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Public Speaking - Bell 2

26 October 2017

The Values of Our History

As Americans, we have always treasured values such as bravery and commitment, values that have been needed to progress us to where we are today. If American history could be reflected in a story, we would read tales of sacrifice, bravery, and commitment. Let me tell you a story that begins in 1971, with a boy who grew up drawing army men and playing strategic board games. His dream was to serve his country before he started his professional career. He joined the ROTC program at his college, where he received an education alongside training to join the army. He was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the army as a military intelligence officer with a branch detail in the chemical corps. He was stationed in Germany, and when he got out of the army and came home, he found his wife. He became a husband and a father. And just as his life was finally settling, he received a letter telling him that he was to be mobilized. The letter told him that he could be gone for up to two years, and he was not told where he would be stationed. He had to leave his family while he traveled to different bases. But he was persistent and brave as he faced the unknown. He served in the intelligence directorate for Central Command's Special Operations component headquarters. Later, he was deployed to Qatar. After nine months of service, he was honorably discharged and came back home to his wife, newborn daughter, and me, his two-year-old.

My dad is one of the most hard-working, devoted individuals I have ever met. He is part of a long-standing history of bravery and perseverance. I can think of many people today who

have shown these qualities--and we see them all throughout our past. George Washington did not know whether his under-average troops could win independence, but because of their hope for the future, we have the opportunity to live in this nation today. There have been brave women who have taken risks and emerged from their stereotypes, like Sybil Ludington, who was sixteen in 1777 when she rode forty miles horseback at night through the rain to warn the Patriot militia that the British were coming, traveling more than twice the distance of Paul Revere. There have been those who have boldly committed to their beliefs of racial equality, such as Claudette Colvin, who refused to give up her bus seat to a white passenger nine months before Rosa Parks did. And as a result of everyone's hope and persistence, we see these rights in action every day. Before different heroes have become influential, they had visions of hope for the future.

We have individuals all throughout our history who have had this hope and sacrificed their time, and sometimes even their lives, for our country. Since declaring independence, America has taken risks to stand out from the crowd, taken risks to persist through hard times, and taken risks to strengthen our foundations. There were those yesterday, there are those today, and there will be those tomorrow, who show commitment, perseverance, and strength of mind and heart. But no one embodies these characteristics better than our veterans. Those who have served and those who are currently serving have taken risks, whether at home or abroad. They have sacrificed their time and resources to sustain this nation. Through the years, they have trekked across mountains and through valleys, they have journeyed into the depths of the jungle, they have flown above the clouds and traveled under the sea, all to make sure that we maintain our freedom and our country. Because of their willingness to serve, we have assurance in our freedom.

We know these heroes from the founding of America, through the fights abroad to the fights at home, to this very moment, who have taken risks, displayed their beliefs, and shown bravery and dedication. Because such important qualities have been continually written across the pages of our history, we have the hope of seeing them all throughout our future. Throughout the lives of George Washington, Sybil Ludington, Claudette Colvin, and other patriots, our military and veterans have defended our rights.

From my dad to the first Americans, hard work, dedication, and perseverance have been essential to our history, and our veterans are living examples of these virtues. They have worked hard to protect our nation. They have been dedicated to seeking out America's best interests. They have persevered through difficult and trying times. Our veterans have helped us sustain these values, and because we have continually carried these values with us since the dawning of our nation, we can look forward to seeing them again all throughout our future. Thank you.