

Responsibility

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MY LIFE

I am a young man living in a foster home. Over the last ten years I lived with my dad and his wife. They sold drugs for as long I could remember. Now I am far away from my brother and sister. I haven't seen my mom in about three years. I really hope to get to see her again. Sometimes I wonder if my parents even miss me. I would rather have them back than have all the money there is. I haven't seen my father in 12 months. He probably won't get to see his grandchildren grow up. Now I live with my new family, the only people who really love me. My father is in prison doing six years, and when he gets out I hope he'll be with us.

My sister is 19 and lives in Kentucky with her two sons. I'll be there with them as soon as May comes. That is when I turn 18. When I go, I hope I can bring my 13-year-old brother. Right now he lives with my aunt. I want my brother, my sister, and me to be with my mother.

I really like my new foster parents. I've been here for three weeks, and I really enjoy it. I'm glad that my foster parents love me. They bought me new clothes and everything I need. I stayed with three different friends for about a year before I got put in this home. A friend's mom wanted to get custody of me, but she couldn't. I'm just glad that I'm in a good foster home, but I only get to talk to my family on the computer or phone. I really miss having my family around. Where I live now, I have four little sisters and one brother. Larry is my foster dad, and Lisa is my foster mother.

When I grow up and have children, I'm going to give them a better life than I ever had. I hope that I have a really good job so I can support my wife and kids. I want to earn enough money so I can buy my kids what they need and still

pay rent. After I turn 18, I'll be on my own. I hope I'll have my GED so I can get a good job and have a nice home.

~Chad Hale

A MORNING WELL SPENT

Tuesday morning,

Upon my arrival at Live Oaks at my usual time, running five minutes late, I saw familiar faculty members fully dressed in business suits, which is unusual for them. I also observed other well-dressed men and women with smiling faces, talking, shaking hands, and waving their hands as if to be directing individuals to the place they were to go. They were in place as if they were a welcoming committee for dignitaries who were to be present.

I quickly signed the attendance book and asked Harriet, "What is going on today?" Harriet Mason is Live Oaks' most efficient front desk secretary, and I knew that she would know exactly what was going on. Just as she was telling me about the Economic Forum and about the two governors that would be speaking that morning, my dear friend, Charlene Hanners, Vice Mayor of Milford, Ohio, gave me a big hug. She said with much excitement, "Thank you, Rose, for coming to the Pit Stop Lecture." She continued, "Two United States governors, Janet Napolitano, Governor (D) of Arizona and Kathleen Sebelius, Governor (D) of Kansas, will be speaking."

My plan was to go to my ABLE class; however, the thought of being present for an Economic Forum and meeting two state governors was overwhelming! I knew I could catch up on class work the next day, so down the hall to the meeting room I went.

Both governors spoke on behalf of Senator Barack Obama, a Democratic African-American Senator from the state of Illinois, who was running for President. Their topics were mostly concerns about the economic crises in our

country. Followed by their short but dynamic speeches, there was a very informative question-and-answer period.

After all was said and done, very excitedly, I took the elevator up to my classroom. I apologized to my teacher, Marty, for being late to class and told her where I had been. Marty was impressed that I took the time to attend the Forum. It was very informative for me to attend the Forum. Hearing and learning about our government helps me as a United States citizen to make better choices when the time comes to elect our new president.

It truly was a morning well spent!

~Rose M. Buckner

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT OF THE FIRST 10 AMENDMENTS?

The Bill of Rights and later amendments are meant to protect the rights of Americans. All of them are very significant, but it seems to me that the first amendment is the most important.

The first amendment guarantees our right to freedom of religion and speech, the right to assemble peacefully, and the right to petition the government for wrongs we feel it has committed. It does not, however, give us complete license to say and do anything we please. Instead, it is meant to be used when citizens feel that the situation is unjust and violates civil liberties. The amendment is not a license for slander. If a person violates this right, he is guilty of abusing this privilege.

So why is this amendment so critically important? The United States is a democratic nation. Its ideological basis is individual freedom. There have been, throughout history, dictators who refused to let their people exercise their right to freedom of speech. This was especially true if the ideas people wanted to express were against those of the dictator. In my country, South Korea, there was a dictator, Park Junghee, during whose rule no freedom of speech or press was permitted. People who defied this rule were taken away. The president of the country was afraid that if he opposed this dictator, his government would be overthrown, so he ignored what was happening. Later this dictator was assassinated. The chaos that this created demonstrates why the first amendment is indispensable in preventing the misuse of power.

A democracy depends on the individual making his or her own decisions and not on someone in power forcing

them to accept the ideas of those in power. This guarantees equality. No one is more valuable than another. For a sound society, everyone has to be able to express his or her ideas especially when they are in the minority. The first amendment encourages discussion and debate to find solutions to problems. Such open conversation has helped America be productive and innovative.

The idea of democracy can only be achieved by protecting our first amendment rights, which give us the freedom to voice our opinions. Yet it also gives us the burden of using this right correctly.

~Jeehye Song

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

A new year is here, and we have lots to do
Here are our resolutions. We hope they inspire you!

Tougher mother is the new me.
It's for your own good, kids, you'll one day see.
(L.R.)

My wife is ill, and I want to stop the pain.
One day she will be cancer free, I hope, again.
(V.T.)

The G.E.D. is so important to me.
I will study real hard and leap to be free.
(A.T.)

I would like for me to go back to work
So I can be no longer broke.
(R.W.)

My duty to serve is calling me.
I must prepare and cannot flee.
(C.O.)

What I'd like most is to spend more time
With my 3 kids; they're always on my mind.
(P.M.)

