

Ombudsman's

# NEWSLETTER

By. Meridie M. Machado Cohen

February - April 2024



*"If you can't fly, then run, if you can't run, then walk, if you can't walk then crawl but by all means keep moving forward" -Martin Luther King JR*

## Making History: Black History Month

### Meet the Navy's First Female African-American Chief Warrant Officer



I am proud to introduce you to my old friend, CWO4 (Ret.) Summer Levert, in our Newsletter. I have known CWO4 Levert for over 12 years since she was a BM1 serving at Naval Station Norfolk. In the Summer of 1997, Levert began her military service in the Army National Guard. In 2000, she decided to enlist in the U.S. Navy. Now, she is the first black female Boatswain's Mate in the U.S. Navy to hold the position of Chief Warrant Officer.

Her trajectory did not go unnoticed, and she continuously worked hard toward the rank of Chief Petty Officer in 2011, where I had the pleasure of meeting her during her CPO Initiation Season. In 2014, she applied to the CWO program and was selected. If I could choose someone who would break any achievement barriers, it's my old friend CWO4 Summer Levert. As a woman, Levert has seen the good and bad of the Navy throughout her career. "I didn't think this was possible for me because I didn't see anyone that looked like me in this uniform. The white male has always been the model Sailor in every movie, every training video, every poster," she expressed. When CWO4 Levert isn't working, she enjoys gardening in her backyard, playing with her dogs, or riding her bicycle through the city. She is married and is the mother of a beautiful girl. She served for 26 years and retired from the U.S. Navy on July 1st, 2023.

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Letter from CWO4 Levert:

Resiliency,

I served 26 years in the United States Military. Resiliency is something I had to learn. The definition of Resiliency is “the capacity to withstand or to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness”. I remember all too well when resiliency was introduced to the Navy. It wasn't always just there. We had to learn it to deal with difficult situations. Sometimes a difficult situation can be leaving a loved one behind to go on deployment, PCS'ing, or standing a ton of watches with little to no sleep. Sometimes difficult situations may include dealing with a not so easy chain of command, problems in the work center, discrimination, or unfair treatment.

So how do we overcome these situations? It's recommended to have a mentor, someone you can talk to when you're going through hard times, someone you can reach out to at anytime and will help you along the way. You want a mentor that's going to be honest with you and let you know if you are the problem, which is sometimes tough to hear but also sometimes the case.

How do you navigate through the tough times when you feel like you're receiving unfair treatment? Sometimes you feel like giving up or you may feel hopeless and depressed. I've been in these situations. You have to ask yourself if you are being all you can be, if you are getting all your quals, not slacking off, helping the command with collaterals, and being a team player. If you're doing all these things and still seeing no result then it may be time to talk to someone onboard your ship. Use your chain of command. It's your right to speak about how you feel. The CMC is your largest asset if you're enlisted, and the Department Heads and XO if you're an Officer. Utilize them if you need to. They are there to listen and offer advice.

Finally, make the best of the Navy, no matter where you are or what the situation is. It won't last forever. I remember the saying on an awful deployment I was once on. We used to say “embrace the suck”. We had to embrace it to get through it, with smiles on our faces. As a Bosn there's a lot of “suck”. We work in the cold, wet, hot, windy conditions a lot of the time. And if you drag yourself along the way in misery then it'll be miserable. But if you learn to ‘embrace the suck’ it can be an awesome experience. Its how you build camaraderie and how you gain true Shipmates. I challenge you to examine yourself and make sure you're a part of the team. If you're not then get on board!!!

Kind Regards,

*CWO4 (Ret.) Summer Levert*



## Celebrate Your Military Child this April!

April is the Month of the Military Child! The Department of Defense brings attention to the sacrifice of military service on our children, celebrating their extraordinary resolve in the face of constant change. According to the Department of Defense, our communities have over 1.6 million children!

### PURPLE UP on April 15th!

Wear purple this year as a visible symbol of support for our military children and their sacrifices. Purple Up Day allows communities to say thank you to our children! Purple Up Day this year is April 15th, 2024.

## Who is your Ombudsman?

My name is Meridie M. Cohen, everyone calls me “Meri”, and I am your Ombudsman. It’s an honor to volunteer for this position. Having someone to offer guidance and resources in times of need can be invaluable. I believe connecting the Sailors and their families to necessary resources can benefit them, and in turn the command. Over the last fifteen years as a military spouse, I have volunteered to support military families and spouses in formal and informal roles. Whether at casual get-togethers or providing support as a Family Readiness Group Assistant in preparing command family events to boost morale and camaraderie. I enjoy talking, listening, and being around my fellow military spouses and their families.

Aside from being a NMRTC Portsmouth and CNATTU Oceana Ombudsman, I am also a Clinical Social Worker serving our Sailors. I have seen the best and the worst of “both sides of the coin,” so I am eager to support our CO, XO, CMC, and families as the Command Ombudsman.

I look forward to meeting you all soon as a command and to boost the Ombudsman program and connect in more ways than just location!

Kind Regards,

*Meridie M. Cohen*

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**National Suicide Prevention Line** at 1-800-273-TALK or **988** or inform your chain of command should such ideations occur .