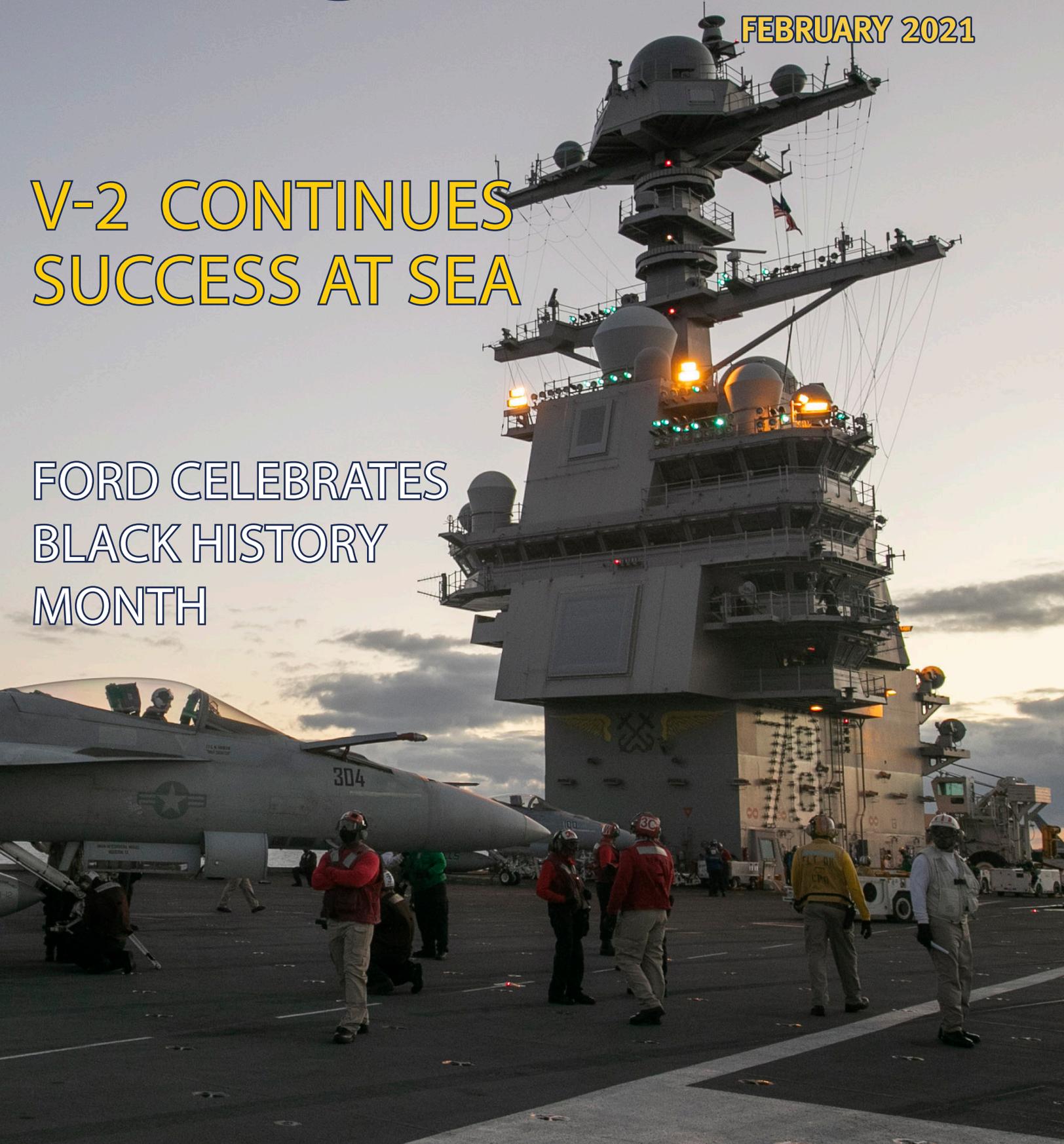


# THE WOLVERINE

FEBRUARY 2021

V-2 CONTINUES  
SUCCESS AT SEA

FORD CELEBRATES  
BLACK HISTORY  
MONTH



# THE WOLVERINE

USS GERALD R. FORD (CVN 78)

