

The Changing Definition of Freedom

When I think of Freedom I think of going just about anywhere and being able to do things without being worried about being shot or have something bad happen to me. Obviously, there are still shootings and robberies that happen but I have never had to worry too much about that happening to me, at least not yet anyway. I think it has taken a long time to get to where we are right now and even now it isn't perfect but it has definitely improved. This brings me to my topic which is, the history of freedom and how we have gotten to where we are now.

The goal of the Declaration of Independence was to present colonists' injustice against Great Britain. "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." This was said by Thomas Jefferson and it indicates freedom of expression.

The first 10 Amendments to the Constitution is the Bill of Rights. It assures civil rights and liberties to individuals, freedom of speech, press, and religion. It lays out laws for the procedure of law and set aside powers that were not delegated to the Federal Government.

Abraham Lincoln became convinced that freeing the South's slaves was important to the Union in order to win the Civil War. The Emancipation Proclamation took effect the following year, it applied to slaves in Confederate states, Lincoln made it clear in the Gettysburg Address that the Union fought to provide a "new birth of freedom." In 1865 the 13th Amendment enactment to the Constitution discontinued the institution of slavery, it allowed more than 4 million black men, women, and children to help in enslavement.

From 1880 to 1920, more than 20 million immigrants came to the United States looking for freedom and new opportunity. The United States greeted the new arrivals with exception of people from Asian countries, where the entrances were strictly limited by laws including, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. This policy ended with World War 1, and in the 1920s new laws were introduced to limit immigration.

72 years after the national women's rights movement at Seneca Falls, ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920 gave women the right to vote. In spite of setbacks in the Civil War, the suffrage movement gained power in the early years of the 20th century, protesters were arrested, imprisoned, and in some occurrences went on hunger strikes for the cause. When Tennessee became the last state to confirm the 19th Amendment in August 1920, women went to the polls to utilize their right to register their ballots in the presidential election.

In 1963, while the civil rights reformers protest segregation and voting limitation across the South met with violent objection, and thousands of people marched on Washington demanding "Jobs and Freedom," President John F. Kennedy presented the first major civil rights legislation since Reconstruction. After Kennedy's assassination, his inheritor Lyndon B. Johnson took up the doggedly pushing the bill through Democratic objection in Congress. On June 2, 1964, Johnson signed into the Civil Rights Act law, this ended with segregation of public, many private facilities, and prohibited discrimination based on race, region, gender, or national origin.

There are plenty more freedom topics that I could write about that have brought us to where we are today, but these are just a few that I felt were important.