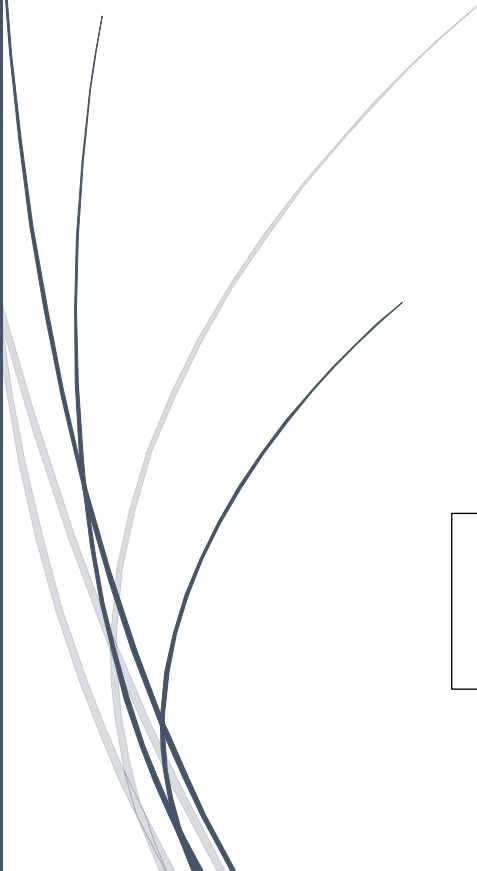




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Defense Logistics Agency Energy

2021 Womens History Month Podcast



<p>Prepared By: Ahmad J. Burse DLA Energy Director EEO, DEI Office</p>
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Ahmad Burse: Hello, DLA Energy Team and welcome to the DLA Energy Women's History Month 2021 Podcast. The date is 18 March 2021.

My name is Ahmad Burse, the DLA Energy EEO and Diversity and Inclusion Director and I will be the moderator for today's podcast.

Today's guests are Brigadier General Canlas, the DLA Energy Commander, Sir, Welcome to the podcast.

Brig Gen Canlas: Thanks Ahmad.

Ahmad Burse: Mr. Eric Smith, SES the DLA Energy deputy commander. Sir, welcome to the podcast.

Mr. Smith: Thank you Ahmad and I appreciate allowing to participate in this podcast this morning.

Ahmad Burse: Gentlemen, welcome and thank you for taking the time and sharing your words and wisdom regarding the importance of Women's History Month. I think it is also important to acknowledge and bring awareness to the Defense Logistics Agency's first female Director, Vice Admiral, Michelle Skubic and its first female Senior Enlisted Leader, Command Sergeant Major, Tomeka O'Neal. So, let us begin.

Women's History Month honors and celebrates the struggles and achievements of American women throughout the history of the United States.

This year's theme is VALIANT WOMEN OF THE VOTE: REFUSING TO BE SILENT.

Gentlemen, what does Women's History Month mean to you?

Brig Gen Canlas: Hey, Ahmad, this is Brig Gen Canlas. I will go ahead and start of with that. You know it's great to be able to celebrate this month. You know, I feel like that this is a great opportunity to recognize women to think about the courageous trailblazers that we've had in, in our rich history of what we call America.

For me personally, I like hearing new stories about previously unrecognized, or probably those less popular women that made huge impacts for our military and our Nation.

You oftentimes hear the popular names that come up, and that's fine. But I also love to hear and learn about something new and, you know, one of the recent ones that I've heard about was. First Lieutenant Madeline D'Eletto she went by Dell. She was a flight nurse during World War II, she was one of the few flight nurses and she helped evacuate some of the wounded right after the "D-Day" invasion at Normandy and so incredible to hear her story about how, you know she paved the way. In aeromedical evacuation and you know that role, that it played on our military history.

And so, I love hearing vignettes like that, that helped highlight. Probably some of the less popular folks that made contributions to our history. Over.

Ahmad Burse: Mr. Smith

Mr. Smith: Ahmad yes, thank you. So, just to caveat on what General Canlas said. So, you know for me, Women's History Month is a reminder, again of the amazing historic contributions and achievements that women have made throughout the world. There

are generations of young women, men and children that have aspired too, you know, higher greatness.

Because of the achievements of women you know, who have traveled to space, who have won Olympic medals who have earned the noble peace prize, because of those women, women have been at the forefront of peaceful, you know civil rights protests. Just reminds us that women are like the General said are, trailblazers in the United States and throughout the world.

