

Valor, Victory, Veterans

“Our nation itself is testimony to the love our veterans have had for it and for us.” Ronald Reagan declared this in his famous speech at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial of November 1988. The truth in his words always leads me to reflect on the sheer devotion of our veterans; these brave people who have served and continue to serve our country. Our veterans, everyday citizens who decided they would take a stand, take a chance, to protect this country and its values; these heroes deserve all the respect and honor we can give them. They not only defended our nation in times of crisis and war; they returned into our lives and gifted us with their stories, their experiences, their triumphs, and their love.

When our country was threatened, who stepped forward as the first line of defense—aware of the possible dangers but volunteering themselves regardless—all for the well-being of the nation? Who acted as a shield to ensure our safety while risking their own? Who merits our full appreciation and esteem for all the blood, sweat, and tears they shed to preserve the liberties we enjoy? You see, veterans aren’t just victors or trophies brought back from times of war. They’re the foundation of our country as a whole. As Abraham Lincoln put it, “A nation that does not honor its heroes will not long endure.” Why is this? These veterans provide the basis for which we stand on, united as the people. We, the ordinary people that veterans have worked so diligently to safeguard, need to always remember our roots, the people who made it all possible.

When I mention the word “veteran,” many would immediately think of soldiers fighting in the warzone. However, the veterans actually extend to a wide range of people, including those who have served behind the scenes. My own great-grandfather, Rogelio Niño, served in the military himself. He was based in San Diego, California, and he was a nutritionist, a chief cook of the U.S. Navy. The most important thing I understood from his position was that these people all have a part to play, no matter how small. These veterans each have something to give, all with one common goal; to uphold the welfare of the United States. Just like in a puzzle; you can’t see the whole picture until you connect all the pieces together. Each veteran served in their own way, all contributing to the cause.

The way in which veterans serve isn’t all to do with war, though. Veterans possess a quality that is treasured in our daily lives; wisdom. Through their experiences, veterans share stories with family and friends, able to connect with people on a deeper level. Through their service for the country, veterans are able to incorporate their own insights and skills into their own words and actions. Through their lives, we are able to

glimpse the legacy they built, the people they supported, and the relationships they created.

As you can see, veterans are vital to each one of us individually and the entire unified country. Veterans were there when we needed them most; the least we can do is accept them with love and honor. The valor and victory that the veterans showed is truly a prime example of how we ourselves should act in our lives as well.