

## ESSAY PAGE

Freedom is a simple word. Just ask Google what it means and you'll get millions of definitions in under half a second. Type in "What does Freedom Mean to Me?" and you'll likewise find thousands of essays and opinions. However, of those thousands of searches few will tell you what freedom is because freedom in itself cannot be defined only experienced. To me freedom is this moment right here, it is me telling you what freedom means to me with total disregard for what you may think and without fear of repercussion. I could tell you freedom is an illusion or that the government is restricting our freedoms more and more everyday. I could even go so far as to say that this is all a dream created by aliens to keep us slaves. The point is, freedom gives me the right to say what I think and feel regardless of how ridiculous it may seem. To me freedom is the right to choose, think, and live in a manner I see fit. With my freedom to choose also comes your right to disagree with those views. Americans have more freedom than most of us know. We have the right to say what we want, write what we want, think what we want, and many other freedoms to numerous to list. As a military dependent I have had the opportunity to see what it means to live without freedom.

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I have talked with former East Berliners, Cubans, Untouchable Indians, and Romanians who have only recently been allowed some of the freedoms we take for granted everyday. Spend ten minutes with one of these individuals and your views of what freedom means will dramatically expand. Can you imagine life where you are imprisoned for voicing your opinion, killed for criticizing the government, or even silenced for living outside the norms of an oppressive government? I, we, often forget that there are millions of people who live in these conditions. We believe that we are exempt from this possibility because of our Constitution. Freedoms are not safeguarded by a piece of paper but through its expression and by the blood and sweat of people like my father and the thousands of service men and women like him who sacrifice their comfortable lives to protect our freedom. If you associate with the military long enough you will hear a phrase that I feel sums up my opinion of freedom, "I may not agree with what you say, but I'll fight until my death for your right to say it". Back in the seventeenth century, French philosopher René Descartes revolutionized the world with, "I think therefore I am" but to me, and for today, the true idea is "I think therefore I'm free".