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## Air Force Veterans Compare Race Relations in and out of the Military

David Morse

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VVS04E05

Host Intro:

At its best, the military is a model of good race relations, since successful missions require trust and respect among service members. Our Veterans' Voices series continues with Air Force veteran and Wright State University student David Morse of Riverside and Air Force veteran Mia Walthers of Huber Heights, who both saw less prejudice in the military than they did as civilians.

Host Outro:

That was Air Force veterans Mia Walthers and David Morse. Veterans' Voices is produced in collaboration with the Military and Veterans Center at Wright State University. This series is supported by Wright-Patt Credit Union.

Photo: Air Force veterans Mia Walthers and David Morse. Photo courtesy of Morse.

Transcription:

Mia Walthers (MW): I was actually born in South Korea. I'm not quite sure what town. I know it was close to Seoul. But, unfortunately, back in the Dark Ages, they didn't keep very good records. It was kind of an ugly period in history. The Vietnam War was wrapping up and biracial children like myself were not looked upon to favorable.

David Morse (DM): Yeah.

MW: My father was an American serviceman. He and my mother got married in Korea and we all moved here. He adopted me when I was about four years old. My perception of the military, even at such a young age, was it was a place of equity. If you worked hard, studied hard, and did the right thing, then my perception was that you could get ahead, you were accepted. I was active duty in the Air Force as a weather specialist. Even once I got in, I had great advocates, I had great mentors. So my experiences were always very positive.

DM: Absolutely. Even within my own military career, the only statuses that I knew of were of rank. You know, officers, enlistments, NCOs verses Airmen, and all that stuff.

MW: My children grew up on a military installation. They were born on military installations. One of them went to school on a military installation. All of our neighbors were biracial. It was black, white, Asian, Filipinos, Hispanic, it didn't matter. Everybody was more mixed than they

were just one race. And you fed them. You don't feed one child, you feed all the kids. And anybody who has ever lived in base housing laughs and smiles because they get it. They're all your kids. My kids never really understood differences. They understood it because they saw it everyday, but it was accepted. It is what it is. The really didn't see the uglier side of it until they left the gates of the base. When we retired and moved to Huber Heights, my daughter came home the first day and said, "Hey Mom, this kid followed me around today and said, 'Hey Ching Chong Chin, why don't you go back to your country?'" And she said, "Well, you're stupid because I'm Korean." Good for you, honey. That's exactly how you handle it.

DM: My dad, when I was growing up, was military so I was a military brat travelling all over the place. I really didn't have a true concept of racism, or any of that stuff. I actually didn't learn a lot of the terms and their true meanings until I was in high school, because I just wasn't exposed to it.

MW: To be hones with you in the twenty plus, thirty years that I've been affiliated with the military, there hasn't really been anything that shown me differently.

DM: Right.

MW: And I'm not saying it didn't exist, I'm not naïve. Sometimes things are left unsaid, so you don't hear it. But with that said, I think, for me, with my background, I think it has a lot to do with a sense of camaraderie, and being accepted, and knowing that when you wear that uniform, you're part of the same family.