One in three military women has been sexually assaulted, the Defense Department revealed – a rate twice as high as that for civilians.

A report conducted by the US Government Accountability Office showed that 45% of homeless veterans were black women, while 41% were White, 7.6% were Latina, and 1.3 were Asian. Most homeless female veterans served during the Persian Gulf and Iraq War periods.

The profile says, “while male returnees become homeless largely because of substance abuse and mental illness, experts say that female veterans face those problems and more, including the search for family housing and an even-harder time finding well-paying jobs. But a common pathway to homelessness for women, researchers and psychologist said, is military sexual trauma, or MST from assaults or harassment during their service, which can lead to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).



## **Black Female Veterans among growing Homeless Population, 2013**

# Black Female Veterans among Growing Homeless Population

## March 11, 2013 by Liane Membis



- What happens to women military soldiers once they return home from war is not widely discussed within the African-American community. However, recent studies by the Defense Department reveal that black female veterans are disproportionately being left to fend for themselves. **According to follow-up studies, black women who are sexually traumatized in the military are one of the fastest growing segments of the homeless population.**
- Sexual assault is one of the military's most vicious secrets for women, a recent [New York Times profile](#) shows. **One in three military women has been sexually assaulted, the Defense Department revealed – a rate twice as high as that for civilians.** A [report](#) conducted by the U.S. Government Accountability Office showed that 45 percent of homeless veterans were black women, while 41 percent were white, 7.6 percent were Latina and 1.3 percent were Asian. Most homeless female veterans served during the Persian Gulf and Iraq War periods.
- **The cause of the growing trend? Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder from sexual assaults that often go unreported due to fear of reprisal.** The profile says:
- “While male returnees become homeless largely because of substance abuse and mental illness, experts say that female veterans face those problems and more, including the search for family housing and an even-harder time finding well-paying jobs. But a common pathway to homelessness for women, researchers and psychologists said, is military sexual trauma, or M.S.T., from assaults or harassment during their service, which can lead to post-traumatic stress disorder.”



# Department of Defense documents relating to sexual assaults in the military

Gregg Zoroya & Tom Vanden Brook, USATODAY, May 7, 2013



- A new report shows that sexual assaults in the military have jumped by more than one-third since 2010.
- Pentagon estimates of how many troops are sexually assaulted show the numbers increased by 35% since 2010, from 19,300 service members believed to be victims that year to 26,000 in 2012, according to a Defense Department survey released...
- According to the Pentagon survey, only one in 10 people who were sexually abused stepped forward to complain last year. That amounted to 3,374 cases in 2012, of which only about 3,000 chose to press charges. ***“Far fewer victims report sexual assault that are estimated to experience it on an annual basis,”*** says a written summary of the Pentagon findings.
- The survey revealed that while the rate of men suffering sexual abuse has remained steady since 2010, the rate of female victims increased from about one in 23 to one in 16 last year.
- President Obama, also condemned the reported rise of sexual assaults within the military. *“Let’s start with the principal that sexual assault is an outrage, and it’s a crime.”*

