

Montford Point Marines

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Objectives

Students will examine the history of African Americans who received basic training at Montford Point, a facility at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

North Carolina Education Standards

African American Studies (Social Studies)

7.05 Describe and evaluate the contributions of African Americans during World War II.

7.06 Explain how World War II laid the groundwork for the modern Civil Rights Movement.

Grade 5 (Social Studies)

4.05 Describe the impact of wars and conflicts on United States citizens, including but not limited to, the Civil War, World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, Persian Gulf War, and the twenty-first century war on terrorism.

4.06 Evaluate the effectiveness of civil rights and social movements throughout United States' history that reflect the struggle for equality and constitutional rights for all citizens.

Grade 8 (Social Studies)

6.02 Describe the significance of major events and military engagements associated with World War II and evaluate the impact of the war on North Carolina.

6.03 Examine the significance of key ideas and individuals associated with World War II.

6.04 Assess the impact of World War II on the economic, political, social, and military roles of different groups in North Carolina including women and minorities.

Materials

- The teacher should have a computer with access to the internet, audio, and an LCD projector.
- Each student group should have a computer with access to the internet.

Time Required

1 hour

Background

Located on the History page of the Montford Point Marine Association, Inc. website (<http://www.montfordpointmarines.com/History.html>)

On the 25th day of June 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order No. 8802 establishing the fair employment practice that began to erase discrimination in the Armed Forces. A board headed by Brigadier General Keller E. Rocher was organized to study the integration of African Americans being assigned to the

Composite Defense Battalion, which included coastal artillery, antiaircraft, infantry and tanks.

In 1942, President Roosevelt established a presidential directive giving African Americans an opportunity to be recruited into the Marine Corps. These African Americans, from all states, were not sent to the traditional boot camps of Parris Island, South Carolina and San Diego, California. Instead, African American Marines were segregated – experiencing basic training at Montford Point – a facility at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. Approximately twenty thousand (20,000) African American Marines received basic training at Montford Point between 1942 and 1949.

Approximately 20,000 African American recruits received training at Montford Point Camp (less than 10% of the Marine Corps end strength) during World War II. The initial intent of the Marine Corps hierarchy was to discharge these African American Marines after the War, returning them to civilian life – leaving the Marine Corps an all-white organization. Attitudes changed and reality took hold as the war progressed. Once given the chance to prove themselves, it became impossible to deny the fact that this new breed of Marine was just as capable as all other Marines regardless of race, color, creed or National origin.

Exceptional recruits were singled out to assist in the training of their own platoons. Mortimer A. Cox, Arnold R. Bostick, Edgar R. Davis, Jr., Gilbert H. “Hashmark” Johnson and Edgar R. Huff were selected for their leadership’ and maturity and became the First Black Drill Instructors. These first DI’s would join the staff to reinforce the training mission at Montford Point which was to develop African American Marines for support roles in the Corps, following their graduation.

In July of 1948 President Harry S. Truman issued Executive Order No. 9981 negating segregation. In September of 1949, Montford Marine Camp was deactivated – ending seven years of segregation.

On April 19, 1974, Montford Point Camp was renamed Camp Johnson, in honor of the late Sergeant Major, Gilbert H. “Hashmark” Johnson. Johnson was one of the first African American’s to join the Corps, a Distinguished Montford Point Drill Instructor and a Veteran of WWII and Korea. The Camp remains the only Marine Corps installation named in honor of an African American.

Visit the Historic Reading Room (building M-100) aboard Camp Johnson to learn more about the Montford Point legacy and feel the presence of this special breed of Marine. (<http://www.montfordpointmarines.com/History.html>)



Figure 1. "Getting uniforms, whether or not they fit." (UNC Wilmington)



Figure 2. "Firing from a seated position." (UNC Wilmington)



Figure 3. “Three Marines with rifles and bayonets clear an obstacle course hurdle.” (UNC Wilmington)



Figure 4. “Boot camp for all Montford Point recruits included plenty of close order drill.” (UNC Wilmington)



Figure 5. “By late 1945, white drill instructors had been replaced by African Americans. Here Sgt. Gilbert “Hashmark” Johnson, one of the first and most respected black drill instructors, reviews troops on Montford Point.” (UNC Wilmington)



Figure 6. “Dress parades were part of the Montford Point routine.” (UNC Wilmington)

Procedures

- Students will be shown one or a few of the short films about Montford Point (available at the following link: <http://www.montfordpointmarines.com/MPMA%20MUSEUM.html>).
- If internet access is unavailable, students can read a history of Montford Point (please see additional resources).
- Students will then pair up or break into small groups to begin discussing and researching the following points:
 - Biographical information about Mortimer A. Cox, Arnold R. Bostick, Edgar R. Davis, Jr., Gilbert H. "Hashmark" Johnson, or Edgar R. Huff.
 - The concept of military segregation.
 - The history of Executive Order No. 8802.
 - The history of Executive Order No. 9981.
 - The history of buildings at Montford Point.
- Students will organize their group discussions and research into an outline format.
- One student from each group will present the group's findings to the class.

Additional Resources

Montford Point Marine Museum

<http://www.montfordpointmarines.com/MPMA%20MUSEUM.html>

The History Place: African Americans in World War II

<http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/aframerwar/index.html>

Pictures of African Americans During World War II: Selected Audiovisual Records

<http://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans/ww2-pictures/>

Wynn, Neil A.

2010 *The African American Experience During World War II (The African American History)*. The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc., Maryland.

Nalty, Bernard C.

1995 *The Right to Fight: African-American Marines in World War II*. Marines in World War II Commemorative Series. University of Michigan Library, Michigan.

Available: <http://www.nps.gov/archive/wapa/indepth/extContent/usmc/pcn-190-003132-00/index.htm>

Evaluation

At the end of the lesson, ask students what they learned about the history of African American Marines at Montford Point from their group's research, as well as the presentation from other groups. Ask what additional information they would like to know, and additional questions that arose during their research that were not addressed by the available resources.