



THE CHIEF'S CORNER

CHARLES R. BOWERY JR.

HISTORICAL HONESTY AND TRANSPARENCY

As a familiar saying goes, “There is never a wrong time to do the right thing.” In addition to being trained professionals who are educated in the standards of their craft, U.S. Army official historians, archivists, and museum professionals are first and foremost staff officers. They respond to the needs of military and civilian officials for historical information and perspective to support ongoing Army and federal government business. The work that this small community of approximately 500 professionals does is critical to maintaining government transparency and public trust, because it informs leader decisions and government programs daily.

The rigorous historical research, publishing, decision support, and material culture this community provides have been essential to ongoing efforts to engage with the most challenging moments in our past. From the work of the Naming Commission to the Army’s correction of the record to restore honorable service to African American soldiers wrongly accused of mutiny in the World War I era, and continuing in the hundreds of Freedom of Information Act requests that our community supports each year, the Army Historical Program is a key component of our nation’s ability to face its past with honesty.

This does not mean that we have all the answers, however, or that we are able to define an “objective” past. Rather, the constant pursuit of complexity, and of difficult questions, is what matters. This work takes place in a sharply polarized society with access to tremendous amounts of information of dubious reliability, making our jobs more difficult but, if anything, more critical. I am especially proud of the diversity of content and subject matter in *Army History*, because it serves as a great example of the scholarly accomplishments of our community, and of our commitment to honesty and transparency in mobilizing the past for a better future. I am also proud of our hundreds of museum professionals and archivists, who use objects and documents to inform both official inquiries and public engagement with our military. A visit to any one of our thirty museums affirms our commitment to illuminating all aspects of our Army’s 250 years of service to the nation. The sum total of this great work is the ability of our most senior leaders and officials to confront the past with confidence and integrity, to the benefit of our society.