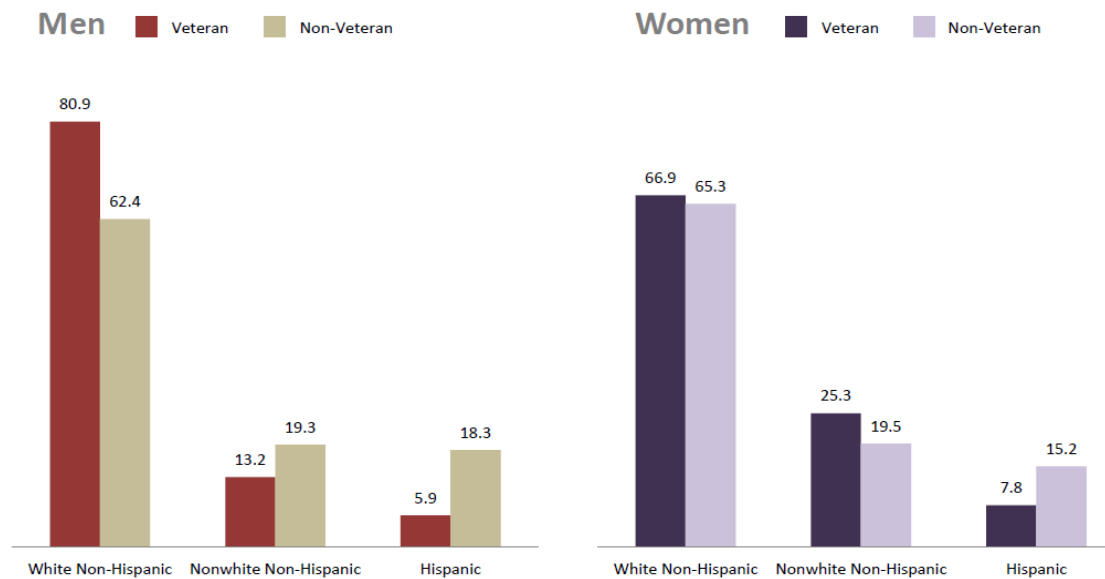
# National Center for Veterans Analysis & Statistics

Washington, DC



Male Veterans are more likely to be White not Hispanic than male non-Veterans. Female Veterans are more likely to be Nonwhite not Hispanic than non-Veteran women. Both male and female Veterans are less likely to be Hispanic than their non-Veteran counterparts.

**Race Distribution**  
(in percent)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey PUMS, 2011  
Prepared by the National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics

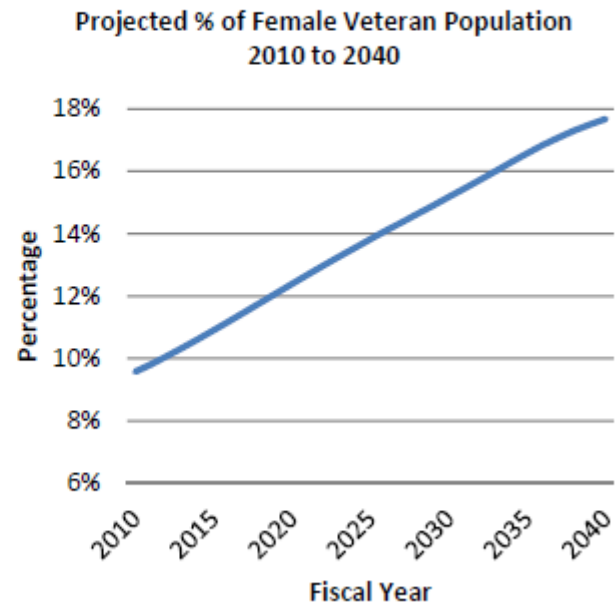
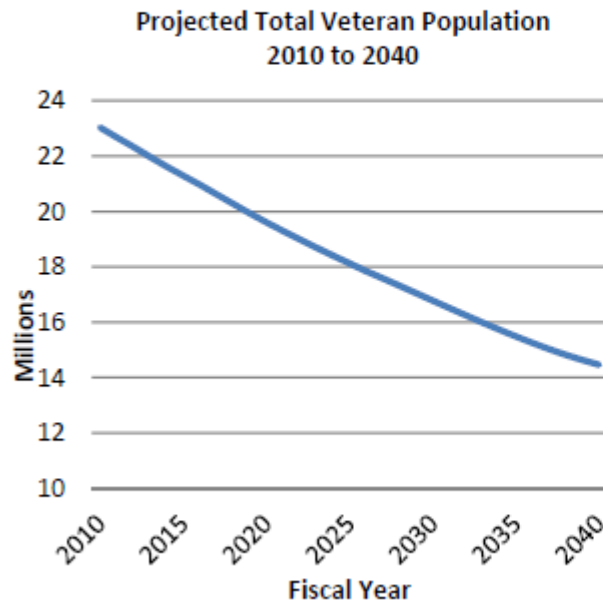
Note: "Nonwhite" includes Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, some other race, and two or more races.

