



## **What Freedom of Speech Means to Me**

The First Amendment of the US Constitution states that "Congress shall make no law...abridging the freedom of speech", but what does this mean to me?

At moments like these, I am extremely proud to be an American. What makes America unique from other countries is that we are so diverse, whether it be in race or class. Freedom of speech allows us to embrace this diversity in thought and celebrate our newly-discovered voices. Yet it is unfortunate that many people do not appreciate the value of free speech in their everyday lives.

First and foremost, I believe that freedom of speech is a basic human right. To me, it is a simple truth- everyone deserves to be heard. Especially in America, we consider free speech and expression as essential characteristics of a healthy democracy.

But for others, their right to free speech is limited or even non-existent. I am especially aware of this fact because I grew up in a family of Chinese immigrants. In fear of censorship and retaliation from the Chinese government, my parents were not allowed to freely think and speak, and that was their reality. So, when I see people arguing over controversial topics on the Internet, I am grateful. Isn't it better to live in a society where everyone can speak freely than one in which no one can speak freely?

However, the most important lesson that my parents taught me was that freedom of speech gives me the power to speak up for others. Throughout history, it was because there was someone who was willing to speak up and fight for change that American society has progressed. Therefore, freedom of speech means that I have the responsibility to speak out against injustice. Writing op-eds for the school newspaper, speaking at political rallies, and campaigning on social media are different ways that I have been fortunate enough to observe and contribute to my local community.

So, what does freedom of speech mean to me? It is the key to generating positive social change in our democratic society.