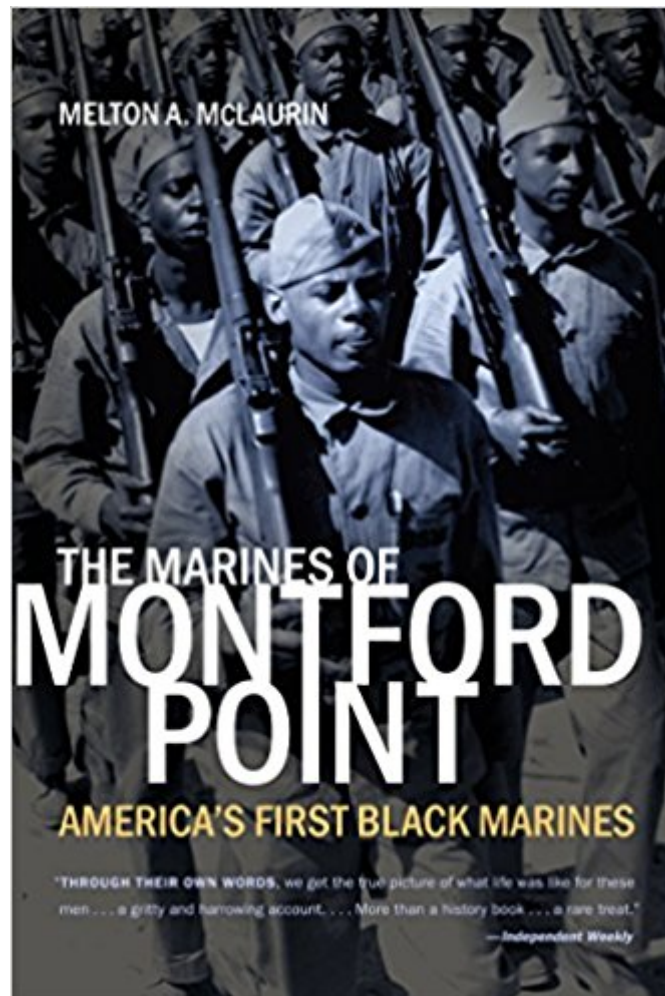




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# The Marines Of Montford Point: America's First Black Marines



## Synopsis

With an executive order from President Franklin Roosevelt in 1941, the United States Marine Corps--the last all-white branch of the U.S. military--was forced to begin recruiting and enlisting African Americans. The first black recruits received basic training at the segregated Camp Montford Point, adjacent to Camp Lejeune, near Jacksonville, North Carolina. Between 1942 and 1949 (when the base was closed as a result of President Truman's 1948 order fully desegregating all military forces) more than 20,000 men trained at Montford Point, most of them going on to serve in the Pacific Theatre in World War II as members of support units. This book, in conjunction with the documentary film of the same name, tells the story of these Marines for the first time. Drawing from interviews with 60 veterans, *The Marines of Montford Point* relates the experiences of these pioneers in their own words. From their stories, we learn about their reasons for enlisting; their arrival at Montford Point and the training they received there; their lives in a segregated military and in the Jim Crow South; their experiences of combat and service in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam; and their legacy. The Marines speak with flashes of anger and humor, sometimes with sorrow, sometimes with great wisdom, and always with a pride fostered by incredible accomplishment in the face of adversity. This book serves to recognize and to honor the men who desegregated the Marine Corps and loyally served their country in three major wars.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

On June 25, 1941, FDR's executive order 8802 allowed, among other things, black men to become U.S. Marines for the first time in American history. The U.S. was then rigidly segregated, particularly

in the South and in southerner-heavy institutions, including the military, especially the Marine Corps. The marine commander established training for blacks at Montford Point, North Carolina, and from 1942 to 1949, when the camp closed after President Truman desegregated all the armed forces, it trained more than 20,000 men, most for the Pacific theater. McLaurin interviewed 61 veterans of Montford Point and relays their words on who they were, why they joined, how they trained, and the combat they saw (many served in Korea and Vietnam, too). They reflect never-ending struggles with the deliberate and unconscious bigotry of the time and place. The Marine Corps is fully integrated now, and the marines of Montford Point aren't familiar now to the general public. Several Point trainees wrote memoirs, and with them McLaurin adds invaluable to the literature on blacks in the military. Roland Green