Ahmad Burse: Thank you.

Gentlemen, the next question for the both of you. *Has there been any valiant women leaders or visionaries that inspired you? And what is it, that they did that inspired you in and made them those visionaries?*

Brig Gen Canlas: Ahmad you know, there's so many women out there that it's going to be hard to narrow it down, but I will narrow it down to two, you know, they said two that come to my mind right now. Off the top my head. The first one was my previous boss. When I worked in my last job at Mobility Command and that's General Maryanne Miller, who retired last year and she was she was only the fourth female four Star general in the Air Force's history. You know, really an incredible leader and I really admired her leadership and she was a great mentor and friend. What made her special is she should lead with so much passion for people and also the other part was she was well respected as an aviator as a leader and as a General Officer. You know, all through the halls of the Pentagon and also on Capitol Hill. But achieving the rank is only one aspect that I, you know that I think we could look at, but for me I truly admired the way that she, you know, conducted herself when not in the limelight.

You know she cared for the poorest of the poor. She would often go to the poorest areas of India serve out there and help others that are less fortunate. And to watch her humility and how she conducted herself both privately and publicly. It was awesome to watch. It was truly an honor to have worked directly for her.

The second one that comes to mind was my Command Chief when I was serving as a Wing Commander at Charleston Joint base Charleston in Charleston, SC. So my Command Chief, you know during my second year was a Chief Master Sergeant Jennifer Kersey and she was a great wingman and an awesome battle buddy to have. You know, that she grew up in Security Forces here and for those who know the Security Forces career field, It's a career field that has mostly been dominated by men, you know by males, since the beginning of time, it seems like. But you know she thrived in that and she had actually rocketed straight to the top. Yeah, you know she was she was extremely bright and had a tremendous EQ or emotional intelligence and she could walk into the room and light it up. And you know, for me that was a great inspiration. Then she could cut across generational lines. Young old everyone admired her and so you know she definitely complemented my weakness and blind spots and I know that I'm a better leader because of her. Mr. Smith.

Mr. Smith: And again, I agree with general, just it's hard to narrow this list down to you know any specific women because of the vast number that contribute to the historical context to the United States and over the world but let me let me take a different

approach still. So first, what I want to do is start first with, you know, close to home by recognizing the women you know in my life, that provided me inspiration. First I want to start with my grandmother. Who as a sharecropper's wife in South Carolina, raised 13 kids always had her hands full. But she always had the time for kind words and encouragement needed for me as a little boy growing up. You know to keep me going and then it's my mother who also you know worked full time and raised four kids while my father spent a great deal of time away from home in service to our nation to include two tour tours in Vietnam. And then of course closer to home is my wife who also was a dedicated military spouse and raised two kids. While I was away from home a lot and in service to our nation.

But in the larger context, again, it's pretty hard to for me to narrow it down to a just a few leaders or visionaries, but in general, women are the unsung heroes you know, when it comes to development of arts, science and culture. You know and has been that way for generations. It's an exhaustive list that includes pioneers like you know, Susan B. Anthony, Sojourner Truth, Rosa Parks, Madame Curie, Amelia Earhart, Sandra Day O'Connor, Sally Ride, Mother Teresa, Shirley Chisholm and of course vice president of the United States, Kamal Harris. All those great women you know, represent historical firsts that will inspire generations to come.

Ahmad Burse: Thank you, Gentlemen, and thank you for your candidness your stories and you know the way you're able to express how these great women impacted you. It really tells a great story and gives a message to others.

Brig Gen Canlas, not to take away from President Joe Biden's victory. *However, this year, we have seen inauguration of America's first female vice president did her victory inspire any conversations with family and friends for you?*

Brig Gen Canlas: Yes, and thanks Ahmad. When your looking at you know, what happened you know with this. Kamala Harris becoming our first female vice president right, regardless of political beliefs, regardless of party affiliation. Right, it's really hard not to admire what this achievement means to so many, it's always inspiring to hear that sound that virtual sound of the shattering of the glass ceiling, right? And so you know, perhaps? For me, we talked about those conversations that, I got to have because of, you know, the achievement of Kamala Harris.

It is, you know, with my own daughter right here at home, with my 16-year-old daughter. We are able to cover so many things, and for her I think it was inspirational knowing that you could make it all the way to the top and not only you know, were we able to study this and examine it through the gender aspect. But, we also looked at it through the racial and ethnic lines of this achievement. So definitely nothing to, you know discount in the end, right? Because this is a big achievement and I think it sets well for America. Over.

