

WISCONSIN WOMEN MAKING HISTORY

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MARCIA ANDERSON

1957

City: Beloit, Madison

County: Dane, Rock

Marcia Anderson was the first Black woman to earn the rank of major general in the US Army.

Marcia Anderson was born in 1957 in Beloit, Wisconsin. Her parents divorced when she was young; she moved to East St. Louis, Illinois, with her mother when she was 7. Anderson went to an all-girls Catholic high school across the river in St. Louis, Missouri. After graduating from high school, Anderson attended Creighton University in Nebraska.

At Creighton, Anderson was required to take a science credit and, after the astronomy class she wanted to take was full, enrolled in a class in the Military Science Department through Army ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps). She enjoyed the class and credited it with helping her overcome her shyness. In 1979, Anderson graduated with a bachelor's degree in political science and was commissioned as a second lieutenant. She chose to stay in the Army Reserve rather than go on full-time active duty. As a member of the Army Reserve, Anderson served as a civilian soldier; she held a full-time non-military job in addition to her Army responsibilities. She worked at the Kellogg Company for three years before deciding to pursue a law degree. She attended Rutgers University and then practiced law for 10 years after her graduation in 1984. Drawn to the administrative side of law, Anderson moved to Madison in 1998 for a job as the Clerk of Court of the Federal Bankruptcy Court of the Western District of Wisconsin.

To advance in the military, Anderson attended the US Army War College and earned her master's degree in strategic studies. In 2008, she became a brigadier general. In 2010, she took a leave of absence from her civilian job to accept a position at Fort Knox as the Deputy Commanding General for the Army Human Resources Command. In 2011, while stationed at Fort Knox, she became the first African American woman to earn the rank of major general. Shortly after, she was assigned as the deputy chief of the Army Reserve and began working at the Pentagon. There, Anderson oversaw an \$8 billion budget, sat on various policy councils, and regularly met with members of the House and Senate Armed Services Committees. She returned to Madison and her civilian job in 2014, and two years later, she retired from the Army.

Anderson's military career lasted 36 years and shattered expectations. She received many awards and commendations throughout her career, including the Major General James Earl Rudder Medal for her outstanding contributions to the Army, the Army Commendation Medal, the Legion of Merit, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Army Achievement Medal and the Parachutists Badge.

To learn more, visit womeninwisconsin.org/profile/marcia-anderson