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"An important contribution to military and civil rights history. . . . Create[s] an oral history of this group of Marines." -- Durham Sunday Herald-Sun

The stories in this book are hard to believe but all too real. Sad to think how ignorant our country was and how so many great Americans were treated so bad. The book is a must read for anyone who has a sincere desire to understand the history of our military - specifically the Marine Corps. Not only does it reveal the truth about race relations in our Marine Corps, but the Espri de Corps maintained by the Montford Point Marines through out their lives after the Marine Corps speaks volumes of what it takes to be a Marine and what it means to any person - regardless of race - that has earned the title - "Marine." I gave the book only 4 stars because I feel the format and organization undermines the story and unintentionally misses the mark on an extremely important point: you can be born into a life of ignorance and prejudice - or you can live a life of being kept "separate but equal" - but when the bullets and bombs start - we are all brothers-in-arms - and we will all look out for each other. In war - the human race is the only race that matters and you either band together as brothers or we all go down together. If you have no military in your blood - this is the one book on military history you should read.

Great Book to read, especially when I served with someone of them and one lived across the street from me and was my first role model, I ran errands for his mother as a little boy age 5 up and would see his picture in his Marine uniform and later drink Jack Daniels with one as a grown man.

This book contains a lot of interesting and eye-opening anecdotes (presented verbatim) about the

Marines, race relations in the armed services, prevailing societal attitudes about race when the Montford Point Marines enlisted, and the experiences of black Marines in WWII, Korea, and Vietnam. So in that regard, it is a five-star book. But unfortunately, the style of the book is not my favorite. It is presented as a series of anecdotes from different Montford Point Marines. There is some general historical narrative, but the bulk of the text is first-person accounts, so it skips around from person to person. The anecdotes are roughly in chronological order, so they start with each man's account of his youth and how he came to enlist in the Marines. Then the anecdotes switch to each man's experience in boot camp, then his experiences in WWII, then Korea, etc. So you might read an anecdote from Person A on page 25 and then again on page 75. It became hard to remember each person's back story. If you like first-person accounts of history, this is definitely a great book. If you are particularly interested in one man's anecdotes, I recommend bookmarking the pages where he appears so that you can reference his background information later on in the book. Follow-up: Several readers have complained that the stories are difficult to read because some of the speakers have bad grammar and the grammar is not edited. I did not find this to be the case. The only time I had trouble following an anecdote was when someone made too many references to battalion numbers, since I couldn't keep them straight.

As an African American Marine, this book humbled me! It made me realize that I owe everything that I've accomplished in my career to the Marines of Montford Point. I'm very honored and proud to follow in the foot steps of these men. These black Marines only had one thing they wanted to prove. That they were good Marines! Great book!!!

this was an excellent perspective. I really liked it.

As a retired Marine First Sergeant (white) who was very familiar with the history of the Montford Point Marines, my eyes were opened to a more telling story that needed to be told. Although most books, articles and movies focus on the confrontational pressure cooker of black vs. white in a few dramatic examples, this book was the first one that allowed me to actually feel the emotions of oppression during their routine daily life. I have read many books, articles and seen several movies on the subject of racism but I have never been enthralled like I have during my reading of this book. What I found very commendable was the neutrality of the writer. The mixture of good stories of genuine helpful whites was balanced with an equal number of examples of racism. Because the book is 90 percent actual stories from Montford Point Marines and 10 percent framing the content

for each chapter, you feel as though you are visiting with these special Marines on their front porch as they tell their story. I commend the writer on his method of creating chapters in the book. Each Chapter has a unique focus that is very specific for that chapter. This will make for an excellent method of research when seeking specific information for public speaking or citation in future articles to be written. Semper Paratus  
First Sergeant John E. Crouch (ret)

I knew two of these men; one of them is still alive and I stay in touch with him. Great story of patriotism.

Unknown part of United States military history, however there are more stories to be told of the same subject.

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