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A Sanctuary of Liberty

“Our country is in danger, but not to be despaired of. Our enemies are numerous and powerful; but we have many friends, determining to be free, and heaven and earth will aid the resolution. On you depend the fortunes of America. You are to decide the important question, on which rest the happiness and liberty of millions yet unborn. Act worthy of yourselves” - Dr. Joseph Warren (McKenna 347). Dr. Joseph Warren, a man forgotten by millions of modern-day Americans, was an astounding example of patriotism. He was willing to sacrifice his life to effect change in his America and to support the foundation of the United States. The roots of our democracy thrived because of the difference made by our founding fathers. These men lived and died to create a sanctuary for liberty.

Immigrants from many countries around the world come here to find that liberty promised and to strengthen the country with the value they place on freedom. My father, an immigrant raised in Havana, Cuba, represents one of those many newcomers to this country. My father’s family lived through years of religious persecution. My grandfather was an American-educated Methodist minister in a communist country and was looked down upon in the eyes of the dictatorship. Spies were sent to infiltrate his church, his phones were tapped, and he was even jailed. My father was raised in fear of, and to despise, the Cuban government and, as a result, went on to love the foundations, democracy, and values of the United States and its Constitution.

Pedro Luis Mayor III, my father, received his citizenship on September 5, 2018. Tears rolled down his face when he stood among people from throughout the world with their hands over hearts, reciting the pledge of allegiance for the first time as citizens of our inspiring country. It will forever be implanted in their memories. We, as students in public school America, wake up and recite the pledge every morning. We know it backwards and forwards, and, yet, it doesn't make as big of an impression on us as it does to those who spent years of their lives without the pledge's promise. Ecstasy ran through our house the first day my father was able to place a ballot in the voting box. He was able to speak in our government, and no matter how small his voice might be he is still able to make a change, not just in the United States, but everywhere we impact the world. The week after he got his citizenship there hung a red, white, and blue flag outside our front door. That symbol represented his voice in our world, his part in the ever growing community we represent. My father was the proudest American the day he first voted. He was prepared to make a difference, a vote, a change, and that is what I believe patriotism is. It is not just the wave of the flag, or the dispassionate recitation of our pledge. It is not the ability to fight for our country, or the freedom we hold so dearly. Although these are symbols of our devotion to this country, we are more than that. We are a community, a network, and our voice is patriotism.

In *Saving Dr. Warren... "A True Patriot"* by Jeffrey McKenna, Steve O'Dell is a fourteen year old boy struggling to find his patriotism. Although he defined it in beautiful words for judges to admire, he can't see that patriotism inside himself. He argues with his best friend because he doesn't take the idea of patriotism seriously and doesn't respect it. "I'm thinking patriotism means -- other things. I think it's doing something for others, you know the people in your country. Someone isn't patriotic just because they say they are. They need to be doing

something," says Grace, Steve's best friend (McKenna 18). She shows Steve that somebody needs to make a difference to be considered patriotic. In the beginning of the story, Steve sees patriotism as unnecessary and ridicules those who live by it. Throughout the book, as Steve grows closer to Dr. Warren, a man who has devoted his life to change, you see that Steve's patriotism starts to flower. He tries to affect history and make the U.S. better by attempting to save Warren's life in the Battle of Bunkerhill, but when he realizes that he couldn't physically do so he opted to save Warren's legacy through writing. Steve knew that by doing this it would give the American people a chance to reconnect with their history and understand why we are here today. Through experiencing the Boston Massacre, the Boston Tea Party, the Battle of Menotomy, the Battle of Bunker Hill, and many other events, Steve had the ability to live through one of the most patriotic time periods in U.S. history. Therefore, he became part of the interwoven community of patriots who contributed to the foundations of this country. "Lee Warren was surely part of the old oak tree that represented patriotism in Steve's essay. Steve felt part of that same old tree" (McKenna 341). Steve eventually grew to be a part of the tree even though originally he felt isolated from it.

We are all connected. Though we have our different beliefs, opinions, and experiences, we all have one thing in common: we are a part of the community, the tree, and we can spark change within it. Dr. Warren, George Washington, Sam Adams, Paul Revere, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and the remaining founding fathers used patriotism to create the foundation. We are the ones who ensure the tree thrives and continues growing. We are patriotism. "Freedom has its life in the hearts, the actions, the spirit of men and so it must be daily earned and refreshed - else like a flower cut from its life-giving roots, it will wither and die" -Dwight D. Eisenhower (Famous Quotes).

Works Cited

McKenna, Jeffrey J. *Saving Dr. Warren... "A True Patriot"*. Jeffrey J. McKenna, 2020.

"Quotes of Famous People." *quotepark.com*, 3 June 2021,

<https://quotepark.com/quotes/1453903-dwight-d-eisenhower-freedom-has-its-life-in-the-hearts-the-actions-t/>. Accessed 21 February 2022.