

The American Flag and What It Means To Me

The American Flag means many things to many people. Fifty stars, thirteen stripes, freedom, liberty, patriotism, and safety are the most common. There are fifty stars for fifty states united together, thirteen stars to represent thirteen colonies that pulled together to create the beginning of the United States. For some Americans, it does not mean much of anything past the idea that it is just the flag of America.



I think by burning an American flag or shouting any sort of contraband against the USA, or taking a knee or keeping a hat on for the flag ceremony or the playing of the national anthem, or refusing to participate in the pledge of allegiance, you become no

more loyal to this country and its freedoms than our enemies themselves. It's hard to comprehend, because we are so used to these freedoms, we have become unaware to the fact that we could lose them, or that we even had to fight to receive them in the first place.

Unfortunately, there are many who reside in America today that wish America be torn apart. Government officials in California want to succeed from the union of the other states. Mayors of large cities in America want their own sanctuary cities to shelter illegal immigrants and to defy the rules of the governed land. I get it, they want freedom without a price, however, it doesn't exist. Freedom always comes with a price. Without it comes rebellion, anarchy, lack of security and false peace.

Some may see our flag as a piece of cloth and as a national symbol pieced together with a collection of stars and stripes in red, white and blue with certain ideas attached to it such as freedom of speech, religion, life, protest, and expression and representing all this country has to offer.

But, to really look at it, isn't the flag one of our countries proudest symbols that we hold high, and talk about proud and true? Doesn't it really stand as a representative of our freedom of speech and freedom of rights? Should we be allowed to burn flags and practice our rights of freedom of protest and expression, all which the flag itself represents?

Some believe that if they are angry with something that the flag represents, then they should be able to disrespect it, ignore it or even burn or desecrate it in protest. But personally, I find this wrong. Being disrespectful or burning that flag only represents injury to that relationship. When

The American Flag and What It Means To Me

you show disrespect for our flag, I see it as you are choosing to disrespect or ignore the sacrifices and the achievements of the patriots and veterans of this nation.

Since the beginning of this nation, millions have fought and died, on whatever the battlefield or over whatever law, as authorized by congress, executed by the president, our commander-in-chief for this nation. If you love the freedoms we have here in the USA, then you should love this country. Starting with George Washington, to our veterans of war, and all of our armed forces and even to Martin Luther King, disrespecting it is destroying the respect for that right. The flag represents that very right to freedom of speech.

When I see a flag blowing in the breeze, or I see a crowd of thousands standing with their hands to their hearts while the National Anthem plays, I always shiver and get goose bumps. I just stand there in awe that so few could sacrifice so much for so many. And that is what the flag represents to me, and as I believe it also means I have always been an American citizen in agreement with the first amendment, giving us the freedom of speech and freedom to write and believe whatever we choose, as long as it is not infringing on someone else's rights.



But I also agree with the flag amendment that puts a law in place making it wrong for the American flag to be vandalized. The flag represents the dream of one and all Americans, the dream to live free, to accomplish one's goals without fear of an overbearing government, the dream to have rights and the dream to control one's own fate and fortune. Sports players refusing to stand during the national anthem, taking a knee, showing disrespect for their country; what these players don't seem to understand is that Americans gave their lives so that they could have the freedom to play a kids' game for a living.

When players disrespect the flag, they disrespect that sacrifice. Yes, athletes do have a constitutional right to engage in speech that is offensive to millions of Americans. But the First Amendment does not protect them from the *consequences* of their offensive speech and their actions. There is no constitutional right to play professional football. If a sports player stood on the sidelines and hurled racial epithets, his speech would be protected by the First Amendment because someone has died to grant him his continued freedom.

So what does the flag mean to me? The flag means a lot to me. I know that many Americans have died protecting our flag. Many people have died raising our flag also.

The American Flag and What It Means To Me

I remember standing in front of the Marine Corps Iwo Jima War Memorial in Arlington near the Arlington National Cemetery in Washington D.C. with my family while on vacation as a kid as my father explained that the statue with the soldiers raising the flag was raising that flag to me. He told me how these soldiers would sacrifice themselves just to raise a piece of cloth.



The inscription on the War Memorial states: "For the Marine dead of all wars, and their comrades of other services who fell fighting beside them." Uncommon valor is a common virtue in honor and memory of the men of the United States Marine Corps who have given their lives to their country since 10 November 1775. In 1961, President John F. Kennedy issued a proclamation on June 12 that a Flag of the

United States should fly over the memorial 24 hours a day, one of the few official sites where this is required. Why, you might ask? Because of what this flag represents to our nation and all the other nations upon this earth.

Now that I'm older, I have done the same. I became a United States Marine; I served as a combat Marine in Vietnam. I fought, sweat, and shed my blood for our freedoms. I also realize that this is much more than just a piece of cloth, It is a flag; The American flag. It stands for liberty, justice, freedom, and so much more. It stands for our united country, and disrespecting this flag would be like disrespecting me, my country, and every other American citizen.

I remember while walking in the rice paddies and the jungles of Vietnam, on one of those occasions we were under attack. Marines were dying in front of me, blood was being shed. After the battle was over and the dead and wounded were medivaced, I remembered seeing a few of our guys running after our flag being carried by a wounded soldier. They risked their lives for their flag, their country. I felt very proud of my unit and our nation.

The flag isn't just a piece of cloth to show that 'America' exists. It is there to represent us. People would die for the flag, just as they would die for their country, there is no difference. I would die for the flag and for my country so my kids and grandchildren and others may have peace, freedom and security from evil.

As a boy I had a patriotic view on life. As a young man at the age of twenty, I experienced firsthand living or dying protecting my country. As an older adult veteran, I would still do the same. Freedom is worth the price.

John 15:13 "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends."