



Speeches that have marked history

Joe Biden Holds a Moment of Silence for COVID-19 Victims

February 22, 2021 - Washington DC- USA

Each day I receive a small card in my pocket I carry with my schedule. It shows the number of Americans who've been infected by or died from covid-19.

Today we mark a truly grim heartbreaking milestone: 500,071 dead.

That's more Americans who've died in one year in this pandemic than in World War I, World War II and the Vietnam War combined.

That's more lives lost to this virus than any other nation on Earth, but as we acknowledge the scale of this mass death in America we remember each person, and the life they lived, the people we knew, the people we feel like we knew.

Read the obituaries and remembrances the son who called his mom every night just to check in, the father's daughter who lit up his world, the best friend who was always there, the nurse, the nurse and nurses. But the nurse who made her patients want to live.

I was in, just in Kalamazoo, Michigan at the Pfizer vaccine manufacturing facility.

There I met a man when I walked in whose father-in-law was dying of the virus. He was sad. I asked if I could call his father-in-law. He said his father-in-law was too sick to speak, but then he said, but could I pray for him. Could I pray for him.

We all know someone, fellow Americans who live lives of struggle, purpose, and of hope, who talked late into the night about their dreams, who wore the uniform born to serve, who loved, played and always offered a hand.

We often hear people described as ordinary Americans, there's no such thing. There's nothing ordinary about them.

The people we lost were extraordinary, they span generations, born in America, immigrated to America. But just like that so many of them took their final breath alone in America.

As a nation, we can't accept such a cruel fate.

While we've been fighting this pandemic for so long, we have to resist becoming numb to the sorrow. We have to resist viewing each life as a stas... as a statistic, or a blur, or on the news.

We must do so to honor the dead, but equally important care for the living those that're left behind, for the loved ones left behind. I know all too well. I know what it's like to not be there when it happens.

I know what it's like when you are there, holding their hands just look in your eye and they slip away, that black hole in your chest you feel like you're being sucked into it.

The survivor's remorse the anger, the questions of faith in your soul. For some of you, it's been a year, a month, a week, a day, even an hour.

And I know that when you stare at an empty chair round the kitchen table, it brings it all back no matter how long ago it happened, as if it just happened that moment you look at an empty chair. The birthdays, the anniversaries, the holidays without them, and the everyday things, the small things, the tiny things that you missed the most, that scent when you open the closet. That park you go by that you used to strole in, that movie theater where you met. The morning coffee you shared together, the bend in his smile, a perfect pitch to her laugh.

I received a letter from a daughter, whose father died of COVID-19 on Easter Sunday last year. She and her children, his grandchildren, and her lent this season, a season of reflection and renewal with heavy hearts. Unable to properly mourn she asked me in the letter « what was our loss among so many others ».

Well, that's what has been so cruel.

So many of the rituals that help us cope, that help us honor those we love, haven't been available to us. The final rites with family gathered around. The proper home going showered with stories, and love, tribal leaders passing out the final traditions of sacred cultures on sacred lands.

As a nation, we cannot, and we must not let this go on.

That's why the day before my inauguration the COVID-19 Memorial at the reflecting pool in the National Mall I said to heal, to heal we must remember.

I know it's hard, I promise you I know it's hard, I remember, but that's how you heal you have to remember. And it's also important to do that as a nation. For those who've lost loved ones, this is what I know, they're never truly gone. They'll always be part of your heart.

I know this as well, this seems unbelievable but I promise you, the day will come the memory of the loved one you lost will bring a smile to your lips before a tear to your eye. It will come I promise you, my prayer for you though is that they will come sooner rather than later. And that's when you know you're going to be okay, you're going to be okay.

And for me, the way through sorrow and grief is to find purpose. I don't know how many of you've lost someone a while ago wondering, is he or she proud of me now is that what they want me to do. I know that's how I feel.

We can find purpose, purpose worthy of the lives they lived and worthy of the country we love. So today, I ask all Americans to remember, remember those we lost and those who're left behind.

But as we remember, as we all remember, I also ask us to act, to remain vigilant, to say... stay socially distanced, to mask up, get vaccinated when it's your turn.

We must end the politics and misinformation that's divided families, communities in the country. This cost too many lives already.

It's not Democrats or Republicans who are dying from the virus. It's our fellow Americans, it's our neighbors, our friends, our mothers our fathers our sons our daughters, husbands, wives. We have to fight this together, as one people, as the United States of America.

That's the only way we're going to beat this virus, I promise you. The only way to spare more pain and more loss, the only way.

These millstones no longer mark our national mourning, these milestones, I should say, no longer...more, mark our national mourning.

Let this not be a story of how far we fell, but of how far we climb back up.

We can do this for in this year of profound loss we've seen profound courage, from all of you on the front lines.

I know the stress the trauma the grief you carry. But you give us hope. You keep us going. You remind us that we do take care of our own that we leave nobody behind. And while we've been humbled, we have never given up. We are America. We can and will do this.

In just a few minutes, Jill and I, Kamala and Doug will hold a moment of silence here in the White House, the People's house, your house.

We ask you to join us, to remember, so we can heal, to find purpose in the work ahead to show that there is light in the darkness.

This nation will smile again, this nation will know sunny days again. This nation will know joy again.

And as we do, we'll remember each person we've lost, the lives they lived, the loved ones they left behind.

We will get through this, I promise you. But my heart aches for those of you who are going through it right now.

May God bless you all, particularly those who have lost someone.

God bless you.