

**Black Angels:  
Breaking Down Barriers While Fighting  
For the Right to Be Marines**

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Junior Individual Documentary**

**National History Day**

**May 22, 2020**

**Process Paper Word Count: 495**

## Process Paper

Choosing a topic for National History Day was actually very easy for me this year because I have always loved military history and the impact it has had on today's world, and I knew of several topics that could fit the theme of "breaking barriers." But when I thought back to the many veterans I've met and the stories they've told me, it became clear that the Montford Point Marines were the best fit. Not only did they have to break through major barriers in the military, they had to do this in their everyday lives, too.

The part that was a little harder for me was to figure out where to start once I had my topic. Since the national competition last year, I knew that I wanted to try to do a documentary and I knew that I wanted to try to do some interviews. I am lucky to know three of the original Montford Point Marines, so I set up an interview and as I prepared, I started doing some research about the time period so I could come up with informed questions to ask them.

When I interviewed them, they all told me stories about their service and talked about the men they served with in the United States Marine Corp. These stories were very impactful and helped to guide the rest of my research. I found out more about their experiences, what they endured personally, and the conditions they trained and lived in while at camp. I used a variety of sources to do this research (books and websites), but none had the impact that the personal interviews had and my hope is that this documentary will help to tell their stories.

As I began writing the script for my documentary, I ran into a few barriers myself. First, the 10-minute time limit was surprisingly difficult. Cutting out information was hard;

every part of their stories felt too important. My main goal was to make sure that their story was told and more importantly, I wanted these men to feel like they weren't forgotten and that they are appreciated for the sacrifices they made while breaking down the color barriers in the Marine Corps. Another obstacle was finding enough usable images, or enough to match the amount of story I needed to tell. Eventually, I found a balance.

Throughout my project I learned a lot about these great men and the barriers they broke. The biggest barrier they broke down was proving that they are just as capable as the white soldiers in the United States Marine Corps, and more importantly deserved to be treated equally to those other men. They had to do this gradually, stepping up to face challenges in many critical battles during World War II. I am hoping that this documentary bring honor and light to what these amazing men did for their country and for the generations of African Americans coming after them.

## Annotated Bibliography

### PRIMARY SOURCES:

#### Interviews:

Hassler, Robert. Montford Point Marine. Personal Interview. November 10, 2019 and January 25, 2020.

*Mr. Hassler was a member of the Montford Point Marines and served during World War II. I had the opportunity to interview Mr. Hassler, and he shared with me stories about what camp life was like for him, specifically his experience when he first arrived. He talked about the way soldiers were segregated, even in battle, and how certain jobs were only available to white soldiers. He also talked to me about what it was like to finally receive the Congressional Gold Medal for his service.*

Love, Ervin. Montford Point Marine Detroit Detachment 158. Personal Interview. October 11, 2019.

*Mr. Love is the Historian of the Local Detroit Montford Point Chapter. He is a retired Marine, and responsible for keeping history alive at the chapter. During my interview with him he showed pictures and artifacts of the Montford Point Marines during the war, some of which I used for my documentary. As we talked, he helped guide my research, encouraging me to look at Executive Order 8802. This helped me to better understand the time period and topic, and ultimately how these Marines were able to enlist.*

Moore, Calvin. Montford Point Marine. Personal Interview. November 10, 2019.

*Mr. Moore is an American Marine who served during World War II. Mr. Moore shared stories about his time in the Marines, however, most of the interview focused on his experiences at Camp Montford Point and how the men were treated once they returned home from war. He gave me insight into what it was like to live in a segregated society and how experiences like not being served a meal on a train full of Marines on their way home made him feel. I also spoke to him about what it felt like to finally receive the Congressional Gold Medal.*

Owens, Eugene. Montford Point Marine Detroit Detachment 158 Commandant. Personal Interview. October 11, 2019

*Mr. Owens is the Commandant of the Local Detroit Montford Point Marine Chapter. Mr. Owens is also a retired Marine and very knowledgeable on the Montford Point Marines. He took me on a personal tour of the chapter, showing me artifacts and photographs and explaining their significance. He shared collected stories of the marines who served in World War II, specifically about the white officers at Camp Montford Point and how they*

*trained the first black marines who arrived. He also shared stories of black marines who were promoted, and eventually took over the training and how the men felt about that.*

Shepherd, Calvin. Montford Point Marine. Personal Interview. October 11, 2019 and January 25, 2020.

