



## What Freedom of Speech Means to Me

As George Washington said, “If freedom of speech is taken away, then dumb and silent we may be led, like sheep to the slaughter.” Freedom of speech has been a basic freedom of our country since it was organized. It lets us express our thoughts, opinions, and beliefs as we choose. The door of discussion and opportunity is wide open, being compared to a country with very little freedom in this aspect.

Just consider what it would be like without this simple, but powerful freedom. You could not say anything against political leaders, may not be free to practice a certain religion, and could get punished for something you say. People have to endure this all over the world. For them, the door is closed on their ability to speak their minds, and if they do try to crack the door open, they suffer severe penalty. Freedom to say what we want is often overlooked in our country, and not considered to be the incredibly important right that it is.

We are so lucky to be in a country that supports freedoms such as this. Having a constitution that supports and promises our freedoms has made our society feel remarkably free. Unfortunately, some citizens of our country seem to think that an open door on free speech gives them permission to figuratively charge through and destroy what has been offered. There is definitely a line between discussing our ideas and opinions with others in a heated way, and being so hateful and violent that we refuse to accept any other opinions. Free speech allows us all to see others’ points of view and make our country the best it can be.

We are not like sheep being led to slaughter, but are intelligent and cooperative citizens of an exceptional country. Depth of understanding and gratitude help us to defend and use our rights in a purposeful and respectful way. I have a deep appreciation of the freedom of speech, and I am working to better see and express my recognition of it.