## MEET THE TRIAD

COMMANDING OFFICER  
CAPT John J. Cummings

EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
CAPT Jeremy Shamblee

COMMAND MASTER CHIEF  
CMDCM De'Andre Beaufort

## MEDIA DEPARTMENT

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER  
LCDR Desiree Frame

ASSISTANT PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER  
LT Ayifa Brooks  
Lt. j.g. Beau Nickerson

MEDIA DEPARTMENT LCPO  
MCC RJ Stratchko

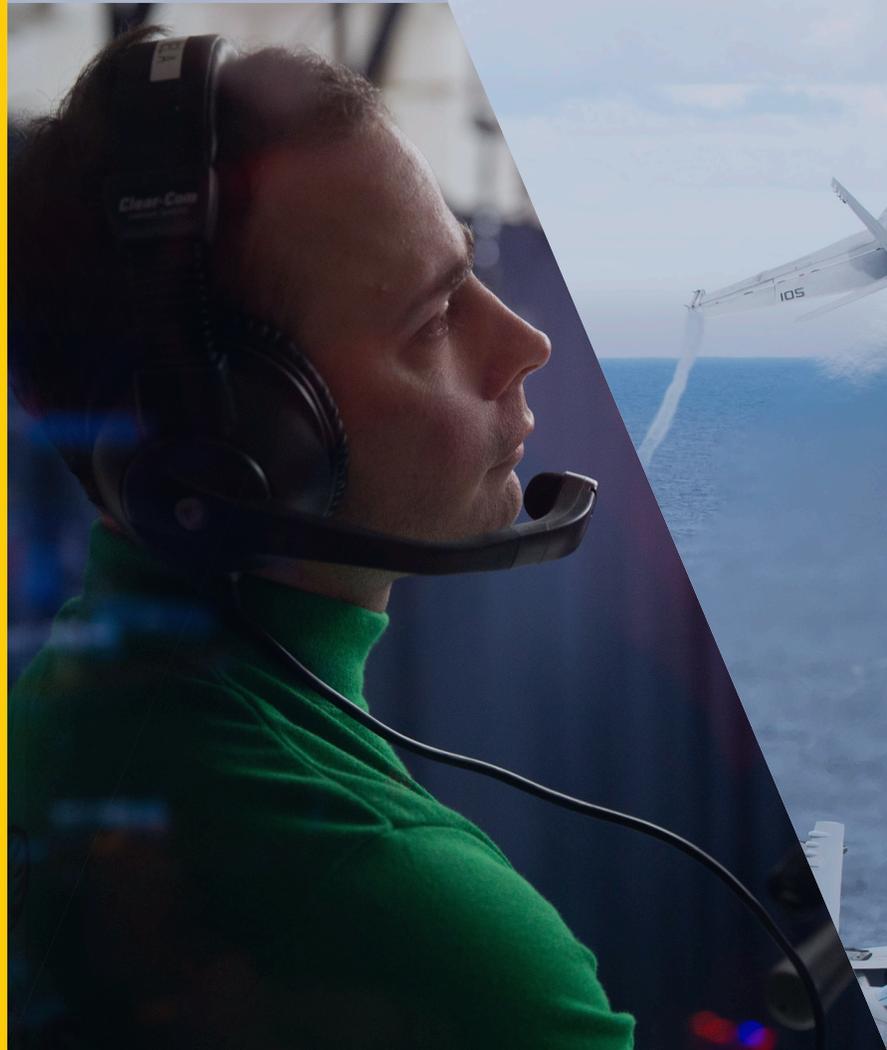
THE WOLVERINE EDITOR  
MC3 Zachary Melvin

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MC1 Juile Matyascik  
MC1 Gary Prill  
MC1 Jeff Troutman  
MC2 Kallysta Castillo  
MC2 William Spears  
MC2 Ryan Seelbach  
MC3 Zachary Guth  
MC3 Angel Thuy Jaskuloski  
MC3 Shanell Lawrence  
MC3 Dalton Lowing  
MC3 Brett Walker  
MCSN Riley McDowell  
MCSN Sarah Mead  
MCSN Anton Wendler  
MCSN Mariano Lopez  
MCSN Trenton Edly  
MCSN Jackson Adkins

### FRONT COVER PHOTO

Sailors assigned to USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) air department, conduct cyclic flight operations Nov. 9, 2020. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Ryan Seelbach)



## THIS MONTH IN NAVAL HISTORY

February 22, 1909

The Great White Fleet returns to Hampton Roads, Va., following its 14-month round-the-world cruise.

