

Discours pour la cérémonie de commémoration du 11 novembre

Monsieur le Consul Général, dear American veterans,
dear colleagues, dear students, dear parents, ladies and gentlemen,

I would like on behalf of our entire school to welcome you all today in this beautiful French school in the heart of New York.

I would like to use these few minutes to share my feelings with you. These emotions, I must say, are felt on several levels. The first of which is my appreciation for the collaboration with our Consul General who immediately signed on to the project when I proposed to organize a ceremony here at our school. It is this same appreciation that inspires my gratitude to our Department Head of History-Geography, Laurent Pointud, and his team who contributed to the preparation of this ceremony.

I also feel great pride because it is not every day that a French school abroad welcomes veterans who fought on French soil to ensure that democracy triumphed over despotism. It is this same pride that I feel as I address you, our students, when I see myself a little younger than you, listening to one of my grandfathers who fought during the First World War. He spent seven years in the army and a large part of the First World War in Greece.

So when I arrived in Australia in 1991 I understood that the city of Canberra was sending me a signal when I visited the history museum, The Australian War Memorial. There I discovered before my eyes the model of the site of the Battle of Gallipoli, when the French and the Australians fought, once again, to combat dictatorship.

From the bottom of my heart I feel a deep sense of appreciation to you, dear Veterans, because all of my life I have had the good fortune of enjoying the wonderful feeling of freedom. Born at the beginning of the 1950's, I was able to live my youth in a country liberated from the yoke of Nazism. And I could do that because you consecrated, sacrificed, dedicated a part of your youth, while putting your life in danger, to liberate Western Europe from the prison of Nazi furor.

Sixty-six years later, we owe it to you to keep the memory alive. Just this morning during a ceremony in Paris, French President Sarkozy remembered an event which occurred on November 11, 1940 when 2,500 French high-school students challenged the Nazi occupation by honoring the victims of the first world war. This brave act resulted in the arrest of half of the young demonstrators by the German army. We owe this remembrance and this recognition to you, the young generations of the 1940's, so that we may never forget.

Having been in the world of education for 40 years, I know that education is the essential key for preventing future wars in civilized countries.

In the name of the community of the Lycée Français de New York, thank you for being here with us this afternoon to celebrate our franco-american friendship, a union that serves the noble cause of freedom so that intolerance and dictatorship will be replaced with democracy throughout the world.

