

***PARTNERS IN THE FIGHT FOR WWI AND WWII AFRICAN AMERICAN  
WAR HEROES WHO WERE DENIED OUR NATION'S HIGHEST MILITARY HONOR***

**THE MEDAL OF HONOR**



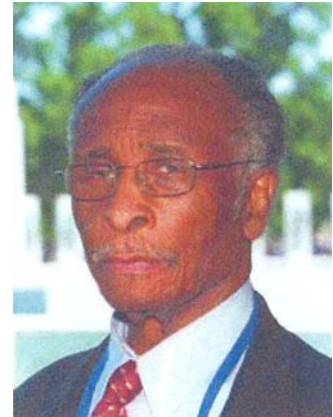
**Mickey Leland**

(1944—1989)



**Joe DioGuardi**

(1940- )



**Dr. Leroy Ramsey**

(1923—2013)

**THE PRESIDENT**

*welcomes you to*

**THE WHITE HOUSE**

*on the occasion of the presentation of the*

**MEDAL OF HONOR**



*Tuesday, June 2, 2015*

**CITATION**

*The President of the United States of America,  
authorized by Act of Congress,  
March 3, 1863, has awarded in the name of Congress  
the Medal of Honor to*

**PRIVATE**

**HENRY JOHNSON**

**UNITED STATES ARMY**

*For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life  
above and beyond the call of duty:*

Private Henry Johnson distinguished himself by extraordinary acts of heroism at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while serving as a member of Company C, 369th Infantry Regiment, 93d Infantry Division, American Expeditionary Forces on May 15, 1918, during combat operations against the enemy on the front lines of the Western Front in France. In the early morning hours, Private Johnson and another soldier were on sentry duty at a forward outpost when they received a surprise attack from a German raiding party consisting of at least 12 soldiers. While under intense enemy fire and despite receiving significant wounds, Private Johnson mounted a brave retaliation, resulting in several enemy casualties. When his fellow soldier was badly wounded and being carried away by the enemy, Private Johnson exposed himself to grave danger by advancing from his position to engage the two enemy captors in hand-to-hand combat. Wielding only a knife and gravely wounded himself, Private Johnson continued fighting, defeating the two captors and rescuing the wounded soldier. Displaying great courage, he continued to hold back the larger enemy force until the defeated enemy retreated leaving behind a large cache of weapons and equipment and providing valuable intelligence. Without Private Johnson's quick actions and continued fighting, even in the face of almost certain death, the enemy might have succeeded in capturing prisoners and the outpost, without abandoning valuable intelligence. Private Johnson's extraordinary heroism and selflessness above and beyond the call of duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, Company C, 369th Infantry Regiment, 93d Infantry Division and the United States Army.



### Criteria for Award

The Medal of Honor, established by Joint Resolution of Congress 12 July 1862 (amended by Act of 9 July 1918 and Act of 25 July 1963) is awarded in the name of Congress to a person who, while a member of the Armed Forces, distinguishes himself conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while engaged in an action against any enemy of the United States, while engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing foreign force; or while serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in an armed conflict against an opposing armed force in which the United States is not a belligerent party. The deed performed must have been one of personal bravery or self-sacrifice so conspicuous as to clearly distinguish the individual above his comrades and must have involved risk of life. Incontestable proof of the performance of service is exacted and each recommendation for award of this decoration is considered on the standard of extraordinary merit. Eligibility is limited to members of the Armed Forces of the United States in active Federal military service.

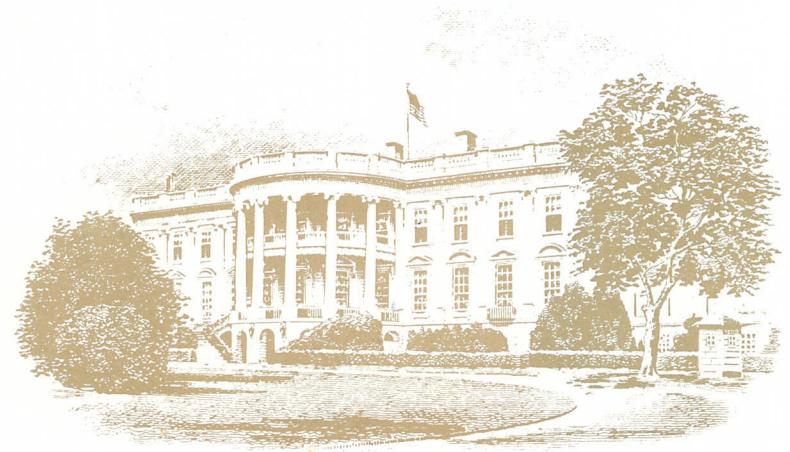
## Medal of Honor Presentation (Posthumously)

by

**George Bush**  
President of the United States of America

to

**Corporal Freddie Stowers**  
United States Army



East Room  
**The White House**  
Washington, D. C.

on  
April 24, 1991  
at  
three o'clock



# The New York Times

**EDITORIALS/LETTERS** TUESDAY, JANUARY 21, 1997

---

## More Blacks Deserve Honors as War Heroes

---

To the Editor:

As a former Republican Representative who, with the late Representative Mickey Leland, a Democrat, initiated the effort almost a decade ago to insure that deserving African-American veterans of both world wars would receive Congressional Medals of Honor, I applaud the awards made on Jan. 13 to seven African-American veterans of World War II who had been denied this nation's highest military honor because they were black (front page, Jan. 14). However, I protest the absence of historical perspective in your coverage.

In 1988, Mr. Leland and I introduced legislation to confer the Medal of Honor posthumously on black servicemen after a three-year campaign by Leroy Ramsey, a retired Albany educator who had discovered that none of the 549 medals awarded during the two world wars went to any of the 1.5 African-Americans on active duty.

The seven medals bestowed on Jan. 13 came about because the Army, acting in part on our original plan, awarded a grant to Shaw University, a historically black institu-

tion in Raleigh, N.C., to review potential African-American candidates for the medal. However, Shaw received a mandate to study only the Army and only World War II.

This was not what Mr. Leland and I agreed to in June 1988, when Defense Secretary Frank C. Carlucci asked us to abandon our attempt to open up the statute of limitations to award medals to Sgt. Henry Johnson of New York, a World War I veteran, and Seaman Dorie Miller of Texas, who served in World War II. At that time, Mr. Carlucci argued for a comprehensive study, lest we commit another injustice by awarding only two medals when many other black candidates probably existed.

Fortunately we were able to overcome the political obstacle and succeeded in getting the first medal awarded, in 1991, to Cpl. Freddie Stowers, who served in the Army in World War I.

We need to go back to the original plan to investigate candidates who were passed over for our nation's highest military award, in both the Army and Navy and for both world wars.

JOSEPH J. DIOGUARDI  
Ossining, N.Y., Jan. 16, 1997



Congressman  
**JOE DIOGUARDI**  
Serving Westchester County



Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce a bill which will eliminate a gross inequity that has existed for far too long in the history of the Congressional Medal of Honor.

DID YOU KNOW THAT OF THE ONE MILLION BLACKS WHO SERVED IN WORLD WAR II AND THE HALF-MILLION BLACKS WHO SERVED IN WORLD WAR I, NOT ONE, I REPEAT, NOT ONE, RECEIVED THE CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR IN EITHER WAR???

Blacks have been awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor in every other war since the inception of the Medal in the Civil War with the unusual exception of those who served in WWI and WWII.

Two perfect examples of blacks who were unjustly denied the Medal of Honor are Seaman Dorrie Miller and Sergeant Henry Johnson. Both men served their country above and beyond the call of duty; Seaman Miller was awarded the Navy Cross for his noble actions in WWII, and a ship was named in his honor. Sergeant Johnson was given France's highest military award, the Croix de Guerre, because of his acts of heroism against the Germans in WWI.

