

Victoria Moore

What Veterans Mean For America and Its Citizens: Essay for the NVBDC Scholarship

As a direct descendant of two retired Army soldiers and generations of military history, I was taught at a very young age to respect and honor the Veterans who fought and died to keep this country safe. My dad, Master Sergeant Jimmy Moore Jr. (Ret.), is a highly respected Veteran in the Fort Wainwright community. After dedicating 26 years of his life to the service, his hardworking and tenacious nature still encourages him to assist the military on the civilian side. My dad went from working as the Executive Officer for DENTAC to being the head of Health and Safety at the Bassett Army Community Hospital. He has told me countless stories about his experience in the Army, and often mixes it with humor and lightheartedness; however, I know my dad has some unhealed trauma. He hides it under lock and key, yet still perseveres through. He may come off as a serious, no-nonsense man, but he holds kindness in his heart, even after the PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) he went through. Veterans, like my dad, are warriors who remind citizens of the honor, courage, valor, and commitment that this prosperous country holds. My dad inspires me to commission into the Army because he is living proof that veterans achieve outstanding accomplishments, in and out of service.

Veterans are more than just 'retired soldiers'. They are the physical embodiment of patriotism and inspire faithfulness in millions nationwide. Veterans are a testament to the courage and sacrifice that soldiers of every branch of the military go through. They are the backbone of our bountiful country, who are willing to sacrifice life and limb for the protection of our rights and freedoms.

Like many other military families, my dad was deployed twice to Iraq and stationed in South Korea for an entire year during my childhood. Our only form of communication during those separations was through phone calls or video chat. At that age, I couldn't fathom that every day my dad was away from home, there was a chance that he might not come back. Every day, I am thankful that he has returned. Veteran families that go through pain, loss, and suffering serve as a reminder of the great men and women we have lost in action or as prisoners of war. The holes that they have left behind. These losses remind the living to always remember and respect those who have or are serving for our protection.

There is a day dedicated to remembering and honoring our Veterans. The United States has a long-held tradition that on November 11th - Veterans Day - American citizens

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take the time to remember those who have fought in defense of freedom throughout history. To recognize the sacrifices made so that the citizens of the United States can live in peace and security.

The upcoming generations must learn from those who have lived. I am very lucky to have the opportunity to communicate with two Marine Corps Veterans who are changing lives every day. Chief Warrant Officer - 5 Carlos Cruz (Ret.) and Staff Sergeant Travis Walker (Ret.) are filled with stories and advice that influence and impact the students they communicate with. These two Veterans not only change lives; they inspire others to enact change right alongside. It is through their witty banter, insight, and wisdom that they help encourage future generations to succeed. These instructors, and many others, are helping generations of children have a deeper respect and understanding of our Veterans and all they do.

Veterans fight for our rights, endured the dangers of conflict, live with physical and emotional trauma, and have been separated from their families. Their values and loyalty to civic duty are an inspiration to all citizens and serve as a reminder that everyone should work towards the common good. Veterans represent all branches of the armed forces: Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, and Space Force. Each branch has unique traditions that instill loyalty and help define them, but all Veterans are united in the commitment to this country's ideals and values. They are the embodiment of patriotism through their service on the United States' behalf. It is through their selfless acts of bravery that help grant me rights and liberties, that allow the US citizens to live without fear, pain, or strife about the threats at home or across the seas.

The significant contributions from Veterans to American society are impactful and extend far past their service in the military. Like my dad and many others, Veterans have gone on to become leaders and advisors in their communities, utilizing the skills and knowledge they have earned to enact positive change. The leadership, discipline, and teamwork skills are invaluable to this country's development. Along with this, Veterans are often involved with efforts in helping to improve the healthcare system by being advocates for the needs of others, reducing the homelessness population, poverty, and unemployment, ensuring that those who have served our country are not left behind.

Veterans are an essential, irreplaceable part of American society. They exemplify bravery when faced with adversity, epitomise the meaning of commitment, and symbolize

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loyalty and devotion towards the United States and its citizens. Without Veterans sharing their stories and reaching out, our country would be prone to making mistakes that Veterans have learned from. As citizens, we must respect and acknowledge our freedom fighters, from the past and present. For those who have never served in the military, they are restricting themselves from gaining the wisdom that Veterans hold if they are not willing to listen to the stories that veterans are willing to share. We owe Veterans a debt of gratitude for their service and dedication to protecting our rights, and we must continue working together to ensure that they receive the support and recognition they deserve. Their stories must be shared, their wisdom passed down, and their sacrifices *must* be remembered. Veterans mean everything to America.

