

More than ever before

by SHERALYN ROMAN

As I reflect upon what to write about weekly in this space, one of the more mundane considerations often revolves around timing. Typically typing my thoughts on a Monday or a Tuesday (noon at the latest, mind you) one wonders about the relevance of said thoughts by the time you, dear reader, actually read them. This week however, the topic is not only timeless, but more important than ever before. That topic is our freedom, whom we must thank for it and on whom we must rely upon for its preservation. The US election looms large not just over the United States, but around the entire world as we anxiously await the outcome. Will the sacrifices for our freedoms, made by brave previous generations, have been in vain?

Monday is November 11th, and on the 11th day of the 11th month, at the 11th hour we rightly pause in our otherwise busy and self-important lives, to honour those who fought and/or gave their lives for our freedom.

There were no republicans or democrats, liberals or conservatives, labour parties, NDPs or green parties on various battlefields. Instead, there were (and are today) simply people. Americans, Canadians, British or French, or, in other words, the citizens of any one of the many other countries around the world (let's not forget present-day Ukrainians!) who united against a common enemy, typically fascism, in order to preserve freedom. The freedom to vote in democratic elections for leaders chosen by the people. The freedom of bodily autonomy, to read books based on personal preferences, to move about freely, and to marry for love (and not one that was defined by any one narrow religious standard).

Now more than ever before, in light of what might have happened on November 5, and what continues to happen in countries around the world seeking to protect themselves from dictators, communism, fascism or indeed any of the 'ism's,' this generation must remember, reflect upon and recall the sacrifices made by previous generations.

History plays a vital role as an educational tool, but only if we refer to it, value its teachable moments and talk openly and often about the lessons learned. Communities of people went to war on behalf of every citizen, taking their place at the front lines not because they wanted to, but because it became imperative to do so for the greater good of all. Now, at least here in North America, we are simply asking this generation to make wise decisions, decisions like exercising the right to vote, that will help preserve the legacy of those who fought on our behalf in any of the world's major conflicts. As a reminder again, that legacy is your freedom. Yes, even those who deny we have any freedom at all, but who enjoyed the freedom to ditch work, get in a truck and block our nation's capital to complain about their lack of freedoms! Word to the wise, your ability to do just that ? that's freedom folks ? the very definition of it!

When we hear a candidate refer to immigrants as 'vermin,' or of candidates 'exploring' other cultural issues of concern (to them, not necessarily all citizens) such as trans rights or abortion, book bans or charter schools, these should each be considered a red flag in the slow and steady march toward democracy's decline. Yes, social media makes it more challenging to discern reality from fiction, but we don't need social media with history as our guide. Look to our past and it couldn't be more clear what the outcome is when we refuse to speak up, speak out, or indeed fight: whether that's for our freedom to exist; to love and be loved, to practice our religion of choice, or to practice no religion at all, to feel safe in our homes, and to enjoy equality of opportunities.

If you live, as we do, in a free and democratic society, know that it did not come about solely as a result of the hard work of our predecessors. It's also the result of the sacrifices made by many, in both the distant, and not so distant past, during various conflicts around the world. Sacrifices made for the benefit of us all. With the US on the verge of making history (one way, or the other) now, more than ever before, on November 11, it's incumbent upon us to pause, honour and salute with a grateful heart, those who fought for our freedoms. Long may our memories be. There are two remaining Remembrance Day services where members of the public may pay their respects: Alton Legion on Sunday, November 10th at 10 a.m. and Town of Caledon Offices, Monday, November 11th at 10:50 a.m.