

Captain John D. Mason Veteran Peer Outreach Program
*A Community Discussion Panel Regarding Outreach To Veterans With Diverse
Backgrounds: What can you do for a Veteran?*



Bertrand D. Berger, Ph.D.
Clinical Psychologist
Assistant Professor
Department of Psychiatry
Medical College of Wisconsin
Mental Health Division Manager
Milwaukee VA Medical Center

Agenda

- Welcome
- COVID-19 update for Veteran vaccinations.
- Veterans use of VA healthcare – the Statistics.
- Captain John D. Mason Peer Outreach Project
- Panelists Introductions
- Questions and discussions

Wisconsin Veteran Suicide Deaths, 2018

| <i>Sex</i> | <i>Veteran Suicides</i> |
|------------|-------------------------|
| Total | 115 |
| Male | 110–120 |
| Female | <10 |

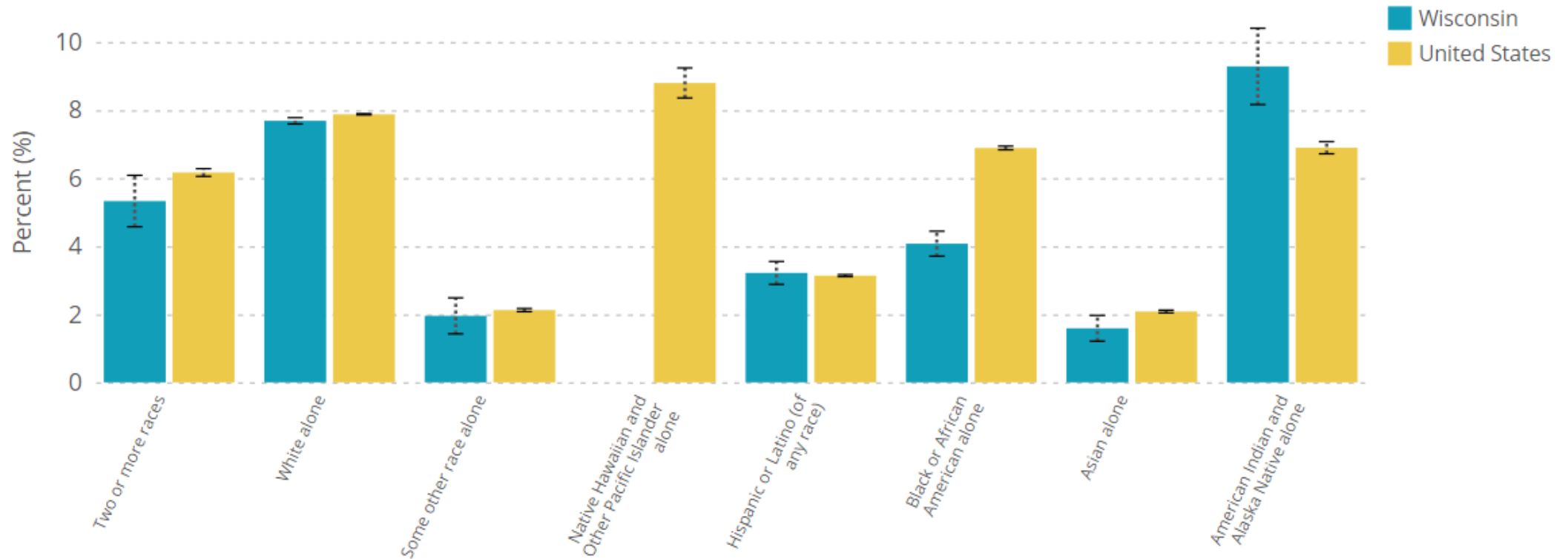
<https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/data-sheets/2018/2018-State-Data-Sheet-Wisconsin-508.pdf>

Veterans Use of VA Healthcare

- Less than 30% of Veterans use VA healthcare in the US and Wis.
- In Wisconsin, our Veteran population has a:
 - lower household income.
 - higher percentage of Vietnam Veterans (so generally an older population).
 - racially and culturally more diverse Veteran population in primarily in southeastern Wisconsin.

