

What Patriotism means to me.

"I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America... indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." These were words I had difficulty understanding when entering first grade. My parents left Vietnam with intentions to establish a new life to support me and my siblings. I was born a citizen and raised to assimilate simultaneously into two cultures and languages. Growing up surrounded by native Vietnamese speakers, it was the only language I spoke until kindergarten. Upon starting school, it was difficult trying to understand English while trying to make new friends; I had a hard time understanding their cultural norms. After finally grasping what my peers were saying, I was introduced to the Pledge of Allegiance. When starting to recite it at school, I did not understand what my peers and teachers were saying. My initial reaction was to reflect their behavior, standing poised and placing my hand over my heart. From that moment forward, I began repeating the words in order to better remember them so that I may recite the Pledge.

By my second grade year, I memorized the Pledge and understood what it meant, but was reluctant in deconstructing its purpose. By fifth grade, after learning about the wars that our founding fathers and heroes have fought to be able to establish this free nation, I proudly stood up to deliver the Pledge of Allegiance. By then, my intention in delivering this form of nationalism that helped lead me to my patriotism became deliberate. This was in honor of the people who have fought or is fighting to protect America and help establish freedom within our nation, like our veterans and soldiers, and for my love for America.

Patriotism is the fondness and commitment I have for my country and how I express it in my life. Without a reason or purpose to help me express my love for my country, the action of reciting the Pledge would be meaningless. Having full intent and reason behind what I am doing, like reciting the Pledge, is the true definition and foundation of Patriotism.