

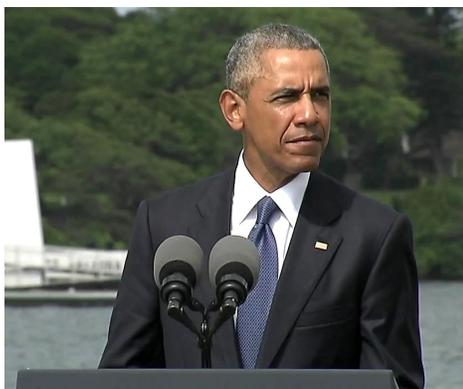


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## Barack Obama

### *Address at Pearl Harbor*

delivered 27 December 2016, Oahu, Hawaii



**AUTHENTICITY CERTIFIED:** Text version below transcribed directly from audio

**President Obama:** Prime Minister Abe, on behalf of the American people, thank you for your gracious words. Thank you for your presence here today -- an historic gesture that speaks to the power of reconciliation and the alliance between the American and Japanese peoples; a reminder that even the deepest wounds of war can give way to friendship and lasting peace.

Distinguished guests, members of our armed forces -- and most of all, survivors of Pearl Harbor and their loved ones -- aloha.

**Audience Members:** Aloha.

**President Obama:** To Americans -- especially to those of us who call Hawaii home -- this harbor is a sacred place. As we lay a wreath or toss flowers into waters that still weep, we think of the more than 2,400 American patriots -- fathers and husbands, wives and daughters -- manning Heaven's rails for all eternity. We salute the defenders of Oahu who pull themselves a little straighter every December 7th, and we reflect on the heroism that shone here 75 years ago.



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As dawn broke that December day, paradise never seemed so sweet. The water was warm and impossibly blue. Sailors ate in the mess hall, or readied themselves for church, dressed in crisp white shorts and t-shirts. In the harbor, ships at anchor floated in neat rows: the California, the Maryland and the Oklahoma, the Tennessee, the West Virginia and the Nevada. On the deck of the Arizona, the Navy band was tuning up.

That morning, the ranks on men's shoulders defined them less than the courage in their hearts. Across the island, Americans defended themselves however they could -- firing training shells, working old bolt-action rifles. An African-American mess steward, who would typically be confined to cleaning duties, carried his commander to safety, and then fired an anti-aircraft gun until he ran out of ammo.

We honor Americans like Jim Downing -- a gunner's mate first class on the West Virginia. Before he raced to the harbor, his new bride pressed into his hand a verse of Scripture: "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." As Jim fought to save his ship, he simultaneously gathered the names of the fallen so that he could give closure to their families. He said, "It was just something you do."

We remember Americans like Harry Pang -- a fireman from Honolulu who, in the face of withering fire, worked to douse burning planes until he gave his last full measure of devotion

-- one of the only civilian firefighters ever to receive the Purple Heart.

We salute Americans like Chief Petty Officer John Finn, who manned a .50-caliber machine gun for more than two hours and was wounded more than 20 times, earning him our nation's highest military decoration, the Medal of Honor.

And it is here that we reflect on how war tests our most enduring values -- how, even as Japanese Americans were deprived of their own liberty during the war, one of the most decorated military units in the history of the United States was the 442nd Infantry Regiment and its 100th Infantry Battalion -- the Japanese-American Nisei. In that 442nd served my friend and proud Hawaiian, Daniel Inouye -- a man who was a senator from Hawaii for most of my life and with whom I would find myself proud to serve in the Senate chamber; a man who was not only a recipient of the Medal of Honor and the Presidential Medal of Freedom, but was one of the most distinguished statesmen of his generation as well.



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Here at Pearl Harbor, America's first battle of the Second World War roused a nation. Here, in so many ways, America came of age. A generation of Americans -- including my grandparents -- the Greatest Generation -- they did not seek war, but they refused to shrink from it. And they all did their part on fronts and in factories. And while, 75 years later, the proud ranks of Pearl Harbor survivors have thinned with time, the bravery we recall here is forever etched in our national heart. I would ask all our Pearl Harbor and World War II veterans who are able to, to please stand or raise your hands -- because a grateful nation thanks you.

The character of nations is tested in war, but it is defined in peace. After one of the most horrific chapters in human history -- one that took not tens of thousands, but tens of millions of lives -- with ferocious fighting across this ocean -- the United States and Japan chose friendship and peace. Over the decades, our alliance has made both of our nations more successful. It has helped underwrite an international order that has prevented another World War and that has lifted more than a billion people out of extreme poverty. And today, the alliance between the United States and Japan -- bound not only by shared interests, but also rooted in common values -- stands as the cornerstone of peace and stability in the Asia Pacific and a force for progress around the globe. Our alliance has never been stronger.

In good times and in bad, we are there for each other. Recall five years ago, when a wall of water bore down on Japan and reactors in Fukushima melted, America's men and women in uniform were there to help our Japanese friends. Across the globe, the United States and Japan work shoulder-to-shoulder to strengthen the security of the Asia Pacific and the world -- turning back piracy, combating disease, slowing the spread of nuclear weapons, keeping the peace in war-torn lands.

Earlier this year, near Pearl Harbor, Japan joined with two dozen nations in the world's largest maritime military exercise. That included our forces from U.S. Pacific Command, led by Admiral Harry Harris, the son of an American Naval officer and a Japanese mother. Harry was born in Yokosuka, but you wouldn't know it from his Tennessee twang.

Thank you, Harry, for your outstanding leadership.

In this sense, our presence here today -- the connections not just between our governments, but between our people, the presence of Prime Minister Abe here today -- remind us of what is possible between nations and between peoples. Wars can end. The most bitter of adversaries can become the strongest of allies. The fruits of peace always outweigh the plunder of war. This is the enduring truth of this hallowed harbor.



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It is here that we remember that even when hatred burns hottest, even when the tug of tribalism is at its most primal, we must resist the urge to turn inward. We must resist the urge to demonize those who are different. The sacrifice made here, the anguish of war, reminds us to seek the divine spark that is common to all humanity. It insists that we strive to be what our Japanese friends call *otagai no tame ni* -- "with and for each other."

That's the lesson of Captain William Callaghan of the Missouri. Even after an attack on his ship, he ordered that the Japanese pilot be laid to rest with military honors, wrapped in a Japanese flag sewn by American sailors. It's the lesson, in turn, of the Japanese pilot who, years later, returned to this harbor, befriended an old Marine bugler and asked him to play taps and lay two roses at this memorial every month -- one for America's fallen and one for Japan's.

It's a lesson our two peoples learn every day, in the most ordinary of ways -- whether it's Americans studying in Tokyo, young Japanese studying across America; scientists from our two nations together unraveling the mysteries of cancer, or combating climate change, exploring the stars. It's a baseball player like Ichiro lighting up a stadium in Miami, buoyed by the shared pride of two peoples, both American and Japanese, united in peace and friendship.

As nations, and as people, we cannot choose the history that we inherit. But we can choose what lessons to draw from it, and use those lessons to chart our own futures.

Prime Minister Abe, I welcome you here in the spirit of friendship, as the people of Japan have always welcomed me. I hope that together, we send a message to the world that there is more to be won in peace than in war; that reconciliation carries more rewards than retribution.

Here in this quiet harbor, we honor those we lost, and we give thanks for all that our two nations have won -- together, as friends.

May God hold the fallen in His everlasting arms.

May He watch over our veterans and all who stand guard on our behalf.

May God bless us all.

Thank you.