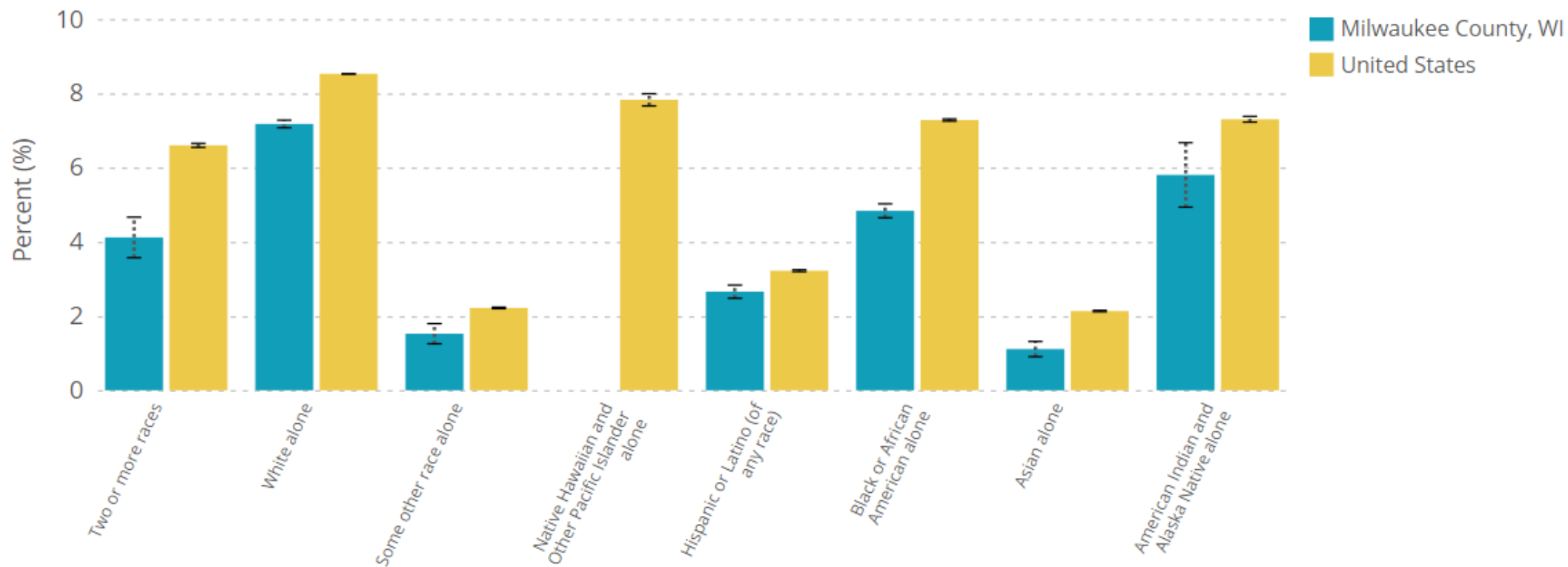
- https://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/SpecialReports/State_Summaries_Wisconsin.pdf
- <https://www2.census.gov/library/visualizations/2015/comm/vets/wi-vets.pdf>

Veteran Population Share: by Race and Ethnicity (2018)



Data unavailable for: Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone

Veteran Population Share: by Race and Ethnicity (2013-2017)



Data unavailable for: Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone



CAPTAIN

JOHN D. MASON

VETERAN PEER OUTREACH PROGRAM

Chris Swift

MCW Veteran Peer Specialist

Mark Flower

MCW Veteran Peer Specialist



CHARLES ALLEN, MD, CFI 2
National Member on the Advisory
Committee on Minority Veterans
Department of Veteran Affairs

Charles E. Allen, MD is a retired Air Force Officer, (Major, KC 135 Tanker Pilot, 23 combat flights during the Gulf War), a retired family practice physician and former project director for UW-Milwaukee (UWM) Veterans Upward Bound (VUB).

