

HONORING JOHN FREDERICK  
KENSETT AND THE HUDSON  
RIVER SCHOOL OF PAINTING

**HON. JAMES A. HIMES**

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, November 16, 2011*

Mr. HIMES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call attention to a recent event in the Capitol Visitors Center. Two paintings, "Discovery of the Hudson River" and "Entrance into Monterey" by Albert Bierstadt, have been placed in the Capitol complex after years in the Members' staircase in the House. These works are part of the Hudson River School of painting, a movement that influenced not only American art, but our culture and environment as well.

The Hudson River School was dedicated to an accurate depiction of landscapes, particularly emphasizing the untouched beauty of the land. Ultimately, these beautifully represented panoramas helped influence the environmental conservation movement and were used in 1916 to support the creation of the National Park Service.

John Frederick Kensett, a member of this first indigenous American school of painting, has ties to my district. Born in Connecticut, John Frederick Kensett worked as an engraver before traveling to Europe and the American West to study and paint. However, he is best known for the works he did upon his return to my state. The light-filled landscapes of the coast of Contentment Island became Kensett's signature.

Kensett's contributions to both art and culture are lasting. He was chosen by President Buchanan to serve on the only United States Capitol Art Commission to supervise the decorations of this very building during renovations in 1859. He also assisted with the foundation of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, which continues to be one of the most prominent cultural institutions in the United States. Inspired by the Hudson River School's founder, Thomas Cole, Kensett was commonly seen as Cole's successor as the leader to this important movement.

I encourage everyone to make time to appreciate these paintings and the legacy of the Hudson River School.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

**HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN**

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, November 16, 2011*

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Speaker, due to my responsibilities related to the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction, I missed the vote on final passage of H.R. 2838, the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Act. Had I been able to vote, I would have voted "no."

IN CELEBRATION OF THE  
MONTFORD POINT MARINES RE-  
CEIVING THE NATION'S HIGHEST  
CIVILIAN HONOR—THE CONGRES-  
SIONAL GOLD MEDAL

**HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, November 16, 2011*

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, as a veteran myself in a so-called "Forgotten War" in American history, I know what it is like to come home and feel unrecognized. The Montford Point Marines for too long have been unsung heroes. These men fought abroad to preserve our freedom and democracy, then came home and had to fight for their civil liberties.

On the eve of 11-11-11, the United States Senate passed legislation, which the United States House of Representatives voted unanimously 422-0 to honor the Montford Point Marines with the nation's highest civilian honor, the Congressional Gold Medal. These truly great American men fought in some of the bloodiest battles of World War II—the first Black Marines in the Navy. After 70 years, they have finally received the honor they deserve for a legacy we must not forget to pass on to our future generations.

At the time of their military service, discrimination and violence toward Blacks in America were rampant. Black Marines were sent to untraditional boot camps; they were segregated and instead received training at Montford Point, a facility at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

One of these heroic men is my beloved brother, the Honorable David N. Dinkins, who is also the first African American and 106th Mayor for the City of New York. He recounted some obstacles he and his comrades faced in an interview: "Italian and German prisoners of war, some of them were guarded by Black soldiers. They were treated better than those people who were protecting our country; soldiers and Marines." My brother David further stated, "During training, Black Marines were often kicked, slapped, could not eat until the whites had finished, and were routinely passed over for promotions."

He even heard stories of some Black Marines following orders to march into a river where they soon drowned. Despite their hardships, the Montford Point Marines proved to be a solid force within our military, just as capable as any group of white Marines. Originally organized to serve as a temporary surge in manpower, the Blacks trained at Montford Point comprised roughly 10 percent of the Marine Corps strength during the war and were to be disbanded after hostilities ended.

Montford Point Marines won praise from several white officers for their heroism during the seizure of Okinawa and at Iwo Jima. They were even sent to Nagasaki to clean up after the atomic bomb was dropped. Documented by the Montford Point Marine Association, much of that heroism occurred with the 51st Defense Battalion, which arrived at Saipan in the Mariana Islands to support the 2nd and 4th Marine Divisions of V Amphibious Corps. While they were assisting the combat units, one of their own, Private First Class Leroy Seals of Brooklyn, New York, was shot and died the next day of his wounds. The Montford

Point Marines picked up their rifles that day, fought back the Japanese, and even destroyed one of the Japanese machine guns from the beachhead perimeter side-by-side with the white combat units. In February 1945, a group from the 51st landed on Iwo Jima with the 5th Division, 28th Regiment. The combat regiment came ashore and it seemed that taking Iwo Jima would be a cakewalk. The Japanese, however, had planned an ambush. They (the Japanese) had placed guns on either side of Mount Suribachi and were firing at will onto the Marines on the island. The Black Marines of the 8th Ammunition Company landed during the second or third wave and somehow they kept ammunition in the hands of the combat units throughout this deadly firefight. Repeatedly the Black Marines delivered the much-needed ammunition. Though the Japanese actually shot two trucks from under one of the drivers, he kept coming back. Combat Marines who thought they had seen everything cheered this young, Black Marine from their foxholes. The Montford Point Marines knew their job was to keep the combatants supplied and they did so with great valor and at great expense to their company. The Japanese soon saw this and began to make their assault on the Ammo Company as well as the combat Marines. The Montford Point Marines rose to the occasion by fighting off these attacks as they continued their supply missions. This is the courage and stamina that lead Admiral Nimitz, Commander of the Fleet in the Pacific to say, "On Iwo Jima, in the ranks of all the Marines who set foot on that Island uncommon valor was a common virtue."

Those early Montford Point Marines were the catalyst for the great presence of African Americans in the Marine Corps. By the time that camp was closed for recruit training in 1949, over 21,000 recruits were trained and molded there. In July of 1948, President Harry S Truman issued Executive Order No. 9981, ending segregation in the military altogether. In September of the following year, Montford Point was deactivated, ending the legacy of inequality.

Twenty years following World War II, during August 1965, a group of enterprising Marine veterans and active duty Marines from Philadelphia organized a reunion. The purpose was to renew old friendships and share experiences of former comrades who received recruit training at Montford Point Camp, Camp Lejeune, and New River, North Carolina. This group, chaired by then Master Gunnery Sergeant, Brooks E. Gray, USMC, held a meeting in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and formulated and developed plans for a National Reunion. The response was overwhelming and 400 Marines from all over the country convened at the Adelphia Hotel in Philadelphia. In 1966, the Montford Point Marine Association, Inc. received its Charter and founder Brooks E. Gray became the Association's first National President.

Next year, the Marine Corps will officially begin teaching all their servicemen and servicewomen about the Montford Point Marines. There is a museum dedicated to their service located at Camp Gilbert H. Johnson in Jacksonville, North Carolina. The Montford Point Marines Association continues to work tirelessly to preserve their stories, which serve as a reminder of the struggles behind us and the challenges ahead. In order to truly appreciate their legacy, we must continue sharing this story.