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Kemper Memorial Essay

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Throughout our nation's history, minorities have had to overcome innumerable obstacles in order to become equals. Several of the attempts to gain equality were challenging and time-consuming, such as the Civil Rights Movement for African-Americans. After a long, perilous fight against slavery, then segregation, and finally, inequality, blacks have become accepted members of society. One major event that helped unify blacks in American society was the creation of the African-American infantry regiment in the military. The United States military has been a major force responsible for granting equality to unique groups because it helps unite different people under one common goal: to protect our country.

The military has been a unifying force for abolishing segregation, not just with African-Americans, but also with many different types of people. Women are commonly perceived to be weaker, less capable, and more sensitive than men, and therefore, too emotional to be involved in warfare. It is because of these stereotypes that women have not been very occupied in wartime affairs. Previously, women have participated with the armed forces solely as nurses, chefs, or caretakers. They were never able to partake in actual combat. For example, during the American Revolution in the late 1700s, most women served as seamstresses, cooks, maids, and nurses, as they were forbidden to take part in the war effort as a soldier. However, in this war for independence, as well as the

Civil War, some valiant females decided to disguise themselves as men, cutting off their hair and altering their clothing, in order to take part in combat.

Since then, women have slowly but surely been making progress regarding their integration into the military. It wasn't until after World War II that women were officially allowed to fight alongside men in the army. In 1948, the Women's Armed Services Integration Act was passed, which granted females permanent roles in the Army, Navy, and Air Force. One year later, the first black women enlisted in the army. Since then, the number of women in the military has grown substantially. As of 2013, over 200,000 females are in active-duty military positions, and around 70 serve as generals in leading roles. The majority of these women serve in the Army, but a substantial number participate in the Navy and the Air Force, as well as in the Marines. Fourteen females have received the Silver Star for being in combat, hundreds are in charge of squadrons and military units, and for the first time in the United States history, as of 2008, a woman was named a four-star general, one of the most prestigious military honors.

Great leaps and bounds have been accomplished for women in the military, and it has completely changed society's view of gender differences. Females can do great things for this country, the same as men, when given the chance. Other groups too, such as Asians, African-Americans, and Latinos, have benefitted due to their increased involvement in the military. The commonality between everyone serving in the army has provided a basis for equality in American society. They all want to serve our country, and no matter their physical appearance, race, or gender, they should be allowed to do it. Tom Clancy, author of several novels dealing with war, once said, "The U.S. Military is us. There is no truer representation of a country than the people that it sends into the field to

fight for it. The people who wear our uniform and carry our rifles into combat are our kids, and our job is to support them, because they're protecting us." What Clancy said was true; those in the military are the best representation of America. The only way to truly show the values of our country is for everyone serving in the military to be equal, and that requires equality outside of the army, too.