*Mr. Shepherd is an African American Marine who served during World War II. Mr. Shepherd shared his personal experiences of what it was like to be in the Marine Corp. The interview focused on how African Americans were initially not allowed to serve and what that felt like, how they were kept separated from the white soldiers once they were allowed to enlist, and how even then they were considered “back up” and help with supplies. Mr. Shepherd was also able to put me in contact with other men who served with him (who I later interviewed). Additionally, we spoke about what it felt like to finally be awarded the Congressional Gold Medal for his service.*

#### Web Sources:

Brumbaugh, Jared. “Remembering the Montford Point Marines,” *Public Radio East*, March 10, 2014. <<https://www.publicradioeast.org/post/remembering-montford-point-marines>> Date Accessed November 1, 2019.

*This is a radio broadcast recording of an interview done with Norman Preston, a veteran who served as a Montford Point Marine. In this interview, Mr. Preston talks about his experiences with Sgt. Major Huff, a black instructor at Camp Montford Point. Mr. Preston explains how black instructors were often harder on black soldiers than the white instructors were. Another nice thing about this source was that the website provided transcripts of the interview, which made it easier to find quotes from it.*

Hiatt, Anna. “Who were the Montford Point Marines?” *JSTOR Daily*, June 26, 2019. <<https://daily.jstor.org/who-were-the-montford-point-marines/>> Date Accessed October 25, 2019.

*This was an online article that had personal stories in it, compiled by the author. I used this for the quotes from Major General Thomas Holcomb. These quotes highlighted the racism the black marines faced once they were allowed to enlist and the way their (white) superior officers treated them.*

“Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia,” Ferris State University, September 2000. <<https://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/>> Date Accessed November 2, 2019.

*This is a link to the digital collection for a museum that specifically specializes in Jim Crow. There are interviews, pictures and links to documents that were very helpful when I was writing my script. Specifically, this was helpful when I was explaining Jim Crow laws and the affect they had on African Americans living in the US. This was also helpful in understanding the extent of the barriers African American Marines faced, not just in the military but at home.*

“Montford Point Marines: Forgotten First Black Marines Blog.” May 8, 2014. <<http://montfordpointmarinesandhonor.blogspot.com/2014/05/white-montford-point-marine-officers.html>> Date Accessed November 5, 2019.

*This is a blog written by the son of one of the Montford Point Marines who served in World War II, and is dedicated to telling his father's personal story. This filled in some gaps of knowledge for me, especially about General Holcomb, the Letter of Information 421, a letter that was kept confidential through the war and explained that no black noncommissioned officers outranking a white Marines. Additionally, this blog incorporated pictures of the Montford Point Marines collected by the University of North Caroline Wilmington.*

Roosevelt, Franklin D. “Executive Order 8802,” June 1941. <<https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=72>> Date Accessed December 2, 2019.

*This is an image and the text of Executive Order 8802 which officially allowed African American men to enlist in the Marines.*

Pictures/Videos:

“African-American Marines of the 16<sup>th</sup> Field Depot Rest on Peleliu.” *World War II Multimedia Database*. <<https://www.worldwar2database.com/gallery/wwii1429>> Date Accessed December 2, 2019.

*This is a picture I really liked of the Marines resting after working hard to take care of the wounded and run supplies.*

“African American Soldiers Carry a Japanese Prisoner.” *World War II Multimedia Database*. <<https://www.worldwar2database.com/gallery/wwii1172>> Date Accessed December 2, 2019.

*This is an image of African American Marines carrying a Japanese prisoner on a stretcher who was ill and needed to be treated for malnutrition.*

“Camp Montford Point.” Library of Congress: Search Photos, Prints, and Drawings. <<https://www.loc.gov/photos/?fa=location%3Anorth+carolina%7Clocation%3Anew+river&st=slideshow#slide-100>> Date Accessed December 2, 2019.

