

The dictionary's definition of freedom is, "the power or right to act, speak, or think as one wants without hindrance or restraint." That is how us Americans have always viewed freedom. Acting and saying whatever you please without any chains holding you back. Freedom is for everyone. The Declaration of Independence, the document America was built upon, states this.

Although, when we look into the history books we don't see "freedom" as it is defined. People of color were forced into labor and thought less of was considered right. Even people of the same pale white complexion were treated unfairly. Women, in a man's view, had only one purpose and that was to populate. They were thought to be less intelligent. In today's world not everyone believes that anymore. I think that freedom evolves with the people who define it. As we learn how to accept the word freedom as a word for everyone and not a specific word for one race, gender, or even sexuality.

People before 1920 didn't view freedom of speech as we do now. Men and men only have the freedom and right to vote. Many women thought that the life they were living was normal. Cooking, cleaning, and caring for their children. All while the men worked. Not that there was anything wrong with the lifestyle they had back then; it was true that women didn't have as much freedom as men did. In the 19th century women were expected to serve their fathers and husbands. Their job was to care for the children and the house. They rarely got the chance to work towards something more. Women who wanted the freedom to be something other than a housewife was out of the question. Now over one hundred years later anyone can regardless of gender. Freedom became something women had to work for and still continue to fight for the freedom to be equal to the male counterpart.

Before 1865 people wouldn't see anyone of color as a human being worthy of rights like everyone else and it would be many years later before they were even treated equally. African Americans went from no freedom at all to having rights like everyone else through many different kinds of protests. Much like the women of the late 19th century and early 20th century, people of color had to earn freedom of equality. The freedom to walk wherever they wanted, to learn without feeling like they didn't deserve it because of the color of their skin, to sit anywhere like a normal human.

Freedom is evolving with sexuality and expression of gender. Free to love whoever they want and be who they are without being told it's wrong. It's always been there but never accepted as a way for people to live. Anyone and everyone has the right to freedom. It has always been that way but we as human beings just didn't always think of it like that. People believed that loving someone of the same gender is wrong and goes against some peoples' moral code. It was illegal and is still in many countries. No one was openminded to the idea of changing gender, pronouns, or sexual attraction. When you look back to the Holocaust not only Jews but gay people were affected. Just like the Star of David, Pink Triangles were used to label anyone gay. In the Stonewall Riots the LGBTQ+ community fought back against the police when officers rioted the Stonewall Inn. Today the community has Pride Month to celebrate and express their identities freely. Everyday they can be who they are without everyone oppressing them.

The more you think about it the more you realize that freedom hasn't changed but grown from a limited, specific concept to what it really means today. A simple word that has always had the same meaning throughout history, "the power or right to act, speak, or think as one wants without hindrance or restraint." This freedom would include: 1) people wanting the freedom to practice their own religion, 2) when millions of people wanted the freedom to live as they wished without anything keeping them from doing, 3) freedom to vote and 4) live equally among others.

Freedom is important--this right is crucial in our country. It helps us express ourselves and our ideas. Without freedom, the world would be forced to be silent and stay one way and one way only. In an ever changing world it is important that freedom is provided to all. Without freedom, new ideas and expressions wouldn't be possible. So when asked what does freedom mean in today's world, you might say that it is the right to express yourself, speak how you please without harming others, talk about LGBTQ+, and so many other issues. But in reality it might mean something different in a few days or years because of new laws or new standards put in place. Freedom with a simple, unchanging definition can mean something else with time. There is one definition of the word but with a better understanding the meaning can be more flexible and open to everyone, as it should be.