

Freedom and Equal Rights for All

Once upon a time there was a kindhearted princess who lived in a beautiful palace. A little bird came every day to her window and sang for her. The princess enjoyed the bird's singing and company so much that every day she waited eagerly for the bird to come to her window and sing. She wished that the bird would keep her company throughout the day.

One day she captured the bird and put it in a golden cage. She fed it the best type of food. But the bird felt sad. It did not want to eat anything. It grew weaker day by day. It did not sing as before.

One day the princess asked the bird the reason for all this. The bird then said, "I just want to be set free."

The kind princess set the bird free. The bird flew happily to its freedom. The next morning it was back again with its beautiful song.

The bird just wanted to be set free. It needed its freedom. Freedom. But what does freedom really mean? What does it mean to be free? To me, freedom is the ability to do whatever one desires. To be free means to be able to live where you want to live, to practice the religion you want to practice, to be able to express your thoughts and opinions on various topics without being judged, to do the things you want to do, to be able to get a good education, learn, develop, improve.

As John F. Kennedy had once said: "The best road to progress is freedom's road". In order to develop to our full potential we need freedom. I believe freedom is the ability to do everyday things such as going out for a walk, standing up for what we believe in, listening to our favorite music, wearing the outfit we like or simply having someone to talk to when things get tough. Now, we live at a time when we take all of these things for granted. Because when a person has unconditional access to something, they tend to get used to it so much that at some point they forget that there actually might be people out there who are not as fortunate.

The world is constantly evolving and so are its inhabitants. Things change, people change, priorities change. For example, in the past, women did not have equal rights and opportunities like men did. They did not have the right to vote or wear pants. They were not respected members of the society; they did not get equal pay for equal work. They didn't even have the right to open their own bank account apart from their husband.

Today we live in a fast paced environment. A world largely dominated by science and technology. Technology changes by the second, cures for diseases that were once thought of as incurable are being invented, we have far more possibilities than we did 50 years ago. Today, modern day women have all of the above rights and opportunities. Modern day women are free to vote and do what they desire. They are equal to men. It took time but the more important thing is that when people are determined, they will eventually reap the results of hard work and dedication. And often times, these results are invaluable.

I believe we can really be free when we have the ability to forge our own destiny and make our own choices. It is when one has the power to make up one's own priorities and act accordingly. When we can let go of our own prejudices, stereotypes, and aggression to others then we can truly be free.

What is more, being free means you can be yourself. It means to believe in yourself and your abilities. And that's exactly the kind of basis the United States of America was founded on. Diverse cultures have shaped the United States of America into the great country it is today. The "Founding Fathers" built America on the fundamental rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. They believed everyone should have equal rights. They believed people should be happy as "the most perfect society is that whose purpose is the universal and supreme happiness". No one is to be treated differently based on their race, creed or

color. But most of all, America wouldn't have been the same without its freedom. And this freedom gives us the means to be ourselves. It gives us the power to express ourselves in every single way without being judged or suppressed. It gives us the opportunity to live up to our potential and develop into the people we were meant to be. This, I believe, is the true meaning of freedom.