

My Responsibility to America

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I am a child of immigrants, an American by birth and at heart. My parents' sacrifice for me and my sister gave me the freedom and standard of living that people across the globe dream of. When I see other teenagers burning the American flag or sitting during the Pledge of Allegiance or National Anthem, I wonder if they even understand their actions. I wonder if they understand the privileges they have as Americans in the most respected country in the world. When they travel short or long distances, they see carefully-engineered infrastructure designed solely for their well-being and safety. They don't see the overcrowded, polluted roads, where riding in an auto-rickshaw for one day would likely make them sick for the following two days, like I experienced when I was thirteen years old. They do not hold the fear that their younger sisters may be forced into marriages. They do not question the safety of foods served on their dinner plate. They do not question the safety of calling the police in a dangerous situation. They never see the reality of the world they live in.

Now, my duty is to honor the sacrifice my parents made and to take advantage of the opportunities I have in the land of the free and the home of the brave. It is my duty to thank them for giving up the comfort of their home to give me and my sister a better life. Though their sacrifice allowed me to be born an American citizen, it is even more of my responsibility to thank America for the opportunity to be independent and free. It is my responsibility to thank those who sacrificed their lives for America, so immigrants like my parents could live in the land of opportunity. Yes, America has had its flaws, a bloody past, but the changes our country has made cannot be paralleled by any other country in the world. The Constitutional amendments and policies in the name of liberty prove that America promotes prosperity despite adversity.

Though not all injustices have been solved, the past proves that our country can improve, and there is no other country to which my parents would have even thought of going.

Thanking America will never be enough to show my gratitude. It is my duty, my responsibility as an American citizen, to preserve the America that is seen as a safe haven, a land of opportunity to others around the world. It is my responsibility to serve America when I am eligible to vote or be a policymaker with the aim of sustaining the American dream of success and opportunity for all. This can only be done with ample knowledge of the past, knowledge of those who first died for America, of those who created America. George Washington, in his farewell address, stated that the “unity of government is ... [the] main pillar in the edifice of your real independence.” When seeing the violence and turbulence in our country, I know that George Washington, the president who set the precedent for the actions of the future presidents, would not approve. Is my responsibility to only learn of Washington and his fellow founding fathers? Learning and theorizing are nothing without action.

As a teenager in America, with all the freedom of speech, expression, and press, I can do nothing to literally change the world. I can take no solid, substantial action against injustices I see, for I am not a voter. I am not a policymaker, but although the action I can take to benefit America is not a political or legal action, it may perhaps be the most important action of them all. I can change my mind. I can change my heart, for America is nothing without the unity of the people despite diversity. To change our mindsets correctly, we must look to the past and understand the lessons of those who fought for our country, a connection to what we are fighting for. My responsibility is to mentally continue that fight and not allow the values of America, George Washington’s cherished timeless ideals of American unity, to die.

The people protect American values, and have protected them thus far, but it is now time for my generation to inherit the responsibility of an American citizen and safeguard those values. President Washington, we will protect your legacy, and we will protect America.