

\Li-bər-tē\

Liberty, as defined by Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, means "the quality or state of being free." But how can liberty be summed up in less than ten words? How can it be summed up in words at all? Liberty means something different to everyone and is something that all must be aware of and thankful for.

The majority of Americans take liberty for granted. What does liberty actually mean us? Not too much, since we know no other alternative. Before we had liberty, the value of it to us was very high. Now, since it's something we have, and are used to having, the value has gone down, as if we bought it at Target and stuffed it in the back of a dark closet. Just earlier today, I was telling my parents about writing a paper. "It's on liberty. I'm not that interested in the subject." My dad plucked my complaint out of the air and hurled it back as a punch in the gut: "You would be if you didn't have it."

What would life be like if we didn't have liberty? It is hard for me to imagine, as I too, like most other Americans, know no alternative. I might see a community lacking liberty as being an excessively monitored society, such as in George Orwell's *1984*, or similar to the South in the United States during slavery, during which slaves were ruled by fear and physical restraint. On the other hand, any other person with different experiences than I would have different takes on a society without liberty.

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Being conscious of the fact that those who established and fought for the United States of America went to great lengths to obtain liberty for all shows us that we should treasure and make the most of our liberty. However, making the most of liberties involves being aware of all the options they allow us and adhering to laws.

Optimus Prime, a character from the movie *Transformers*, said it well: "Freedom is the right of all sentient beings." This quote means that any and all living things that are aware and can be conscious of their freedoms should have the right to be free. If one cannot be conscious of having freedom, then there is no use in having it. In other words, if one doesn't know the jailer unlocked one's cell door, and the doesn't swing open on its own, then one is just as trapped as if the door was locked. This is relevant because of the bond between freedom and liberty. Probably the greatest thing that can be done for our descendants, as Americans, is to show them how to be aware of and value their liberties instead of taking them for granted.

That said, one must be conscious of and adhere to rules created within society. Having liberties does not mean that one can be running around destroying property and harming others. Laws are created to protect everyone's liberties. Voluntarily complying with laws shows that fewer laws and punishments need to be active to maintain liberty for everyone.

Liberty. Some people say it in ten words; some people say it in ten thousand, yet the meaning can never be defined on paper like it is in real life. As Americans, we must make the most of what was given to us by people who had to fight for it. We must value it and be conscious that it wasn't free, and never will be. Liberty.

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