

Voices

'I am thankful for...'

Season of Gratitude

It's about more than turkey and football

BY ELIZABETH DIAS

EVER SINCE ABRAHAM LINCOLN NAMED THE LAST THURSDAY IN NOVEMBER "A DAY OF Thanksgiving and Praise" 150 years ago, Americans have taken an annual pause of gratitude. This year TIME asked public figures to share their personal messages of thanks. Here's a taste. Check out the full collection at time.com/timethanks.

MICHELLE OBAMA

First Lady of the United States, on stories she hears as she travels the country meeting with military families:

Their stories take my breath away.

They talk about moving every couple of years, finding another new job and helping their kids adjust to yet another new school. They tell me about spouses on their third, fourth or fifth deployment, away from home for months on end. They tell me about missed birthdays and anniversaries and answering questions from their kids about when Mommy or Daddy is coming home.

When their spouses do come home, their families often go through months of readjustment: renegotiating roles, rebalancing responsibilities, rekindling a relationship when both people have changed. Then there are those whose spouses come home seriously wounded who quit their jobs to become round-the-clock caregivers, doing their best to make the person they love whole again.

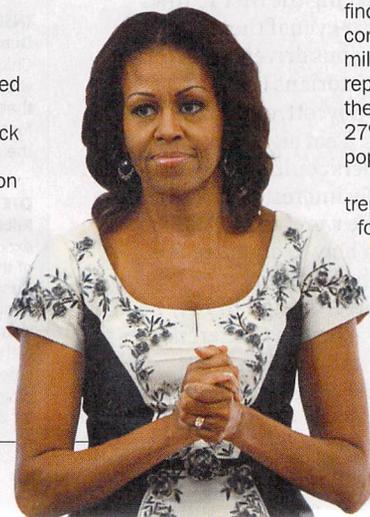
Over the years, as I've listened to these stories, I've asked myself over and over again, How is it possible that so many of us know so little about the challenges

these families face?

The answer is simple: military families don't complain. They're proud of their service and more than willing to make the sacrifices that come with

it. And no matter how tough it gets, because they're so strong and resilient, they somehow keep everything together. They succeed in their jobs, run their households and even find time to serve their communities: 81% of military-family members report volunteering in the past year, versus 27% of the general population.

So ... I'm feeling tremendously thankful for our **military families**, and I hope you'll join me in working to serve them as well as they've served our country. Go to www.joiningforces.gov to find out how.



DAVID ORTIZ
2013 World Series MVP for the Boston Red Sox

I am thankful for my second home, the city of Boston. This has been a difficult year for Boston, with the tragic bombings at the marathon. However, this city has bounced back stronger than ever, and I am thankful for all the policemen, firemen and emergency workers who have shown the strength of our city. I love this city and am honored that I can call it home.

ASTRONAUTS MIKE HOPKINS AND RICK MASTRACCHIO

Currently aboard the International Space Station on their first and fourth missions for NASA, respectively

‘We are thankful for the privilege of flying aboard the space station, an incredible vehicle built by tens of thousands of Americans, as well as people from Russia, Europe, Japan and Canada. This multinational effort to operate the most complex facility ever sent into orbit is truly one of the most amazing accomplishments in the history of mankind.’

CHARMAINE YOEST

CEO of Americans United for Life and a co-author of *Mother in the Middle*

I’m thankful for the unplanned, the unexpected, the revelations that make up an authentic life.

A chance encounter with an old friend on the street led to a job I love. I cried from loneliness on the way home from the event where, unknowingly, I met my husband. Even in that brief moment of despair, my future was unfolding. Life is like that.

I could not even have envisioned the adventure of parenting five endlessly fascinating, and frustrating, children. They are, of course, perfect, albeit messy. Five new narratives, each one a cliff-hanger I would give a whole life to read.

I surely wouldn’t have chosen cancer for me or my husband. But through sickness and sorrow, I found healing, unknown friendships and love.

Life is not perfect. But it is lovely. I do not have what I planned. But I have immeasurably more than I could have asked for or imagined. For that, I’m thankful.

JOHN BOEHNER

Speaker of the House of Representatives

‘That I, the son of a bartender, have been given the chance to contribute to this work in the city that Washington built is something for which I am forever thankful.’



MARK KIRK

Junior U.S. Senator from Illinois

I am thankful for the more than 300,000 physical and occupational therapists in the U.S. If it weren’t for my PTs and OTs, I could never have returned to the Senate after I suffered a massive stroke in 2012.

My stroke left me nearly paralyzed on the left side of my body. Even sitting upright was almost impossible. Less than a year after my stroke, I walked up the 45 steps of the U.S. Capitol and returned to the Senate. About 800,000 Americans have a stroke each year. Access to rehabilitation provided by PTs and OTs makes a life-changing difference for countless Americans, and it did for this Senator.

RICK WARREN

Pastor of Saddleback Church and author of 10 books, including *The Purpose Driven Life*

This year became the worst year of my life when my youngest son, who’d struggled since childhood with mental illness, took his own life. How am I supposed to be thankful?

God doesn’t expect me to be thankful FOR all circumstance, but IN all circumstances. There’s a huge difference. The first attitude is masochism. The second shows maturity. We’re not supposed to be thankful for evil or sin, or the innocent suffering caused by these things. But even in heartache and grief there are still good things that I can be thankful for.

I’m thankful that God sees all I go through. He cares. He grieves with me. I’m thankful that even though I don’t have all the answers, God does. I’m thankful that God can bring good even out of the bad in my life, when I give him the pieces. It’s his specialty. God loves to turn crucifixions into resurrections, and then benefit the whole world. God never wastes a hurt if we give it to him.



CHELSEA MANNING

Formerly Private Bradley Manning, serving 35 years for leaking classified documents

‘I’m thankful for people who ... dare to ask probing, even dangerous, questions.’

OBAMA: YANA PASHKOVA—AFP/GETTY IMAGES; ORTIZ: JIM DAVIS—THE BOSTON GLOBE/GETTY IMAGES; BOEHNER: MELINA MARA—THE WASHINGTON POST/GETTY IMAGES; WARREN: JAE C. HONG—AP