

The Bill of Rights and Me

I never knew how much the Bill of Rights affected my life until writing this essay. These amendments protect me—they protect us all—and we forget. Freedom of Speech, protection from cruel punishment, and respect for privacy are the rights I most take for granted, and yet each is vital to life as a U.S. citizen.

I exercise the 1st amendment, freedom of speech, every day. This amendment allows expression of my deepest thoughts without punishment. Because we as citizens can express ourselves, we can fight for change. The 2018 March for Our Lives movement was students fighting for gun protection after a mass shooting. They rallied for something they believed in and changed state laws. This amendment lets us speak and lets us learn. If we couldn't speak freely, teachers wouldn't teach freely. They would restrict their ideas and thus my education. I wouldn't be who I am without the 1st amendment.

The 8th amendment protects me from unusual and unreasonable punishments. If this amendment didn't exist, punishments for crimes would be excessive. Imagine our lives without this amendment: in the Maldives, same sex marriage leads to death. Someone's life ends because of who they love—that is unreasonable. Without the 8th amendment, America would be doing the same.

The 4th amendment protects my privacy—no one can search my things without a warrant. In the age of the internet, this is vital. Without this amendment, I would be paranoid, questioning everything I do. Imagine being watched everywhere you go—that's what's happening in China. China has over 6 million cameras installed throughout the country to watch its citizens. You may think this isn't a problem if you have nothing to hide, but we should have a choice about what personal information gets out there. Some don't want their lives on display and constantly judged.

The Bill of Rights protects me even when I don't realize it. The 1st amendment protects my thoughts, the 8th amendment protects me from unreasonable punishments, and the 4th amendment protects my privacy. These amendments affect us all. We shouldn't be ignoring their ceaseless value.