



Connecticut Veterans Legal Center Releases New Data Revealing Stark Racial Disparities in Military Administrative Separations

West Haven (November 11, 2022) – Connecticut Veterans Legal Center (CVLC) announces the publication of “[*Discretionary Injustice: How Racial Disparities in the Military’s Administrative Separation System Harm Black Veterans*](#),” a report revealing stark racial disparities in military administrative separations.

Comprising over one million individual separations, *Discretionary Injustice* draws on Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) data obtained by CVLC from the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines, detailing five years (2015 - 2020) of persistent racial disparities in military administrative separations.

The data shows that Black Veterans are much more likely than white veterans to bear the stigma of a less-than-honorable discharge. Black servicemembers —across all service branches—were approximately 1.5 times as likely as white servicemembers to receive an Other Than Honorable rather than Honorable discharge, and approximately twice as likely as white servicemembers to receive a General discharge. Black servicemembers make up nearly 18% of separations in the armed forces but received only 16.5 of the honorable discharges. However, they received over 25% of Other Than Honorable discharges and over 30% of General discharges.

“The military’s administrative separation process is highly discretionary, making it a system where bias has the potential to thrive, undetected. The fact that Black service members receive General and Other Than Honorable discharges at such unexpectedly high rates is alarming, and we call on Congress and the Department of Defense to take immediate action,” says **Alden Pinkham, Singer Fellow at CVLC**.

Other Than Honorable and General discharges are the results of administrative separations, which have far fewer due process protections than other forms of military disciplinary procedures. Veterans without honorable discharges struggle to access critical VA benefits, leaving them at a higher risk for poverty, homelessness, and suicide. Veterans who hold a less-than-honorable discharge can be shut out of benefit programs ranging from housing, education, vocational training, and healthcare.

“I am proud of CVLC’s work spotlighting the systemic inequity and discrimination in the administrative separation process. The Department of Defense has taken steps to address overt racism within its ranks, but there is much more to do to remove the systemic racism and implicit bias that results in racial discrimination and trauma. With this study, there is hard evidence of disparate results in what should be a race-neutral process. With this evidence, and the recommendations made in the report, I hope that

the Department will take corrective and restorative action,” said **Alison Weir, Executive Director of CLVC.**

The Discretionary Injustice report reviews the history of Black military service to contextualize these racial disparities, explains how the military separates veterans with less than honorable discharge statuses, describes the highly discretionary nature of the administrative separation system, details study findings and provides recommendations for steps the military, VA, and the government should take to address the issue.

"As the 75th anniversary of the desegregation of our military looms, it is essential to interrogate the myriad of ways race continues to inform inequitable outcomes for those who serve. The devastating legacy of bad paper discharges — proliferating in World War II through the present day, has stripped generations of Black troops of the social and economic benefits of military service. CVLC’s report contributes to a broader critical analysis of the military’s failure to contend with the issue of anti-Black discrimination across its ranks and is a damning indictment of how far we’ve come post-integration," said **Richard Brookshire, Co-Founder of Black Veterans Project.**

###

About CVLC: Connecticut Veterans Legal Center (CVLC) helps veterans recovering from homelessness and diagnosed with mental illness overcome civil legal barriers to housing, health care, and income. Co-founded in 2009, CVLC was the first legal aid program in the United States to embed legal services at VA mental health facilities. For more information, please visit: <https://ctveteranslegal.org>

About Black Veterans Project: Black Veterans Project furthers research and storytelling to advance racial equity in and out of uniform. For inquiries about the experience of Black veterans, contact info@blackveteransproject.org <https://www.blackveteransproject.org>