

Is There Pride in Serving in our Nation's Military?

By Malinda Labriola

Our nation's military is a protector of peace, restorer of normality, and catalyst of nationalism. The words needed to describe a team laden with such enormous responsibilities traverse commendable, stupendous, and extraordinary. Encompassing the efforts of our soldiers with a phrase is futile considering the massive meaning dedication has to this country. These peacekeepers, because of their contributions to the nation and their service to the betterment of humankind, deserve more than words. They are entitled to nothing less than an immensely credible pride for their actions.

When a parent looks at their child, is there not pride in knowing they are responsible for the child's wellbeing and protection? They secure the unhindered growth of this child so that it may develop to become self-supporting. Does the child not have pride in knowing that by flourishing under the parent's protection, they bring further pride in recognition of their parents' efforts? In the same way a parent protects a child, our military safeguards the nation. In the same way a child requires a parent to preserve its well-being, the nation requires our military to perpetuate its development. Our country is the fostered and the fosterer. It necessitates protection from terror and violence: threats to its homeostasis. This conservation is provided by our military. The nation, in return, provides protection by harboring the people our troops love and the homes they return to after duty. There is certainly pride in maintaining that symbiotic relationship.

Possessing pride for participating in our nation's military is justifiable for reasons other than protection of the defenseless. One's service builds character, self-awareness, leadership, friendship, and reliability, among other qualities. Regardless of whether one agrees with a military action, these characteristics are separately regarded as categorically positive attributes acquired through membership in the armed forces. The traits a person procures during their time in the military lend themselves to create an improved, structured individual that is capable of effectively aiding society after leaving their position in the military. There is certainly pride in maintaining good character.

My grandfather served his tour of duty at the beginning of the Vietnam War. He had been stationed on Guam as part of the Navy Medical Corps. When asked his thoughts on his service,

he replied, "I was proud to serve and feel tremendous pride for the people who are currently serving. They are incredibly brave. They all take an oath, "'to protect and defend the USA,' and that is what they do. They develop a strong feeling of kinship and of being part of a team. They are constantly in harm's way and are asked to put themselves in dangerous situations. Many are serving multiple tours of duty and are away from their families for months at a time. I hate war generally, but I could never feel anything but pride for our soldiers, sailors, and marines. I wish that the people in our armed forces could be using their talents to promote peace." My grandmother was, "Very proud to be married to a Lieutenant in the U.S. Navy." She told me that while attending celebrations where bands play the anthems of our military branches, both she and my grandfather still stand with hands over hearts during *Anchors Aweigh*.

Our military saves lives every day. Our troops devote their lives to defending the strength of national unity, the growth of our country, and the welfare of every person protected by their efforts. I cannot determine the emotions of the individuals who fought in past wars or the men and women fighting at this moment, as we speak. What I can say is that selflessness is a rare and honorable gift. Those who sacrifice themselves for the prosperity of our country can claim this gift for their own. I sincerely hope our soldiers take pride in serving their country because we, the people, are so incredibly proud of our military.