

REMARKS BEFORE VETERANS' DAY EVENT
LOS ANGELES MISSION COLLEGE
SYLMAR, CA
NOVEMBER 8, 2001

Good morning.

To the men and women of our armed services, those who have served domestically, those who have served abroad, those who have served in peacetime and in wartime, to those who serve our great nation, on this Veteran's Day celebration, we, your fellow Americans, your fellow countrymen, salute you.

To the families of those who have lost sons and daughters in wars, let us together turn our thoughts towards those who gave their lives so we could live in freedom.

Today, as we are gathered to commemorate Veterans' Day, we pay tribute to all veterans - of the Revolutionary War, of the War of 1812, of the Civil War, of the Spanish-American War, of World War I, of World War II, of the Korean War, of the Vietnam War, of Operation Desert Storm - and now, Operation Enduring Freedom.

On the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month in 1918, fighting in World War I ended - a day that was to be the day that ended all wars. And on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month in 1921, an unknown World War I soldier was buried at Arlington National Cemetery, overlooking our Nation's capital, during what was then known as Armistice Day.

These days, in a display of patriotism and national resolve that reflects the unity of our great nation, we proudly display the Stars and Stripes, an instantly recognizable symbol of our country's values.

George Washington - one of our nation's very first veterans - chose these words to describe our flag:

"We take the stars from heaven, the red from our mother country, separating it by white stripes, thus showing that we have separated from her, and the white stripes shall go down to posterity representing liberty."

More than 200 years later, our flag represents liberty and freedom in Los Angeles, in New York, in Washington, from ocean to ocean, across the plains, and around the world.

In one of our nation's darkest moments just over one year months ago, we were all reminded that there are those who resent our freedom and our liberty. As a nation, we were shocked. As a nation, we grieved. As a nation, we mourned.

And as a nation, we know that there is a new generation of fellow countrymen, of patriots, that will continue to fight for our freedom and our democratic way of life.

Today, let us ask God to give strength to us all so that we may continue to be indivisible as a people. Let us pray for the safe return of our sons and daughters who are high in the skies, out on the seas, or on the ground, who are in harm's way.

Exactly 60 years ago, in his "Four Freedoms" speech, President Franklin D. Roosevelt eloquently described the freedoms our country holds dear:

Our freedom of speech and expression.

Our freedom to worship God in our own way.

Our freedom from want.

And our freedom from fear.

President Roosevelt went on to say this:

"Veterans' Day is not to honor war, but to honor the sacrifice made by others for our freedom."

And that is why we are gathered here today at Los Angeles Mission College, with veterans of wars past, and those who are serving our country today.

We have come together to honor and remember those who displayed courage under fire, those who were fearless and strong, and those who soared high on the wings of freedom.

Our veterans - both during their active duty and to this day - display a tradition of bravery, honor, and pride.

Our veterans embody the spirit of our people - of Americans throughout our great land, Americans of different backgrounds, and Americans of different faiths.

Our veterans have endured rough seas so that we as a nation may sail free.

Our veterans fought against bigotry, hatred, and oppression so that we could live in freedom.

Our veterans, through the programs of the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, continue to give to our country through volunteerism and community service.

And our veterans died so that we might live.

Many of us here today are not veterans ourselves. But we can honor our veterans by living according to the values that our country stands for.

We should exercise our freedom of expression - whether it's a work of art, or a letter written to a local elected official telling them the work that needs to be done in your community.

We should each take the time to exercise our freedom of religion - to worship God in our own way, based on the traditions of our families and our heritage.

We should also be free from fear - and let us strive to seek a country and a planet in which our children don't grow up afraid of others, or those from other lands.

Our country's freedom has been tested many times in our nation's history, and each time we have emerged stronger than ever. We are stronger in our souls, we are stronger in our hearts, and we are stronger in our resolve.

We are forever indebted to you, the veterans of the San Fernando Valley. And we are indebted to you, the individuals we are singling out for special recognition today--those Veterans that have been called members of the Greatest Generation--Veterans of World War II.

As I call each name, would you please rise so that we may recognize you:

- ***First Sergeant, United States Army Field Artillery, JIM NIXON.***
- ***Private First Class, United States Army Field Artillery, PAUL RAMIREZ.***
- ***Private First Class, United States Army Second Infantry Division, BOB ERICKSON.***
- ***Private First Class, United States Army Infantry Division, ROBERT CAMPOS ACEBO.***

Thank you for your bravery, thank you for your courage, and thank you for your service to our country.

This ceremony at Los Angeles Mission College, in the heart of the San Fernando Valley, would not be possible if it were not for the many men and women from this same community who fought for our freedom overseas.

Today's event is an expression of our thanks, and our gratitude, for your service that has preserved our freedom, our dignity, and the American Way.

Thank you, may God bless you, and may God bless America.

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