

## What Freedom of Speech Means to Me

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Many people have various perspectives on what freedom of speech is to them. To me, freedom of speech is a privilege that I have that many others around the world do not. It allows each person to express him or herself and to spread diverse ideas with not just words but actions and thoughts. Being able to voice my own opinions in public or to hold up a sign during a protest without the fear of being arrested is due to our right as Americans to freedom of speech.

Imagine a world wherein freedom of speech was not a given right but a mere thought. Without it our country would not have gone through the civil rights movements of Martin Luther King Jr. and the continuing fight for women's rights occurring today. Our right to speak freely allows us to oppose terrible ideas and to fight for what we think is right. Picture what would occur in a dictatorial country that heavily controls speech: a student like me would be scared to speak his or her mind and could be killed for sketching an offensive doodle in class. As citizens who live with freedom of speech, we never live in fear of situations like these. Our given right of free speech can be seen on t-shirts, on lawns in front of homes, and even on the backs of cars, as each shows the creative power of free thought. Whether we are supporting our president or supporting cancer awareness, we are using our right of free speech without even realizing it.

The renowned Greek philosopher Socrates once said, "The only good is knowledge and the only evil is ignorance." I refuse to be ignorant. When our freedom of speech is limited we restrain ourselves from thinking, because to think wrong would be to suffer punishment. Parham Pourdavood, a boy who grew up and lived in a country without freedom of expression, explained that when you are scared to express your opinions it is like "prison for the mind." We should not live in that prison.