YET, INCREDIBLY, THESE MEN HAVE BEEN DENIED OUR COUNTRY'S HIGHEST HONOR, THE CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR. I URGE MY COLLEAGUES TO HELP ME CORRECT THIS OVERSIGHT BY SUPPORTING MY BILL WHICH WILL WAIVE THE FIVE-YEAR LIMITATION ON AWARDING THE MEDAL OF HONOR FOR THESE MEN.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

*Joe DiGuardi*  
OCTOBER 20, 1987



COMMITTEES  
BANKING, FINANCE AND  
URBAN AFFAIRS

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

SELECT COMMITTEE ON NARCOTICS  
ABUSE AND CONTROL

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

October 21, 1987

DISTRICT OFFICE  
1 NORTH BROADWAY, SUITE 901  
WHITE PLAINS, NY 10601  
(914) 997-6440

Dear Colleague:

Yesterday, we introduced legislation to correct a gross inequity that exists in the history of the Congressional Medal of Honor. OF A TOTAL OF 1 AND A HALF MILLION BLACKS WHO SERVED IN WORLD WAR I AND WORLD WAR II, NOT ONE RECEIVED THE CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR. THESE ARE THE ONLY TWO WARS SINCE THE INCEPTION OF THE MEDAL OF HONOR IN THE CIVIL WAR WHERE NO BLACKS WERE GIVEN THE AWARD.

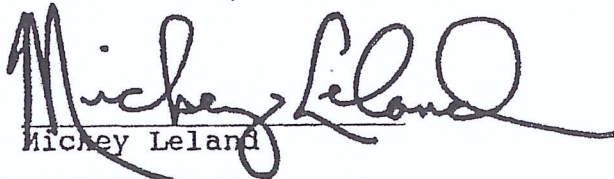
Two perfect examples of blacks who were unjustly denied the Medal of Honor are Seaman Dorrie Miller of Waco, Texas (WWII) and Sergeant Henry Johnson of Albany, New York (WWI). Both served their country above and beyond the call of duty. Seaman Miller was awarded the Navy Cross for his noble actions in WWII, and a ship was named in his honor. Sergeant Johnson was given France's highest military award, the Croix de Guerre, because of his acts of heroism in WWI.

Yet, incredibly, these men have been denied our country's highest honor, the Congressional Medal of Honor. The failure to award the Congressional Medal of Honor to these men is a slap in the face to all blacks who have fought so valiantly in the two major wars of this century to preserve the freedoms and liberties that we all cherish. Our bill would waive the statute of limitations on awarding the Medal for each man. Once the statute is waived, the Army and Navy could recommend these men to the President, who then could award the Medal on behalf of Congress.

In addition, we are writing a letter to Secretary of Defense Weinberger urging him to give a favorable recommendation to the President once the statute of limitations is waived by Congress. Your support for these measures will hopefully ensure that fair and equal treatment will be awarded to the soldiers who gave as much to their country as the 549 others who were awarded the Medal in WWI and WWII.

If you would like to join us in finally rectifying this unfortunate oversight, or if you need additional information, please contact Brita Forssberg at x56506.

Sincerely,

  
Joseph J. DioGuardi  
Mickey Leland



JOSEPH J. DiOGUARDI  
20TH DISTRICT NEW YORK

COMMITTEES  
BANKING, FINANCE AND  
URBAN AFFAIRS

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

SELECT COMMITTEE ON NARCOTICS  
ABUSE AND CONTROL

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

Washington, DC 20515

WASHINGTON OFFICE  
325 CANNON BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515  
(202) 225-6506

DISTRICT OFFICE  
1 NORTH BROADWAY, SUITE 901  
WHITE PLAINS, NY 10601  
(914) 997-6440

The Honorable Frank Carlucci  
Secretary of Defense  
The Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We are writing to urge you to reverse the stated opposition of the Department of the Army and the Department of the Navy to H.R. 3509 and H.R. 3510. These measures would enable the President to award the Congressional Medals of Honor posthumously to Sergeant Henry Johnson and Seaman Dorrie Miller, two black men eminently deserving of the Congressional Medal of Honor by all high standards, the only obstacle being that the statute of limitations has expired.

The sad fact is that of the 1.5 million blacks who served our country so valiantly in World War I and World War II, not one received our nation's highest honor, the Congressional Medal of Honor. H.R. 3509 and H.R. 3510 would waive the statute of limitations on awarding the Medal. As I'm sure you are aware, the Armed Services Committee is reluctant to act until a favorable recommendation is received from the Department of Defense. The refusal of the Department of Army and the Department of Navy to acknowledge this injustice is offensive to many who served our nation.

It is clear that both Sergeant Henry Johnson and Seaman Dorrie Miller acted above and beyond the call of duty. Sergeant Johnson, who served in France during WWI, received France's highest military honor, the Croix de Guerre. Yet, his own country refuses to recognize his bravery. Seaman Miller performed so bravely at the battle of Pearl Harbor that he received the Navy Cross, and a ship was named in his honor. He was killed in a torpedo attack. He, too, has been unfairly denied his country's highest honor.

It is time, Mr. Secretary, as a matter of fundamental justice, to change this oversight. Many Medals have been awarded after the five-year limitations statute has expired; we need to correct this as soon as possible. We look forward to your favorable response to this request.

Sincerely,



Joseph J. DiGuardi



Mickey Leland

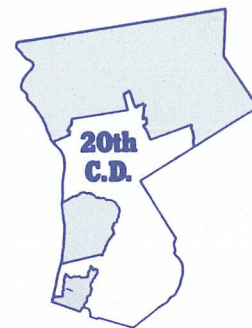
(JUNE 1, 1988)

(SUBMITTED TO SECRETARY CARLUCCI WITH 104 SIGNATURES)





Congressman  
**JOE DIOGUARDI**  
Serving Westchester County



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
June 8, 1988

CONTACT: Ari Fleischer  
(202) 225-6506 (o)  
(202) 547-4285 (h)

DIOGUARDI TO CARLUCCI: SERVE JUSTICE AND REVERSE THE DECISION

WASHINGTON - Congressional pressure on the Pentagon mounted today as 104 Congressmen sent a joint letter to Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci urging the Secretary to reverse a lower level pentagon decision refusing to grant the Congressional Medal of Honor to any black Americans from either the First or Second World War.

N  
Congressman Joe DioGuardi (R-NY), who is leading the Congressional effort to grant the Medals to the first black Americans from the World Wars, said, "The refusal of the Army and the Navy to grant our nation's highest military honor to a black American from the two World Wars is unacceptable. We are calling on Secretary Carlucci to correct this historical injustice and reverse the decision of his subordinates."

E  
One and a half million black Americans fought for the United States during the two World Wars. Despite the fact that 549 Medals of Honor were granted during the two wars, not one was granted to a black American.

W  
DioGuardi introduced legislation in October 1987 to correct this injustice by opening the statute of limitations for two specific servicemen. The Navy announced it would oppose DioGuardi on May 23rd and the Army made a similar announcement on May 13th.

S  
In the letter to Carlucci, DioGuardi wrote, "It is time, Mr. Secretary, as a matter of fundamental justice, to change this oversight. Many medals have been awarded after the five-year limitations statute has expired; we need to correct this as soon as possible."



# Battle to award blacks Medal of Honor widens

Cunneill News Service

WASHINGTON — What began as a one-man battle to award the first Medals of Honor to black World War I and World War II servicemen is now being waged by scores of people on Capitol Hill.

Reps. Joseph DioGuardi, R-N. Y., and Mickey Leland, D-Texas, have introduced legislation to confer posthumously the nation's top military honor to Seaman Doris "Dorrie" Miller of Waco, Texas, and Sgt. Henry Johnson of Albany, N. Y.

DioGuardi said the legislation has about 30 co-sponsors in the House.

The action stems from a 3½-year campaign by Leroy Ramsey, a retired Albany educator who discovered in 1984 that none of the 549 Medals of Honor awarded during the two world wars went to the 1.5 million black servicemen.

Ramsey said the U. S. omission contrasted with the 150 black soldiers who received the Croix de Guerre, France's highest military medal, during World War I.

One of them was Henry Johnson, who killed at least four Germans

and wounded at least a dozen others during a 1918 raid. He was shot three times and wounded by a grenade that shattered part of his shin bone, but he managed to rescue a comrade from capture by charging a soldier with a knife.

Miller was cited for actions during the Pearl Harbor attack on Dec. 7, 1941.

A cook third class in the Navy, Miller was said to have moved his mortally wounded captain out of the line of fire and manned a machine gun aimed at the Japanese planes.

A naval training station in Illinois and a ship were both named for him and he received the Purple Heart, the Navy Cross and the World War II victory medal, among others.

Miller subsequently was promoted to second-class mess attendant.

Jean Kirk, head of the Navy's Awards and Special Projects Branch, said while Miller was clearly a hero, "we will oppose it."

