

ALL THAT WE CAN BE¹

REVIEWED BY MAJOR MICHELE E. WILLIAMS²

The Army is “the only place in American life where whites are routinely bossed around by blacks.”³ This is the conclusion of two sociologists who wrote *All That We Can Be*, a thought provoking book about race integration in the U.S. Army. The authors persuasively argue that the Army is “the most successfully racially integrated institution” in America.⁴ The authors outline twelve key principles that arise from the Army’s experience and argue that civilian institutions can use these principles to achieve successful race integration.⁵ Military insiders may find most of these principles commonsense. Two of these principles, however, are rather controversial and should fuel significant debate.⁶ The authors conclude that the civilian world can achieve the Army’s results on a large-scale only through a national service program, which they term the “civic equivalent of the draft.”⁷

The authors’ backgrounds lend strength and credibility to their opinions on race integration and affirmative action. Both authors served in the

1. CHARLES C. MOSKOS & JOHN SIBLEY BUTLER, *ALL THAT WE CAN BE: BLACK LEADERSHIP AND RACIAL INTEGRATION THE ARMY WAY* (1996).

2. United States Army. Written while assigned as a student, 47th Judge Advocate Officer Graduate Course, The Judge Advocate General’s School, United States Army, Charlottesville, Virginia.

3. MOSKOS & SIBLEY, *supra* note 1, at 2.

4. *Id.* at 132.

5. The twelve principles, or lessons, are: (1) Blacks and Whites Will Not View Opportunities and Race Relations the Same Way; (2) Focus on Black Opportunity, Not on Prohibiting Racist Expression; (3) Be Ruthless Against Discrimination; (4) Create Conditions so that White and Black Youth Can Serve on an Equal Basis to Improve Their Social and Civic Opportunities; (5) Install Qualified Black Leaders as Soon as Possible; (6) Affirmative Action Must Be Linked to Standards and Pools of Qualified Candidates; (7) Affirmative Action Must Follow a “Supply-side” Model, Not a “Demand-side” Model; (8) A Level Playing Field Is Not Always Enough; (9) Affirmative Action Should Be Focused on Afro-Americans; (10) Recognize Afro-Anglo Culture as the Core American Culture; (11) Enhancing Black Participation is Good for Organizational Effectiveness; and (12) If We Do Not Overcome Race, American Society May Unravel. *Id.* at 132-142.

6. These two principles, “Lesson Nine: Affirmative Action Should Be Focused on Afro-Americans” and “Lesson Ten: Recognize Afro-Anglo Culture as the Core American Culture,” are discussed *infra*.

7. *Id.* at 124, 143.

Army after being drafted and view their military experience favorably.⁸ Both have studied the military extensively throughout their careers.⁹ Their backgrounds also defy racial stereotypes. Mr. Moskos benefited from affirmative action during college but is white.¹⁰ Mr. Butler is a black American¹¹ and the fourth generation of his family with a college degree.¹² Perhaps most importantly, both have gained “extraordinary access” to the military at all levels.¹³ By providing this information, the authors implicitly acknowledge that opinions about race integration often result from our own personal backgrounds. As a result, many readers (especially those with some military experience) will find additional insight and balance in the authors’ views.¹⁴

One does not have to agree with the authors’ views to find valuable lessons in *All That We Can Be*. Military and civilian leaders should take special note of the authors’ insights on affirmative action. They emphasize that institutions that lower standards to promote less qualified individuals may quickly achieve the “right” race mix and temporary peace.¹⁵ The long-term costs of this kind of affirmative action, however, are resentment by whites and loss of self-esteem for blacks, who are made to feel that they cannot succeed without special favors.¹⁶ The authors argue that the Army’s method is better. This method, which they call “compensatory action,” helps disadvantaged groups to meet the standards of competition.¹⁷ Instead of lowering standards to promote black Americans, the Army educates and trains them up to the standards. Thus, the Army can promote black Americans to leadership positions without suffering a loss in quality.

8. Charles Moskos served in Germany in the late 1950s, and John Sibley Butler is a decorated Vietnam War veteran. *Id.* at xviii.

9. *Id.* at xiv, xviii.

10. *Id.* at xvii-xviii.

11. The authors use the terms black, black American, and Afro-American interchangeably throughout the book.

12. *Id.* at xviii.

13. *Id.* at xiv, xviii, xxi-xxii. The depth of the authors’ observations and interviews of military personnel is impressive. Mr. Moskos spent time with units deployed all over the world. At least two Army judge advocate general officers contributed to the authors’ research.