February 21, 1945

Japanese kamikazes sink escort carrier USS Bismarck Sea (CVE 95) while off Iwo Jima with the loss of 318 men. USS Saratoga (CV-3) is struck by five kamikazes but survives, although 123 men are killed.

February 8, 1991

As part of Operation Desert Storm, USS Wisconsin (BB 64) attacks a dozen Iraqi artillery emplacements with 36 rounds of its 16-inch guns in support of a Marine reconnaissance probe into occupied Kuwait.

February 3, 2017

USS Enterprise (CVN 65) is decommissioned in a ceremony held in the ship's hangar bay, Feb. 3. The ceremony marks the end the ship's nearly 55-year career, and is the first decommissioning of a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier.



## FOR MORE CONTENT

Want to see more about USS Gerald R. Ford?

<https://www.dvidshub.net/unit/CVN78>



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BY EXAMPLE

# Know your rate: Air Traffic Controller

Story by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Anton Wendler



Chief Air Traffic Controller Michael Knecht, from New York, assigned to USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) operations department, monitors flight operations and tracks aircraft from Ford's Carrier Air Traffic Control Center. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Apprentice Riley McDowell)

ATLANTIC OCEAN — The United States Navy has over 3,700 aircrafts and about 7,000 pilots, more than any other country's Navy. Ensuring the pilots and aircraft can complete their missions and operate safely is the job of Navy Air Traffic Controllers (AC).

In an article published by Navy Times in 2019, Air Traffic Controller 1st class Jonathan M. Epperson, who was assigned to Naval Air Station Meridians McCain Field, recalls how he had his training and courage tested as he guided Boyd Williams through an engine failure and emergency landing.

"An ideal air traffic controller is someone who thinks clearly, is calm, resourceful and respectful," said Williams. "Someone who is accommodating and reasonable with requests and he was all of those things. He was a calm person on the ground who could relate to what I was going through and know what I was going through. He was my lifeline, a person on the ground to coordinate potential."

Staying composed while Williams's aircraft suffered engine failure allowed Epperson to assist in an emergency

landing onto U.S. Highway 45 with no one getting injured. Epperson was awarded the Navy Region South East Air Traffic Controller of the year.

The lives of pilots and millions of dollars' worth of naval aircraft are in the hands of AC's and its their privilege and responsibility to ensure safe operations and to be able to save lives and aircraft during an emergency. They always have to be ready for an emergency, ready to save a pilot's life. Aboard USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78), AC's are constantly working for the pilot's safety as they launch and land from Ford's flight deck.

"It's a cross between exciting and nerve-racking, because it's our responsibility if something goes wrong," said Air Traffic Controller 3rd class Austin Reese from Tifton, Georgia, assigned to Ford's operations department. "There's peoples lives and a lot of money at stake, if we weren't to do our jobs correctly. It could be a major crisis."

The work that AC's have to do can be intense from within their radar room, monitoring the planes in the sky and communicating with their pilots. AC's might not be the first thing you think about when you see an F/A-18E Super Hornet zoom past but, the AC's are making sure that pilots and aircraft operate safely.

"It's an honor, a privilege to be in this position," said Air Traffic Controller 2nd class

Jamal Wilson from Roanoke, Virginia, assigned to Ford's operations department. "To have that much trust in a person because these are lives in the sky."

AC's can sometimes be overlooked when thinking about the pilots, their aircraft and the missions they complete. AC's are a part of the whole flight operation, from taking off, to safely maneuvering through air traffic and landing.

"It's extremely rewarding, because of how much responsibility it is, and to have a good night, every night," said Wilson. "To know that those pilots got back to the ship safe or back to their families, it's extremely rewarding."