*On the Library of Congress' website, there was a slideshow of pictures of Marines at Camp Montford Point. Also in the slide show was an image of the letter from A. Phillip Randolph to the NAACP Secretary Walter White about him wanting to undertake the organization of a march of ten thousand African Americans or more upon Washington. Many of these pictures were helpful in creating my documentary.*

“Construction Battalion Wait to Assist Wounded on 7<sup>th</sup> Marines.” *World War II Multimedia*

Database. <<https://www.worldwar2database.com/gallery/wwii1431>> Date Accessed December 2, 2019.

*This picture shows the soldiers talking and waiting to assist with more wounded soldier.*

“File Congressional Gold Medal Montford Point Marines.jpeg.” Wikimedia, Creative Commons. <[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Congressional\\_Gold\\_Medal\\_Montford\\_Point\\_Marines.jpeg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Congressional_Gold_Medal_Montford_Point_Marines.jpeg)> Date Accessed October 13, 2019.

*This is a Fair Use image of the front and back of the Congressional Gold Medal that I used in my documentary.*

“Reverend Rufus W. Oakey Leads Service on Peleliu.” *World War II Multimedia Database*. <<https://www.worldwar2database.com/gallery/wwii1432>> Date Accessed December 2, 2019.

*This is a photograph of a religious service taking place on September 18, 1944 at Peleliu. I really liked this picture because it shows an integrated Marine gathering.*

Hoarn, Steven. “Montford Point Marine Photos,” *Defense Media Network*, August 29, 2017. <<https://www.defensemianetwork.com/stories/montford-point-marines>> Date Accessed November 5, 2019.

*This website had a wide variety of photographs of the Montford Point Marines, including closeup photos of them in battle. The website also had a short overview of the battles, explaining what was going on and who was featured in the photos.*

Knecht, Rick. “Untitled Image” 1944. Researchgate.net, September 2013. <[https://www.researchgate.net/figure/A-rare-image-showing-African-American-Marines-mixing-with-their-white-counterparts-on\\_fig7\\_265172514](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/A-rare-image-showing-African-American-Marines-mixing-with-their-white-counterparts-on_fig7_265172514)> Date Accessed December 2, 2019.

*In this photo, from a WW2 Photo Archive, black and white Marines are sitting, huddled together on the front lines at Peleliu in September of 1944.*

Kriegsbericht, Leon. “Pictures of African Americans During World War II,” *Lest We Forget*, Histomil.com, April 11, 2012. <<http://histomil.com/viewtopic.php?t=9126&start=10>> Date Accessed November 30, 2019.

*This is a website where people can post pictures from World War II. Most of the posts are collections of pictures of specific battles or groups that people have collected and want to share with others. I was able to search the Montford Point Marines, and found several good pictures to use in my documentary.*

National WWII Museum. “Fighting for the Right to Fight: The African American Experience in World War II,” 2019. <<http://righttofightexhibit.org/during-war/army.php>> Date Accessed January 3, 2020.

*This is a digital exhibit from the National World War II Museum. This site contained pictures, documents, and video clips that were helpful in creating my documentary. While most of the pictures I had already seen in other archives, like the National Archives and the Library of Congress, there was a video clip of men loading a mortar during a battle.*

Nye, Logan. "15 Photos of the First Black Marines in US History," *We Are the Mighty*, July 2, 2019. <<https://www.wearethemighty.com/history/black-marines-world-war-2>> Date Accessed October 25, 2019.

*On this website, I found several pictures to use in my documentary. This thing I liked best about this particular site is that the man who compiled them wrote detailed captions that explains who was in the picture, what they were doing, and where the pictures were taken. This was helpful in figuring out where the photos should go in my documentary. This site gathered the photographs from the National Archives and linked the collection. This was also incredibly helpful because it directed me to more images to use.*

Robinson, Rick. "On the Shoulders of Giants," July 21, 2017. <<https://www.dvidshub.net/video/577956/shoulders-giants>> Date Accessed December 3, 2019.

*This is a short documentary clip that about Executive Order 8802. This includes a clip of President Franklin D. Roosevelt signing the Executive Order*

"US Marine Corps." Pictures of African Americans During World War II, *The National Archives*, 2020. <<https://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans/ww2-pictures>> Date Accessed October 25, 2019.

