

The Responsibility of Freedom

"One nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." These words, spoken daily by millions of Americans as part of the Pledge of Allegiance reflect the importance of freedom in society today. Ratified in the 18th century, The United States of America's constitution, the fundamental document of the American republic, starts protecting five fundamental rights. It is clear that the concept of freedom, the power to act, speak, and make choices without unnecessary hindrance, is essential to both people who created the constitution, and those who live under it today. While the inclusion of freedom in the document governing the structure of the US makes it seem like freedom is a right people inherently have, this is not the case. Not everyone living in the US has the privilege of enjoying the same personal freedoms. The limitation of systems in place, the rights that continue to be neglected, and the way in which people behave and treat others forces freedom to become a responsibility. A responsibility that we must uphold through our own actions to ensure that everyone gets to experience liberty.

The US Constitution protects five basic rights in the First Amendment: the freedoms of religion, speech, the press, assembly, and petition. But freedom is more than just five things written over 200 years ago. It is the ability to speak your mind and act upon your thoughts. It is the protection against oppression and unnecessary censorship. Every choice and action you take in your day to day life, you are utilizing your right to do it. Being written into a governing document supports that freedom is a right, but what does it mean for freedom to need accountability?

Responsibility is the state of being accountable or answerable for your actions, duties, and obligations. Maintaining freedom is a responsibility of citizens, because freedom is the ability to make choices and responsibility is the requirement to own their outcomes. Since every action impacts yourself and society, true liberty requires accountability. Therefore, freedom and responsibility are connected. A person cannot exercise their freedom without affecting the people around them. For example, freedom of speech allows people to express their beliefs and opinions, but using that freedom of responsibility means recognizing that words can influence others and shape society. This does not mean that people should be prevented from expressing unpopular opinions, but rather that individuals should consider the consequences of their choices and understand that having freedom doesn't remove the responsibility to respect other people's

liberties. If people are not accountable for their actions, then freedom is often oppressed. This is why people continue to hold themselves and others accountable for actions that oppress the freedom of others.

This lack of responsibility is exactly the reason for the oppression of freedom that can be found in society today. In recent times, immigration enforcement can be seen as limiting liberty, as they restrict freedom of movement for immigrants living in the United States. Immigrants who legally immigrated to the US and who have lived in the United States for years can suddenly face deportation as immigration enforcement increases. This demonstrates how a lack of responsibility in the creation and implementation of immigration policies can limit individual liberty, as people who have built lives in the United States may suddenly face the loss of their freedom to remain in the country.

Despite this lack of liberty resulting from a lack of responsibility over our actions, it is exactly our actions that can uphold liberty and defend the freedom of those living in the US, and even worldwide. Through our actions, we have the power to stand up for others, whose freedoms are not protected. This includes protesting for those who are unable to do so, such as those with disabilities or are simply too afraid to do so. By choosing to protest, you defend the rights of others. Additionally, you can choose to voice your opinions through discussions or debates. This action, once again, defends basic freedoms by advocating for their importance. When specifically addressing immigration, people can petition the government to express concerns about immigration enforcement practices and advocate for policies that they believe better will protect individual freedoms and rights.

Ultimately, freedom is both a right we are guaranteed and a responsibility we must protect. If freedom was just a right we enjoy, then why do people continue to protest? If liberty was a privilege available to all, then why is the liberty of so many, in the USA and world wide, still repressed? If freedom was truly a right we enjoy, then people would feel that they can enjoy it freely; but they don't, and because they don't, we have the responsibility to correct this. For our actions and our voice have the power to turn freedom, a right we should all enjoy, into a right we do enjoy.