



CONNECT

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The Complexity of Diversity

By: **Cedalia Ellis, MSW, LCSW**

When we think of the word "diversity" our minds typically shift to race and gender. Although ethnicity, race and gender are a big part of diversity, we often overlook other rich dimensions of diversity. There are various factors that play into diversity. Some identifying factors are more outwardly visible and others come along from birth. Diversity is also how we identify organizationally and our view of the the world. So, as we continue on this journey of understanding diversity, inclusion, and cultural humility remember that diversity is not narrow, but that it encompasses the entire spectrum of human experience; we each define ourselves in terms of our cultural affiliations, as well as the unique subcultures that give meaning to our lives. For many servicemembers and their loved ones, their identities are forever shaped by their devotion to their nation.

**DIVERSITY EQUITY &
ENGAGEMENT
NEWSLETTER**

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National DISABILITY

INDEPENDENCE DAY

By: Terry Gish

July 26th is recognized as National Disability Independence Day, and it celebrates the 1990 signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). I respect the ADA not only because of the positive impact it has made in the lives of so many but because one of my relatives helped to write it.

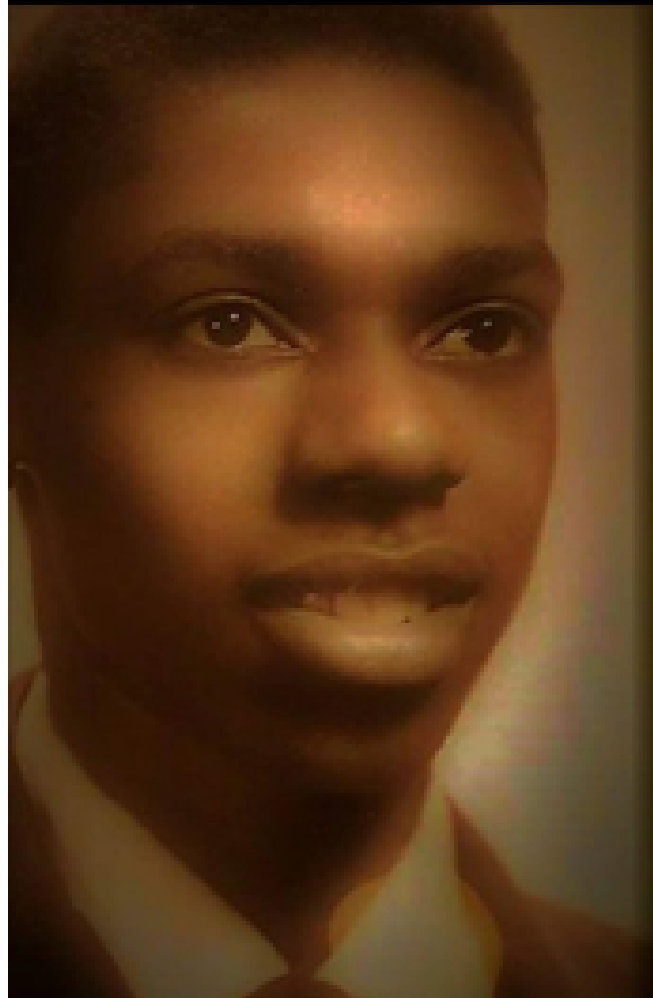
My father's 3rd cousin, Paul Carrington Ashton, was a noted authority on devising ways for individuals with physical disabilities to enter or re-enter the workforce. I've collected newspaper articles and book citations of his work. Carrington was appointed to the President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped and was later drafted to write part of the accessibility guidelines for what would become the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The ADA champions the civil rights of people with disabilities. In addition to offering protection from discrimination, the ADA guarantees accessibility accommodations in workplaces and public accommodations. Things like wheelchair ramps, wheelchair-accessible restrooms, and provisions for service animals are just a few pieces of the ADA and its efforts to protect individuals living with a disability.

When I told Cousin Carrington that I bragged about his involvement with the Americans with Disabilities Act, he quickly said, "I only wrote a section of the accessibility portion." Only? It may not seem like a big deal to him, but to the woman who can get her wheelchair into a public restroom or the man with a cane who isn't stopped from entering a building by an insurmountable series of steps, it means a lot.

If your life is not personally affected by the Americans with Disabilities Act, I guarantee you that the life of someone you know is. On July 26th, we celebrate 31 years of protection and inclusion, not special rights but equal rights.

Carrington Ashton (years before his ADA work)





HONOR FLIGHT

SOUTHWESTERN INDIANA

By Kristine Beauchamp



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The first Honor Flight departed from Evansville Regional Airport in October 2014. This flight was created to honor senior American veterans and their families for their commitment and service to the United States Military. In Southern Indiana, the Honor Flight is the 133rd Honor Flight Network hub that serves the surrounding Indiana counties. This flight honors older and terminally ill veterans by providing an expense-free flight to Washington D.C.

