

On June 13, 2023, Fort Polk, located in Vernon Parish, Louisiana, was renamed to Fort Johnson in tribute to Medal of Honor recipient and Albany native and hero, Sgt. Henry Johnson. Fort Polk, previously named for a Confederate commander, Leonidas Polk, was renamed as part of an executive order to remove, rename and rebrand any and all military installations which bore the name of confederate leadership. This effort, put forth to celebrate the contributions of the vast diverse backgrounds which make up the United States armed forces and bring recognition to those heroes who had not always been celebrated and honored in a timely fashion and with the appropriate, dignified way.

Fort Polk, now Fort Johnson has historically worn the reputation and slogan “Home of Heroes”. The installation is known for its tough climate, unruly terrain and training regiment which is said to separate an everyday soldier from a hero. Fort Johnson was established on January 10, 1941. Thousands of Soldiers learned the basics of combat here during the World War II Louisiana Maneuvers. Forty-eight of the Army’s 91 divisions of WWII trained at Camp Polk (Johnson). Generals such as Eisenhower, Patton, Bradley and Marshall learned many lessons during the maneuvers that were critical to their success in defeating the axis powers. As such, after learning of the heroics of Sgt. Henry Johnson and the battle he single handedly fought and won in saving his comrades, the executive order was passed to rename Fort Polk to Fort Johnson in recognition of a true American Hero. In addition to this, Fort Johnson has the distinction of being the only US military installation to be named for a non commissioned officer!

In addition to the 5 Generals, 2 Admirals, 15 Colonels, 27 Purple Heart recipients, 2 Senators ,a host of active military personnel and a standing room only crowd announced to at over 10,000 - CBA alumni **Ronnie Spratt '88** and **Jelani Cowan '97** were present in representation of CBA's commitment to living the legacy of Sgt. Henry Johnson. In his speech given during the closing reception, Jelani spoke of our five Henry Johnson scholars by name and exemplified them as the heartbeat of tenacity and excellence exuded by Sgt. Johnson in the modern day via their commitment to excellence as a part of CBA's overall mission.

Jelani Cowan '97

CBA Henry Johnson Scholarship Mentor & Advocate

