

What Freedom Means to Me

by Madeline Leneschmidt

Where would we be without freedom? It is a terrifying question that forces one to face grim reality. If we do not have freedom, we cease to be anyone at all. Without the right to speak freely, we would be stripped of everything that makes us a person and just a shadow of ourselves. Although people would say that freedom is a cornerstone of what society is, I think that the majority of those people overlook the truest, best part of what freedom actually is: the ability to speak without fear.

Freedom of speech sets a foundation for the American Dream. Without the freedom of speech, the ability to become what you want to be and think what you want to think would become obsolete. The right to speak without fear of retribution is what makes us individuals, not just a group of citizens, but as equally significant, people within one democracy. The sacrifices made by our veterans have been instrumental in safeguarding these freedoms and providing a path for generations to come to follow their dreams.

Whether in the battlegrounds of World War II, the trenches of Vietnam, or the deserts of the Middle East, veterans have faced unfathomable challenges, often paying the ultimate price to preserve our freedoms. These sacrifices remind us that our liberties and freedoms are not some given right, but rather the outcome of the battles won by brave men and women who believed in a better future for all.

The freedom of speech allows people to express their thoughts and beliefs without fearing repression. By being able to challenge the norms and fight for

what people believe in, as a nation we grow through this exchanging of ideas. Imagine a society where ideas that do not align with the “right” idea are suppressed and shut down. This scary image almost seems like something out of a George Orwell novel. Without the sacrifices of veterans that might be what our nation could look like, hopeless, unoriginal, and restrictive. Instead, our nation is allowed to thrive and bloom because courageous individuals fight for what is right.

The reason why we need to continue to honor veterans is to show not only our lasting gratitude and respect but also the acknowledgement of the countless sacrifices veterans have made to protect these important freedoms. By celebrating veterans, we preserve a collective memory which helps keep the lessons of history remembered. Recognizing and thanking veterans of their sacrifices reaffirms our dedication to ensuring that these rights are preserved for future generations. Veterans are more important to our democracy than one day of an observed holiday may imply. Our veterans protect everything we hold dear as Americans, most importantly our freedom of speech.