*This is an incredible archive of images and was very useful for finding images to include in my documentary.*

#### Books:

Bondurant, Eugene. With The Old Breed: At Peleliu and Okinawa. Oxford University Press, 1981.

*This book was very interesting and was the author's memoirs of his service in the Marines. Specifically, these stories focused on the Battles of Peleliu and Okinawa, explaining what he and the men he served with did, how they felt about it, and how they handled the challenges they faced.*

McLaurin, Melton Alonza. The Marines of Montford Point, America's First Black Marines, University of North Carolina Press, 2007.

*This book had lots of great first-hand accounts from nearly 60 Montford Point Marines. This book was incredibly useful to me because it helped me to verify a lot of the information I found in other sources on the internet.*



Smith, Holland M. and Percy Finch. *Coral and Brass*. April 7, 1989. <<https://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USMC/Coral&Brass/index.html>> Date Accessed November 14, 2019.

*This is a digital copy of the book Coral and Brass written by USMC General Holland Smith and Percy Finch. I used this book for the chapter on the Battle of Saipan to get more information about it, and I also used one of the pictures included of General Smith for my documentary.*

## SECONDARY SOURCES:

### Web Sources:

“Absent from History: The Black Soldiers at Iwo Jima,” *The Guardian*, October 20, 2006. <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/oct/20/usa/film>> Date Accessed November 15, 2019.

*This article was interesting because it talked about the movie *Flags of our Fathers* and how the film did not feature any black Marines. The article explains that Clint Eastwood, who directed the film, said he wasn't aware that many black Marines fought at Iwo Jima. The article interviewed a few Montford Point Marines and they were not surprised by this, explaining that their stories were rarely told and many people did not even realize they were there. This article helped me to understand the way these heroes' stories were erased whereas their white counterparts' stories were celebrated.*

“African-Americans and World War II—the Story of Montford Point,” *North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources*, February 19, 2013. <<https://www.ncdcr.gov/blog/2013/02/19/african-americans-and-world-war-ii-the-story-of-montford-point>> Date Accessed November 15, 2019.

*This article provided me with the number of ammunition and depot companies that come out of Montford Point as well as the cost (\$750,000) to construct the barracks and support facilities such as the motor pool, chapel, mess hall, steam plant, and recreational area. This gave me a lot of background information about the camp and how it was set up. This was helpful because it allowed me to visualize where things were and what they looked like as I was reading about the camp and hearing stories about it.*

Campbell, James. “Pride and Prejudice: The Montford Point Marines on Saipan,” *History Net*, August 10, 2012. <<https://www.historynet.com/pride-and-prejudice-the-montford-point-marines-on-saipan.htm>> Date Accessed November 12, 2019.

*This article is where I found the information about the kind of work the black Marines did during battles and this is also where I found most of my information on the battle of Saipan. The author also explains the great impact that the black Marines had on the battle. Additionally, this article told the story of a Marine named Kenneth Tibbs, the first African American killed in battle and the impact his death had on the men he served with.*

Haskew, Michael E. "Marine Corps Desegregation: WWII Begins to Break Barriers," *The History Reader*, St. Martin's Press, October 10, 2016. <<https://www.thehistoryreader.com/military-history/marine-corps-desegregation/>> October 9, 2019.

*This is an article that focuses on the Battle of Saipan and how the black Marines were actually called upon to take action and fight because of significant losses to the main (white) forces. It was after this battle that the treatment of black Marines began to change, and white Marines began to see them as equals (at least on the battle field).*

Jones, Derrick. "The Combat Role of African American Marines during World War II: An Answer to the Spike Lee – Clint Eastwood Debate." March 21, 2009. <<https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a519277.pdf>> Date Accessed November 1, 2019.

*This is a dissertation written by Major Derrick Jones. In this essay, I found a lot of information about the role black soldiers, specifically Marines, played in battles in the Pacific Theatre. This essay also explained the role these Marines played in breaking down barriers of perception about race. In the essay, the author explains the effect of Executive Order 8802 on soldiers and the lengths black soldiers had to go to prove themselves.*

Lippman, David H. "Combat Horror on Saipan." *Warfare History Network*, December 29, 2016. <<https://warfarehistorynetwork.com/2018/12/20/combat-horror-on-saipan>> Date Accessed December 2, 2019.