She said to waive the five-year statute of limitations on medal recommendations would be unfair to the "thousands" of other servicemen who received Navy Crosses.

MAY 31, 1988



# The Washington Post

FRIDAY, JUNE 3, 1988

*William Raspberry*

## Two Heroes, No Medals Of Honor

Rep. Joe DioGuardi (R-N.Y.) not only thought his bills to honor two black war heroes would be noncontroversial. He was also naive enough to imagine that the Army and the Navy might be grateful for a chance to correct what he deemed a historic "oversight."

But the services have turned down the New Yorker's attempt to grant posthumous Congressional Medals of Honor to Sgt. Henry Johnson, a World War I infantryman from Albany, and Seaman Dorrie Miller, a World War II hero from Waco, Tex.

As a result, the number of black servicemen to receive Congressional Medals of Honor for their heroism in the two world wars will remain at zero.

DioGuardi and Rep. Mickey Leland (D-Tex.), who joined him in introducing the bills to waive the time limit for granting the medals, have not accused the services of discrimination—just neglect. After all, black servicemen have won the nation's highest award for valor in all major conflicts going back to the Civil War, when 13 black soldiers were awarded the medal for their heroism in a single confrontation: the Battle of New Market Heights.

The seaman, who died two years later during a torpedo attack on his boat, was awarded the second highest honor, the Navy Cross, and a warship was later named in his honor.

But the services, while not discounting their heroism, have refused to go along with the attempts to grant Johnson and Miller the Congressional Medal.

The Navy made no official reply to congressional requests for comment on the proposed legislation, but the assistant secretary of the Army for manpower and reserve affairs cited time limitations, inadequate written records and the possibility of unfairness for the Army's refusal to support the DioGuardi bill.

The apparently fruitless legislation cites Johnson for his actions during World War I when, as a member of a black infantry unit from New York assigned to a French division, he and another soldier were attacked by 12 Germans. Johnson, using his rifle and a knife, repelled the attack and, though wounded by gunshot and a grenade, managed to rescue his fellow soldier.

The French government honored Johnson with its highest award, the *Croix de Guerre*.

Miller was on duty at Pearl Harbor during the Japanese attack that brought the United States into World War II. "In the face of enemy strafing and bombing," the legislative proposal recounts, "Miller assisted in moving his mortally wounded captain to a place of greater safety and then returned to man a machine gun directed at the attacking Japanese air force. He did not abandon his position until ordered to do so later in the battle. Miller's actions are especially heroic due to the fact that he was a mess steward, the only duty available to blacks in the Navy."

"Although former Sgt. Johnson displayed great courage by his gallantry in action," Delbert L. Spurlock Jr. wrote, "the Department of the Army has consistently found it necessary to refrain from supporting the many requests received each year for exemptions from the time limitations applicable to the award of the Medal of Honor."

The law requires that recommendations for awarding the medal and descriptions of the heroism occasioning the recommendations be made within three years of the act.

"In the past, the Department of the Army has received correspondence from members of Congress and others, requesting that special consideration be given to awarding the Medal of Honor to former Sgt. Johnson for his heroic act, as racial prejudice may have been a factor in his not being recommended for the award," Spurlock wrote.

"Although no black soldier was awarded the Medal of Honor during World War I, approximately 50 black soldiers were awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the Army's second highest award for valor in combat, for their extraordinary heroism in World War I. At this late date, it would be inappropriate to single out former Sgt. Johnson for award of the Medal of Honor and to provide preferential treatment to him over the thousands of other black soldiers who served so bravely in combat."

The Department of the Navy apparently agrees—to the outrage of DioGuardi and Leland.

Says the New York congressman, "The statute of limitations is for criminals, not for heroes."



# Where are black medal winners?

## Pentagon to investigate whether racism influenced selection process

By Letta Tayler  
States News Service

WASHINGTON — Saying racism may be to blame, Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci has launched an investigation into whether black servicemen were unjustly denied Medals of Honor during the two world wars.

The action followed pressure from 130 members of Congress who introduced legislation calling on the Pentagon to explain why none of the 1.5 million blacks who served in the two wars received a Medal of Honor, the nation's highest military award.

The bill, written by Reps. Joseph DioGuardi, R-N.Y., and Mickey Leland, D-Texas, also urged the Pentagon to posthumously award the medals to a New York Army sergeant and a Texas seaman, both of whom were black.

"It is clear that unjust discrimination existed during World Wars I and II that could well have extended to individual decisions leading to the awarding of medals," Carlucci said in a Sept. 30 letter to DioGuardi that announced the probe.

"The investigation will examine the extent to which racial discrimination might have been part of those conditions," Carlucci's letter said.

If the study finds cases where blacks were unjustly denied Medals of Honor, awards could be granted to them retroactively, said Pentagon spokesman Maj. David Super.

The Pentagon has awarded 3,408 Medals of Honor since 1863, of which 575 were handed out for the two world wars. But only 61 of the prestigious awards have gone to blacks, most of them during the Civil War, the Indian campaigns and Vietnam.

DioGuardi, who released the letter yesterday, said the study could correct "an historic injustice."

"This is an admission that there was discrimination against blacks when it came to awarding the most prestigious medals," he said.

Super said the investigation will include a special look at the service of two blacks whom DioGuardi and Leland believe deserve posthumous Medals of Honor.

One of the servicemen, Army Sgt. Henry Johnson of Albany, received France's Croix De Guerre for combat bravery in the all-black "Hellfighters from Harlem" infantry regiment during World War I.

The other, Seaman Dorrie Miller of Waco, Texas, received the Navy Cross — the Navy's second-highest honor — for defending the USS West Virginia during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

In March, the Army started reviewing its official history of the all-black 24th infantry regiment, which served in Korea, to see if it shortchanged the unit's role in the war.



# Metro

COUNTY / REGION / STATE

Gannett Westchester Newspapers/Thursday, April 25, 1991

## Medal of Honor finally awarded to a black WWI soldier

DioGuardi says race  
a likely factor in delay

By Ellyn Ferguson

Gannett News Service

WASHINGTON — President Bush awarded a posthumous Medal of Honor yesterday to Cpl. Freddie Stowers, making him the first black soldier from World War I to win the military's highest award for valor.



Joseph DioGuardi

received in a battle to capture a hill in France.

Bush offered no explanation for the delay to an audience that included Stowers' family, Vice President Dan Quayle, Defense Secretary Dick Cheney and Gen. Colin Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

But former New York Rep. Joseph DioGuardi, who attended the ceremony in the East Room, said race probably played a role.

The conservative Republican teamed with the late Rep. Mickey Leland, a liberal Texas Democrat, in 1987 to push the Department of Defense to review records of black veterans in both world wars. He started after discovering that none of the 1.5 million black men who served the United States in those wars had been awarded a Medal of Honor.

To DioGuardi, that "just wasn't statistically possible." In America's other wars, blacks had won Medals of Honor.

The Pentagon's review found that Stowers had been recommended after leading Company C of the 371st Infantry Regiment, 93rd Division, in a battle for Hill 188 in the Champagne Marne sector of France. He was wounded by a machine gun but continued to lead his men until he died.

There had been no action taken on the recommendation.

In November 1990, the military again recommended that Stowers receive the medal posthumously. The president agreed.

Yesterday, Bush praised Stowers as "a true hero, a man who makes us proud of our heritage as Americans, a man who in life and death helped keep America free. . . ."

Stowers' sisters, Mary Bowen, 80, and Georganna Palmer, 88, nodded as the president spoke. Neither spoke during the ceremony.

DioGuardi said he was pleased with the resolution of the Stowers' case.

However, he will continue to press for similar recognition for Henry Johnson of Albany, N.Y., who won the French Croix de Guerre during World War I, and for Seaman Dorie Miller of Waco, Texas, who won the Navy Cross for actions during the attack on Pearl Harbor.



# ALBANY DISTRICT

## 369th VETERANS' ASSOCIATION, INC.



URBAN LEAGUE BUILDING • 95 LIVINGSTON AVENUE ALBANY, NEW YORK 12210

April 18, 1987

The Honorable Joseph J. DioGuardi  
50 Baraud Road  
Scarsdale, New York 10583

Dear Congressman DioGuardi:

I take great pleasure in addressing this letter of thanks and appreciation to you on behalf of the members of the Albany District Chapter of the 369th Veterans Association.

