

## Why I am Proud to be an American

When an American flag becomes faded and worn, it should be properly retired. The first time I saw a flag retired was at scout camp. At the end of the evening's campfire, the camp director told an inspirational story about soldiers defending our country, and then staff members in immaculate Class A uniforms reverently folded the flag and placed it on the fire. As the flames consumed the fabric and a trumpet sounded the mournful notes of Taps, my eyes watered. I was moved by the sacrifices made by countless men and women who have served our country to preserve the freedoms we enjoy today.

To echo the words of the famous Lee Greenwood song, "I'm proud to be an American, where at least I know I'm free, and I won't forget the men who died, who gave that right to me." These lyrics really speak to how I felt that night, and how I feel today. In the United States of America, we enjoy more freedoms than anywhere else in the world. We can go where we want, worship as we please, and become whomever we want to be. All people enjoy the unalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

In addition to the freedom of this nation, I admire its character. President Harry S. Truman said, "America was built on courage, on imagination and an unbeatable determination to do the job at hand." These traits are still seen today in the courage of those who serve our country, the imagination of those who advance technology and the arts, and the determination of youth who pursue their dreams. My dream is to do my part by serving in the military after college, joining the ranks of those whose courage I admire.

The morning after the flag retirement ceremony I saw at scout camp, I was gifted one of the flag's grommets by a staff member. I have kept that grommet for the past four years, wearing it on a cord around my neck as a constant reminder of why I am proud to be an American.