Quitting smoking is a bit hard for me
But '08 to '09, I'm smoke free.
(A.D.)

Want to be a size 8
Before my wedding date.
(M.B.)

Confidence we've gained indeed.
That's why we'll succeed
(E.V.)

A sharper mind is what I need
To help me in my life succeed.
(R.B.)

*~Live Oaks Group Project by
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ANOTHER DAY FOR THE ZOOKEEPER

The zookeeper passes the gate, sees the **ape**,
slips on a peel, and breaks his heel.

The man walks up to the **bear**,
he knows he is scared, and then he loses his hair.

The man walks to the **crocodile** cage.
He knows the croc is enraged.
He gets out of the cage,
gets onto the ledge, and slips off the edge.

He lands near the **donkey** and gets kicked.
The man is beginning to get ticked.

He goes to the **elephant** hole to feed them.
While he is feeding, he looks around at the elephant
and gets hosed by the elephant's nose. He is feeling cold.

He goes to the **flamingos** to give them a taste,
and then he leaves and he is being chased.

He looks at the **giraffe**,
his foot gets smashed, and he gets a rash.

He hops over to the **hippos**,
eats a bag of Cheetos,
gets stuck and feels like a bimbo.

He goes into the building to feed the **iguanas**.
It feels like a sauna like in the Bahamas.

That night he goes to see the **jaguar**,
but he trips on some wire which knocks out the power.
The jaguars were loose for an hour.

After the power comes on,
he walks through the **kangaroo** field.
He watches the animals hop,
he sees something pop, the kangaroos stop,
he gets bopped and lands in slop.

He walks to the **lion's** den and takes off his shoe.
He steps on a pin and yells "Ooh!"
The lion growls and grins.
The man frowns.
The lion hears a sound, turns around,
but the man is not found.

The man goes to the **monkey's** cage.
He knows he is in for a game
when he feeds the monkeys.
The monkey takes his keys,
and the man gives him some cheese for his keys.
He gets his keys from the chimpanzees.
He slips and falls from the tree,
and then he feels his weak knees.

That was the zookeeper's day!

~Samuel Buckingham

THE BILL OF RIGHTS

My name is Yi Daio and I'm from China. I have been in Cleveland for 15 months because my husband is an international student at Case Western Reserve University. To improve my English, I enrolled in an ESL class at Case. I have made progress due to the guidance of my ESL teachers.

This semester, we are using a new text, which is about America. The first unit was about the writing of the Constitution. This document was adopted on September 17, 1787 by the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia. The Constitution defines the organization of the United States government. Any power not given to the federal government is left to the individual states, but the Constitution is the highest law in the land. There have been additions to the Constitution in the form of amendments. The first ten are the Bill of Rights. These rights were passed in 1791; they protect the rights of all citizens, residents, and visitors. They place limits on the powers of the federal government.

When we were asked to choose which of the amendments we thought was the most important, I did not hesitate. I think that the first amendment, which guarantees freedom, is the most important. It gives Americans the right to religious freedom, freedom of speech, freedom to gather together to express their beliefs, and freedom to petition the government if they think it did something wrong. These rights are the keys to democracy. I can't think of any better example of the exercise of these freedoms than in the election in November 2008 of a new president. In the election, people expressed their dissatisfaction with the government through their words both spoken and written. This ability to speak gives the people a great influence on the government. If those in power want to stay in power, they must listen to the people. This is what true democracy is. Government is not just to lead the

people but to serve and benefit them. If the majority feels that the government is not doing a good job, they will replace it.

I must say that freedom of speech is a relative term. People can't say things that will be harmful to others. This would be libel. In this era of high technology, news spreads very fast. There are people who use the media to spread vicious rumors, and we saw this also in the election. The misuse of this liberty can be very dangerous.

Yet, it is freedom of speech that makes America such a progressive society. In countries that are run by a monarchy or a dictator, the people can't talk freely. Those who dare to speak out suffer cruel suppression. I know this from what happened in my country during China's "Great Cultural Revolution" from 1966 to 1976. All freedom of speech was taken from the people. It was a period of violence and chaos.

People all over the world are crying out from freedom to express their thoughts, and this seems to me to be a right that all people deserve. Let us hope that our world is moving in the direction of giving this right to everyone on this planet.

~Yi Daio

BOUND OR FREE?

“Are you bound or are you free?”

Hello. Let me tell you all about me when I was younger. I asked my parents, “Why must I go to school?” My mother sat back in her chair and gazed at me. Then she leaned forward and smiled and started to speak to me, not at me but to me because she wanted me to understand.

“My precious child,” she said as a tear fell down her face, “I know you think an education is free and a waste of time, but let me tell you about some people who died and paved the way, at one point and time in life. Our people were not allowed to read or write. To be caught with a book could cost them their lives because they knew freedom came in the mind. A man can put chains on you and you can still be free because in your mind you can see things in their clarity.”

“But my baby,” mother said as she brushed her hand over my cheek, “ignorance is an invisible chain and that’s the most dangerous chain of all. You can’t outrun it; it’s a battle you must turn and fight. It may cost you some blood and some major battle scars if you don’t give up. Fight to the end and I promise you, you will win without a dime in your pocket or a penny in the bank. You can travel the world and it won’t cost you a thing, because you already paid the price when you learned how to read.”

I looked at my mother with this strange gaze then I asked her how then would I pay? She handed me a book and said, “Let your mind take you there.” So I went to school to learn to read.

The End, no it’s my beginning. I’m about to see the world.

P.S. Would you like to travel with me? Come on, hop on board.

~Judy Brewer