We have been kept very much aware of your efforts in the interest of former Sergeant Henry Johnson, a World War I hero from New York's 369th Infantry Regiment. Many of us have felt all along that Sergeant Johnson deserved the Congressional Medal of Honor for his acts of valor on the night of May 14, 1918. We were, however, unable to make the progress that we desired.

The progress that you and Dr. Ramsey have been able to make in that regard has been quite pleasing to us. We especially appreciate your sponsorship of H.R.3509, the bill to waive the statute of limitations and allow the award to be given to Sergeant Johnson posthumously for his act of valor that occurred more than 70 years ago. We also appreciate the similar effort that you have put forth in the interest of Doris Miller, the black sailor from Waco, Texas who was a hero at Pearl Harbor.

Your hand-delivery of letters to the President and the Secretary of Defense on behalf of these two brave servicemen was most impressive. We are in agreement your press release that they deserve the Congressional Medal of Honor "BECAUSE IT'S RIGHT." We have had that feeling all along, and it is indeed heartwarming to know that you feel the same way.

You may rest assured that you have not only our support in this endeavor, you also have our offer of assistance.

Before closing, allow me to say that your tireless effort in getting an additional 140 members of the United States House of Representatives to become co-signers of this measure was well received by all of us.

Respectfully yours,

*Gordon Van Ness*

**NATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT**  
DOUGLASS W. JOHNSON

**DISTRICT OFFICERS**

**PRESIDENT**  
Gordon D. VanNess

**1st VICE PRESIDENT**  
Samuel Praylor

**2nd VICE PRESIDENT**  
James A. Dandles

**RECORDING SECRETARY**  
Clarence R. Watson

**CORRESPONDING SECRETARY**  
Leroy L. Ramsey

**TREASURER**  
Maurice Thronton

**ASSISTANT TREASURER**  
Henry F. Shadrick

**CHAPLAINS**  
Rev. Carl B. Taylor  
Rev. Allan A. Stanley  
Rev. Arthur T. Moore  
Rev. James C. Waters

**SERGEANT-AT-ARMS**  
Thomas Richardson

**COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN**

**Joint Activities**  
Conrad L. Duncan

**Auditing**  
Henry F. Shadrick

**Convention**  
Gladys S. Carter  
Oscar E. Carter

**Historical**  
Leroy L. Ramsey

**Housing**  
Dorsey M. Whitehead

**Hospitality**  
Claude E. Joseph

**Legislation**  
Douglass W. Johnson

**Membership & Reclamation**  
Douglass W. Johnson  
Rev. Arthur T. Moore

**Nominating**  
Charles Tigner

**Resolution & By-Laws**  
Clifford M. Johnson

**Veterans Affairs**  
James H. Bouldin

**Youth Activities**  
Clarence Parker

**Welfare**  
Rev. Arthur T. Moore



# Editorial Page

Gannett Westchester Newspapers/Tuesday, April 30, 1991

## A good deed from ex-congressman

Former Westchester Congressman Joe DioGuardi deserves a round of applause for his persistence. He had a lot to do with President Bush last week presenting a posthumous Medal of Honor to the first black soldier from World War I.

After a 73-year wait, the nation's highest award for valor was presented to the family of Cpl. Freddie Stowers, who died Sept. 28, 1918, of wounds suffered during a battle in France. The military had years ago recommended that the 21-year-old South Carolina soldier receive the award, but no action was ever taken.

DioGuardi, a conservative Republican who had been asked to seek recognition of black World War I hero Henry Johnson, who joined a black National Guard unit at Peekskill, got involved in 1988. DioGuardi, convinced by black historian Leroy Ramsey of Albany

that race was the key reason black war heroes were overlooked, joined the late Rep. Mickey Leland, a liberal Texas Democrat, to push for a U.S. Defense Department review of the military records of black veterans in both world wars.

Even after his defeat for re-election in November 1988, DioGuardi continued to push former colleagues in Congress and top defense department officials to conduct the review. Last November, the military again recommended that Stowers receive the medal posthumously and Bush agreed.

Inspired by this victory, DioGuardi says he's more committed than ever to get similar recognition for other deserving black soldiers such as Johnson, who won the French Croix de Guerre during World War I.

Carry on, Mr. DioGuardi. Carry on.



## TIME TO HONOR BLACK HEROES

### HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 24, 1991

#### TIME TO HONOR BLACK HEROES

(By former Congressman Joe DioGuardi)

Twenty-one year old Henry Johnson of New York wanted to be part of an American Army, but the Army didn't want him—because he was Black in a regiment commanded by Black officers.

The year was 1917, and America had gone to Europe to fight in a world war against the Kaiser and the "Huns". There were Black soldiers in the U.S. Army, to be sure, but always in units whose officers were "dependable" whites. Henry Johnson had enlisted in the 15th New York National Guard, a unit with Black officers. Since the segregated U.S. Army could not accept the idea that Black Americans could lead troops in battle, the 15th was sent off to fight with the French Army.

Sergeant Henry Johnson and his squad were put out in a forward listening post in the Argonne Forest. Their job was to get early warning of German patrols probing out across no-man's-land, possibly marking the path for a major attack on the French lines. About midnight on that dark night, a strong German patrol moved in silence across the shell-pocked fields with an unusual goal; to capture and learn more about these new Black American soldiers.

Henry Johnson's buddy Needham Roberts first heard the noise, and Henry fired an illuminating flare. Exposed, the German patrol rushed Johnson's position, throwing grenades. Roberts fell back, badly wounded, but Johnson, his leg broken by a grenade fragment, brought down three attackers with well-aimed rifle shots, then another with the butt.

Johnson looked across the dugout to see three Germans dragging his wounded buddy Roberts over the parapet edge. Hobbled on one good leg, Johnson lurched across the dugout and killed another German with his knife. As reinforcements appeared, the Germans fled, dodging Johnson's grenades until they were out of range of his arm.

At least a dozen battle-hardened German soldiers attacked Henry Johnson's position. They failed in their mission, leaving four of their number dead at his feet. The grateful French government bestowed upon Henry Johnson that nation's highest award for valor the coveted Croix de Guerre.

Skip ahead now to that fateful day of December 7, 1941, when Japanese planes roared down out of the sky to inflict a terrible blow upon the U.S. Navy, at anchor in Pearl Harbor. On duty on the battleship West Virginia that December dawn was Seaman Dorrie Miller. The U.S. Navy allowed Blacks to serve on ships, but not to fight. Dorrie Miller served the food. Before that hour of hell was over, Dorrie Miller was serving lead to the diving Japanese attackers.

When the bombers hit the West Virginia, its skipper was mortally wounded. Amid a hail of shot and shell, mess steward Dorrie Miller moved his captain to a place of safety. Then this untrained mess steward, "not white enough to fight" by Navy standards of that day, manned an abandoned machine gun emplacement and took on the Japanese Air Force face to face. He gave up his position only when ordered to do so later in the battle. For his heroism under enemy fire, Dorrie Miller won the Navy Cross and, after he was killed in action two years later a warship was commissioned in his honor.

Of the million and a half Black Americans who served their country in two great World Wars, Henry Johnson and Dorrie Miller stand at the forefront for conspicuous gallantry under enemy fire. But neither Johnson nor Miller, nor any other Black servicemen, were awarded the nation's highest decoration for bravery in combat, the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Black servicemen have won the Congressional Medal in every other war going back to the Civil War. Black heroes won the Medal in Korea and in Viet Nam. But to this day the Defense Department has resisted every effort to confer the nation's highest tribute on brave men like Henry Johnson and Dorrie Miller.

I know, for securing the Congressional Medal of Honor for these two American heroes was a cause I undertook during my years in Congress. My partner in this just cause was the late and beloved Representative Mickey Leland of Texas, whose tragic death in a plane accident on a mercy mission to hunger-ravaged Ethiopia was a tremendous loss for the whole world.

In October of 1987 Mickey and I lined up well over 100 fellow Members of Congress, representing all points on the political spectrum, as co-sponsors of legislation to extend the statute of limitations to award Congressional Medals to Sergeant Henry Johnson and Seaman Dorrie Miller. Perhaps naively, we thought such broad support in Congress would assure easy passage. We were wrong.

The Defense Department had lots of reasons why our bills should be dismissed. Henry Johnson got the Croix de Guerre, because he fought with the French Army; that should be enough. Dorrie Miller got the Navy Cross and that should be enough. Too many years had gone by to reopen the cases. It would be unfair to bestow this high award on just two servicemen, ignoring the heroism of so many others, etc., etc.

