

PARADE

PRESENTS

Keeping America Free

One of America's most trusted and revered leaders is former Secretary of State and retired four-star general in the U.S. Army, Colin Powell. He has served his country for much of his



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life. He once said, "Today I can declare my hope and declare it from the bottom of my heart that we will eventually see the time when that number of nuclear weapons is down to zero and the world is a much better place."

General Powell is not alone in that mission. Every day, thousands of Americans serve their country to make the world a better place. They endeavor to keep America, as it says in *The Star-Spangled Banner*, "the land of the free and the home of the brave."

Military service is not a requirement for citizenship. It is a choice and it's not for everyone. It wasn't always a choice. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed the Selective Training and Service Act in 1940. It was the country's first peacetime draft. From 1948 – 1973, when there weren't enough people volunteering for the armed forces, the government could "draft" or call young men to mandatory service. It was the law.

That all changed in 1973 when the draft ended and the U.S. military became an all-volunteer organization.



Chat About It

Do you think America's military should be a draft system or a volunteer organization? Why? Who should serve?

Selective Service

When FDR signed the Selective Service Act in 1940, it required all male citizens between the ages of 26 and 35 to register for the draft. The country was not at war at that time but President Roosevelt thought it would be smart to be ready for what he wisely saw as the increasing threats from Japan and Germany.

He said, "America stands at the crossroads of its destiny. Time and distance have been shortened. A few weeks have seen great nations fall. We cannot remain indifferent to the philosophy of force now rampant in the world. We must and will marshal our great potential strength to fend off war from our shores. We must and will prevent our land from becoming a victim of aggression."

While Roosevelt was making a prudent choice at the time, he needn't have worried about having enough men to defend America. After the Japanese bombed the naval base in Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, thousands of young men enlisted, that is, volunteered to serve their country. Similarly, after the 9/11 attacks, there was a spike in enlistments to the armed forces. It was not nearly the huge spike that followed the Pearl Harbor attack, but there was an increase.

Chat About It: *Why do you think the Selective Service Act called for only males to serve? Why does an attack on America inspire people to enlist? What might inspire you to serve? Do you think service to the country is a right, a responsibility, or a privilege?*

A Day to Honor Service

When World War I ended on Nov. 11, 1918, a holiday was established to honor the "armistice" or ending of the fighting. Called "Armistice Day," the holiday was dedicated to world peace and honored the veterans of that war.



Alas, world peace didn't last. After World War II and the Korean War, Congress changed the name of the holiday to Veterans Day. The mission was to honor American veterans of all wars and conflicts. It's different from Memorial Day because that holiday honors veterans who died in service to the country, while Veterans Day honors all who serve.

Chat About It:

What do you think is the proper way to celebrate a holiday honoring those who serve their country? What do you think about retailers who offer "Veterans Day Special Sales"? Does that honor military service?

The Cost of Freedom

The Korean War, fought between World War II and the Vietnam War, is sometimes referred to as "the forgotten war." The memorial in Washington D.C. is a realistic reminder of the harsh conditions faced by the men and women involved in that conflict. The memorial is made up of 19 stainless steel sculptures representing a military squad on patrol in Korea. Etched in granite nearby are these words, "Freedom Is Not Free."



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In order to appreciate that sentiment, one must first understand what freedom is. Our nation's freedom began with the drafting of the country's blueprint, known as The Constitution. In that document, the Founding Fathers outlined how the country would operate. Before it was ratified, though, it was changed or amended to add more guarantees of civil liberties. We now enjoy a variety of freedoms in the United States. The First Amendment guarantees several of them:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

As you consider how life in the United States is shaped by the power of democracy, by the freedom of the people to choose leaders, think about the work that goes into protecting our way of life. Freedom may not be free, but isn't it worth the price?

Chat About It: How important are the freedoms we have here in America? Are there some that are more important than others? Which are the most valuable freedoms? What does "freedom is not free" mean to you? Why do you think it's etched on the Korean War Memorial? Finally, define the word freedom in your own words.



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Memorializing Service

One way people honor veterans is by visiting one of our nation's compelling war memorials in Washington, D.C. In addition to the memorial honoring the Korean War, there are several others. Here is a brief description about three of those:

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial:

The walls are polished black granite. On the somewhat mirrored surface, the names of those killed in the war are carved in the stone. There are more 58,272 names with 1200 listed as missing. People who visit the memorial will often place paper over a name and rub over it so that the name appears on the paper as it appears on the wall.



The World War II Memorial:

More than 400,000 veterans died fighting and more than 16 million people served in the war effort. The design includes a rainbow reflecting pool in a sunken plaza surrounded by 56 pillars representing U.S. states and territories during the time of the war.



African American Civil War Memorial

Just behind the beautiful nine-foot bronze statue entitled "The Spirit of Freedom" is the "Wall of Honor," with 209,145 names engraved on plaques. The names are of the African-American men who fought for the Union during the Civil War. There is also a museum at that location.

Chat About It: *Today U.S. military personnel are involved in war efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Do you think that news about those wars inspires young people to serve? Consider interviewing an adult who has served the country and find out what motivated that person to enlist.*

