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What Patriotism Means to Me

Merriam Webster defines patriotism as a love or devotion to one's country. However, patriotism is much more than a textbook definition. Patriotism is a way of life, a mindset, a quality that stays with you in spite of changing times and it has been exemplified in various ways throughout American history.

Picture yourself in the shoes of a soldier during the American Revolution, where this whole idea of patriotism began. Even though you are cold, hungry, and homesick, you will do anything to defend your new country; that's patriotism. Imagine a young Union soldier in the Civil War, humble eyes behind a musket as he grasps his shiny bayonet. Observing the bloodshed around him, he knew it was his duty to preserve the Union; that's patriotism. As the soldiers stormed the beaches of Normandy, preparing for battle, it was patriotism that motivated them to persevere. Patriotism is what I see when I look at pictures of my late grandfather in Vietnam, knowing that he left his family at home so he could defend the land that he loved. Patriotism is a group of firefighters erecting an American flag amid death and destruction brought on by terrorism, while my father, grandfather, and countless rescue workers searched tirelessly for their fellow Americans. Today, patriotism is the driving force behind the brave men and women who continue to fight for our country and face some of the worst evils our world has ever seen.

I have a profound respect for our fine nation and consider myself to be deeply patriotic. It pains me to see American citizens disrespecting our flag, bashing our country, and forwarding their own agendas under the guise of "patriotism". Patriotism does not see race or political lines. It is not meant to force a nation apart, but rather, bring it together. So, each time I stand proudly with my hand over my heart to recite the Pledge of Allegiance or sing the National Anthem, I am showing my love for this country, its history, its leaders, and most of all, my fellow patriots.