Now Mickey and I (and many other Congressmen) understood that the racism which permeated the armed forces in the days of Johnson and Miller meant that many meritorious cases would never be reopened and treated fairly. But we firmly believed that bestowing the Congressional Medal on these two heroes, even years after the fact, would not only correct two clear cases of justice denied, but also atone for the slights suffered by so many. As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. would have put it, too many brave men were judged not on the content of their character, but on the color of their skin. "When justice is threatened anywhere, it is threatened everywhere."

Because of Defense Department opposition, Congress took no action on the bills Mickey and I introduced. But now we are in a new decade with a new Congress. In honor not only of two long-fallen war heroes, but also of my fallen friend and colleague Mickey Leland, I am working to persuade the Defense Department, at long last, that the time has come to confer our nation's highest award on Henry Johnson and Dorrie Miller, as two outstanding heroes among the gallant Black Americans who rose to the defense of their country in time of war.



May 27, 2009

Letters to the Editor  
The New York Times  
229 West 43<sup>rd</sup> St.  
New York, NY 10036

Via fax at (212) 556-3622/ [letters@nytimes.com](mailto:letters@nytimes.com)

**Re: "Tuskegee Airmen: Long Unrecognized, Now Celebrated" (Anne Barnard, May 25)**

Reading Anne Barnard's article on Memorial Day brought back memories of the bipartisan battle that the late Representative Mickey Leland and I waged against our military establishment over twenty years ago. We brought to light an historic injustice: that many deserving African American veterans of both World Wars I and II did not receive Congressional Medals of Honor because of racism. In fact, incredibly, until we took up the challenge, not one African American had received our nation's highest military honor during the two world wars, even though 1,550,000 served and 549 medals were awarded to others.

Fortunately, Mickey and I were able to overcome serious political and bureaucratic obstacles in succeeding to get the first medal awarded posthumously by President George H.W. Bush at a White House ceremony that I attended in 1991, to Corporal Freddie Stowers, who served in the army in World War I. (Tragically, Mickey had just died in a plane crash on a humanitarian mission to Africa.) Seven more medals were awarded on January 13, 1997, by President Clinton, to African American army heroes who served in World War II as a result of an official study conducted to determine how many more African American heroes received our nation's second highest award (The Distinguished Service Cross), but were denied our nation's highest military honor because they were black. Unfortunately, I still believe that not enough has been done to make up for the blatant racism that existed in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially with segregated army divisions, in World Wars I and II.

Even though the military has said that the relevant files from World War I have been lost, at the least President Barack Obama should now recommend that all African American war heroes from World War I, who were assigned to serve under French commanders and were given France's highest military honor, the Croix de Guerre, be awarded Congressional Medals of Honor posthumously. At the top of the list of those who received the Croix de Guerre should be Sergeant Henry Johnson of Albany, New York, who served in Europe with the 369<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the U.S. Army in World War I and whose extraordinary heroism was publicly recognized on February 17, 1919, in a parade up New York City's Fifth Avenue upon his unit's return from Europe. Sadly, Johnson died inconspicuously in the vicinity of Washington, DC, in 1929, at the age of 32, while he was trying to obtain a military pension.

Hon. Joseph J. DioGuardi  
U.S. House of Representatives, 1985-1989  
Ossining, NY  
(914) 671-8583



100TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 3509

For the relief of Henry Johnson.

---

## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 20, 1987

Mr. DIOGUARDI (for himself and Mr. LELAND) introduced the following bill;  
which was referred to the Committee on Armed Services

---

## A BILL

For the relief of Henry Johnson.

1       *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*  
3 That the time limitations specified in section 3744(b) of title  
4 10, United States Code, shall not apply with respect to  
5 awarding a medal of honor under section 3741 of such title to  
6 Henry Johnson (service number 10-33-48) for acts of hero-  
7 ism during World War I while a sergeant in the United  
8 States Army.



100TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 3510

For the relief of Dorris Miller.

---

## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 20, 1987

Mr. DIOGUARDI (for himself and Mr. LELAND) introduced the following bill;  
which was referred to the Committee on Armed Services

---

## A BILL

For the relief of Dorris Miller.

1       *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2       *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*  
3       That the time limitations specified in section 6248(a) of  
4       title 10, United States Code, shall not apply with respect to  
5       awarding a medal of honor under section 6241 of such title to  
6       Dorris Miller (service number 356-12-35) for acts of heroism  
7       during World War II while a member of the United States  
8       Navy.





## Elramco Enterprises, Inc.

Dr. Leroy L. Ramsey  
President and Publisher

May 10, 1996

In Perspective of *THE BLACK*  
*AMERICAN VETERAN* magazine

Basic Printing Company

Nobel Greeting Cards

The Honorable Joseph J. DioGuardi  
2 Croton Avenue  
Ossining, New York 10562

Dear Joe:

As the effort to see to it that former African American military persons receive the same recognition as Americans of European descent, I am very pleased to report that our effort of the mid-1980's has continued to move forward. We all have noticed that President Clinton is endeavoring to reward a group of African American World War II heroes with the Medal of Honor. That is the object of this correspondence.

This effort which was begun in 1984, and joined by you almost immediately, has made some progress over the years. Your support and enthusiasm for this endeavor while you were in Congress has never left or been reduced by you over the years. I have always seen this as a tribute to your fairness for all people, regardless of race, creed or color. I am pleased to say that without your assistance this matter never would have reached its current status. Your bi-partisan humanism has been very beneficial.

As you will note by the attached copy of your letter, it was you who responded to Governor Cuomo's request to assist me in the endeavor. It was you who helped tell the nation of our effort on "CBS This Morning." It was you who pressured Defense Secretary Carlucci to recognize the fact that a serious miscarriage of justice had been made when he authorized a national study of potential African American heroes who might deserve the Medal of Honor.



It was you who helped me by personally bringing the matter to President Reagan in which it received attention from the White House. It was you who introduced the bill in Congress (assisted by the late Congressman Mickey Leland) to waive the statute of limitation and make the awarding of the Medal possible.

I shall never forget how you personally took the proposed Bill in hand and lobbied members of Congress from both sides of the aisle: black, white, liberal, conservative, male and female, to get that 142 members of Congress to sign the Bill and become co-sponsors.

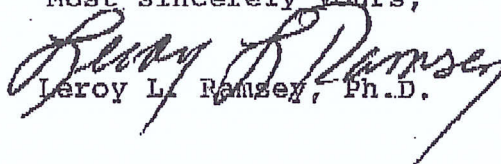
As if you had not done enough, Joe, you personally brought your mother up to Albany with you when you served as guest speaker Sergeant Henry Johnson's old unit, the 369th Veterans' Association. And you did it all at your personal expense, refusing to even take travel expense when you were running for re-election. No one, not even me, gave you one red cent.

It appears that the effort has made a small change, Joe. We were interested in all African American veterans from both World Wars I and II, involving the Army and the Navy. The current effort seems to have been restricted to the Army and World War II.

I suggest that we use every resource at our command to assist those in the current effort in making sure that the ends of their effort are realized. However, we should go further. We should attempt to have the original study pursued since it was comprehensive in nature, concentrating on the Army and the Navy in World Wars I and II.

I hope that you find this proposed course of action acceptable, and that we will be able to cooperatively continue to pursue the task which is so necessary.

Most sincerely yours,

  
Leroy L. Ramsey, Ph.D.

Attachments







HON. JOSEPH DIOGUARDI  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS  
1985 — 1989

CHAIRMAN  
TRUTH IN GOVERNMENT  
2 CROTON AVENUE  
OSSINING, NY 10562  
(914) 762-5530  
FAX (914) 762-5102

DIRECTOR  
COALITIONS FOR AMERICA  
717 SECOND AVENUE, NE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20002

June 29, 1996

William Raspberry  
The Washington Post Writers' Group  
1150 15th St., NW  
Washington, DC 20071

Dear Bill,

It's been some time since we spoke. I continue to read your syndicated columns and I haven't forgotten the wonderful piece you wrote on June 3, 1988, entitled "Two Heroes, No Medals of Honor." I'm attaching a copy of that article and the front page of a cover story from the May 6, 1996 issue of *U.S. News & World Report* for your ease of reference, together with a letter that I received last month from Dr. Leroy Ramsey, the Black historian who worked with me and Congressman Mickey Leland on the issue of awarding Congressional Medals of Honor to African American war heroes from World Wars I and II.

