

# Drafting disciplinary action

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From its inception, The United States of America was founded on the ideal of being a multi-cultural society where people no matter where their prior standing was in society could come and realize their “ American Dream”. In reality this has not always been the case, and although we as Americans are getting much closer to experiencing this ideal, it still is not the case.

Changes needed to be made. Without people to take charge and dedicate a portion of their lives to facilitate change, that change would never happen.

One of these people who worked selflessly to fight for a greater level of quality for the USA was Charles H.

Houston. Not only was Houston “ totally committed to – indeed, consumed by – a singular mission: finding and wielding levers of change to free black Americans from racial oppression. ” (Carter 1 but he was also one of the first agents of the civil rights movement in the United States who achieved what he or she was fighting for. Houston early life experiences molded him into the early civil rights advocate he became, furthermore it is possible to draw parallels between these experiences, and later on his casework, to contemporary civil rights movements such as the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLUT) movement currently appending in the United States of America. In order to fully understand why Charles Hamilton Houston became one of the most prominent figures in the civil rights movement, it is vital to take a look at his life experiences prior to him becoming a lawyer.

Mr... Houston was born in Washington D. C. In 1895 to an honest, hardworking family. Houston father was a lawyer and his mother was a hairdresser who boasted an impressive list of clientele, who “ included

senators and cabinet officers” (Linden 2012). Not only did his parents provide him a relatively steady income, they recognized his intellect and desire to learn.

Because of this, they nurtured his mind at every opportunity possible, “As often as their tight budget allowed, they took Charles to the zoo, concerts and matinee theaters” (Linden 2012). Along with these enriching extracurricular activities, his parents also knew the value of a strong formal education and at age twelve they enrolled him in the M. Street High School, which was the first African American secondary education institute in the United States (Linden 2012). M. Street High School was also a cut above most high schools at the time as it “proudly offered its students a traditional classical curriculum...

... At a time when most secondary black schools only provided vocational or “general” curricula.

There is no question that his parents played a crucial role in grooming Houston to become the man that he was later in life. Chances are that if Houston was born into a family of uneducated laborers who either did not believe in or care about upward class mobility, Houston's intellectual nature would have been repressed and he would have ended up at one of those trade schools, if at any school at all. Without his distinguished academic background, Houston would have never ended up at the university of Amherst. His experiences there were more significant than just receiving a higher education, Amherst is where Houston really began to experience the disparity between blacks and whites during that time period. “As the only black student in 1915” he took the trials he suffered which included isolation and racist behavior and used them to motivate himself toward

academic excellence (Linden Around the time Houston finished up at Amherst, America had entered World War I as a fighting member of the alliance.

Not wanting to get drafted into the front lines as many blacks did at the time, he decided to enlist to become an officer. His experiences in France further exposed him to flagrant discrimination, ignorance and oppression that was carried out by white Americans for no reason other than the fact that they believed themselves to be racially superior. His time in France is what really lit a fire inside him to begin fighting for his brothering as he declared, “ My battleground, is in America, not France” (Linden Houston returned to the States in 1 919 to a time of extreme racial tension. Things got so bad during that time his father, a civil lawyer, began taking up cases as a defense attorney in an attempt to ward off unjust convictions against AfricanAmericans, but with racist trials and all white juries it was neigh impossible to attain justice.

Houston had seen enough, Charles applied and was accepted to Harvard Law School. After again achieving a record of academic excellence, as well as serving as an editor of the prestigious Harvard Law Review, he continued his graduate studies and by 1 924 he was now ready to take his knowledge and apply it to practical use(Linden 3. ). Again, Houston willingness to step outside his comfort zone made him experience a sobering reality of just how bad race relations were in America at that time. If he didn't halogen himself so much there is a good chance that he never would have stepped out of black society, and the probability of him deciding to go all the way in his fight for equality would have dropped significantly.

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Additionally, his father, whom he must have respected significantly due to the good treatment he received from him in his early life, feeling the responsibility to become a defense lawyer. Every must have also had a profound impact on him as well. Without these early experiences culminating into somewhat of a perfect storm, I strongly believe that we would have never gotten the Charles Hamilton Houston we know today. This concept doesn't only apply to Houston, either. Looking at every civil rights figure, you can draw distinct parallels between their experiences and Houston. It took a good upbringing a sharpened mind, and a first hand taste of injustice, usually by being strong and living out of your comfort zone to motivate them to fight for social equality and the greater good. To give a contemporary example, in 2003, the fourteen year Old Thomas McLaughlin “ was inappropriately disciplined and and restricted from talking about being gay” at a junior high school in Arkansas. The people in charge at that school also touted Charles to his unknowing parents, which is widely agreed upon to be a one of the worst things you can do to a homosexual who is closeted to his or her parents.

Instead of laying down and accepting this injustice, McLaughlin enlisted the services of the American Civil Rights Union, or ALCOA. Together they won the case on the grounds of McLaughlin first amendment rights being violated, drew much attention and put great pressure on his school district, and became an advocate of civil rights all before he legally could drive a car. (Wright). Looking at those who oppose rights being granted to minority groups whose intensity of opposition ranges from mild discomfort to indifference, their nature leads them to take the stance that what doesn't

directly affect them will only harm them. Through the ages this has consistently bogged down social progress and greatly affected the lives of those that social progress would help.

In 2010, the controversial military practice “ don’t ask don’t tell” officially began to be dismantled after President Obama signed the Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell Repeal Act of 2010. This was seen as a landmark victory for the members and supporters of the GLBT community, who viewed DADA as the systematic discrimination of a minority group by a branch of the government. Of course, whenever a decision is made in government when dealing with a sensitive subject, there is always backlash from opposition groups. In this case, high ranking officials from the army and marines visited congress and petitioned them to reconsider their decision to repeal the anti DADA bill.

Their primary reasons being: “ social upheaval among the tight units that live and fight side by side for months at a time” and “ potential for corruption”. Even while subscribing to these ideas, they conceded that openly gay people serving in the military were bound to happen at some time (Flattery. ) This clearly shows that because the repeal of DADA didn’t necessarily apply to them, the generals didn’t want to take a low risk of allowing homosexuals to be who they really were in the line of duty.

Moreover, their conservative temperament had rendered them incapable of evaluating the potential positives that could arise from eliminating DADA.

Why didn’t they consider the fact that being a forcibly closeted homosexual in such a stressful, high risk situation would add to that tension, making their duties even harder to perform? Also, in my experiences I’ve noticed that

people who are more perceptive of social situations can pick up on the fact that a person may or may not be a closeted homosexual. These relationships tend to be much more stifled and awkward until the closeted homosexual makes their true nature clear to their friend, colleague or relative. After the air has been cleared, these relationships are generally more open and trustworthy, assets which would be vital in an area of combat. Finally, instead of looking at homosexuals as the problematic aspect of this dilemma, the military chiefs should look at homophobia as the problem and began drafting disciplinary action that should be used when homophobia is present among the ranks.

I am sure the military has some sort of penalties that arise when racism becomes a problem in the military, and I am also sure that high ranking officers felt that racism would be an epidemic when the military became desegregated in 1948. Clearly racism still exists in the world, but hate crimes with race as the motive are few and far between in contemporary times, and these isolated incidents receive major publicity because of their rarity and the resulting public backlash.