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Montford Pointers: 'Earned — Not Given'

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To the editor:

Your recent editorial supporting the Congressional Gold Medal for the Montford Point Marines is on point.

Montford Point Marines personify the Marine slogan, "Earned — Not Given." Perhaps no other Marines have earned the title more. Pointers fought the good and very difficult fight against friendly and foreign fire. In the 1940s, they were not wanted by the Corps or country.

When civil rights groups launched attacks against Jim Crow, the armed forces were among their first targets. Blacks in the military were figuratively and literally on the front line of the Civil Rights Movement. Before there was a Martin Luther King or Rosa Parks, there were the Tuskegee Airmen and Montford Point Marines — the guinea pigs, if you will, in this experiment called integration. The Montford Point Marines did on the ground what the Tuskegee Airmen did in the air — proved black men could (and would) fight for America. They also helped open the doors of opportunity — not just for black Marines — but for black people period.

Kudos to Eleanor Roosevelt for believing in them and urging President Roosevelt to do the same.

Montford Point Marines fought in revered battles such as Iwo Jima. Montford Point produced 20,000 exceptional Marines. Among them are former New York City Mayor David Dinkins, Turner Blount and the late Georgetown and Jacksonville coach, Gid Johnson.

As was noted, to Blount's credit, he rose above "incivility" to become a Jacksonville city councilman and to have a granddaughter graduate from the U.S. Naval Academy.

The U.S. Marine Corps is to be commended for righting the wrong imposed on the Montford Point Marines by supporting the establishment of a museum, co-producing a documentary, donating land for a memorial, establishing Montford Point Marines' Day and now recommending the Congressional Gold Medal for these deserving men.

Your editorial's suggestion to award the medal "while face-to-face recognition is still possible" is also on point and well taken.

Many Montford Point Marines have gone on to receive their highest award. Among them is my father, the late Glenn White, who passed in January. A humble and unassuming man, Dad died with his dignity and spirit intact.

In his will, he made but one request — to be buried in uniform. He was donned in dress blues and 14 medals at his funeral. The congressional medal was not among them. Let us not let this omission occur for others who, like Dad, remained always faithful to the Corps.

It is said, "The pen is mightier than the sword." The Montford Point Marines are fortunate to have both forces on their side. On behalf of Dad and all Montford Point Marines, thank you.

Gina Francis
Jacksonville

Editor's note: Gina Francis, DVM, is the daughter of the late Montford Point Marine Glenn White and a life member of the Montford Point Marine Association Ladies Auxiliary.