As you may know, the lengthy *U.S. News & World Report* essay on Congressional Medals for African American War heroes came about because the U.S. Army, acting in part on the original plan, awarded a grant to Shaw University, an historically Black institution in Raleigh, North Carolina, to review potential African American candidates for the Congressional Medal of Honor. However--and this is one of the problems that must now be rectified--Shaw received a mandate to study only the Army and only World War II. This is not what Mickey and I agreed to in June 1988, when Secretary of Defense Carlucci asked us to abandon our attempt to open up the statute of limitations to award medals to Sergeant Henry Johnson (NY-WWI) and Seaman Dorie Miller (TX-WWII). At that time, Carlucci knew that Mickey and I already had more than 150 signatures from both Republicans and Democrats in the House of the 218 required. Carlucci argued for a comprehensive study, lest we commit another injustice by awarding only two medals when many other Black candidates probably existed.

Now, in 1996, only part of the story that emerged in 1987 is being revealed. To compound matters further, I understand that certain members of Congress who wanted the statute of limitations opened in 1987 are now unwilling to revisit this issue and, in effect, are blocking the issuance of the medals recommended by the army (based on the Shaw



University study) for seven Black World War II veterans. Is it possible that some of the Republican members among them are stonewalling because they do not want President Clinton to get credit for issuing these medals in an election year?

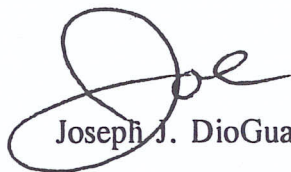
In 1988, you ended your article by quoting me as saying that, "The statute of limitations is for criminals, not war heroes." It is ironic that, eight years later, the statute of limitations is again being invoked, this time in a Republican-controlled Congress, to deny medals, even where they have been investigated and selected by an expert, independent research group.

As one of the two people who started this campaign (as you know, Mickey died shortly after we met with Carlucci in June 1988), I would like to see the record set straight. The African American servicemen who deserve this honor (and there are probably dozens of them) continue to be victimized by partisan posturing and token solutions. I hope that you can help bring attention to the continuing injustice being perpetrated against Black American war heroes, some of whom are still alive. We need to go back to the original plan to investigate candidates who were passed over for our nation's highest military award, in both the Army and Navy and for both World Wars I and II. In the meantime, the seven heroes recently identified should receive Congressional Medals immediately. If you decide to pursue this, and I hope you do, I will be happy to share with you my extensive files.

There are plenty of reasons to resolve this problem once and for all, including the now recognized institutional racism that victimized Black American soldiers and sailors in the two world wars. We should not perpetuate injustice with half truths, partial solutions, and inexcusable delays.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Joe", with a large, stylized loop at the beginning.

Joseph J. DioGuardi



HON. JOSEPH DIOGUARDI  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS  
1985 — 1989

CHAIRMAN  
TRUTH IN GOVERNMENT  
2 CROTON AVENUE  
OSSINING, NY 10562  
(914) 762-5530  
FAX (914) 762-5102

DIRECTOR  
COALITIONS FOR AMERICA  
717 SECOND AVENUE, NE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20002

January 16, 1997

Katherine Roberts  
Op-Ed Editor  
The New York Times  
229 West 43rd St.  
New York, NY 10036

Dear Ms. Roberts:

On January 14, *The New York Times* ran a front-page story by James Bennet, entitled "Medals of Honor Awarded at Last to Black World War II Veterans." The article celebrated President Clinton's acknowledgment of seven African American U.S. Army veterans who had been denied this nation's highest military honor after the Second World War because they were Black.

As a former Republican Congressman who with the late Democratic Congressman Mickey Leland initiated the effort almost a decade ago to ensure that deserving African American veterans of both World Wars I and II would receive Congressional Medals of Honor, I certainly applaud the awards made on January 13, 1997. Nevertheless, I must protest the absence of historical perspective in your coverage of this event.

Your readers should know that this week is the culmination of an effort that began nine years ago with two congressman--one white, the other Black, one Democrat, the other Republican. Our introduction of legislation in 1988 to confer posthumously the Congressional Medal of Honor on Black servicemen stemmed from a three-year campaign by Leroy Ramsey, a retired Albany educator who discovered that none of the 549 medals awarded during the two world wars went to African Americans, who numbered 1.5 million on active duty. Your readers should also know that the task that Congressman Leland and I undertook is not yet completed, and that only part of the story that emerged in 1988 has been revealed.

The seven medals bestowed this week on African American men who served in the army came about because the U.S. Army, acting in part on our original plan, awarded a grant to Shaw University, an historically Black institution in Raleigh, North Carolina, to review



potential African American candidates for the Congressional Medal of Honor. However--and this is one of the problems that must now be rectified--Shaw received a mandate to study only the Army and only World War II. This is not what Mickey Leland and I agreed to in June 1988, when Secretary of Defense Carlucci asked us to abandon our attempt to open up the statute of limitations to award medals to Sergeant Henry Johnson (NY-WWI) and Seaman Dorie Miller (TX-WWII). At that time, Carlucci knew that Congressman Leland and I already had more than 150 signatures from both Republicans and Democrats in the House of the 218 required. Carlucci argued for a comprehensive study, lest we commit another injustice by awarding only two medals when many other Black candidates probably existed. (Incidentally, Mickey Leland was killed shortly after this meeting.)

In 1988, I said that "the statute of limitations is for criminals, not war heroes." I thought it ironic that the statute of limitations was being used as a convenient excuse to deny medals. Fortunately we were able to overcome this political obstacle and succeeded in getting the first medal awarded to Corporal Freddie Stowers (WWI, Army) in April 1991. Nevertheless, it has taken six years to grant the seven medals awarded last Monday to African American war heroes and a comprehensive redress of history has still not yet taken place. The now recognized institutional racism that victimized Black American soldiers and sailors in the two world wars continues to have an impact.

As one of the two people who started this campaign, I would like to see the record set straight. The African American servicemen who deserve this honor (and there are probably dozens of them) continue to be denied recognition because of partisan posturing, half truths, and token solutions. I hope that you can help bring attention to the injustice being perpetrated against Black American war heroes, some of whom are still alive. We need to go back to the original plan to investigate candidates who were passed over for our nation's highest military award, in both the Army and Navy and for both World Wars I and II.

Sincerely,



Joseph J. DioGuardi

# Rethinking the Recognition of Doris Miller

---

By Marsha Rose Joyner Special to the NNPA from the Afro-American Newspaper

Published April 2, 2015

---



*(Courtesy photo)*

*First in a series.*

Doris "Dorie" Miller, and hundreds of other messmen who were serving breakfast that morning, never dreamed that day in 1941, was the time for them to be heroes. That point is not to be questioned.

When the office of Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-Texas) contacted me about their desire to have Dorie Miller awarded the Medal of Honor, I was excited. Since 1942 there have been thousands of people attempting to have his Navy Cross upgraded to the Medal of Honor.

In the last several sessions, Rep. Johnson, with the support of the Congressional Black Caucus and members of both parties in Congress, has filed legislation to waive the statute of limitations so that Miller could receive the Medal of Honor.

"The Navy has concluded that the Navy Cross, the highest award that can be approved and awarded by the Secretary of the Navy, appropriately recognizes Petty Officer Miller's heroic actions," said Navy spokesman, Lt. Mike Kafka, who added that those seeking to upgrade Miller's award can offer new evidence or ask the Navy to look at the case anew, a request Johnson may make.

First let me say, Lt. Kafka apparently did not do any research. In 1941 no Black messman was a petty officer. At the time of Miller's actions the Navy was totally segregated. How could the Navy not recognize that racism was the underlying theme?

Absolutely we must ask again!

However this may not be new evidence, since racism is the birth defect of this country. What is new is the evidence of his long lasting legacy. I believe that we must look at Miller in a new light. The history of wars is generally written about battles as if there were no people. And when



people are mentioned, it is the generals, admirals and presidents. Miller was not even a sailor; he was a messman second class, the very bottom of the Navy's tight knit social thread. To shine a real light on World War II, we must see with today's eyes the "little people," the mess attendants of the world. Filipinos and Guamanians who chose to come to America following a dream; after a period of untold harassment and brutality, enlisted in the Navy only to become messmen. Servants!