Under the leadership of Carrier Strike Group TWELVE, Gerald R. Ford is underway in the Atlantic Ocean conducting first-ever integrated carrier strike group operations with Carrier Air Wing EIGHT, Destroyer Squadron TWO and their Air and Missile Defense Commander, Commanding Officer of USS Gettysburg (CG 64).

For more news from USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78), visit [www.dvidshub.net/unit/CVN78](http://www.dvidshub.net/unit/CVN78)

# Ford Reflects on African-American's Contributions to Naval History

By Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Shanell Lawrence



NORFOLK (Mar. 9, 2020) USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) command master chief, De'Andre Beaufort, looks at the crew during an all hands call on the ship's flight deck. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Angel Thuy Jaskuloski)

ATLANTIC OCEAN — Black History Month is an annual celebration of the contributions, achievements and the immeasurable impact that African Americans have had on our nation and its history.

As USS Gerald R. Ford steamed in the Atlantic Ocean this week, the crew took a moment to pause and reflect on Black History Month.

African Americans have always been a part of our nation's armed forces even though they weren't always able to serve in the many facets that we see today. In fact, at the start of World War II they weren't even allowed to enlist in the Navy's general service until 1942. They were only able to enlist as messmen, cooks and waiters whose chief function was to serve food to other Sailors.

By January 1944, there were roughly 100,000 African American men serving in the Navy. These Sailors quickly demonstrated their expertise, willingness to serve and dedication to their country despite the challenges they faced due to the color of their skin.

"Black History Month has been a great celebration of the pioneers that paved the way for me and many others," said Ford's Command Master Chief Deandre Beaufort. "In the armed services, Black History Month reminds us of where we came from."

Although African Americans could enlist in the United States Navy, none were able to be commissioned as officers until a group of 16 African

American men were assembled at Recruit Training Center, Great Lakes in Illinois for officer training in January 1944. There was a strong sentiment that they could not succeed as officers. These men demonstrated that not only could African Americans succeed as officers, but that they could excel. The normal officer course was sixteen weeks long and these men completed the training in 8 with an average grade point average of 3.98 out of 4, the highest average of any class in Navy history at the time. Even though all sixteen men had passed the course, the Navy only wished to commission 12 as officers and a thirteenth as a warrant officer, sending the remaining 3 men back into the enlisted ranks. These thirteen men would become known as the "Golden Thirteen."

In October of 1944, President Franklin D. Roosevelt agreed to reopen the Navy to African American women, who had not been permitted to serve since World War I. This order was the precursor to the commissioning of the Navy's first 2 African American female officers, Frances Eliza Willis and Harriet Ida Pickens, who were sworn in to the WAVES (Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Services) on November 13, 1944 and commissioned on December 26, 1944.

These unprecedented accomplishments, in such a short time period paved the way for others like, Ens. Jesse Brown, the first African American Naval Aviator, Capt. Chancellor Alphonso "Pete" Tzomes, the first African American to command a nuclear-powered submarine, and Lt. Cmdr. Wesley Brown, the first African American U.S. Naval Academy Graduate.

These men and women persevered when faced with adversity. In doing so they proved their leadership abilities and demonstrated that African

American Sailors are not only able and willing to serve in our Navy, but are able to do so with extraordinary distinction.

The lessons learned from these trailblazers continue to be passed on even today. For Sailors like Yeoman Second class Jocelyn McCoy, it comes in the form of encouragement and inspiration from her chain of command.

"Lt. Cmdr. [Shannon] Morris, he motivates me to go for OCS (Officer Candidate School)," said McCoy. "Since he was shown that he could do it, he wants me to know that I can do it too. He knows I have the potential and the mindset."

The Navy has trained a generation of outstanding African American officers and enlisted personnel who provide critical leadership and expertise in times of peace and conflict.

Today's African American Sailors stand proudly knowing the accomplishments of their predecessors and continue to distinguish themselves ashore, on ships, in aircraft and on submarines.

In response to "What does Black History Month mean to you?," Adm. Michelle J. Howard, Naval History and Heritage Command, replied, "By taking the time to educate ourselves on our history and the people who shaped this nation, we can more fully appreciate the ideals set down by the founders... It's a reminder that our work is to sustain freedom and ensure that rights and liberty belong to all our citizens."