He currently is an associate lecturer of chemistry-biochemistry at UWM and national director of education, training, and mental health for the National Association For Black Veterans (NABVETS), headquarters in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Dr. Allen has over 35 years of experience working with veterans, as a physician he did rotations at the Zablocki VA in internal medicine, surgery, and psychiatry.

Full bio located at: [BeThereWis.Com](https://www.betherewis.com/minority-panel-outreach-discussion-jan-2021-bio-page/)

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Fernando H. Rodriguez

Now Retired from the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs, Fernando remains active in Veterans Service Organization in particular in Latino veterans' affairs and believes that Latino veterans have been left behind when it comes to obtaining benefits. For that same reason he is active in the American GI Forum and has helped formed the one first chapter in Wisconsin, he is presently the Secretary. The GI Forum is the largest and oldest Latino Veterans organization in the nation. Fernando is active with the David Valdes Post #529 of the American Legion, the only Post in Wisconsin that honors the name of a Latino.

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Gwendolyn (Gwen) M. Sheppard, Major (Retired), USAFR

Gwen entered the Air Force as a cadet at the Air Force Academy. She spent 2 years active duty at the Academy before transferring to North Carolina State University (NCSU). She completed her Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering at NCSU. She entered the Air Force Reserves in 1984 as an Airman First Class. She served in the Missouri Air National Guard and the California Air National before being commissioned as an Ensign in the Navy Reserves in 1989. She served in various positions with Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 17, the PHIB "Seabees" Amphibious Construction Battalion 1, NMCB 25 and Engineering Field Division Pacific Division.

In September 1997, Gwen transferred to the Air Force Reserves serving with the 440th Civil Engineer Squadron. She deployed to Kuwait in 1999 and was recalled to active duty in 2003 in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom where she served as an Engineering Officer at Baghdad International Airport.

Gwen served as Squadron Commander of the 440th Civil Engineer Squadron. She served as a special projects officer at HQ Air Force Reserve Command, Robins AFB, GA where she assisted with matters pertaining to Air Force Reserve Officer and Enlisted Force Development, Civil Engineer training requirements and website development.

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Aloysius “Ali” Nelson

Division Director of Kenosha County Veterans Services and Commissioner of Southeast Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

On August 10, 2015 Ali Nelson was appointed in his current position as the Division Director of Veterans Services in Kenosha County, responsible for county population of approximately 13,500 veterans. He is jointly appointed by the Kenosha County Executive Jim Kreuser and the Governor of Wisconsin to serve on Southeast Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) representing Kenosha County for a six-year term ending September 15, 2022. As a commissioner he is the chairperson for SEWRPC Environment Justice Task Force for the seven-county region. Ali Nelson served from September 2011 to August 2015 as the Racine County Veterans Service Officer, responsible for county population of approximately 15,000 veterans.

Ali served from March 2012 to October 2014 as President of Southeast Region County Veterans Service Officers Association, and from April 2015 through April 2019 as training officer for County Veterans Service Officers Association (CVSOA) of Wisconsin consist of 72 counties. In October 2020 Ali was elected as 2nd Vice President for CVSOA of Wisconsin.

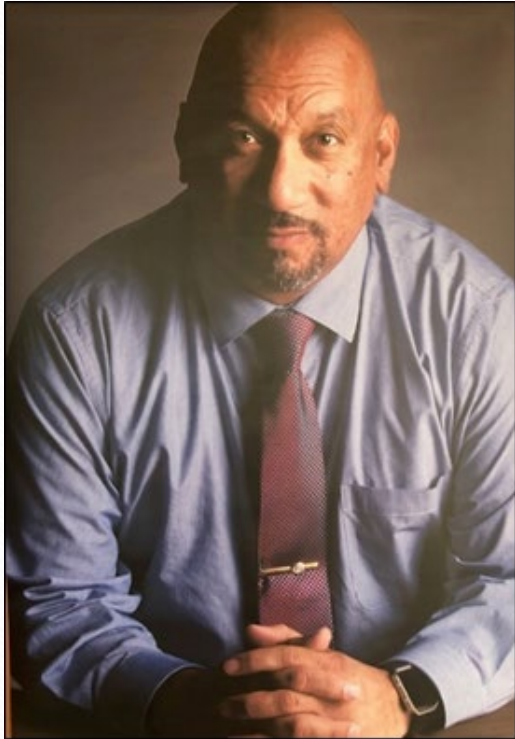
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Will Johnson
Director of Equal
Employment Opportunity
Milwaukee VAMC