Ahmad Burse: Thanks Sir, thank you.

The next question will be for Mr. Smith.

The National Civilian labor workforce, the National civilian Labor workforce, what it does is it basically takes the census, and it says based off of our census for 2010, the goal for female employees in in any workforce should be about 47%. However, within the DLA Energy population, we're currently at 32% for female employees. What guidance do you

have for managers and supervisors to improve our representation of female employees within the DLA Energy workforce?

Mr. Smith: OK, thank you Ahmad, that's a good question. Well, the first thing I want to reiterate to all of our management supervisors is that we should always select the best candidate. Right, so with that being said, we need to make a concerted effort to ensure that women are included in the pool of candidates in our hiring process. And it is a couple of things I had in mind that you can do.

First, communication is key. Ah, we have to ensure that women candidates rather be internal external to Energy are aware of the job opportunities as they are being developed. Ahh, Second, you know you need to ensure that that women are prepared to compete, when these opportunity's come out. And you can do that by, you know, through mentoring coaching and affording them developmental opportunities such as filling temporary positions and also through targeted rotational assignments. When we go out to recruit, we go out to colleges or different industry days and things of that such, you know we can. We can structure our programs to be tailored toward women. Ah, and then you know, in the course of any minority class you know we must be, you know, have a focus on improving the female energy population and so with the communication again is a key. But this is one of those demographics that we should, and we need to focus on. And the two that I mentioned are just some of the many things that we have at our disposal to make sure that we have a good start in trying, your know first of all maintaining our energy population percentage and then begin improving on that.

Ahmad Burse: Thank you, Sir, and some of the things you said regarding mentoring coaching, and you know and targeted rotations. Those are things that not only anyone or any leadership or any group that is underrepresented are tools that they can use to improve their representation and prepare them to be able to step in the shoes of persons that leave. Thank you.

Brigadier General Canlas, are you aware of any struggles, women professionally or professional professionally or personally have to overcome? How can we, as an agency, assist women in overcoming these hurdles?

Brig Gen Canlas: Hey Ahmad, that is a that is a great question, right? And you know, I think the struggles out there are real right, both professionally and personally. But one thing that you know. I will never know what it feels like to walk in a woman's shoes, right? Just because you know, I haven't been there. But one thing that I try to do to overcome that right, is to listen and to open up my ears.

You know, listen more than I than I speak and basically, have empathy, you know. And try to understand their struggles. But you know, our society has come a long way over the decades. But I still think there's a lot of work to be done. You know, there's still a lot of stigma's that exist in our culture. You know, even in our subculture in the Department of Defense against Women. But you know one thing I do applaud, is the recent efforts, you know initiatives of our military services and Department of Defense is smoothed some of that turbulent experienced by women in the workforce.

You know, for those in the military, particularly in particular, right, as we've seen some uniform changes hairstyle changes, you know recently there was a big victory of. The

feel the bun the movement, which kind of relaxes the hair standards for women, which I think it was long overdue, right?

And also we got providing options. They hit pause on military service to allow focus on women to start families because that's something that you know the male population never has to deal with, right. And so you know that was kind of military centric, but that doesn't, you know, end just right there, right? That, that dilemma of having children and basically that choice between having family and having career right, that extends well beyond the military.

That's something that is civilian workforce that must navigate each and every day. You know in the past it almost seems like those things were two were mutually exclusive, right you had to make it choice between family and career. So, I'm glad to see that you know that workplace rules and regulations have evolved overtime, so it does not have to be one or the other, right? We could move forward, and you can see folks, you can see women make it to the top. You know with the family right and they didn't have to sacrifice any of that. Ah, you know to make it to the top. Over.

Ahmad Burse: Sir, thank you for your response and one of the things that you said that I think was very important was you said we need to learn to listen. You know, speak less and listen more, and I think you know having that attitude can kind of, address things before they become something greater, before they become something significant or a significant problem, but I think that with a lot of us need to learn to do is listen more because there are some unique challenges there. But thank you for your response, Sir.

Mr. Smith, what elements do you feel are needed to create an organizational culture that is that is inclusive not only to the needs of women, but all employees and in with that understanding an inclusive culture means that employees have a psychologically safety to kind of express themselves without being concerned of retribution but express themselves with the awareness they are contracting members of the team.

