

What does Patriotism mean to me?

I consider myself very blessed being born into a family where both parents served in the military. As a child I was raised by many different caretakers since my parents were always gone on training missions or multiple deployments. It was not until I was a little older that I came to appreciate and be proud of my parents for their service and sacrifice. Unfortunately however, due to their absences, they missed several important moments in my life as well as my siblings because of their call to duty.

When I see or hear of individuals who kneel during the playing of our National Anthem, or who think it is acceptable to burn our nations' flag, I am appalled. How can this happen? How can individuals not understand that freedom is not free? Many thousands of our service men and women; fathers, mothers, sons and daughters, have paid the ultimate sacrifice so that we all can live in this country, the land of the free and home of the brave.

Some might suggest that because of my family situation, of having parents serve in the military, that I am too patriotic. Yet I am very proud and honored to have two dedicated parents who not only defined the word, "patriotism", but who lived it and who would have died believing in it. Yes, actions do speak louder than words. Patriotism is not a word in our household, but rather a way of life for my family.

Patriotism is and always will be a very special word to me. There are many ways that individuals feel patriotic or experience patriotism, but for me, patriotism is not about politics, it is not just about our military or our nations' strength and power over other nations, but rather, it is something that comes from the heart, it is a love and respect for our country. It is also a feeling of loyalty, duty and honor. In summary, patriotism means family, means feeling safe and being proud to call oneself an American.