*This is an image of the Marines in battle. They are on the beach getting ready to bring in supplies and help wherever needed. This image is part of an article on the Battle of Saipan.*

Matic, Andy. "How Denying Black Soldiers FHA Loans Denied Black Families Post-War Prosperity." *AndyMatic—Creative Content*, January 31, 2014. <<http://andymatic.com/how-denying-black-soldiers-fha-loans-denied-black-families-post-war-prosperity/>> Date Accessed December 16, 2019.

*From this article I learned more about the racism black service members (men who served in all branches of the military, including the Marines) endured. This article focused on the way soldiers were treated when they returned home and how they were denied benefits that were awarded to their white counterparts. In this case, it was housing loans. This showed me that while they broke down the barrier in war and gained acceptance in the service, barriers remained at home.*

Medina, Monica. "In the Presence of Greatness: Montford Point Marines, Jackson, Inge and Reavis," KPBS.org, February 3, 2014. <<https://www.kpbs.org/news/2014/feb/03/presence-greatness-montford-point-marines-jackson-/>> Date Accessed October 30, 2019.

*This article focused mostly on telling the story of three Montford Point Marines. The author provided some background, including why they wanted to serve as Marines, their experiences when they first enlisted, and how they felt the need to prove themselves to their peers and superiors.*

Miller, Dustin. "The Marines of Montford Point: Fighting for Freedom," University of North Carolina Wilmington, YouTube.com, March 30, 2015. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vRvFSv7RoPY&t=2490s>> Date Accessed October 3, 2019.

*This was incredibly helpful for me as I was just getting started with my research. It helped me get a better handle on my topic, understand how it connected to the History Day theme, and get an idea of some of the people and battles that I should research.*

"Montford Point Marines Established an Undeniable Legacy in the United States Marine Corps." Wounded Warrior Project, MediaRoom, 2019. <<https://test.mediaroom.com/wounded-warriorproject/Montford-Point-Marines-Established-An-Undeniable-Legacy-in-United-States-Marine-Corps>> Date Accessed December 16, 2019.

*This article is where I found more information about the Montford Point Marines being awarded the Congressional Gold Medal for their service. While this was something that was covered by the veterans I interviewed, this article was helpful in understanding why it was finally awarded and how government leaders felt about it.*

"Montford Point Marines," Marine History, MarineParents.com, 2019 <<https://marineparents.com/marinecop/montfordpointmarines.asp>> Date Accessed October 5, 2019.

*This was a great website for me because it had a nice, comprehensive breakdown about the history of the Montford Point Marines. As I was just starting my research, this was helpful to get a clear idea of the timeline, who was involved, and other things I should look into as I continued my research. This helped me to craft questions for my interviews with Montford Point veterans, and because a bibliography was included it, it pointed me in the direction of more sources on the topic.*

Patrick, Bethanne Kelly. "The Montford Point Marines," *Military.com*, 2020. <<https://www.military.com/marine-corps/the-montford-point-marines.html>> Date Accessed October 12, 2019.

*This article tells the story of a man name R.J. Wood who was arrested for impersonating marine while he was home on leave and wearing his dress blues. This was just another example of the unfair treatment the Montford Point Marines faced. This article also provided me with some important dates which helped me to create a timeline of events in my head, specifically for the time between when black men were allowed to enlist and when white drill instructors were replaced with black instructors.*

Rundles, Jim and Bennie McRae Jr. "The Montford Point Marines Worked and Fought on Iwo

Jima,” *Lest We Forget: African American Military History*, February 23, 1995. <<http://Lestweforget/hamptonu.edu/page.cfm?uuid=9FEC4392-E2BA-3AA6-7E99F09F2CAB48E>> Date Accessed November 12, 2019.

