

Proclamation 6963 of December 5, 1996

## National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, 1996

*By the President of the United States of America*

*A Proclamation*

Fifty-five years ago, on a calm Hawaiian morning, Imperial Japan launched a surprise attack against the U.S. Armed Forces stationed at Pearl Harbor, shattering the peace of our land and drawing America into World War II. The assault of December 7, 1941, lasted only two hours, but it killed or injured almost 3,600 Americans, destroyed a major portion of our Nation's Pacific Fleet, and damaged more than 325 aircraft, severely weakening our air power.

The attack jolted our Nation and forced us into a war unlike any previous conflict, waged across the globe in places most Americans had never heard of, in dense jungles and on an ocean we once thought too large for an enemy to cross. It was a war that would require unparalleled courage and determination from soldier and civilian alike, and all Americans rose to the monumental challenge.

During this time, our Nation stood united in purpose and in spirit as never before. Millions of brave and patriotic men and women served the Armed Forces in the struggle for freedom; millions of others sacrificed on the home front. On farms and in factories, mines, and shipyards, Americans labored around the clock to supply the food, weapons, and equipment needed to win the war. In our homes, schools, and places of worship, Americans from every walk of life prayed and worked together for victory. And—as a powerful testament to America's resilience—battleships damaged at Pearl Harbor returned to service and helped break the back of the Japanese fleet.

The generation that fought World War II came home to build new careers and communities and made America the richest, freest nation in history. Some men and women remained in uniform, safeguarding our liberties and ensuring that tyranny would never again threaten our shores. In peace, this generation vowed never again to be unprepared and gave our Nation the security and progress that we have known and cherished for over 50 years.

This is the precious legacy bestowed on us by the men and women of the World War II generation. We can best honor their deeds of courage and determination by maintaining their vigil in defense of freedom and striving, as they did, to make the world a better place for all its peoples.

As we mark the 55th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor, let us remember in prayer all those who died on that day and throughout World War II. Let us also honor all World War II veterans and their families, those who lost loved ones, and those who worked on the home front. Finally, let us give thanks once again for the peace and freedom secured by their service and their sacrifice.

The Congress, by Public Law 103-308, has designated December 7, 1996, as "National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day."

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim December 7, 1996, as National Pearl

Harbor Remembrance Day. I urge all Americans to observe this day with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities in honor of the Americans who served at Pearl Harbor. I also ask all Federal departments and agencies, organizations, and individuals to fly the flag of the United States at halfstaff on this day in honor of those Americans who died as a result of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this fifth day of December, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-first.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Proclamation 6964 of December 10, 1996

### Human Rights Day, Bill of Rights Day, and Human Rights Week

*By the President of the United States of America*

*A Proclamation*

When America's founders crafted the Constitution and Bill of Rights more than two centuries ago, they not only created a blueprint for the conduct of American government, but they also gave expression to a vision of human dignity that inspires people to this day the world over. Our Nation's commitment to the freedoms enumerated in the Bill of Rights—among them freedom of speech, religion, and assembly, and the right to due process and a fair trial—serves as a beacon of hope to oppressed peoples everywhere.

Americans continue to work to improve our application of equality under the law for all our own citizens, as we believe that freedom and justice are the birthright of humankind. We are also working daily to foster and promote the growth of these rights in other countries. Indeed, the championing of democracy and human rights serves as a cornerstone of my Administration's foreign policy.

As we observe Human Rights Day, Bill of Rights Day, and Human Rights Week, we can take satisfaction in our progress in advancing human rights around the world in the past decade. In fact, more than half the people in the world now live under democratic political systems. Even in countries still struggling to establish basic human rights and freedoms, we are seeing some progress. And brave reformers such as Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma continue to press their rightful demand for freedom.

It is also encouraging that, with the growth and development of the human rights movement, there has been greater awareness and appreciation that women's rights are human rights.

Just over a year ago, representatives from 189 countries met in Beijing at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women. That historic gathering focused the attention of the world on women's rights and needs. Now, we are beginning to see some progress. In many countries, increasing numbers of women are contesting and attaining public office and playing a vital role in shaping the political agenda. In Romania, women gathered