# National Center for Veterans Analysis & Statistics

Washington, DC



## Veteran Population Projections: FY2010 to FY2040

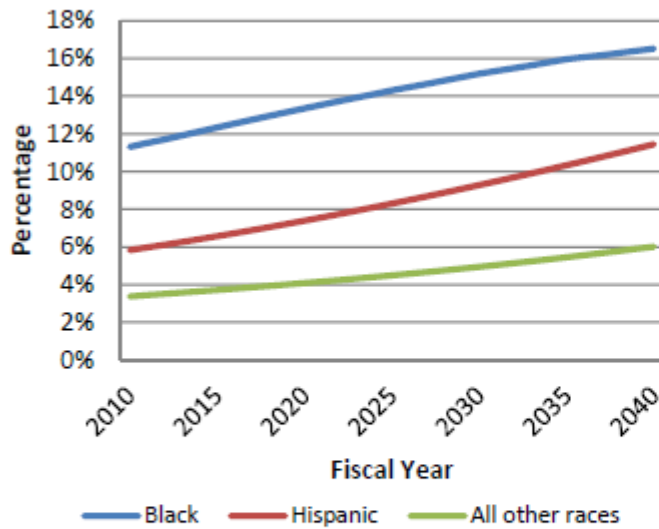


# National Center for Veterans Analysis & Statistics

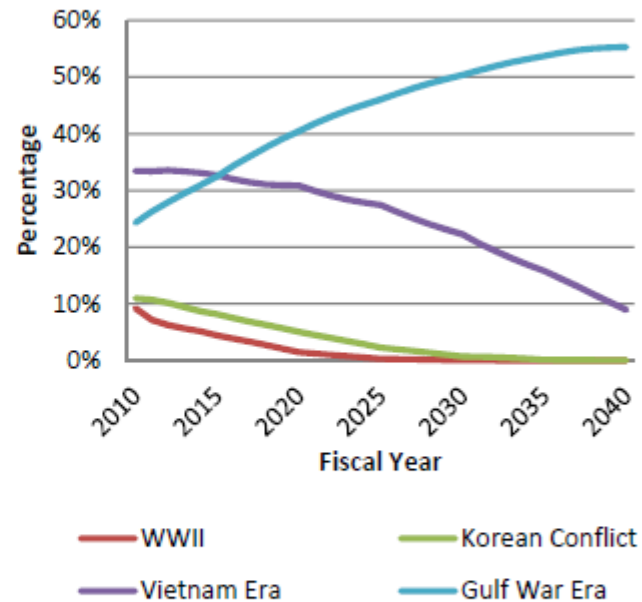
Washington, DC



**Projected % of Minority Veteran Population  
2010 to 2040**



**Projected % of Total Veteran Population by  
Period of Service, 2010-2040**



Note: Categories are mutually exclusive.  
'All other races' includes American Indian/Alaska Native,  
Asian, Pacific Islander, and Other.

Source: Office of the Actuary, Veteran Population Projections Model (VetPop2011) tables 1L, 3L and 2L.

# Issues Forums/National Sessions



The Braintrust serves not only as a forum for debate, but a national platform for advocacy (*or oasis for African American veterans in particular*) and as a national think tank group for public policy development

- “ 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Global War on Terrorism (2011)
- “ Supporting Our Troops, Preserving Their Families (2010)
- “ Coming Home: Transition From Military Service to Civilian Life (2009)
- “ 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of the Congressional Black Caucus Veterans Braintrust (2008)
- “ In the Name of Justice: Military Justice, or Injustice (2007)
- “ Grappling with Environmental Exposure and Health Disparities (2006)
- “ African American War Widows, Widowers and Gold Star Families (2005)
- “ Honoring African American Women Who Served (2004)
- “ The Path to Glory: The Congressional Medal of Honor, Navy Cross and Distinguished Service Cross (2003)