5



6



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8



# PHOTOS OF THE MONTH

## FEBRUARY 2020

1. Sailors, assigned to USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) air department, work on the flight deck as the ship prepares to get underway Jan. 28, 2021. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Julie R. Matyascik)

2. Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) 1st Class Amber Anderson, from Marion, Virginia assigned to USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) air department, directs an E-2C Hawkeye, attached to the "Screw Tops" of Airborne Command and Control Squadron (VAW) 123 on Ford's flight deck Jan. 29, 2021. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Zachary Melvin)

3. Boatswain's Mate Seaman Riva Redding, from Norfolk, Virginia, assigned to USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) deck department, pulls a messenger line through a chock on the ship's fantail during a sea and anchor detail, Jan. 28, 2021. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Riley McDowell)

4. Hull Maintenance Technician 1st Class Abner Ocampo, from Virginia Beach, Virginia, assigned to USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) engineering department, welds a metal spacer in the ship's machinery repair shop, Jan. 29, 2021. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Zack Guth)

5. An F/A-18F Super Hornet attached to the "Gladiators" of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 106 performs a touch and go on Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) flight deck Jan. 30, 2021. VMMan conducting carrier qualifications. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Kallysta Castillo)

6. Sailors assigned to USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) weapons department, conduct a live fire weapons qualification exercise. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Mariano Lopez)

7. Capt. J. J. Cummings, USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) commanding officer fist bumps side boys while standing by for the arrival of Vice Adm. Dean Peters, commander, Naval Air Systems, on Ford's flight deck, Jan. 29, 2021. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Jackson Adkins)

8. Machinist's Mate 3rd Class Ryan Moreland, from Long Beach, California, assigned to USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) engineering department, performs maintenance in Ford's galley Jan 30, 2021. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Apprentice Trenton Edly)

# The Backbone of the Flight Deck

Story by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Jackson Adkins

NORFOLK, Va. —If an aircraft carrier did not have Aviation Boatswain's Mates (Equipment), also known as ABEs, carriers would just be carrying aircraft. Flight operations wouldn't be possible and one of the carrier's primary missions couldn't be accomplished.

ABEs assigned to USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78), work with first-in-class technology known as Advanced Arresting Gear (AAG) and Electromagnetic Aircraft Launch System (EMALS). Ford's ABEs are specifically charged with learning these

new systems and paving the way for future Ford-class carriers.

"ABEs conventionally are steam and hydraulic related so that's all we deal with. So here we have had to adapt to the electrical side of our rate," said Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Equipment) 1st Class David Vonbehren, from Cincinnati, assigned to Ford's air department as the bow catapults leading petty officer. "As far as Nimitz [class], everything has been laid out for them over lots of years. They have got everything set up, we had to start everything from the ground up here."

Ford-class carriers have optimized manning which allows them to operate with less personnel than Nimitz-class carriers. In air

department's V-2 division there are approximately 25 ABEs, half the amount that would be assigned on a Nimitz-class carrier.

They also work with many other departments on the ship to maintain their equipment such as reactor, supply, and engineering.

"On a Nimitz-class carrier it's hydraulics, here it's mostly electrical," said Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Equipment) 1st Class Kimberley O'Donnell, from Silverdale, Washington, assigned to Ford's air department as the arresting gear leading petty officer. "Engineering helps us out a lot by helping us get parts from the hanger bay to the 03 level, when we have to replace parts."

While Ford is underway, ABEs are continually testing the equipment and stressing them to their limits.

"EMALS is the future of the Navy," said Vonbehren. "There is not going to be another aircraft carrier that is going to be able to contend with us."

Though the work life of an ABE can vary depending on what ship they work on or what equipment they maintain, Vonbehren says some consistent characteristics you will find in any ABE is that they are knowledgeable, hardworking and adaptable.

"With every ABE comes adaptability and versatility. Each day is started with an open mind and the acceptance of the challenges that have not yet been revealed," said Chief (Sel) Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Equipment) Justin Knighton, from Euless, Texas, assigned to Ford's air department as the bow catapults leading chief petty officer. "Through blood and sweat, no matter the elements, an ABE will complete the mission."