Carlos Bulosan wrote "I feel like a criminal running away from a crime I did not commit. And this crime is that I am a Filipino in America." That day, the "day that will live in infamy" was for heroes. Thousands of them! Most of whom we will never know. That day was a day for every man and woman to step out of their comfort zone and be counted. In America, that day was to question what people take for granted, what people hold to be true about "colored men." For Miller that day was to break through the hypnosis of social conditioning; to take a stand at any cost; to be courageous and noble in their actions and in deeds. That December day was to be that moment.



*(Courtesy photo)*

### **Beginning of WWII**

"Even as Hitler espoused the theory of the "Superior Aryan Race," the U.S. military practiced the theory of "African-American mental inferiority." The Army War College study of 1940 described the African American as having "less developed mental capacities."

The Navy was accepting African Americans on a limited basis as messmen/stewards. The Marines were accepting no African Americans. According to historian Duane B. Bradford; "during the first six months of 1940, the Army admitted 30 African Americans total into all of its schools."

World War II African-American sailors were stripped of their dignity, their "somebodyness." Regardless of their education they were expected to be messmen, stewards and cabin boys, not trained for combat.



They did not even wear the traditional Naval Anchor on their uniforms. Secretary of the Navy (Colonel) Frank Knox, (former publisher of the Chicago Daily News and the 1936 G.O.P. vice presidential nominee) wrote "the policy of not enlisting men of the colored races for any branch of the naval service but the messmen branch was adopted to meet the best interests of general ship efficiency."

However, there is so much misinformation about Miller, his actions that day and even the ship he served on, nowonder he has not been awarded the Medal of Honor. Having had the rare opportunity of knowing men who served with him on the West Virginia as well as other survivors of the attack on the Pearl Harbor Dec. 7, 1941, I decided to revisit the mounds of articles, books and films about Miller. Much to my horror the vast majority of it was incorrect.

My friend, Ray Emory, a Pearl Harbor survivor and historian was gracious enough to spend the day with me and another friend as we combed through his records and files of Dec. 7. So much so that I now feel I have to rethink the recognition of Miller.

Some of the misinformation was trivial, but none the less it is out there.

The biggest misinformation and most often repeated stated that Miller served on the USS Arizona. That was not correct. All of the messmen who served on the Arizona went down with the ship. One article claimed he was on board the USS Missouri. That ship was not at Pearl Harbor the day of the attack. She was the last battleship commissioned by the U.S. Navy in June 1944.

His rate or rank has always been at question. In the Navy a person's "rate" is the same as "rank" in the other branches of the military. At the time of the attack Miller was a messman attendant second class, a rate created for men of color only.

I have read in several articles that he was a seaman. At the time of the Dec. 7 attack, there were no Black seamen.

The Messman Branch, responsible for servicing officers only, was a racially segregated part of the U.S. Navy. White sailors could not serve in the Messman Branch, which was composed almost exclusively of African Americans, Guamanians, Chinese and Filipinos. Dorie Miller's very public presence as a messman attracted criticism from civil rights leaders during the war, and the Roosevelt administration was under some pressure to address this inequality.

Some steps were taken throughout the war, but the navy's leadership proved resistant to major change. In February 1943 the name of the branch was changed to Steward Branch, the word "officer" was dropped from rate titles, and "mess attendant" became "steward's mate."

The new rating of "cook" should not be confused with "ship's cook," which was part of the Commissary Branch.

In June 1944, cooks and stewards were authorized to wear petty officer-style rating badges. Despite the change in insignia, however, stewards and cooks were not petty officers and ranked below the most junior petty officer grade. Petty officer status was not extended to stewards until 1950.



Some articles have Miller as a cook. That is somewhat correct. At the time of the attack on Dec. 7 Miller was a messman. As the war raged on, men of color were promoted to the rate of cook, because they needed them to do more than wait on the officers. At the time of his death Miller had been promoted to cook third class. In April 1942 changes were announced to allow African Americans to serve in other capacities. Even so African Americans selected for ratings other than messman were to be segregated and commanded by White officers and chief petty officers.



*(Courtesy photo)*

The movie Pearl Harbor was probably the worst offender of the portrayal of Dorie Miller. Several people say it is only a movie. And that is true. However, a majority of people get all they know about history from movies. Lt. Frederick White, who served on the USS West Virginia, wrote that Miller was called up to the deck to move the ship's captain because he had been mortally wounded because he (Miller) was the biggest man on the ship. In the movie it is apparent to all watching that Cuba Gooding Jr. was not the biggest man on the ship.

At the time of the filming at Pearl Harbor, I complained about Cuba Gooding Jr. being portrayed as Dorie Miller because he was not big enough. I was told by one of the historians, "at least the character is in the film." What else could I say?

Director of the movie Pearl Harbor Michael Bay acknowledges on his DVD commentary track that Miller's actions were altered slightly simply for the sake of the narrative; it was more dramatic to have him comfort the dying captain and then deliver his final order.

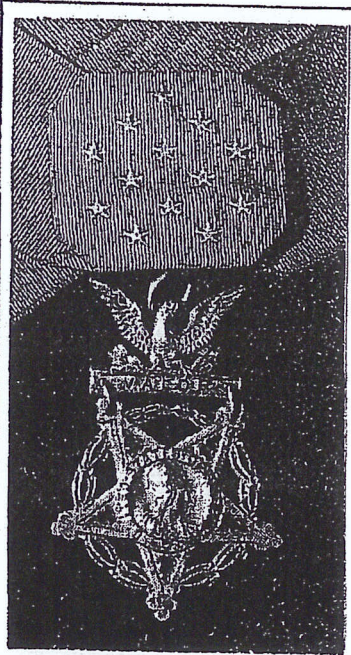
All so the movie portrays Miller on Dec. 7, 1941 in a uniform with a cook's second class rate. As we have said before the cook's rate did not exist in 1941. This error is difficult to attribute to anything other than a lack of adequate research. The National Parks Service and the U.S. Navy are credited as consultants on the film.



# Medal is 72 years late

## Cpl. Freddie Stowers died leading an attack

By Siobhan McDonough  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES



### AWARD RECIPIENTS

The Medal of Honor, the highest U.S. military decoration, has been awarded to 3,418 persons since it was established in 1862.

#### Awarded to:

Whites	3,271
Blacks	78
Jews	12
American Indians	20
Hispanics	37
Men	3,417
Women	1

#### Of the black recipients:

Civil War	23
Indian campaign	26
Spanish-American	6
World War I	1
World War II	0
Korean War	2
Vietnam War	20

#### Recipients who:

Are still living	210
Were awarded the medal twice	19
Are current members of Congress	21
Are now governors	7
Were chaplains	7

Source: Congressional Medal of Honor Society

The Washington Times

Seventy-two years after Cpl. Freddie Stowers led an attack on a German machine gun emplacement and enemy trenches, the Army acted on a recommendation that he receive the Medal of Honor, the armed services' highest honor for bravery.

Cpl. Freddie Stowers is the first black soldier to be posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions in World War I.

During a three-year investigation into possible racism in granting awards, the Army discovered the unprocessed recommendation, according to Col. Terry Adkins, chief of the Army's Military Awards Branch.

Cpl. Stowers, of Sandy Springs, S.C., was 21 when he was killed in action while leading an attack on the Germans in the Champagne Marne Sector of France. His two sisters will receive the Medal of Honor and the Purple Heart on his behalf today at a military ceremony attended by President Bush.

"The fact that he went from private to corporal in such a phenomenal amount of time indicates to me that Cpl. Freddie Stowers was more than your average soldier," said Col. Adkins, who headed the investigation. "He was a soldier with talent."

The prestigious medal, first awarded to Gen. George Washington, is granted to a member of the armed forces for "gallantry and courage above and beyond the call of duty," according to Col. Adkins.

Seventy-seven blacks were awarded the Medal of Honor for service in the Indian campaigns, Civil War, Spanish-American War, Korea and Vietnam, according to Nicholas Oresko, director of the Congressional Medal of Honor Society. Until today, no black soldier had received the award for either of the world

Wars.

"It's an exceptional case," said Col. Adkins.

A packet of recommendations, including Cpl. Stowers', was forwarded to Awards Branch authorities shortly after World War I. All recommendations were processed except for Cpl. Stowers'.