**The Question:** does it have the political will and public support nationally

Co-Chairs, Hons. Corrine Brown (D-FL), Sanford Bishop, Jr. (D-GA)  
& Charles Rangel (D-NY), Chairman Emeritus

# How the Veterans Braintrust is developing a stronger voice and national support network



- 1985 – The Black Veterans Working Group (*first documented issues forum*)
- 1992 – Heroes Today, Homeless Tomorrow
- 1993 – Health Care Issues Facing African American Veterans
- 2002 – Home of the Brave, Land of the Free: Homelessness among African American Veterans
- 2008 – Homelessness among Veterans: The Significance of VA Claims Processing
- 2010 – Homelessness among African American Veterans
- 2011 – The Homelessness Experience of African American Veterans

(Moore & Uhland et al, 2008; Carson, 2002; Rangel & NCH, 1991; BVWG, 1985)

## ...because



- First and foremost acts as a strategic intervention (for the voiceless, the invisible and ultimately the disadvantaged, disenfranchised and the displaced such as the homeless, helpless and hopeless)
- It offers a permanent, or national platform and continuity for ongoing public policy debate and development, and access to high level government officials
- Functions as a receptacle/receptor for African American veterans and families issues, complaints and concerns, while offering culturally relevant critique and a black perspective for the provision of continuing legislative remedies, in addition to expanding opportunities to engage in public policy debate and political involvement

# Let's look across the nation



- Obama's Homeless Veterans Summit: Ending Homelessness among Veterans within Five Years (November, 2009)
  - Los Angeles, CA, Detroit, MI & New York City = 20% of the entire homeless population, not to mention the other 25 top cities. So it's a balancing act... (Urban, suburban & rural)

Mark Johnston, HUD

**Note:** as of June 29, 2011, the US has a total population of 311,651,000, with 82% residing in cities and suburbs as of 2008



# Factors contributing to homelessness



- Poverty (poverty is closely tied to joblessness)
- Lack of support from family and friends
- Dismal living conditions (cheap hotels, overcrowding, or substandard housing)
- Male
- Single (majority)
- From poor and disadvantaged backgrounds (most)
- Mental illness, or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Lack of Affordable Housing
- Marital & Financial Difficulties
- Substance Abuse (Alcohol & Drugs)
- Unemployment & Underemployment (income disparities)
- **Single Mothers** (facing challenges with readjustment to civilian life)

# Some reasons why we need this discussion...



- VA disability claims are backlogged
- VA health administration doesn't deliver services on time
- 1 out of 3 returning soldiers diagnosed with PTSD, or TBI (Risk Factor)
- Less likely to acknowledge non-physical injuries (Risk Factor)
- Bravado, warrior ethos and training (Risk Factors)
- Army Reserves & National Guard multiple deployments (High Risk Factor)  
Lt. Gov. Anthony Brown of Maryland
- VA is organized to care for the veteran, not necessarily the family  
Drs. James Daley & Lorraine Blackman
- Minority veterans were found to be less informed about their care
- Less trusting and more skeptical
- More reliant on religion and spirituality to cope with illness
- More skeptical of information provided by health professionals
- Race congruence increased trust and enhanced the acceptance of care
- Non-Whites have less social support and resources available...  
Dr. Cedric Bright, MD

## Some reasons why we need these discussion... (cont'd)



- “ Underdiagnosis and misdiagnosis of psychiatric disorders, particularly affective disorders such as mood disorder, anxiety disorder and PTSD
  - “ Clinicians misconception, or bias
  - “ Environmental stressors of the inner city (combat zone)
  - “ Symptom presentation
  - “ Non-mental health practitioners (need to be educated)
  - “ Research study needs: large population studies, reliable structured interview methodology (or assessment instrument), examining limited number of cities, oversampling ethnic minorities, including individuals from the institutional setting (due to being overrepresented in jails and prison)
- Dr. William Lawson, MD, Ph.D.