A T-45 Goshawk, assigned to Air Test and Evaluation Squadron (VX) 23, prepares to land on USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) flight deck. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Zachary Melvin)

# USS Gerald R. Ford Provides Afloat Experience for Postdoctoral Psychologists

By Lt. j.g. Beau Nickerson, USS Gerald R. Ford Public Affairs

ATLANTIC OCEAN-- USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78) hosted three naval psychologists on board, Dec. 5 - 17, while underway for Independent Steaming Event 14 to introduce them to practicing while at sea and prepare them for future assignments.

Lt. Carin Teeters, from Fort Wayne, Indiana; Lt. Shalani Offord, from Birmingham, Alabama; and Lt. Krystal Wood, from Dillsburg, Pennsylvania, are completing their postdoctoral fellowship at Naval Medical Center Portsmouth. This underway was the first time at sea for all three officers.

"Your first underway is when you really feel like you're in the Navy," said Ford's command psychologist, Lt. Eric Neumaier, Ph.D. "I remember my first underway back in 2016, and it's a seminal experience. I'm so glad they were able to come out with the ship and gain experience at sea."

While onboard, the fellows shadowed Neumaier to better understand practicing on board an aircraft carrier. The fellow's time was split between gaining clinical experience by assisting with patient intakes, and meeting with different departments throughout the ship to learn the importance of communication.

"Being underway and seeing patients, you really have more understanding and empathy," Wood said. "This is their world. You're not just seeing patients in the setting of an office, but you get to see where they work, where they eat, where they live and just how stressful and intense their job on the ship can be. It becomes a balancing act working in such a close environment. You need to have appropriate boundaries, but at the same time you don't want to be that doc that just stays in their office and no one knows who they are."

The ship can offer a completely unique set of challenges when compared to a traditional setting. It's a fast paced environment, with limited access to external resources and typically only has one psychologist. Fortunately, the ship psychologist is not the only place to go for psychological health.

"We're not the only mental health resource," said Neumaier. "Ship psychology



Lt. Carin Teeters, left, from Fort Wayne, Indiana, assigned to Naval Medical Center Portsmouth, poses for a photo in a MH-60S Sea Hawk helicopter during her temporarily assigned duty, Dec 10, 2020. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Jackson Adkins)

is one part of a trilateral relationship with the Chaplain's Office and the Deployed Resiliency Counselor (DRC), and we are all committed to the mental health of the Sailors onboard so they can remain healthy and mission ready."

Neumaier went on to say that, in the current COVID-19 environment and with the holidays approaching, it's important that Sailors utilize the resources they have to maintain their mental health during this stressful time.

"We have to prioritize self-care," Neumaier said. "Are you eating regularly? Are you getting enough sleep? It sounds basic, but we tend to neglect those things when we're under stress. As far as the holidays are concerned, our interpersonal relationships are one of the best resources any of us have. Even if you can't physically travel home for the holidays, reach out to friends and family by zoom or telephone. Just talking to someone who cares can go a long way."

"Mental health doesn't have to be this scary or ethereal thing," Offord added. "It doesn't have to be going into the woods and meditating for three hours. It can be very basic

and focus on preventative maintenance, stress management, and making sure you are getting what you need."

The underway was not without its fun experiences for the fellows. The three officers were treated to a flight in an MH-60S Sea Hawk helicopter by the "Tridents" of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 9, a .50 caliber gunshot off the ship's fantail, and chances to observe F/A-18 Super Hornet and T-45 Goshawk carrier qualifications from the flight deck.

All of these experiences, while fun, also served to remind the fellows of their responsibility to support the warfighter and thus the national defense strategy.

"Mental health is vital for the mission," Teeters said. "Each service member is a link in the chain and if that link is not properly fortified physically and mentally, then the whole chain is weakened. Regardless of whether you're on the bridge, in an aircraft or on the deck, prioritizing mental health is vital to mission accomplishment."

