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Contact: Office of Communications Director

Phone: (601)359-5608, (601)359-5289, (601)359-5689

E-mail: MDCCOfficeofCommunications@mdoc.state.ms.us

Two Sets of Sisters among MDOC New Officers

PEARL – Two sets of sisters are among the new officers at the Mississippi Department of Corrections.

Bianca and Brianna Blunt, both of Jackson, and sisters Shaquella and Tolernisha Jones, both from Clarksdale, were among trainees graduating the MDOC Correctional Officer Basic Academy Friday at the Central Mississippi Correctional Facility.

The 19 members of Class 2017-6M took the oath of office before MDOC's top officials with a crowd of family and friends looking on. Warren County Sheriff Martin Pace was guest speaker. The Blunt sisters said they are looking forward to their law enforcement career after enduring the military-style regiment of the 10-week long training program at the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman.

"It was a great experience and very challenging, and I am just glad we finally made it," said Brianna, who pursued a degree in criminal justice. "The instructors were great. They would not let us go until they knew we were ready. We really came together as a team in the last two weeks."

Bianca was elected assistant class leader and Brianna received the Highest Honor Award. "It's almost hard to believe we finally made. My favorite part was the 5 a.m. workouts each morning," Bianca said.

The Jones sisters' older brother, Londynn, already works for MDOC. Londynn graduated in the 2017-5M class in August. He and their mother, Dianne, who also worked in corrections, were present. (See Aug. 9 Facebook post: "**Jones Family Keeps Corrections Tradition Going During MDOC's latest Graduation.**")

"I am proud of them," Dianne said.

Commissioner Pelicia E. Hall told all the graduates they will be critical part of the MDOC team and important to the agency's success.

“I appreciate the commitment thus far that you have made to get to this point. You are a valued member of the Department of Corrections. I look forward to you joining the ranks of your peers in helping to take care of our incarcerated individuals. We have a lot of work to do and you are an integral part of a successful team,” Hall said.

Sheriff Pace focused his remarks on the role that corrections officers play in the judicial system, setting a positive example, and maintaining integrity.

“The role that you play as a correctional officer is so vitally important to our criminal justice system in our country," Pace said. "When a judge finds someone worthy of incarceration and sentences them to a period of time in the state penitentiary, it is each of you that we, as citizens, depend upon to know that person is safely and securely detained and treated appropriately while incarcerated.”

Pace continued, “It is so important that you maintain the integrity of the office and responsibility that you have and treat everybody fairly and treat everyone professionally, but firmly. You may be the only positive influence that some people ever have.”

Other award recipients were:

- Ammon Jackson, Second Highest Award;
- Richard Hewitt of Alpha Squad, Shanetra Burnett of Bravo Squad, and Austin Williams of Charlie Squad, all received the Leadership Award;
- Lazarius Thomas, Class Leader Award; and
- Richard Hewett, Top Gun Award for the Glock and the AR-15, and Brandon McLain for the 12-gauge shotgun

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