- “ Trauma and African American veterans (Racism, Segregation & Discrimination)
  - “ Race related stressors
  - “ Historical experiences (before, during and after military service)
- For example: WWI widows denial of pensions (or benefits) and WWII veterans denial of access to housing loans and educational assistance (or equal opportunity); also limited participation in, or exclusion from veterans service organization such as American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars, etc...
- Dr. Michael Kane, Psy.D., MSW, LICSW

# Ramifications for Barriers to Treatment...



- Mental disorders are underrecognized, misdiagnosed, undertreated, and mistreated

Suicide Risk is increased

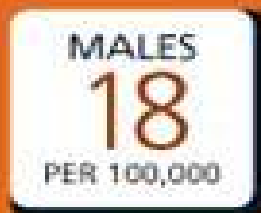
Lawson, William B., Howard University, Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Science, 2007

# Center for Disease Control Data, 2007



## DEADLY DATA

Suicide rates fluctuate with age, gender and ethnicity for reasons that aren't always clear. Men kill themselves more often than women; whites more often than blacks. Suicide rates generally rise with age. The elderly had the highest rate but recently were surpassed by the middle-aged. The numbers here are U.S. suicide rates per 100,000 population based on 2007 CDC data.



Source: Department of Health & Human Services, Centers for Disease Control & Prevention.

# Pilot Study Findings...



A study entitled ***Health Experience and Health Status of African American Veterans*** conducted by Northeastern University and the Tri-Ad Veterans League found the following:

- 78% recalled having experience of discrimination where they received health care services
- Two-thirds did not use the VA as their sole provider and 10% indicated a lack of willingness to use the VA
- **Conclusion:** Study needs to be enlarged to enhance intervention services for VA staff, mental health professionals and community practitioners on behalf of Boston's African American veteran community

Haywood Fennell, Sr., COO, Tri-Ad Veterans League, Inc.

# Most Recent Study Findings...



A study entitled: ***Prevalence & Risk of Homelessness among U.S. Veterans: A Multisite Investigation*** conducted by the Department of Veterans Affairs's National Center on Homelessness among Veterans found the following:

- Veterans were overrepresented in the homeless population
- The number of homeless veterans accounted for approximately 4% of males, and 5% for female black veterans in the general population
- When looking only at veterans living below the poverty threshold, homeless veterans were 15% (regardless of sex) of this population, with this rate increasing to 30% when only looking at Black veterans living in poverty
- The principal findings here indicate that veterans status is associated with a high risk of homelessness, and that a greater proportion of veterans were in the homeless population than in either the general population, or the population living in poverty.
- **Results:** Race, which was divided into Black and non-Black, shows that the homeless population, regardless of veterans status, was disproportionately Black

National Center on Homelessness among Veterans, 2011

# Veteran Homelessness: A Supplemental Report to the 2009 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress

Developed by a team of researchers from Abt Associate Inc., and the US Department of Veterans Affairs National Center on Homelessness Among Veterans



- **Summary of Major Findings:**

## Point in Time Estimates

- On a single night in January 2009, 73,609 veterans were homeless; 57% were staying in an emergency shelter or transitional housing program; and the remaining 43% were living on the street, in an abandoned building or another place not meant for human habitation (i.e. unsheltered).
- Veterans are overrepresented among the homeless population.

## One Year Estimates of Sheltered

- Just over 96% of sheltered veterans were individuals, and just less than 4% were veterans who were a part of a family.
- While homeless veterans make up less than 1% of all veterans, within the poverty population veterans are at greater risk of homelessness than non-veterans.

- **Executive Summary**

## Characteristics of Sheltered

- Homeless veterans are most often white men, between the ages of 31 and 50 years old, with a disability, and alone in a shelter.
- The small number of sheltered homeless veterans in families typically are younger, minority women and less likely to have a disability. However, sheltered homeless veterans in families are more likely to have a male adult present in the household than other homeless families.