# A Passion to Succeed: Ford Sailor Leads By Example

By Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Zachary Melvin

ATLANTIC OCEAN — Personnel Specialist 2nd Class Alyssa Ramos, from Sacramento, California, assigned to USS Gerald R. Ford's (CVN 78) personnel department, uses her experience, both from the civilian sector and the Navy, to push her junior Sailors to succeed.

"I did not join straight out of high school," said Ramos. "I waited until about a year after to join. I was working three different jobs at the mall. It was a ten to ten schedule, seven days a week."

Ramos was very successful in the workplace, being placed in positions of leadership despite her young age. However, she made the decision to join the Navy after tragedy struck too close to home.

"Sacramento has problems with gang violence," said Ramos. "I was taking a trip out of the country, and while I was gone, one of my friends was shot five times in my car. If I had not been on that trip, I would have been with him." It was just two weeks later that Ramos made the decision to join. When asked for a list of ratings she was interested in, she looked to the hard work and dedication of her mother for inspiration.

"I knew that I wanted to do admin in the Navy," said Ramos. "Personnel specialist was my number one choice. My mother worked for the Sacramento police department doing administrative work. I chose personnel specialist over yeoman, because I enjoy math. It was similar to what she was doing."

Emotion rose to Ramos' face as she described the

impact that her mother had on her life before and during the Navy.

"My mom has always been my biggest fan," said Ramos. "She is so supportive of my career in the Navy. I can always hear how excited she is when I talk to her over the phone about ship life and the accomplishments of the Ford."

With the support and work ethic of her mother, Ramos went from an E-1 to an E-5 in a little under two years in the Navy. Her determination to rise to the top using the leadership lessons she had learned while working three different jobs in Sacramento and watching her mother support her children played a big part in this success.

"A lot of people are surprised that I came in as an E-1," said Ramos. "I would say that a lot of it had to do with being in the right place at the right time and having the attitude and determination to succeed."

Accepting a leadership position in basic training, graduating as an honor grad in A-school and proving herself to her chain of command during her first four months on board were all factors that lead up to her being able to promote to third class and take the second class exam early. She advanced it first time up with only a year and eight months in the Navy.

"I am the second youngest person in admin department," said Ramos. "But I do not use my age as an excuse. I feel that if you can get people to respect you as a person, they will respect your rank. I try to show my Sailors that there is nothing that I would ask them to do that I would not do myself."

Ramos gave an example of this leadership style by describing a recent task that she and her fellow shipmates had to accomplish.

"I have always been placed in positions of leadership throughout my life, but I always want people to know that I will be right there with them doing what we have to do. For example, we just had to paint one of our passageways last underway. Myself and the other second classes were right there with our third classes painting alongside them. I always want to show my junior guys that I will be there side by side with them, no matter what the task."

Ramos described one of the challenges of leadership is understanding different learning styles





and teaching Sailors the variety of ways that they can comprehend and grow.

"I am an auditory learner, so I learn by listening," said Ramos. "I have found that everyone learns differently, and it is important for myself and my Sailors to understand different ways to meet those challenges."

A lesson that Ramos learned early on in the Navy was finding ways to find the answers herself and not lean on the knowledge of others.

"Every day I would come into this office and open all the instructions and just have them open on my desk so I was ready to find any answer that I did not know," said Ramos. "So that is one of my big things, teaching my junior guys where to find the answer. I want my guys to be able to find the answer or we can sit down and find the answer together."

Ramos now finds joy in the success of her junior Sailors and also working to help people through the personnel office.

"People do not realize how much money personnel specialists assist in," said Ramos. "Especially during this time of year, I really enjoy being able to help send people their money. It makes me feel good to know

that this money will be able to help Sailors buy presents for their families and feel comfortable while traveling. It is very rewarding."

In her free time away from the ship, Ramos enjoys hiking, cliff diving and cooking.

