

The DEI General: How CQ Brown Made Identity Politics The Top Military Priority



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President Trump's recent dismissal of General Charles Q. Brown Jr., hailed by Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth as the "wakest Joint Chiefs Chairman in American history," was not merely a political maneuver—it was a necessary course correction. Under Brown's leadership, the military abandoned its core commitment to excellence in favor of a social experiment rooted in racial preferences and ideological conformity. Brown's tenure embodied the triumph of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) over military readiness, transforming the Armed Forces into an institution where identity trumped merit. In doing so, he made himself a liability to the very institution he swore to serve, forcing Trump's hand in removing him to restore the military's foundational principles.

General Brown's ideology was never in question. From the outset of his tenure as Air Force Chief of Staff, he made his priorities clear: diversity first, effectiveness second. In a now-infamous June 5, 2020, statement following the death of George Floyd, Brown declared that he was focused on ensuring that "all Airmen, both today and tomorrow, appreciate the value of diversity." But diversity, as Brown defined it, was not about a broader range of perspectives or an expanded pool of high-caliber recruits. It was about dismantling what he called the "white boys club" in military leadership, an obsession that would guide his tenure and policy decisions at every level.

Brown's fixation on racial balancing was explicit. In an interview with *The Washington Post* in January 2021, he insisted, "We gotta actually nudge and pull and actually purposely manage to ensure that we have diverse candidates" for leadership positions. This was not merely an effort to create opportunities for qualified minority candidates, it was an admission that race would be a decisive factor in military promotions. Brown's belief in "managing" diversity extended into recruitment, where he advocated for altering standards to achieve demographic goals, including reducing reliance on standardized testing because he believed it created barriers to diversity.

PBS, in a July 28, 2021, report, noted that Brown had made “diversifying” the Air Force one of his top priorities. In that same broadcast, Brown justified his radical agenda by stating that “the beauty of” George Floyd’s death was that it forced the Air Force to take a “hard look at ourselves.” That statement alone should have raised alarm bells. The military’s mission is not to engage in self-flagellation over racial grievances but to defend the United States from foreign threats. Instead, Brown saw his role as a racial activist within the ranks, pushing the military to adopt DEI principles that prioritized race-based hiring and promotions over operational effectiveness.

His DEI policies permeated every aspect of military personnel management. Brown pushed for reviewing the social media activity of Air Force recruits to screen for “extremist tendencies,” raising concerns about ideological litmus tests being used to weed out conservatives. His monthly “inclusion councils” became ideological echo chambers, where the military’s leadership was pressured to fall in line with progressive social mandates.

Most troublingly, Brown actively worked to diminish meritocratic standards in favor of racial quotas. Under his leadership, pilot training prerequisites were modified to boost racial diversity, even if it meant reducing the importance of flight experience. His efforts to anonymize personal information in awards nominations were similarly driven by a belief that military evaluations were tainted by “unconscious bias.” The implication was clear: the only way to achieve the racial outcomes he desired was to erode the standards that had long defined military excellence.

Brown’s approach to DEI was not merely misguided, it had real-world consequences. The U.S. military, under his tenure, faced its worst recruitment crisis in decades. In 2023, the Army missed its recruiting goal by over 15,000 soldiers, while the Air Force fell nearly 3,000 short. Brown and other military leaders dismissed concerns that DEI policies played a role in this shortfall, but surveys showed a growing distrust in military leadership among conservatives, many of whom cited the force’s “woke” turn as a deterrent to enlistment. The Reagan Institute found that trust in the military plummeted from 70% in 2018 to just 51% in 2022, with respondents overwhelmingly citing the politicization of the Armed Forces as a primary factor.

At the same time, military readiness suffered. Training mishaps and operational failures surged, with the Army experiencing its highest rate of deadly aviation

accidents in over a decade. In 2023 alone, 14 soldiers lost their lives in noncombat aviation incidents, a number not seen since 2011. The Air Force, under Brown's watch, also saw an increase in Class A mishaps, major accidents involving loss of life or aircraft destruction. When the focus of leadership shifts from combat readiness to identity politics, such failures are inevitable.

The crime rate among service members also reflected a growing erosion of discipline and order. Reports showed that sexual assault cases skyrocketing, with the Navy experiencing a 13% spike in reported incidents from 2022 to 2023. While military justice data on other crimes varied by branch, the perception that the force had become more permissive under DEI-driven leadership was undeniable.

Brown's defenders argue that his policies were necessary to create a more inclusive force. But the Armed Forces were never meant to be an incubator for social engineering. They exist to fight and win wars. Brown's tenure represented a profound deviation from that mission, one that prioritized identity over capability, quotas over excellence, and social justice over national security.

President Trump's decision to replace Brown was not just justified—it was imperative. The military cannot afford leadership that views it as a vehicle for racial activism rather than a warfighting force. Trump's actions send a clear message: the era of DEI-driven decline is over. The military will once again be led by those who understand that its primary obligation is to the defense of the United States, not to ideological experiments in diversity.

With Brown gone, the challenge now is to undo the damage he has done. The military must recommit to meritocracy, restore faith among conservative enlistees and refocus on its core mission of national defense. That process begins with purging DEI policies from the ranks and ensuring that future leaders understand that the only standard that matters is excellence in service, not the color of one's skin. General CQ Brown was the wrong man for the job. Trump made the right call in removing him.