

Military Nurses: American's Unyielding Foundation

By Ryan Bidwell, 12th grade

While one cannot deny the importance of soldiers on the front line, other roles in America's military are equally important.

I'm fortunate enough to be sending in my essay while on my Paducah Tilghman High School AP American Studies trip to Washington, D.C. where the roles played by so many of our past and present service members are all around me. Today, I visited the Vietnam War Memorial. The wall itself was stunningly evocative. However, it was a statue further down the path that caught my attention. It depicted three women providing support to a fallen soldier. The statue was the Vietnam Women's Memorial. Seeing the brave determination on the women's faces stirred something within me.

The supporting roles the statue represents – nurses, air traffic controllers, and more – are vital to the strength of our country. If soldiers are the arms of America, then nurses are the heart. These people put themselves in perilous situations, allowing patriotism to continue flowing through the nation and its citizens. Indeed, the Vietnam Women's Memorial has one woman looking to the sky in desperation – whether in search of rescue, divine intervention or, perhaps, fearing a rain of enemy bullets; it is unclear.

The strength in the hearts of military medics is undeniable. Facing catastrophe when near, but not on, a battlefield, they bravely put their safety aside to help America's fight endure. Even if not near combat, serving at a hospital or clinic, these brave people must administer compassion along with healthcare to servicemen and women, along with veterans, who have selflessly stood in the gap for all citizens. They no doubt inspire hope to persevere in the face of on-going medical challenges. Seeing the Vietnam Women's Memorial in person has helped remind me of the on-going importance of diversity in the military; allowing for all people and all skill sets to find a place supporting and defending our country.