



**Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet  
“Mighty Men of Valor”  
100<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion Veterans 72<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary Banquet  
Honolulu, Hawaii  
Admiral Harry B. Harris Jr.  
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As prepared for delivery**

I'd like to extend a special thanks to all the 100<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion veterans of World War II who are with us today. It's no exaggeration when I say that for me to be here, a Japanese American four-star admiral, in command of the United States Pacific Fleet -- the same fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz commanded as he fought the Imperial Japanese across the Pacific -- well, that's because of you and those trail blazers like you. The men of the 100<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion, and the men of the 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team, of the MIS, the 522<sup>nd</sup>, 232<sup>nd</sup>, the 1399<sup>th</sup>, and the 300 Nisei women who joined the Women's Army Corps, or WACS, names and numbers that move mountains. I am humbled to be in your presence.

When I think about the sheer desperation in the world in the early 1940s, when I consider the power of the enemy you confronted, when I examine the insurmountable nature of the obstacles in your path, and when I reflect on the results you achieved, I am awed, for I stand in the company of giants.

You helped achieve nothing less than the survival of the free world.

State and City Leaders, I want to thank you all for being here today. I know how busy each of you are, and your presence here speaks volumes for the value you place on honoring the achievements of the 100<sup>th</sup> Battalion.

And Sergeant Arakawa, I recall that the last time we shared the stage, they had you speaking first. I remember how well you spoke and what a tough act you were to follow.

Clearly event organizers here thought the same thing.

It's an honor for me to speak first, so you, and our newest speaker on the line up, Stacey Hayashi, can both conclude this banquet on a high note.

Fellow Flag and General Officers, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, it's great to see each of you here today.

Recently my wife Bruni and I were at a formal dinner where I was the keynote speaker. When I finished, I wasn't satisfied with my delivery so I told Bruni that I thought I needed to put more FIRE in my speech.

And she whispered back that “No, Harry, you needed to put more of your speech IN the fire.”

Folks, anyone who surfs the web, watches the news, or reads the newspaper, knows that Bob Dylan had it right, that times are a changin'. Russia has taken Crimea, and the future of Ukraine is under threat. I-S-I-L is on the march in Iraq. And there are tensions between nations over territorial disputes throughout the Western Pacific.

Maybe Yogi Berra who had it more right -- "It's déjà vu all over again."

We are now well into the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, living in an age of constant change, where news of upheaval and overthrow travels round the world literally at the speed of light, where our iPhones inform us of change instantly -- via a Facebook post, a tweet, a text, or a KIK -- and if you don't know what a KIK is, you better ask the kids or grandkids, it's the latest thing.

But I'm not here just to talk about change. I'm also here to talk about constants, those things that don't change, those things we can count on, rely on, and depend on during the good times, and during the bad.

Like those things we find at the very core of every man and woman who bravely dons the cloth of our nation to serve in our armed forces -- the unconquerable spirit of the American warrior. I'm talking about undaunted courage in the face of daunting adversity.

Seneca once said that "fire is the test of gold, adversity is the test of men," and I believe it. And the warriors of the 100<sup>th</sup> Battalion were tested, from Day 1. They faced adversity on the home front, when their loyalty to our nation was under constant suspicion, yet they proved time and again that their dedication and devotion to America were without limits.

In the great history of the American profession of arms, the 100th Battalion occupies a special place of high honor -- a place earned by their legendary exploits and by the blood of those who paid the ultimate price.

They were tested on the battlefield, in the heat of combat, where the friction and fog of war reveal the true character of each of us. And time and time again, the men of the 100<sup>th</sup> proved their mettle. When faced with mortal danger they didn't look for the exit. Instead they marched boldly toward the sound of the guns.

And they were tested at home, too. Just three years ago, I was in the audience as men of the 100<sup>th</sup> Battalion, and men from the 442<sup>nd</sup> Regiment and the MIS, were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal for their service to America. One speaker there said, "These remarkable men left a segregated nation to fight and defend an America with no guarantee that their own freedom would be defended in return."

Talk about undaunted courage in the face of daunting adversity. And because of courageous action like theirs, they made a real difference in terms of outcomes and in the lives of others. Our nation has come so far in the past seven decades because of what they, and other like-minded heroes, did.

America saw the defeat of Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and Imperial Japan on their watch. Since then we've stopped the spread of communism as we fought hot wars in Korea and Vietnam and ultimately won the Cold War. We helped free Kuwait, Grenada, and Panama. We put teeth into NATO's efforts to tame the Balkan and Libyan crises. And we're still at it in Afghanistan.

Looking eastward, today Germany and Italy -- once bitter enemies of ours are now alliance partners in NATO. In fact, in NATO's 63-year history, not one country has pulled out, but we've seen sixteen new countries join, with a long waiting list of countries wanting in.

