



African-American Marines battled enemies overseas, racism at home Clayton Pitre, 91, is a Montford Point Marine.



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SEATTLE – A Seattle man was one of the first African-Americans allowed to join the U.S. Marines in World War II.

Clayton Pitre's also one of the last surviving Montford Point Marines.

Pitre, 91, is part of the Secretary of State's "Washington Remembers" exhibit honoring veterans to mark the 70th anniversary of the end of the war.

"I felt far better fighting for this country than trying to go against it," said Pitre, who was allowed to join the Marines after President Franklin Roosevelt banned discrimination in the military in 1941.

Prior to that proclamation, African-Americans had not been in the Marines since the Revolutionary War.

Pitre and 20,000 other African-Americans were trained at the segregated Montford Point base in North Carolina before being sent to Okinawa.

After growing up in Louisiana and witnessing racism within the military, he moved to Seattle to fight for civil rights.

He likes to think his service for his country and for his race has made America a better place.

"There were some problems in the South and I'm glad they're getting rid of those problems," said Pitre. "The black people believe in this country and supported the country."

