

The President's Weekly Address

May 8, 2015

Hello, everybody. Today marks a historic anniversary: 70 years since the Allied victory in Europe during World War II. On V-E Day after the Nazi surrender, people swarmed the streets of London and Paris and Moscow, and the cloud of fear that had hung for so many years finally lifted. Here at home, from small towns to Times Square, crowds gathered in celebration, singing and dancing with joy. It would still be 3 more months of deadly fighting in the Pacific. But for a few hours, the world rejoiced in the hope of peace.

General Eisenhower announced the news with little fanfare. "The mission of this Allied Force," he said, "was fulfilled." But his simple message belied the extraordinary nature of the Allied victory and the staggering human loss. For over 5 years, brutal fighting laid waste to an entire continent. Mothers, fathers, children were murdered in concentration camps. By the time the guns fell silent in Europe, some 40 million people on the continent had lost their lives.

Today we pay tribute to all who served. They were patriots, like my grandfather who served in Patton's army: soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, coast guard, merchant marines, and the women of the WACs and the WAVES and every branch. They risked their lives and gave their lives so that we, and people the world over, could live free. They were women who stepped up in unprecedented numbers, manning the home front and, like my grandmother, building bombers on assembly lines.

This was the generation that literally saved the world: that ended the war and laid a foundation for peace. This was the generation that traded in their uniforms for a college education so they could marry their sweethearts, buy homes, raise children, and build the strongest middle class the world has ever known. This was the generation that includes heroes like the Tuskegee Airmen, the Navajo Code Talkers, and the Japanese Americans of the forty—hundred forty-second [442d]^o Regiment, and who continued the fight for freedom here at home, expanding equality and opportunity and justice for minorities and women.

We will be forever grateful for what these remarkable men and women did, for the selfless grace they showed in one of our darkest hours. But as we mark this 70th anniversary, let's not simply commemorate history, let's rededicate ourselves to the freedoms for which they fought.

Let's make sure that we keep striving to fulfill our founding ideals: that we're a country where no matter who we are or where we're from or what we look like or who we love, if we work hard and take responsibility, every American will have the opportunity to make of our lives what we will.

Let's stand united with our allies, in Europe and beyond, on behalf of our common values—freedom, security, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law around the world—and against bigotry and hatred in all their forms so that we give meaning to that pledge: "Never forget. Never again."

Most of all, let's salute once more that generation of Americans whose courage and sacrifice are the reason we're here today, in peace and freedom. Their spirit lives on in our brave men and women in uniform and their families who continue to defend the very freedoms

^o White House correction.

our parents and grandparents fought for. As Americans grateful for their service, let's truly honor them, on this day and every day, with the gratitude they have earned and the respect that they deserve.

May God bless them, and may he continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2:45 p.m. on May 7 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on May 8. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 7, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on May 8.

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