And looking westward, we see more close allies, including Australia, the Republic of Korea, the Philippines, and Japan. I think it says a lot about the U.S. and Japan -- that these once bitter enemies are now such close friends. Our allies in the Pacific are part of the bedrock foundation for security, stability and prosperity in the strategically important and economically vital Indo-Asia-Pacific region.

Ladies and gentlemen, America remains a beacon of hope and freedom for people from all around the world. We lead the world in GNP and immigration. People risk their lives to come to America, not to escape from America. People come to America to be free and to have a fair chance at realizing their dreams and aspirations. In the marketplace of humanity, America trades not in despair, but in hope.

And that's perhaps the greatest legacy of the greatest generation -- the recognition that no select group, culture or race has a monopoly on patriotism, loyalty or courage.

Today there are 13 flag officers in the United States Navy of Asian descent, and there are dozens more general officers in the other services. And today there are tens of thousands of Asian Americans of all ranks in our combined armed forces. And all of us owe this in no small measure to each pathfinder, like the men of the 100<sup>th</sup>, who have gone before us, and from whom we have drawn much of our strength.

As you may know, my father and four of his brothers served in World War II, enlisted men in the Army and Navy, in the Pacific and European theaters. In fact my father was on USS LEXINGTON when Pearl Harbor was attacked. Thankfully the carriers had pulled out of just a few days before. As you can imagine, growing up, I listened to their stories -- they taught me the importance of serving our Nation.

My mother had a different story. She's Nihonjin. From Kobe. Maiden name Ohno. She lost her home, her school, many of her family and friends in air raids in the same war that her future husband was fighting. After surviving the devastation of wartime Japan, she married an American Sailor. Once settled in America, she adapted with grace and became an American citizen in 1974. She told me that her proudest accomplishments were jury duty and voting. I learned much from my Mother. She taught me to be proud of my ethnic heritage. She taught me the twin concepts of giri (obligation) and gimu (duty).

So, when I turned 18, the decision to serve was easy. The Navy offered the same allure for me that it did for my father -- service, adventure, education, good pay, and I jumped at it. Another one of those constants, the Navy still offers these things, and I'm still in.

I joined at the height of the Cold War and saw its end. I served at the beginning of our wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya, and I'm around to see their ends. And now, I get to see our rebalance to the Pacific.

The United States is a Pacific nation. America's fate is inextricably linked with this region, and Hawaii is uniquely positioned to be what I call the Gateway to America's Rebalance to the Pacific.

And I'm proud that the United States Pacific Fleet is able to play such an important role, as we lead our nation's effort in that rebalance.

Another constant throughout history has been the struggle between good and evil, between right and wrong, where freedom is jeopardized by tyranny, where sovereignty is pressurized by revanchism, and where societies are terrorized by extremism.

And throughout history great nations have been delivered by the hands of those courageous men and women who were willing to stand up for what was right, who were willing to face adversity head on.

I recently came upon something that Lieutenant Stephen Decatur -- one of the Navy's and our Nation's greatest heroes -- said in 1804, when he led a small group of hand-picked volunteers into Tripoli Harbor to burn the captured frigate Philadelphia. Libya 1.0 perhaps.

On the eve of this raid -- which was later called "the most daring act of the age" -- he rallied his mighty warriors with these words:

"We are now about to embark upon an expedition which may terminate in our sudden deaths or our immortal glory."

"Sudden death or immortal glory." Today this is the environment that our military operates, indeed, excels in!

Thankfully our nation has always been blessed with mighty men and women of valor, who not only were willing to defend a nation, but able to take the fight to our enemies, even to the far corners of the globe, and win.

The Nisei warriors of the 100<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion -- all mighty men of valor -- answered that call, each willing and able to fight and defend our nation.

These mighty men were trail blazers and our Nation is all the stronger for it. Their journey was truly one encompassing sudden death, and they achieved immortal glory.

Now, I've spoken for about 15 minutes already, and I bet some of you are looking at your watch in surprise, positive it's been closer to 30.

Recently, on a trip to Australia, I was the last speaker in a long lineup that went through dinner. Afterwards, as we were getting ready to leave, one of the ladies there said to me, "Admiral, I really enjoyed your speech. I woke up so refreshed."

I'm glad to see so many of you are still awake, or maybe you just woke up refreshed.

Ladies and gentlemen, since I want to set our next speakers up for success, let me close with this thought.

Today our Nation draws her strength from those who served before, and from those serving today. Our Nation will also draw her strength from those who serve in the future -- an unbroken chain, linking Americans, generation to generation.

Our strength as a Nation also comes from loyal citizens like each of you in the audience today -- Americans who are aware of the challenges, the opportunities, and the dangers we face. Those of us who serve are grateful for patriots like you, who help make us what we are today -- the world's strongest force for good on the face of the Earth.

May God bless the men of the 100<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion, and each and every one of our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and Coastguardsmen, past and present, who have courageously faced adversity and passed the test.

May God bless this beautiful state of Hawaii.

And may God bless the United States of America, land of the free, and home of the brave. Thank you.