It has been clear that this set of marines from Montford Point has never been thanked for their unwavering service.

By JAMES W. WADE III
Staff Reporter

Recently, President Barack Obama honored a number Blacks who were in the Marine Corps at a segregated boot camp named
Montford Point in North Carolina, many of whom served during
World War II
.

Now over sixty-five years after the Montford Point Camp closed, Congress passed a bill marking

a major milestone in American history. On November 23, 2011, President Barack Obama signed into law the bill awarding the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest honor civilians can receive, to the Montford Point Marines for their bravery and unceasing commitment to the Corps and our country.

More than 20,000 African Americans trained in this segregated facility between 1942 and 1949. They became the first African Americans to serve in the United States Marine Corps.

During that special invitation to the White House in June 2012 to get the medal, some were unable to make it. One of those Marines was Herman Douthard. So, the Marines came to him and presented him with his Congressional Gold Medal at his church, Calvary Congregational on Lee Road.

Sgt. Major Mike Burke from the 3rd Battalion and other Marines presented Douthard with his medal.

“The Montford Point Marines were the first African-Americans to enlist and serve in the United States Marine Corps. Even with things being different now, we have no idea how it was with color segregation,” said Burke.

Fighting back the tears, Douthard shared his memories of serving in the Marines for his country. Douthard, who has been ill, could not travel to Washington to be honored for his bravery and service. At 90 years old, Douthard realizes how many men have died and gone on.

“I am truly honored today. It is a pleasure to know that, after all these years, we are now being recognized,” said Douthard. He went on to share stories about rebellious nature while serving.

Thanking his family, who traveled mostly from out of town, he continued to talk about his experience in the Marines. “I loved serving in the Marines. And, if I could fit one of those suits now, I would serve again,” said Douthard.

It has been clear that this set of marines from Montford Point has never been thanked for their unwavering service. “We were men just like everyone else. I used to get upset when we as Marines had to sit on the back of our bus. It was a Marine bus and other workers could sit in the front.”

It was through a series of articles that another Marine, featured in the Call & Post, Samuel Wade thought Herman was his brother, who also served at Montford Point. “I am happy to have a new friend, Sam Wade. we bonded and will stay in touch until one of us passes,” said Douthard.

Being proud of her uncle, Captain Malinda Parker traveled fromBirmingham,Alabamato be part of this great ceremony. “Even though I am in the Army, I am still honored that the Marines took time to honor my uncle Herman,” said Parker.

Cleveland’s Ward 1 Councilman Terrell Pruitt presented a proclamation to Douthard from Mayor Frank Jackson and Cleveland City Council. “Serving in the service myself, I know how special this day makes you feel,” said Pruitt.

Douthard’s pastors Rev. Harpe and Rev. Lee both talked about how good of a man Mr. Douthard is. “We are truly honored to have him and his family be a part of our lovely congregation,” said Harpe.