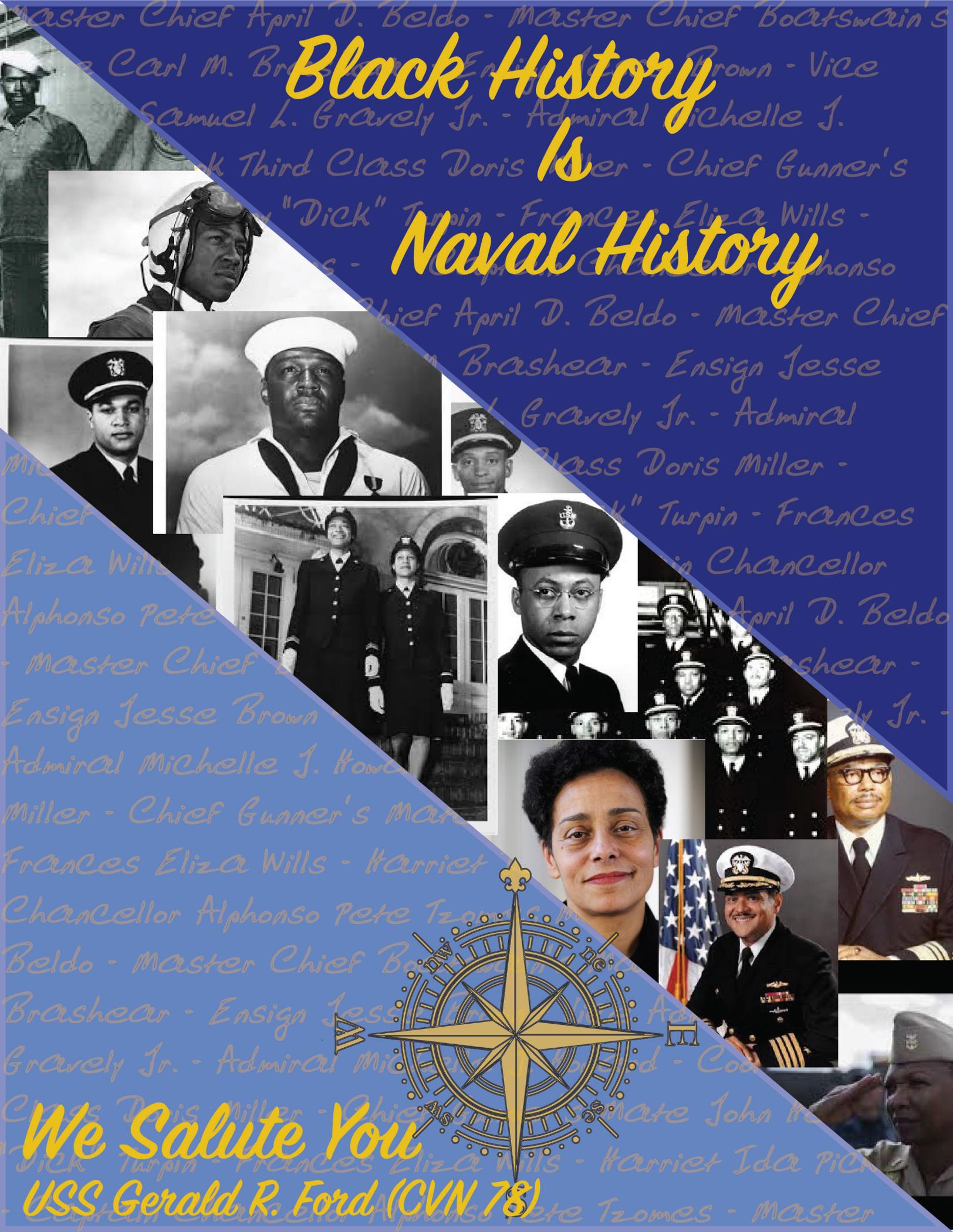
"I never cook for just myself so I enjoy having people over when allowed," said Ramos. "I also like the outdoors and hiking to new places."

The greatest piece of advice Ramos had for Sailors both old and new is to never become comfortable with where they are at.

"Never get comfortable," said Ramos. "E-1 to E-3 are automatic with time, and E-4 is achievable with time. Getting to E-5 and on can be more of a challenge if you get complacent and comfortable with where you are at. Everybody is always working on something, whether it is professional or personal. If you are sitting here not doing anything, then you are going to quickly fall behind. If you see someone of your paygrade or even above working on something, you should be working on it too. If I could give advice to anybody, it would be not to get comfortable. There is always something to learn."

# Black History Is

# Naval History



We Salute You  
USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78)