

Our Veterans' Impact on America: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

Lauren Acosta

America's veterans have always answered the call to defend our freedom and principles. They have sacrificed their lives for our country. Whether in the past during WWII, the present battling terrorism, or the future in cyberspace, it's veterans who protect our great nation. The impact of their sacrifice is enormous, yet we often take it for granted. All veterans, past and present are equally important, however I feel WWII veterans have contributed the most to our freedom today.

My generation has never known total war like what took place during WWII. This generation of veterans, including women, sacrificed their lives to defend our way of life from Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan in ways we have not seen since. It was a perilous time that united the country in a common goal to defend freedom. Yet even after WWII, the impact of veterans continued to shape the world. They would be known as "The Greatest Generation," who grew up in the Great Depression, won the war and came home to help build the world we live in today, transforming the U.S. into the leader of the free world.

Veterans would again answer the call to defend freedom in Korea and Vietnam, fighting heroically against the spread of Communism. Korean War veterans fought bravely at places like Inchon and the Battle of the Chosin Reservoir in extreme conditions against greater numbers. In Vietnam, veterans faced a new type of guerilla warfare and rose to the challenge during the battles of Khe Sanh and the Tet Offensive. Two-thirds of all soldiers in Vietnam volunteered and 11,000 were women. It was during this era that the effects of PTSD were brought to light and after reflection we all can truly appreciate what these veterans went through.

Even today our democratic ideals are still under attack. The 911 terrorist attack spurred a new generation of veterans willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for America. Veterans showed bravery during the first and second Gulf Wars, Tora Bora, Fallujah and the hunt for Bin Laden.

Fighting terrorism is like no other war we have fought. It requires enormous sacrifices from our veterans and their families. Future wars will not only be fought on the ground

but fought online in cyberspace and outer space using anti-satellite technology. This will require a highly educated, trained and motivated soldier.

Due to all of their heroic actions in America's conflicts, we owe a deep gratitude for all of the dangers veterans go through so we can live safely in America. There are countless acts of courage from WWII veterans to present day veterans that we may never know about. It's important to never forget their sacrifices and to celebrate them on Memorial and Veterans Day. As simple as it sounds, I'd like to say "Thank You" to all who served. Their courage and ultimate sacrifice can be summed up in this quote: "We owe our World War II veterans—and all our veterans—a debt we can never fully repay."
—Doc Hastings (https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/doc_hastings_244067)