## Veterans with High Risk

- Rates of homelessness among veterans living in poverty are particularly high for veterans identifying as Hispanic/Latino (1 in 4) or African American (1 in 4).
- Two groups of homeless veterans – women and people between age 18 and 30 – are small in number. However, female veterans and young veterans are at high risk of becoming homeless, and both groups are growing within the overall veteran population.

## Location of Homeless Veterans

- Almost half of homeless veterans on a given night were located in four states: California, Florida, Texas, and New York City. Yet, only 28% of all veterans were located within those same four states.
- The share of homeless veterans located in the densest urban areas (or principal cities) is more than twice that of all veterans (72% compared to 31%).



# Veteran Homelessness: A Supplemental Report to the 2009 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress



- About 24% of African American individual veterans with incomes below the poverty line were homeless at some point during 2009 ...
- African Americans were 1.8 times as likely to be in the homeless population than in the poverty population.
- African Americans were 1.6 times as likely to be homeless than to be a non-veteran living in poverty.
- African Americans were less likely to be homeless than their non-veteran counterparts in the U.S. adult population.
- In principal cities (or the densest urban areas) veterans were more likely to identify racially as African American than they were in suburban or rural areas.
- In 2009, about 72% of sheltered veterans, were in principal cities, and approximately 28% were in suburban or rural areas.
- **Please note:** This distribution was decidedly different than that of the total population, and the total veterans population in 2009.

# Race & Ethnicity as Risk Factors



- The rates of homelessness are much higher for veterans who are African American and Native American than for veterans who are not members of minority groups, particularly among those living in poverty.

Veteran Homelessness: A Supplemental Report  
to the 2010 Annual Homeless Assessment Report  
to Congress (October, 2011)

# Veterans for Common Sense v. Eric K. Shinseki



- The United States Court of Appeals for the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit in a sweeping decision ruled that “*unchecked incompetence*” by the Department of Veterans Affairs had led to poor mental health care and slow processing of disability claims for veterans.

*The court agreed with the plaintiff's claims that the Department must put mental health initiatives into effect “systemwide” and alter the disability adjudication process in its regional office.*

2011

# Homeless Black Vets: The Fight After the War

As we celebrate Memorial Day, the struggle continues for many of those who put their lives on the line for their country  
by Chris Williams, EBONY, May 2012



- Fifty-six percent of all homeless veterans are African American or Hispanic, with Blacks constituting thirty-four percent of the total number of homeless veterans.
- According to a report conducted by the US Interagency Council on the Homeless, “Forty-seven percent served during the Vietnam era while seventeen percent served post-Vietnam and fifteen percent served pre-Vietnam respectively.”
- “We know that black veterans are over represented in the homeless veterans population, but there has been marketed improvement since the study in 1999.” Driscoll said. “The study in 1999 showed that 54% of all homeless veterans were minorities, but the overwhelming majority of those were African Americans. The actual percentage at that time for black Americans was about 47%.”
- The Urban Institute contracted with the Federal government to do the first national survey on homeless veterans in 1996, called the national Survey of Homeless Assistance providers and Clients. When survey data was published three years later, it was revealed that one third of the homeless men in the country veterans and one fourth of the homeless persons in the country were veterans.
- The US Department of Veterans Affairs estimates today that 67,000 veterans are homeless on a nightly basis.
- “African American representation among the homeless veterans has decreased from 47% to 34% according to the latest estimates by the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Veterans Affairs,” Driscoll said. “So that shows improvement, but that’s still a high number and an overrepresentation.”

