

Honor of a Flag

By D. H. Coop

The flags, or colors, in combat not only identify units and nations but they are also symbols that the units will rally around. The American flag was a symbol of the military honor and was not carried into combat by ground forces until 1834 and then only by artillery units. The United States Marines were allowed to carry it in 1876 and the U.S. Cavalry in 1887. All units carried their unit flags, and to lose the unit flag or the American flag was a disgrace on the unit's honor or ship. When John Paul Jones was asked by Captain Pearson of the HMS Serapis if he was lowering his flag, he replied, "I have not yet begun to fight!"

Today, the America flag is worn on uniforms with the blue facing forward and is carried everywhere American troops go. When 9/11 happened, the American flag became more visible on fire trucks and police units. Individual unit flags are still important to service members as a symbol of pride and honor.



The L.A. Marathon in 2019 included a young veteran E-4 Marine who served from 2010 to 2014. He served two tours in Afghanistan at Gereshk Valley and Musa Qala. As a proud Marine, he carried the flag for 22 miles of the marathon to represent the 22 veterans who commit suicide each day in this country. This veteran's name is Nivardo Gonzalez, and he was running to bring awareness of returning and older vets in our society who suffer with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). His return to civilian life was not easy. He entered college and worked on a video about PTSD: "Grunt' Film Project" by Jacob Mogler. It was just before the L.A. Marathon that a friend's suicide made Gonzalez want to bring the plight of many

veterans to light. He also works with the Project Welcome Home Troops, a nonprofit organization that helps veterans to readjust to civilian life.

Gonzalez, an alumnus of Jordan High School, graduated from Long Beach State College with a degree in finance and is working in the area of business today. The flag represents brothers in arms, and he carries that tradition on.