

# **Freedom And What It Means To Me**

Freedom, to me, is the ability to think and act on one's own accord in compliance with reasonable law. There are a lot of individual freedoms that help to make this possible, such as the rights to free speech, press, and countless other rights lined out in hundreds of documents forged by our founding fathers and modern day leaders. These rights and documents are the foundation of every principal and value that we as Americans hold dear.

While how we interpret these documents and rights has always been a topic of discussion; however, the following is clear: every man, woman and child who is a citizen of The United States Of America is awarded the same God-given rights that cannot be usurped or removed. Freedom is the culmination of every document from the Declaration of Independence, every constitutional amendment, and every court decision that allows me to live my life the way I do. It is why I am able to write this essay, and why there are monuments for our incredible veterans to visit. It is why we have elections, unions, and free-thinking discussions. Freedom is not a tangible thing; it is, instead, an ideology -- an ideology that we uphold and live every moment of every single day.

Freedom is the ability to use one's mind to form opinions and beliefs, in a *relatively* safe and accepting environment. While there is undeniably discrimination and inequality in regard to the bestowal of the many documented freedoms within this country, the framework is laid out. Its up to my generation and future generations to carry it forward and extend these freedoms to all who call this land home.

However, every single freedom we take for granted was and is not without cost. The cost is our veterans, whom have been killed, injured, and mentally scarred in the line of duty. They are the bravest and most selfless men and women on Earth. They work tirelessly and sacrifice themselves for the lives of everyone back home. While I do not have any veterans in my immediate family, my Grandfather was stationed in Pearl Harbor on December 7th, 1941. He was getting ready to go out and celebrate his birthday while stationed on the USS West Virginia when the attack began. He survived and spent months in a San Francisco burn ward before re-enlisting. Unfortunately, he passed from illness before I was born, and I never got to meet him. I hope that one day I can help those like my grandfather who have sacrificed so much, as they deserve our endless gratitude.

Regardless of one's definition of freedom, without our service men and women our freedom would not last. Without them protecting us at home and abroad, our way of life would quickly cease to exist at the hands of foreign and homegrown oppressors. So long as that star spangled banner flies, we know we have our enduring freedom, and we know our veterans are fighting for us to keep it that way.

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