14. *But see* Kwame Okoampa-Ahoofe, Jr., *A New Book Affirms America’s “Afro-Anglo” Culture*, THE ETHNIC NEWSWATCH, June 21, 1997, at 30 (describing Moskos and Butler as having “near scriptural optimism” and as veterans, standing “too propagandistically close to their thesis”).

15. MOSKOS & BUTLER, *supra* note 1, at 69, 136.

16. *Id.* at 70, 136.

17. *Id.* at 70.

To their credit, the authors do not try to gloss over the fact that “compensatory action” has not come cheap for the Army. For example, forty percent of black students entering West Point first attend the Military Academy Preparatory School, where the cost of training is \$40,000 to \$60,000 per student.¹⁸ Add the cost of four years at West Point, and the Army has spent close to \$300,000 to make each of these students a commissioned officer.¹⁹ The Army also invests significant resources in its military equal opportunity advisors, sending them away from their units for nearly four months of training at the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute.²⁰ The Institute’s annual budget (not including salaries for the sixty-five military members on its staff) is close to two million dollars.²¹

Leaders in the corporate world are likely to look at these costs of success and wonder how the authors’ twelve principles could possibly be applied to institutions governed by the profit motive. Unfortunately, the authors do not answer this important question but leave the reader yearning for more. The book presents only two arguments on the benefits of race integration: that enhancing black participation is good for organizational effectiveness, and American society will unravel if we do not overcome race.²² Corporate executives constrained by the “bottom line” are likely to find these arguments more lofty than persuasive. The authors will need to argue more thoroughly and present data if they wish to convince private industry that the long-term benefits of race integration outweigh the significant financial burdens.

This is not to say that *All That We Can Be* is short on usefulness. To the contrary, the book is full of valuable information for current and future military leaders. For example, the book cites somewhat surprising data from the early 1980s showing that black noncommissioned officers rated black soldiers harder than their white counterparts.²³ The authors gathered data showing that junior soldiers still believe this to be the case today.²⁴ They use this data to show how black noncommissioned officers “assuage whites’ feelings of reverse discrimination.”²⁵ Although the authors do not

18. *Id.* at 91, 92.

19. *Id.*

20. *Id.* at 56.

21. *Id.*

22. *Id.* at 141-42.

23. *Id.* at 46.

24. The authors apparently did not gather data to determine whether the soldiers’ *perceptions* on this issue were based in fact (e.g. they did not examine efficiency reports). *Id.*

say so, their data furnishes an even broader lesson for black military leaders (and possibly for women and other minorities as well). That is, we must be mindful not to hold back our own in our efforts to be impartial, credible leaders. Given the Army's success, it would be unfortunate to see further efforts at race integration unknowingly hampered by its own minority leaders.

According to the authors, one of the key components of the Army's race integration success is the large number of blacks.²⁶ They argue that this brings at least three advantages to the Army: it provides a sufficient pool from which to recruit black leaders, it allows for wider acceptance of the features of black culture that enhance "organizational climate," and it causes whites to recognize diversity among blacks.²⁷ Of course, the authors note that the Army gains these advantages only because of the failures of our civilian society. They cite hard and convincing statistics to prove their point. "Among qualified youths—those who met the physical and mental standards—an astonishing fifty percent of all blacks joined the military, against only sixteen percent of their white counterparts."²⁸ Quite simply, the Army is a good place for young blacks because their opportunities in civilian life are so limited.

This raises an interesting question not fully addressed by the authors. If civilian institutions adopt the authors' key principles and achieve race integration, does the Army lose out? It appears that some senior military leaders have answered "yes" to this question during the national service debate.

The authors argue that replicating military service in a large-scale national service program is the most effective way to improve race relations in America.²⁹ They believe that national service would increase the number of blacks with the tools necessary to compete on a "level playing field," bring blacks and whites together for a common cause, and create a sense of "enlightened patriotism" and "communitarian thought."³⁰ In order to meet these goals, the authors strongly believe that a national ser-

25. *Id.*

26. *Id.* at 13.

27. *Id.* at 14.

28. *Id.* at 38.

29. *Id.* at 124.

