



Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs hosts tribute to African American Veterans

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SPRINGFIELD — The Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs (IDVA) hosted a tribute to African American Veterans today at the National Guard Armory in Urbana. The ceremony honored all African American Veterans.

“We are here today to salute and honor all African-American Veterans. Since our nation's war for independence, these brave veterans have served honorably in the United States Military,” said IDVA Director Erica Jeffries. African American soldiers, sailors, airmen, coast guardsmen and Marines have participated in the Spanish American War, Philippine Insurrection, Mexican Expedition, WWI, WWII, the Korean War, Vietnam War, Persian Gulf War and our current war on terrorism. “They have served in peacetime and times of war. We thank them for their service to our country,” added Director Jeffries.

Colonel Eugene Scott and Mrs. Beverly Scott were the keynote speaker at today's ceremony. Colonel Scott is the former Publisher of the Chicago Daily Defender newspaper and past President of the Chicago Defender Charities. He commanded tank forces and was the staff officer (G3) for the 8th Infantry Division Combat Ready Forces. A decorated combat veteran, he served two tours of duty in Vietnam. His awards include the legion of Merit, two Bronze Stars and the Combat Infantryman Badge.

Beverly Scott is a writer and Executive Director of Friends of the Victory Monument. She serves as storyteller for the University of West Virginia African American Media Department's Google Expedition Project. This project features the story of the African American experience including the Victory Monument Memorial, the American Legion Giles Post #87 and the Illinois National Guard's “Fighting 8th” who were federalized as the 370th INF.

Major General Richard J. Hayes Jr., Adjutant General of the Illinois National Guard offered remarks as well in today's ceremony. Major General Hayes is the 39th Adjutant General of the State of Illinois. He serves as a member of the Governor's Cabinet as the Director of the Illinois Department of Military Affairs and is the Governor's principal advisor on military matters. General Hayes is the senior officer in the chain-of-command for both the Illinois Army and Air National Guard.

Illinois Department of Veteran's Affairs Director Erica Jeffries presented a Proclamation from Governor Bruce Rauner. American Legion Post 559 provided the Color Guard with the pledge lead by Peter Thomas, Director of Lincoln's Challenge Academy. The Urbana High School Choir sang the National Anthem and 'Lift Every Voice and Sing'. American Legion Post 559 Chaplain Bolden offered the Invocation and Benediction.