I am currently the Diversity and Inclusion Officer of Milwaukee VA Medical Center, and an Alumni of Indiana University. A native of South Bend IN and a Desert Storm era Army veteran, Will is Minority Veterans Coordinator, Certified Mediator, Harassment Prevention Coordinator, trainer of Unconscious Bias, Diversity, and Conflict Resolution. In his current position he is responsible for establishing and maintaining a model Equal Employment Opportunity program in Zablocki's 4,500 employee network as prescribed by the EEOC for federal agencies. As a Staff Sergeant in the Army he was responsible for producing high level ceremonies at the White House, State Department and Pentagon. Most importantly, he is husband to Beverly and father to Connor (Airman) and Mason.



Edwardo Garza, Jr.

**President/CEO
Center for Veterans Issues, Inc
(CVI)**

He is a 1996 graduate of the University of South Dakota where he received a Bachelor of Science in Education.

In May 1999, Garza enlisted in the United States Naval Reserve under the Advanced Pay Grade (APG) program and was assigned to Naval Aviation Base Support Unit (NABSU) 0170 and Strike Fighter Squadron VFA-201 as an Aviation Storekeeper at NAS JRB Fort Worth, TX. In 2003, Garza was selected to cross rate into the Intelligence Community and attended the Basic Reserve Intelligence Training (BRIT) School at NAS JRB Fort Worth, TX. He was assigned to US JICSOUTH 0270 upon completion of that course in May 2004.

In January 2005, Garza was selected for a Direct Commission as an Intelligence Officer and assigned to Reserve Intelligence Area Southeast (RIASE) New Orleans with Defense Intelligence Agency Headquarters (DIA HQ) 1482. He served as the Training Officer and Command Fitness Leader and was instrumental in RIASE assistance and recovery phases during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in August and September 2005. Additionally, Garza served on active duty at DIA Headquarters Washington D.C. at the Joint Intelligence Task Force - Combating Terrorism Division to transition DIA HQ 1482's new mission from the Middle East to Southeast Asia.

See full bio:

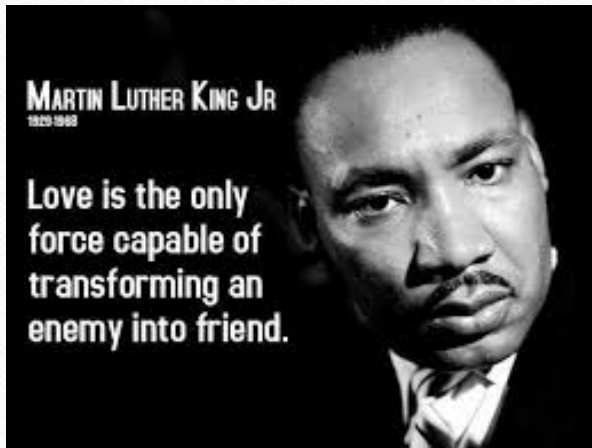
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Questions for the Panelists

What barriers do you see for minority Veterans seeking healthcare?

Questions for the Panelists



- How can we help Veterans get past their stigma about getting help and to seek help, especially Veterans from diverse backgrounds?

Questions for the Panelists



What is the best way to approach Veterans that might need mental health support or healthcare – but won't seek it out?

Questions for the Panelists



What is the best way to connect to Veterans that are not thinking of themselves as Veterans or worthy of VA support?



Questions for the Panelists

- **What is something positive about your VA healthcare experience and helped you seek VA healthcare?**

Discussion and Actions

- New: Southeastern Wisconsin Minority Veteran Advisory Committee