The speed with which the Army got soldiers onto ships home and deactivated may be the reason why Cpl. Stowers' recommendation was overlooked at that time, Col. Adkins said.

Investigators discounted racism when they verified that one black soldier whose name was on the same list of nominees received the Distinguished Service Cross, the second highest award.

Two officers sent to France to do research in the archives confirmed that the reported battle on Hill 188 at the Champagne Marne Sector took place. To support Cpl. Stowers' nomination for the medal, they obtained a full description of his involvement in the battle.

As squad leader in Company C, 371st Infantry Regiment, 93rd Division, Cpl. Stowers inspired his men to follow him in an attack on a German machine gun nest on a hill. The machine gun was taken out during the September attack, and Cpl. Stowers continued to press the attack against enemy trenches until he died of wounds.

The secretary of the Army ordered authorities to confirm that Cpl. Stowers' recommendation was made in accordance with Armed Forces law 3422, which requires the commanding officer to make such a recommendation within two years of the soldier's act. If no award was made because the recommendation was lost or not acted upon through inadvertence, the medal may be awarded within two years after the date of the determination that it was not processed.

Many more should be awarded the "Medal"



## Joe DioGuardi (Re: A Letter of Appreciation)

Original Message

To Mr. DioGuardi,

I am the descendant of a great man that you may still be familiar with today. In the year 1987, you and a fellow friend, Mickey Leland, stumbled upon the case of Corporal Freddie Stowers. Corporal Freddie Stowers was post-humously awarded the medal of Honor in April of 1991. During the ceremony, I, Latasha Katherine Thomas, was held by the president at that time, George Bush.

Looking back on my history, I realize that information about important members of my family have been lost. As a result, it is important to me to be able to grasp tenaciously to the bonds of my history. I have made up in my mind that I will no longer allow all the things that have made me, to become fragile and wither away.

I thank you for your research. I decided to send this message because I became so filled up, when I reread the details of my great great uncle's case. I thought about the malice people harbored within in themselves so much so that they would not award a man that had already passed away a medal that he rightfully deserved.

I often doubt my abilities, but Corporal Freddie Stowers will forever be an inspiration to me and my family. On behalf of the Stowers family, I would like to say thankyou for giving us something to be proud of.

Latasha Thomas

Date: 1/10/2009 10:21:57 PM

Subject: From Joe DioGuardi (Re: A Letter of Appreciation)

Latasha--What a wonderful surprise to hear from you. I remember that day in 1991 at the White House so vividly, especially being with The President, Gen. Colin Powell and your family, including two of your great great aunts who were in their late eighties at the time. Cong. Leland and I got to know each other really well after we were invited to debate current issues on DC Cable TV when I was a new Member of the House in 1985. He was a Democrat who represented a largely African American District in Houston, Texas ; I was elected, as a Republican, to represent a majority registered Democrat District, which included a very large African American population in the southern part of Westchester County, NY (in New Rochelle, Mt Vernon and Yonkers). After that Cable TV exchange, we realized that the less fortunate parts of our diverse districts had very similar problems and concerns, and we joined forces on issues relating to neighborhood crime fueled by drug abuse, turning back budget cuts on food stamps and subsidized housing. ( By the way, you may not know that Cong Leland was not present during that historic White House ceremony because he was tragically killed in a plane crash on a humanitarian mission bringing food and medical supplies to poor people in Ethiopia in 1988; he was a beautiful person in every way and tragically left a new wife and baby boy behind when he died.) Getting back to our work in fighting the military establishment and our congressional colleagues to "open the books" on awarding Congressional Medals of Honor to black American War heroes from World Wars 1 and 2, in 1986 I had received a letter from a New York historian, Leroy Ramsey, about the fact that no black American in the 2 World Wars received our nation's highest award even though 1,550,000 served. These numbers seemed impossible to me and I approached my good friend Mickey Leland to get him to join me to correct, in a bipartisan way, what I (and he) saw as a gross historic injustice, most probably stemming from the segregated US military forces and discriminatory practices at the time. The rest is history and your family is an important part of it since your great great uncle was the FIRST black American serving in WW1 and WW2 to receive our nation's highest military honor. And, as a result of a study that Mickey and I insisted on in 1987 in which the files of ALL black Americans who served in WW1 and WW2, and who received our nation's SECOND highest honor, would be reviewed (to which Secretary of Defense Carlucci agreed), seven more Medals were issued to black American War heroes in 1996. There is so much more I could say about this important part of my service as a Congressman, but I can send you a copy of my file on this for your family records. Please email me your home address and feel free to call me on my cell phone at 914-671-8583.

HOLIDAY SEASON AND FOR THE NEW YEAR!---Joe DioGuardi

ALL THE BEST TO YOU AND YOUR FAMILY DURING THE

Joe DioGuardi

# NEPA

## Northeast Publishers Association

237 W 37 Street Suite 201 New York, NY 10018 212 213-8585 [northeastpublishers.com](http://northeastpublishers.com)

June 8, 2010

Dr. Roscoe C. Brown, Jr.,  
Director of the Center for Urban Education Policy  
The City University of New York,  
New York, NY 10016

Dear Mr. Brown:

I'm Walter Smith, publisher of the New York Beacon and President of the Northeast Publishers Association.

I have come to know Joe DioGuardi over the past few months and have joined with him in his 23-year crusade to have Medals of Honor bestowed on deserving Black soldiers from WW II & I. I think it's an injustice long overdue for correction.

It didn't happen in the past because of racism and disinterest on the part of previous administrations. Some medals were awarded as a means of keeping the noise down, but as long as one remains not given, we all are missing our just rewards.

We now have a Black President and a strong Congressional Black Caucus who if made aware of the public interest, could make it happen.

The New York Black Publishers are meeting with Joe DioGuardi this Wednesday at 4:00pm at the Columbus Club at 8 E 69th street New York, NY to further discuss this issue.

An appeal to our president Barack Obama signed by World War Heroes such as yourself, others such as Colin Powell, Charlie Rangel, Ed Towns, Yvette Clark, Gregory Meeks, James Clyburn, Maxine Waters, Barbara Lee, Danny Bakewell Sr, Al Sharpton, etc, we could get it done in a heartbeat.

We owe it to those brave Black men who gave their lives in hopes it would create a better social environment for all Black people.

We need your help. Please join us in the struggle.

Walter Smith, president  
Northeast Publishers Association



# Meet Congressman Joseph J. DioGuardi



## **Joe DioGuardi wants justice for African American Heroes of WWI & WWII**

During World War I the color of a man's skin came to be a serious barrier to Medal of Honor consideration. Though there was no written policy specifying discrimination, all branches of the military were well in step with the Jim Crow conditions of racism. For the first time in our nation's history, Soldiers were fighting in Europe and among them were African-American troops. Although they were denied the full blessings of the freedom in which they were fighting for, African-Americans still volunteered to fight for their country hoping their military contributions and sacrifices would prove to their countrymen that African-Americans desired and deserved a larger role in the society of the United States. When WWI ended the United States Awarded a total of 118 Medals of Honor: five went to Jewish Americans, one to a Hispanic American and none to African Americans. At the end of WWII 432 Medals of Honor had been awarded: 38 went to Hispanic Americans, 10 to Native Americans, 3 to Jewish Americans, 2 to Asian Pacific Americans, and None to African Americans. This Black-Eye is still lingering on America's face. Two very deserving recipients are waiting in the wings for this distinguished honor: Sgt Henry Johnson of Albany NY and Dorrie Miller a Sailor and Hero in WWII of Waco Texas. The final hurdle to awarding these heroes their just due is the Joint Chiefs of Staff and President Barack Obama.

**Joe DioGuardi has been working on this issue for the past 27 years.**

**Let's make Joe's issue our cause: Call or Write your representative in Washington and tell them to urge the president to move forward with this pressing issue.**



# N.Y. Military Museum Recognizes the Harlem Hellfighters Heroes in France During World War I

They were heroes in France during World War I, only to be treated as second class citizens when they returned to New York.



Lt. James Reese Europe and the jazz band of the 369th Infantry Regiment, also known as the Harlem Hellfighters, upon their return from Europe on Feb. 17, 1919. *Getty Images*

## ***SPONSORS***

**THE MORRIS B. RETTNER FOUNDATION, RONALD RETTNER, DIRECTOR  
TRUTH IN GOVERNMENT, HON. JOSEPH DIOGUARDI, PRESIDENT**