

Irene Trowell-Harris R.N., Ed.D.

Director, Center for Women Veterans
Office of the Secretary
Major General, U.S. Air Force (Retired)

Washington, DC

In the early 1950s, 13-year-old Irene Trowell-Harris was working in a field near her South Carolina home when a plane flew overhead. She looked toward the sky and said to her 10 siblings: "One day I'm going to be up there working on an airplane."

"We all laughed," Trowell-Harris said. "We knew that it was an impossible dream for a minority female."

Ten years later, Trowell-Harris proudly pinned on her silver wings. Through hard work, determination and tenacity, she had made it from the fields of the South through nursing school and into the U.S. Air Force/Air National Guard (ANG) as a flight nurse.

"I always knew I wanted to help people and serve my country," said Trowell-Harris. "The military helped me realize my dream to fly. It offered me many challenging opportunities."

When Trowell-Harris retired from the Air Force/ANG after more than 38 years of service, she had achieved the high rank of two-star major general. Today, she is serving her country in a new way. She advocates for women veterans' rights as the director of the Center for Women Veterans, Office of the Secretary.

"My wish to make positive social changes requires vigilance and persistence," she said. "There is so much work to be done in society. I want to be a part of the solution."



1889
After serving five terms in Congress, Robert Smalls is appointed U.S. Collector of Customs by President Benjamin Harrison. Smalls became famous during the Civil War after his incredible naval skills made him an asset to the Union Armed Forces.

1891

1891
"William Cathey," who served in the U.S. Army for two years, reveals that she is actually Cathay Williams – an African American woman who disguised herself as a man so she could join the military.



1900
Sgt. William H. Carney becomes the first African American awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

FEBRUARY 2010

Black History Month

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 1902: Langston Hughes, poet, born.	2 1915: Biologist Ernest E. Just receives Spingarn Medal for research in fertilization and cell division.	3 2009: Eric H. Holder Jr. sworn in as the nation's first African American attorney general.	4 1913: Rosa Parks, civil rights pioneer who sparked 1955 Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott, born.	5 1884: Willis Johnson patents eggbeater.	6 1993: Arthur Ashe, Jr., tennis player, humanitarian and activist, dies.
7 1883: Ragtime pianist and composer Eubie Blake born.	8 1968: Three South Carolina State students killed during segregation protest in Orangeburg, South Carolina.	9 1964: Arthur Ashe, Jr. becomes first black on U.S. Davis Cup team.	10 1927: Leontyne Price, internationally acclaimed opera singer, born.	11 1990: Nelson Mandela of South Africa is released from prison after 27 years.	12 1909: NAACP founded in New York City. Lincoln's Birthday	13 1970: Joseph L. Searles becomes first African American member of New York Stock Exchange.
14 1817: Frederick Douglass, "the Great Emancipator," born. Valentine's Day	15 1820: Susan B. Anthony, abolitionist and women's rights advocate, born. Presidents' Day	16 1874: Frederick Douglass elected president of Freedman's Bank and Trust.	17 1938: Mary Frances Berry, first woman to serve as chancellor of a major research university (University of Colorado), born. Ash Wednesday	18 1931: Toni Morrison, winner of 1988 Pulitzer Prize for her novel <i>Beloved</i> , born.	19 2002: Vonetta Flowers becomes Winter Olympics' first African American gold medalist.	20 1895: Frederick Douglass, leading voice in the Abolitionist Movement, dies.
21 1965: Malcolm X assassinated in New York.	22 2008: Johnnie Carr, major icon of the Civil Rights Movement, dies. Washington's Birthday	23 1868: W.E.B. DuBois, scholar, activist and author of <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i> , born.	24 1864: Rebecca Lee Crumpler becomes first black woman to receive a medical degree (New England Female Medical College).	25 1853: First black YMCA organized in Washington, D.C.	26 1965: Civil rights activist Jimmie Lee Jackson dies after being shot by state police in Marion, Alabama.	27 1897: Marian Anderson, world-renowned opera singer and civil rights activist, born.
28 1984: Michael Jackson, musician and entertainer, wins eight Grammy Awards.						