30. *Id.* at 124, 147, 169. Communitarian thought is recognizing that citizens have responsibilities as well as rights, that the "common good is more important than individual rights," and that the "welfare of the whole supersedes individual rights." *Id.* at 169.

vice program needs to provide post-service educational benefits equivalent to the GI bill.³¹

The military's senior leadership has viewed post-national service educational benefits as taking away too much from the armed forces. The Department of Defense has objected to such proposals on the ground that they would detract from military recruiting.³² In response to what seems to be a very valid concern, the authors merely footnote to one Army recruiting command study and take only one paragraph to argue that these concerns are unfounded.³³ Given the importance of the military's concerns and potential impact on military readiness, the authors disappoint by not addressing the issue more seriously and in greater detail. Perhaps the authors see the irony in writing a book that speaks so favorably of the Army, yet possibly results in negative consequences to that institution should the book's ideas take hold in the civilian world.

Throughout the book, most of the authors' opinions and arguments seem logical and quite commonsense. The key principles found in lessons nine and ten, however, are rather controversial. Unfortunately, these are also the two most difficult principles, because they are somewhat hard to grasp. In lesson nine, "Affirmative Action Should Be Focused on Afro-Americans," the authors argue that a multicultural approach to affirmative action should be abandoned in favor of expanded equal opportunity for black Americans.³⁴ According to the authors, one of the reasons for the Army's successful race integration is that the Army gears affirmative action *de facto* to blacks.³⁵

The authors believe affirmative action should focus on black Americans because of the "unique conditions of Afro-American life and history."³⁶ In "Lesson Ten: Recognize Afro-Anglo Culture as the Core American Culture," the authors argue that a multicultural view of America should be abandoned in favor of a "unified national identity whose core is recognized as Afro-Anglo."³⁷ The authors "hope for an acknowledgement of our common Afro-Anglo heritage" just as "we came to recognize our shared American religious culture as Judeo-Christian."³⁸

31. *Id.* at 146, 169.

32. *Id.* at 161.

33. *See id.* at 162.

34. *Id.* at 121, 139.

35. *Id.* at 139.

36. *Id.* at 121.

These two lessons are controversial, if not bold. The authors are saying we must favor blacks over all other minorities. The shortcoming here is not the authors' lack of political correctness, but their over-simplified approach. They simply do not ask the obvious questions, much less attempt to answer them. If affirmative action focuses exclusively on blacks, what will be the result for other minorities? For women in and out of the military? For Native Americans, whose history and position in American society is arguably as tenuous as that of blacks? For Hispanics, the fastest growing minority-group in America?³⁹ What effect would an affirmative action policy focusing exclusively on blacks have on relations between black Americans and other minority groups? Is it right to make up for our historical wrongs against black Americans by ignoring other minority groups?

The authors essentially ignore this minefield.⁴⁰ Unfortunately, their somewhat light approach to such a heavy topic is distracting from an otherwise well-researched and well-argued proposal for better race integration in civilian institutions.

Despite some shortcomings, *All That We Can Be* is a thought-provoking read for military and civilian leaders at every level. Readers will appreciate that the authors do not write in an overly academic fashion. Further, the book contains a lot of information that is just plain interesting. For example, chapter two discusses a short but very entertaining history lesson about black American service in the military since colonial days. The book is also full of fascinating facts and statistics, some of which should be eye-opening for Army leaders. For example:

Black civilian employees in federal civil service are 2.5 times more likely to be fired than whites.⁴¹

37. *Id.* at 130. The authors use "Anglo" to refer to the British heritage of Americans and specifically our language, social customs, and legal and political traditions. "Afro" refers to these aspects of our culture: "moral vision, rhetoric, literature, music, and a distinctive Protestant Christianity." *Id.* at 128.

38. *Id.* at 141.

39. Karen Brandon, *Bush's Campaign Works to Win Over Texas Hispanics*, CHI. TRIB., Oct. 25, 1998, at 6. Hispanics are projected to be the largest minority group in America by 2005. *Id.*

40. The book does note that immigrants have also shaped our national identity. MOSKOS & BUTLER, *supra* note 1, at 128. By way of comment on other minorities, the authors express extreme skepticism about multicultural education in settings without a substantial black presence. "[S]uch education can detract from blacks' opportunity by becoming a vehicle for other 'oppressed' groups . . ." *Id.* at 121.

Black Army soldiers are twenty percent less likely to be involuntarily separated than white soldiers.⁴²

Black females are two times as likely as white females to complete their Army enlistments.⁴³

Blacks are more satisfied with their Army careers than whites.⁴⁴

The authors should have addressed some of their points further to convince readers that their twelve key principles will lead to racial integration in civilian institutions. One need not be convinced, however, to find this book useful. At a minimum, the authors gave some original and much needed insight into the issue of race integration. Further, they opened what should be extensive debate on the topic in both military and civilian institutions.

41. *Id.* at 6.

42. *Id.*

43. *Id.* at 42.

44. *Id.* at 5.