As a military mother, honoring our veterans is very important to me. I started volunteering for the Southwestern Indiana Honor Flight committee when a friend had posted on Facebook about filling the goody bags for the flight. I then signed up to work "flight day." Words can not describe the beautiful emotions and the positive energy flowing on flight day! I am very patriotic, and having a daughter who at that time was in the Army and family members that served, it was only natural I connected with this group.

There are many ways to volunteer and show support to our vets from flight day breakfast, take off, landing, meet and greet dinners, and parade events, and I've done it all. Due to my love and commitment to this organization, this past December 2020, I was honored to be voted onto the Board of Directors for Honor Flight Southern Indiana as their Volunteer Coordinator! We take approximately 88 veterans AND their guardians per flight. This is in addition to the medical staff, the bus captains, and the photographers. So we are always looking for volunteers!

Check out the Honor Flight website: <https://honorflightsi.org>

Matrika Brown

Honoring our United States Military Staff

Matrika Brown served in the United States Air Force for 4 years. She started as an E-1 and finished as E-4 with a line number for E-5 (Staff sergeant). Matrika spent her entire 4 years in Cheyenne, Wyoming on an Air Force Base that didn't have a flight line, but she knew the mission was right there. It takes a vast variety of careers to make a base operate -not just combat soldiers. During her time, she experienced being a part of a group of people from all different walks of life, backgrounds, cultures, races, religions, and countries. In basic training, everyone is stripped of anything that makes them a unique individual and are given the same uniform, same amount of pay, food and shelter. From there on out, you get promoted on time served and individual merit/effort. Who you know, where you are from, if you come from money/no money or anything along those lines doesn't bear any weight or get counted against you. According to Matrika, the Air Force wasn't all Kumbaya and rainbows, but everyone was able to come together to serve and work towards the same mission despite what some might see as insurmountable differences.



What is one of the biggest misconceptions about military life?

"I worked in the medical clinic with a man a couple years older than me that came to the USA on a home-made raft from Cuba when he was a teenager. While I joined primarily to get money for college and wasn't very impressed or appreciative of the pay and amenities, he felt very blessed to be in the military because it was a means of stability for himself and his family. He would even send a small portion of his paycheck back to his mother in Cuba to support his family members there in addition to providing for his wife and two small children. When I complained about the food in the chow hall, he told me stories of when he was in Cuba that the food his school provided would often times have maggots crawling around in it. Eye opening change in perspective!"

"I am most proud of being on the ambulance crew in the VPOTUS when the president was visiting a nearby town. I was selected on two separate occasions"



DEFEND AND HONOR



Randall Nelson

Honoring our United States Military Staff

Q: How long did you serve?

A: Randall Nelson served in the United States Army for two years and ten days .

Q: One of the biggest misconceptions about military life?

A: That it's all drudgery.

"I am most proud of being able to serve our country"





Veteran Services

Southwestern Region

Information Provided by: Lisa Withrow



The Department of Veterans Affairs, also known as simply "the VA," consists of two branches of local service providers. Our local Vet Center and the Evansville VA Health Care Center offer services to Southern Indiana and Western Kentucky.

The Evansville Vet Center is part of a national network of readjustment counseling centers that provide outpatient therapy services to combat Veterans and their family members. In addition, any service member with issues related to Military Sexual Assault can receive outpatient therapy at the Vet Center.

The Evansville VA Health Care Center, located at 6211 Waterford Blvd, delivers a continuum of outpatient medical and behavioral health services to Veterans living in our region. These services include: primary care, radiology, oncology, respiratory therapy, physical therapy, audiology, optometry, non-narcotic pain management, and same day surgery.

The Behavioral Medicine Services Department at the Evansville VA offers a full-range of outpatient psychotherapy, psychiatric medication providers, primary care mental health integration, and specialty community services for Veterans who are involved with the justice system, are homeless, or experiencing chronic and persistent mental illness.

The Evansville VA Health Care Center is affiliated with the Marion VA Medical Center in Marion, Illinois. Additional specialty services and inpatient medical/surgical services, as well as an extended-stay residential addiction services unit are located at the Marion campus.

Eligibility for Veterans Administration benefits are based on a multi-tiered system that includes service time, disability status, income and insurance status. EHCC has a local eligibility office that can assist any Veteran in applying for benefits and services. They can be reached by phone at (812) 465-6202. If you are a Veteran (regardless of combat status) you may be eligible for services. If you are a Veteran with ongoing medical issues related to your time serving in our armed forces, applying for benefits also starts with a call to work with an eligibility representative.

Many Veterans who think they may not be eligible for VA services in fact are. A friend recently lost her health insurance at retirement and had never previously applied for VA benefits. She found that she was eligible for a full range of VA health services based on her honorable discharge and change in financial status.

Contact Information

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1100 N. Burkhardt Rd.
Evansville, IN 47715
(812) 473-5993

Evansville VA Health Care Center
6211 Waterford Boulevard
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