John Driscoll, President & CEO, National Coalition for Homeless Veterans

# Sources of Data



- Washington Urban League Pamphlet, 1978
- Monthly Labor Review, 1979 (Labor Department)
- The Legacy of Vietnam Study, 1981
- Report of the Working Group on Black Vietnam Veterans (WG-BW), 1984 (Readjustment Counseling Services, 10B/RC) Washington, DC
- The National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Study (NVVRS), 1988
- Urban Institute Homeless Study, 1988
- Clinical Assessment of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among American Minorities Who Served in Vietnam. Journal of Traumatic Stress, Vol 4, No 1, 1991 (Penk & Allen)
- Chief Minority Affairs Officer Report, 1991-92 (Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Policy & Planning, Washington, DC)
- Heroes Today, Homeless Tomorrow Report, 1991 (National Coalition for the Homeless)
- U.S. Census, 2000
- Homelessness among African American Veterans Issues Forum, 2002 (Late Rep. Julia Carson, D-IN)
- Rental Housing: Information on Low-Income Veterans' Housing Conditions and Participation in HUD's Programs. U.S. GAO Report, December 5, 2007 (GAO-08-3247)
- Are Male Veterans at Greater Risk for Nonemployment than Nonveterans. Monthly Labor Review, Dec, 2007 (Greenberg & Rosenheck)
- Racial & Ethnic Disparities in the VA Healthcare System: A Systemic Review, June 2007 (DVA, Veterans Health Administration, Health Services Research & Development Service, Washington, DC)
- Health Care Experience and Health Outcomes of African American Veterans Pilot Study. Northeastern University & Tri-Ad Veterans League, 2007
- Veterans Data Update 2008: Vital Mission Ending Homelessness among Veterans (Nat'l Alliance to End Homelessness, November 10, 2009)
- National Women Veterans Summit, 2008 (Department of Veterans Affairs)
- Homelessness among Veterans Issues Forum, 2008 (Hon. Gwen Moore, D-WI)
- Prevalence & Risk of Homelessness among U.S. Veterans: A Multisite Investigation. DVA National Center on Homelessness among Veterans, 2011
- Veterans Homelessness: A Supplemental Report to the 2010 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress, October, 2011
- Homeless Women Veterans: Actions Needed to Ensure Safe and Appropriate Housing. U.S. GAO Report, December 2011 (GAO-12-182)
- A Call to Advocate for America's Military Veterans. In 2012 State of Black America: Occupy the Vote to Educate, Employ & Empower, p94-99.
- Homeless Black Vets: The Fight After the War. In EBONY by Chris Williams, May 2012

## Congressman Al Green's Homes for Heroes Act of 2013, passes the House of Representatives



- On Wednesday, May 15, 2013, the House of Representative passed House Bill, H.R. 384, the Homes for Heroes Act of 2013 by a bipartisan vote of 420 to 3. This bill aims to help prevent low-income veteran families from falling into homelessness, as well as provide relief for those currently homeless. This bill does this by moving the Special Assistant for Veteran's Affairs into the Office of the Secretary of the Department for Housing and Urban Development (HUD), as a matter of law not discretion.
- This bill specifically requires an annual report on veteran's homelessness to be submitted to Congress. The Special Assistant would also help coordinate HUD's programs and activities relating to veterans and serve as a HUD liaison with the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA).
- The VA estimates that our nation has 22.2 million veterans. Of this number 4.3 million are homeowners who have disabilities, and 2.7 million are elderly veterans. Many disabled veterans face disproportionate housing costs, and are either at-risk of becoming homeless, or are already experiencing homelessness.

# Lawmakers press Obama on jobs in urban areas



- *President Barack Obama meets with the Congressional Black Caucus Executive Committee in the Oval Office March 30, 2011. Attending the meeting were Rep. Yvette Clarke, D-N.Y.; Rep. Donna Christensen, D-V.I.; Rep. Emanuel Cleaver, D-Mo.; Rep. Andre Carson, D-Ind.; and Rep. G. K. Butterfield, D-N.C.*

## First African American Policy Conference held at White House





# Congressional Black Caucus Veterans Braintrust

(Hons. Corrine Brown, D-FL, Sanford Bishop, Jr., D-GA & Charles Rangel, D-NY, Chairs )



## Thank You

- Ron E. Armstead, MCP, LSW, Executive Director  
617-331-3583  
cbcvbt@verizon.net

*“That those directly affected by a crisis are the ones who must take the initiative to bring about meaningful solutions aimed at enhancing rather than destroying the democratic process...”*

- Website: <http://veteransbraintrustonline.snappages.com>