Mr. Smith: Yeah, good, I think it starts with awareness Ahmad of what really inclusion really entails. You know, you know, we all progress through our careers. We got to where we are now in our careers with a clear understanding of what diversity means. But ah, inclusion is a relatively unique dynamic in the EEO that I don't think all segments of our workforce may not be, you know, may not be versed in, so you know, we need to build trust. As a primary basis of our organization culture and so asked well "How do we do that?"

Well, you know, I think we can start by developing opportunities for all employees, especially those that are down the supervisory chain to contribute to our organizational, their organizations day to day mission. Why not invite employees to sit in on the division region, you know, command level meetings. And even better yet why not develop opportunities for those employees to actually participate at those level meetings. You know, they can present information or present briefing material that most likely they are the subject matter experts or the POC's for anyway. So make, an effort to invite them regardless of their grade, regardless of their career experience, regardless of their classification qualification. Invite them to the table.

In summary I think you know we have to build awareness first of all at the organizational level of the benefits of inclusion. And we need to implement a focused effort that drives

toward a culture of inclusion. Actually, and to kickstart that is something I see as an initial task for the recently created EEO Diversity and Inclusion committee.

Ahmad Burse: Thank you Sir, and it's understood. One of the things that you said it really impacted me was the. You know, creating the awareness of benefits, because a lot of times people kind of pigeonhole these programs into, well, inclusion just means that I. You know, "We just need to allow everyone to come to the come to the meeting." Well Inclusion means, allowing people to come to the meeting, but also soliciting what they have to say and valuing the information that they provide.
Thank you, Sir!

Gentlemen, is there anything that you would want the DLA energy team audience to take away from this podcast?

Brig Gen Canlas: Yeah Ahmad, you know so, thank you. First of all, thanks to you for putting this together. I mean, I think that this is great. Um, this is the second time I've been involved in a podcast in my life, so I'm really excited about it. But as I mentioned from the start right, this is a great opportunity to recognize that you know the visionaries and the brave women who help shape our nation?
But I think even more so. I'm excited, you know, for what this means for the future, right? For the future of our workforce, for the future of the DoD, the future of our nation, right? I mean, we reflect on the past, but you know, we have a path to pave in the future. And you know what? I'd like for people to realize, right? Each and everyone has a role in this. You know this is just not, you know, women, it's you know. Everyone has a role to play, and we could all help to pave that way where you know those boundaries that glass ceiling that I mentioned earlier that they no longer exist.
You know where we could have a world where the possibilities are endless, you know that's a dream that I have for my daughter and maybe hopefully for my daughter's daughter and you know for generations to come. But additionally, you know the one thing I want people to take away from this podcast. Is the great work that you Ahmad and your office, does to help build that environment and the culture of dignity and respect and inclusiveness in our workforce. So, thank you. Mr. Smith.

Mr. Smith: Yes, Sir, again Ahmad and ditto what the commander just said you know the work that you're doing in EEO and the team that you're putting together to buildout, you know, an inclusive mindset or culture in Energy you know is laudable, so we really appreciate what you're doing. And just to let you know and let everyone else know that you have the support of both Commander myself. You know, as you, as you tackle, you know this is critical, critical topic. But you know for everyone else, I wanted them to know that the command and I you know, appreciate their contributions or contributions that women have made and will make to our global mission.
In addition, we just like one everybody to know that we both appreciate and are appreciative of the women you know in our lives and inspired us or contributed to the many successes that we've realized throughout our careers.
So again, I want to thank you for allowing us to share our thoughts on an importance of Women's History Month and we want to do all we can to help include the contributions of women in Energy that help us achieve our mission.

Ahmad Burse: Brigadier General Campus and Mr. Smith. I just would like to thank you both for taking your time, and I wish you well and I'm hoping this can be the beginning of something great in regard to getting more information out to our workforce using what is available.

If any listeners would like more information on the EEO program, the Diversity Inclusion Committee or you would like to volunteer your special skills supporting special observances please contact the EEO office or any member of the team.

Thank you and have a great day.

Women acknowledged during the Podcast:

Vice President of the United States, Kamala Harris

Vice Admiral, Michelle Skubic, Defense Logistics Agency, Director

Command Sergeant Major, Tomeka O'Neal, Defense Logistics Agency, Senior Enlisted Leader

General Maryanne Miller (Retired)

Chief Master Sergeant Jennifer Kersey (Retired)

1st Lt. Madeline "Del" D'Eletto

Susan B. Anthony

Sojourner Truth

Rosa Parks,

Madame, Marie Curie

Amelia Earhart

Sandra Day O'Connor

Sally Kristen Ride

Mother Teresa

Shirley Chisholm