

Veterans... Thank You... thank you for the rights that you have continued to protect. Thank you for serving this country in a capacity that most will never know or understand. In my own journey through life I have made the decision to follow the path of all you brave men and women who have gone before. As I have discussed this with friends, teachers, counselors, and yes, even my family I often get asked, why? Why do you want to go into the military? Although that decision did not come lightly it is very basic... that uniform. That uniform that says; yes teacher, yes friend, yes stranger on the street, I am willing to fight for all of our rights. That is why. I have watched the old war movies watched the old war documentaries and came to the realization how quickly the things we take for granted every day can come to an end if people are not willing to fight for the beliefs we hold dear. I know that there will still be folks that question why? And all I can say is... for you...

So veterans again thank you, thank you for sacrificing before me so I have the opportunity to sacrifice for you in the future.

Veterans... Thank you... You all have been the biggest role models throughout my whole life, even though you are complete strangers to me you have inspired me. Your stories, losses, and your choice to serve this great nation has helped me. None as influential as PFC Donald Swafford, he was one of the greatest people I never got to truly know. Serving with the 44th infantry division during the battle of the bulge in WWII, a bronze star recipient, he came home and raised a family. He never forgot the ones that didn't come home. Even though I never truly knew him, in my heart I know I'm a lot like him. Through his sharing of the stories... the experiences I learned that it takes truly brave individuals to make the up the might of the United States military. Veterans, today is your day, look to your left, right, the men and women next to you have either lived your life, or had a mother, father, brother, sister, in your shoes.

Veterans... thank you. Know that you are not alone. We know of this day as Veterans Day but it is also Remembrance Day. There are those throughout the world who know the sacrifices

soldiers make for us. For our protection, for our freedoms. Veterans. Know that you are not alone, know that when I look at you I do so with pride. Proud that I and those who joined me in taking the oath to serve, are doing it as a thank you. Thank you to our founding fathers for lighting the torch, and veterans thank you for carrying that torch. Thank you for protecting and passing that torch.

Veterans I hope that one day, people in the future will still want to take that leap.

Let's not forget the families that watch their loved ones leave everyday with that uniform on. The families of people that serve face a sacrifice that no other family will have to face. Children, wives, and husbands watch as their loved ones leave. Families, your sacrifice is great, never knowing if the person you love will come home.

Every veteran deserves more than a day. Your sacrifice was one that many can't make. I am honored to be able to follow the footsteps of so many great people. I know that veterans who have come home have faced their own demons. They still push through for those of us who can't. Whether it's from watching your best friend fight along side you or losing limbs, it's hard to go back to the days of happiness. Trauma that you face daily will never go away, all we can do is support you.

So as you walk through today remember that no matter what people think, you are important. You all are the good people we need. So thank you veterans, celebrate today, and remember those who have fallen, and bless those who serve this great nation.