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17

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*What is Peace and Freedom?*

What do peace and freedom mean in today's world? I could give a quick Google search, come to the conclusion that the definition of peace is “freedom from disturbance” and that the definition of freedom is “the state of not being subject to or affected by (a particular undesirable thing)”, and call it good. If all I did was Google the meaning though, what would I be learning? I would be learning nothing of the people who made sacrifices and fought for me to be in the place where I can find the definition of their life's work with the click of a few buttons. I have been blessed to be born in a country where yesterday's struggles and growths have led to the privilege I have to recognize and feel freedom and peace as I am able to do today.

John F. Kennedy was once quoted saying, “Peace is a daily, a weekly, a monthly process, gradually changing opinions, slowly eroding old barriers, quietly building new structures.” Securing peace is not as easy as one might think, sometimes it takes months, years, decades, or centuries. Everyone has their own feeling of actual peace and how it looks and feels to them. You might be at peace sitting back and letting others do all the hard work or you might feel peace knowing you were a part of a successful protest enacting change within a movement that you support. I find peace in my community, the role I play within it and the people who help support me in my decisions make me feel the deepest sense of peace. I find peace in helping

others and helping them change for the better. I find peace knowing that I do have the privilege to experience peace in life.

Libertas is a word of many meanings. Libertas is a Latin word that has many translations, freedom and liberty being two examples. Liberty and freedom go hand in hand with each other, you can't have one without the other. Liberty is defined as "the state of being free within society from oppressive restrictions imposed by authority on one's way of life, behavior, or political views." One could argue that it sounds a little like the definition of freedom. The United States of America's Pledge of Allegiance declares "with liberty and justice for all," and the first amendment states "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." Even in our country's beginning, our founders knew that to secure an ethical principled government the people needed liberty and freedom

When I was told of this essay opportunity my first step of action was to learn more about who John F Tinker is. There was plenty of information on the John F Tinker Foundation's website and I made good use of it. I was startled to find that I never had once heard of this man and his friends' courage to stand up for themselves. I read of the struggles they faced while standing up for something that mattered to them. In a place whose purpose, they thought, was to grow their minds and help strengthen their beliefs in what they stand for, they were targeted and turned away for sticking their necks out where others weren't. I had never heard of Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District. I didn't know about the band of friends who fought to give me the freedom to express my thoughts, beliefs, and opinions in a school setting, I had always taken for granted the fact that I was able to do so.

Peace and freedom would not be recognized the way they are today if it had not been for the struggles many generations have fought against. Without the doings of protesters, civil rights leaders, politicians, and even everyday citizens the way my generation experiences peace and freedom would not be the same, if it hadn't been for the individuals who gave it all they had we wouldn't be able to do many things we take for granted. So yes, I could make a quick Google search and find the definition, but what would it teach me, what would I learn from tapping a few buttons and having an answer? I would see but I would not know. I would hear, but not learn. The true meaning of peace and freedom are ever changing, but I wouldn't know that or experience the feelings of peace and freedom if it hadn't been for the doings of the people before me.