*This article is about the Montford Point Marines who fought at Iwo Jima and the impact they had on the battle. This article showed the black Marines as determined, fearless fighters. As he did this even the white Marines were cheering him on from their foxholes, and after the battle there was more of a sense of camaraderie amongst all the Marines, both black and white.*

Theill, Coral Anika. “From Segregation to Single Corps of Green Marines,” *The Salem News*, June 19, 2012. <<http://www.salem-news.com/articles/june192012/montford-segregation-ct.php>> Date Accessed October 15, 2019.

*This article gave me more information about the segregated conditions at Camp Montford Point. Most of the quotes in this article and stories came from Master Gunnery Sergeant Robert E. Talmadge, USMC (Ret).*

USMC Librarian. “Montford Point Marines 1942-1949,” *Time Toast Timelines*, 2007. <<http://www.timettoast.com/timelines/montford-point-marines-1942-1949>> Date Accessed October 1, 2019.

*This is a timeline that starts at Executive Order 8802, allowing African American men to enlist in the Marines, and goes through all of the battles they fought in, and other significant events. This was very helpful as I was getting started on my research and helped guided the initial stages.*

White, Herbert L. “The Few. The Proud. The Montford Point Marines’ 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary: The Corps’ First Black Recruits Recede into History,” *The Charlotte Post*, August 23, 2017. <<http://thecharlottepost.com/news/2017/08/23/local-state/the-few.-the-proud.-the-montford-point-marines-75th-anniversary/>> Date Accessed October 5, 2019.

*This article provided me with several quotes from Montford Point Marines about their time serving during World War II. This was helpful as I prepared for my interviews with some of the Montford Point veterans because it gave me a better idea of the issues that were important to them, what they endured, and what they still thought about so many years after the war ended. Like other personal accounts, looking back at this article was helpful in verifying information I found in other web-based sources.*

Books and Magazines:

Maurer, Kevin. “Our State Celebrating North Carolina,” *Our State*, November 4, 2015.

*This article explains the history of Montford Point. The article talks about the training methods and how they were always considered harsh, and that this was true for black and white Marines alike.*

Nalty, Bernard C. "The Right to Fight: African American Marines in World War II," Marines in World War II Commemorative Series, *National Parks Service*, 2019. <[https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online\\_books/npswapa/extcontent/usmc/pcn-190-003132-00/sec3.htm](https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/npswapa/extcontent/usmc/pcn-190-003132-00/sec3.htm)> Date Accessed November 5, 2019.

*This was an online book about African Americans serving in World War II. The parts that were most helpful to me were the chapters on segregation in the military, the chapter on Col. Samuel A. Woods, Jr., aka "The Great White Father," Edgar R. Huff, and Gilbert H. "Hashmark" Johnson. This digital book also contained a lot of information about the battles that the Montford Point Marines were involved in, how they proved they were capable soldiers, and how they were finally deemed worthy of being called marines by their white counterparts and superiors.*

Zeigler, Matt. Over the Side: Black Marines of World War II. Booktango, 2015.

*This book was helpful to my research because there was a section that talked about how the African American Marines were treated while they were on leave. He wrote about the story of Edgar Huff who traveled to see his sick mother while he was on leave. As he traveled, he wore his dress blues. During this time, he was arrested for impersonating a Marine because white law enforcement officers (and even white Marines) did not believe that he, a black man, could be a Marine. This was an incredible example of the racism black Marines experienced at home.*

Music:

Andrews Sisters. "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy," JB Productions, October 25, 2012. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QpzJpHPteuM>> Date Accessed February 3, 2020.

*This is one of the songs featured in the background of my documentary.*

Cole, Nat King and Barack Obama. "We Are Americans, Too," Universal Music Group, January 21, 2016. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XmWek13iQnE>> Date Accessed February 3, 2020.

*This is one of the songs featured in the background of my documentary.*

Crosby, Bing. "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition," 1942. Johnny Zero, June 8, 2010. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TUOPvtVZwo8>> Date Accessed February 3, 2020.

*This is one of the songs featured in the background of my documentary.*

United States Marine Corps Marine Band. "United States Marine Corps Hymn," JR Videos, February 16, 2018. <<http://youtube.com/watch?v=Qqv6tzeJ9R4>> Date Accessed February 3, 2020.

*This is one of the songs featured in the background of my documentary.*