

# Military has drop in Black recruits

**By Claudio Cabrera**  
*Special to Sentinel-Voice*  
 NEW YORK (NNPA) - Keyon Brown, a 26-year-old college graduate of York College in Queens, was recently approached by an Army recruiter near his Flatbush home and he politely rejected his enrollment offer.

"I have a career, and even if I didn't, I wouldn't enlist in the war right now with everything going on," he said. "We can't even come up with an answer to why we are fighting, anyways."

The war in Iraq has had a devastating effect on the Army's recruitment of Blacks. A 2005 Pew Research Poll shows that Blacks are twice as likely as Whites to oppose the war.

"We saw the most precipitous drop immediately after Sept. 11," Maj. Gen. Michael Rochelle, commander of Army recruiting, said at the Pentagon this year.

Since 2000, African-American enrollment in the Army has declined by close to 40 percent.

Since the 1970s, the Army has relied on Blacks for a quarter of its soldiers, though African-Americans constituted less than 15 percent of the population. The Army was one of the first U.S. institutions to integrate. Blacks looked at the Army as one of the only equal opportunity institutions in the country.

David Segal, head of the Center for Research on Military Organization at the University of Maryland, believes the Iraq war is a reason for low enrollment but said that the declining trend has been developing for more than a decade.

"The decline in Black enrollment has been increasing since 1990," he said. "There is no denying that the Iraq war is a strong factor, but these young men are also hearing from friends, teachers and parents that the Army is not a good place for a Black man to be."

Another factor is that Blacks are less dependent on the Army due to educational opportunities that have opened up. In the last 25 years, the percentage of Blacks older than 25 with four years of college has more than doubled, according to the Digest of Education Statistics. "The improving economy, more jobs, increasing college enrollment and the fear of getting killed on the battlefield have all contributed to the decline,"

said Segal. The drop in Black recruits has sent the Army searching in other directions for recruits, as in the Hispanic, White and Asian communities.

Enrollment from these communities has increased close to 5 percent since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

*Claudio Cabrera writes for the Amsterdam News.*

# First U.S. Black chief judge dies

WASHINGTON (AP) — Longtime federal judge William B. Bryant, the first Black person to serve as chief judge of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, has died. He was 94.

Bryant, who continued hearing cases as a senior judge until recently, died Sunday night, court spokesman Sheldon Snook said.

President Lyndon B. Johnson nominated Bryant to the federal bench in 1965, after Bryant distinguished himself in private practice and as a federal prosecutor in Washington. He was first hired as an assistant U.S. attorney in 1951.

On Friday, President George W. Bush signed legislation that will name a new \$110 million, nine-courtroom

addition to the federal courthouse in Bryant's honor.

Bryant was known for his dedication to constitutional law and believed that lawyers could stop injustice.

"Without lawyers, this is just a piece of paper," he said of the Constitution in an interview with *The Washington Post* last year.

"If it weren't for lawyers, I'd still be three-fifths of a man. If it weren't for lawyers, we'd still have signs directing people this way and that, based on the color of their skin."

Bryant was a graduate of Howard University and its law school, where he taught for more than 20 years.

His wife of 60 years, Astaire, died in 1997.

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