

National Black History Month African Americans in Times of War

CBP Detroit Metropolitan Airport
February 22, 2018

On February 22, 2018 CBP Detroit Metropolitan Airport celebrated National Black History Month by recognizing this year's theme, "*African Americans in Times of War.*" The DMA D.I.C. invited the founder of the nonprofit organization, Detroit Black Veterans Alliance, to speak on her experience in the military.



Lolita M. Poplar

The Detroit Black Veterans Alliance www.detroitbva.com mission is to inform the public of the lives and achievements of Detroit Black Veterans and to uplift Detroit and its youth. Before Ms. Poplar focused on her message for our staff she introduced us to two people that have encouraged her throughout her life. The first was her high school teacher, Ms. Miriam Turner and her best friend since 3rd grade, Ms. Shawntay Dixon. Both ladies came to support her and are actively involved in the Detroit Black Veterans Alliance.



Lolita Poplar, Miriam Turner, Shawntay Dixon

Ms. Poplar was commissioned as an Officer in the United States Navy in 1997. She served in various leadership assignments in Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Georgia, Louisiana, and Michigan. One of the highlights of her career was becoming the first African American and the first woman to serve as Commanding Officer of the Naval Operational Support Center Marquette (Michigan).



Employees thoroughly engaged during the presentation.

In the Upper Peninsular Ms. Poplar had to overcome the barriers that exists when people are not exposed to diversity. She had to develop and execute a plan to confront the stereotypes that people had by exposing them

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to truths. Her plan included outreach to the youth of the community and an aggressive public relation campaign that rejuvenated public esteem for the United States Navy and Reserve personnel.



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She affirmed in her speech that just laws are necessary, but hatred, ignorance, and fear cannot be legislated away. She challenged us to change our hearts for the sake of our children, by uniting in truth and love towards each other. Ms. Poplar told us about the story of Capitan Bennet who was being honored at a ceremony. She walked towards him thinking he was crying about the joy he had of being honored by his peers. She went over to console him and he asked her do you know why I'm crying? She stated because you're being honored, and he said "no that is not why I'm crying." He said "I'm crying because you made it (he had seen her commander rank)." Capitan Bennet was a white man, her mentor, and a person with a changed heart.

Ms. Poplar continues in her mission to change the hearts of people through her actions. After ten years of military service she

continues her service to country as an ordained minister and founder of "Nourish to Life by Poplar Christian Health Service, a counseling and wellness ministry, founder and CEO of the Detroit Black Alliance of Veterans, and will soon be installed as the first African American and first woman to serve as Post Commander for Post 1 Memphis Department of Tennessee of the American Legion.



Port Director Chamberlain, Assistant Port Director Katikos, Lolita Poplar.

Although Ms. Lolita Poplar came as a speaker to us in Black History Month, she gave us her experience of endurance and triumph. She gave us conversation and connected us to the kinship of humanity. She came as a speaker and left as a friend.