

Chapter Eight: Triple Threat Group

The Triple Threat Group was established in June 2020, after national conversations surrounding police brutality, release of news articles addressing racial disparities in the AF discipline system, and the height of racial tension. The group was spearheaded by (b)(6) and cadets of the WLC with the understanding the issues affecting the communities in which we live in directly impact the climate of the personnel assigned on the base. Furthermore, issues consuming the national attention consume the attention of the institution. The process taken by this group and their findings and recommendations are covered in their Triple Threat Proposal, “Combatting Racism at USAFA” (Appendix D).

Triple Threat’s ongoing efforts align theory and considerations on how USAFA could address racial tension and unrest using a 3-tiered, “triple threat” approach of Acknowledgment, Action, and Advocacy. In clarifying the need to address this issue, as well as to demonstrate the importance of these efforts, Triple Threat solicited shared stories from current cadets and graduates from the past year that captured realities and perceptions that bring awareness to the “Black experience” at USAFA.

During this internal review, three initiatives sought to understand Black experiences of cadets, officers, enlisted, and civilians. Those efforts were the “I am an Airman” focus groups, Triple Threat Survey, and Memorandums for Record in the Triple Threat Strategy Proposal. Themes across these efforts shed light on the culture created by USAFA practices, policies, and procedures. The approach to identifying areas to focus efforts is grounded in research and based upon the work of (b)(6) a sociologist who studied Black experiences in the workplace. Wells listed the following themes of Black leadership in predominantly White organizations:

- Black leader’s leadership is nullified
- Black leader’s attempts to lead result in micro-aggressions against the Black leader
- Black leader’s attempt to gain higher positions of leadership are marginalized
- Black leaders try to save face or be cool in order to avoid humiliation or extra attention
- Black leaders try to be the best in all things, avoiding sharing authentic feelings
- Black leaders commit to one’s self-interest, such as realizing their full potential
- Black leaders commit to completing tasks and being added value to organization

Five of the seven themes were evidenced during the preliminary findings across the three efforts: evidence that leadership is nullified, attempts to lead result in micro-aggressions, attempts to gain higher leadership positions are marginalized, and lastly committing to one’s self-interest, such as realizing their full potential. Being assessed as having a bad attitude while trying to keep bearing is an example of the theme leadership is nullified. Comments about Black people on the Jodel app or in-passing were examples of micro-aggression theme. Lower stratifications without adequate feedback is an example of attempts to gain higher leadership positions are marginalized. Leading to be an example for others, holding leaders accountable,

and the call for diversity & inclusion education are examples of the theme committing to one's self-interest in realizing their full potential.

While the Triple Threat Survey is still in progress, we recommend continued exploration, analysis, and action to address these themes in USAFA's practices, policies, and procedures. Doing so will improve understanding of the human condition and demonstrating ethics and respect for human dignity to better lead teams and organizations in support of USAFA's mission to develop inclusive leaders of character to innovate and fight future conflicts.