

What Makes America Great

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Imagine, for a moment, that you are an immigrant aboard a vessel, journeying toward what you hope will be a more prosperous life. Imagine the rocking of the boat in the churning sea, causing terrible seasickness. The conditions are far from luxurious, but what you are sailing toward cannot possibly be worse than the conditions you left behind. As an immigrant, you are traveling to a country known for freedom, leaving behind your homeland for a place of greater opportunities.

While this scenario may have been merely a figment of your imagination, this was once a reality for my grandma. At the age of five, in the year 1947, my grandma, her three older siblings, and their parents, left most of their belongings behind and boarded a ship bound for America. They hoped that by doing so, they would find a better life in the United States.

Today, the United States is home to over 47 million immigrants, which is the largest immigrant population of any country in the world. Those immigrants chose to leave behind their native countries for a variety of reasons. Some immigrated in order to escape poverty. Others, to avoid conflicts and wars. Regardless of why these individuals chose to immigrate, each and every one of them has one thing in common: they felt that America would offer them an opportunity for a better life.

After all, America has historically been described as “the land of opportunity.” America’s citizens are not limited by race, religion, or gender. Hence, in America, everyone has an equal opportunity to achieve “the American dream.”

The only way, however, that American citizens can achieve the American dream is through the rights that we enjoy on a daily basis.

In America, we have the right to worship as we wish.

In America, we have the right to speak as we choose.

And in America, we are entitled to pursue our dreams.

These rights, while oftentimes taken for granted, are preserved by a force of heroic citizens who fight to protect our country and our freedoms. Our rights, our ability to realize our dreams, are made possible through the sacrifices of dedicated citizens who would lay down their lives in the name of our country.

Our freedom is protected by the military.

It is the courageous men and women who have served in both the past and present who we have to thank for our rights. After all, it is because of selfless veterans that the Constitution's promise of equality has withstood the test of time.

Indeed, America is the epitome of opportunity.

Brazilian soccer player Rafael Cruz once said, "Only in America can someone start with nothing and achieve the American dream. That's the greatness of this country."

As Cruz wisely explained, America's greatness lies in individuals, such as my grandma's family, who seek to achieve their dreams. Not only that, but America's greatness lies in the freedoms that make those dreams a possibility. And most of all, America is made great by those who uphold and defend those freedoms - the military. All of these elements are what make America truly a unique country and a truly great one, as well. Not all of the 7.7 billion people currently living on Earth enjoy the freedoms and opportunities to which we, as Americans, are entitled.

I challenge you to take a moment to appreciate the rights you possess. Take a moment to acknowledge those who sacrifice for our country. And most of all, I challenge you to think about what makes America great.

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