

Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness

A quick search through the Merriam-Webster dictionary will give you a short definition of patriotism: love for or devotion to one's country. Prior to reading Jeffery J. McKenna's *Saving Dr. Warren... "A True Patriot"*, I probably would have agreed with this explanation. However, I have since learned that patriotism is far more than that. Unfortunately, as time has gone by, the true meaning of patriotism seems to have faded away, reduced to a word students hear only on occasion during their history class. What does patriotism *really* mean? Patriotism is vital to our nation because it unites the citizens of America and encourages people to uphold the values of their country.

First of all, patriotism plays a strong role in strengthening the bond of the people. In *Saving Dr.*

Warren... "A True Patriot", Steve O'Dell realizes this when "Their shouting fueled an already-fired up mob. Steve saw no one in the crowd of people with a weapon other than a few who held sticks. No one, not one person in the crowd, moved out of the way, or backed down to the Redcoats" (McKenna 111). As Steve stands in the midst of the Boston Massacre, he witnesses patriotism's effects firsthand. United by their fierce love of America and longing for freedom, the patriots continued to fight as they were gunned down by British soldiers. This can be likened to more recent events, such as the September 11 attacks, in which hundreds of first responders lost their lives saving citizens from the wreckage. Today, this tragedy is annually recognized by the September 11 National Day of Service, where thousands of volunteers gather to pack meals for and aid those in need. Clearly, patriotism plays a key role in uniting the people of our nation.

Furthermore, patriotism helps people stand up for freedom. This is shown when Dr. Warren says that "America must prevail. If I die, all on this continent may know my conviction

to my country was beyond all that life has to offer. I pray to god that if I die, my death will stir the hearts of every American to the cause of liberty” (McKenna 247). Dr. Warren deeply believes in liberty and is determined to do whatever it takes to make America a free country. Similarly, President John F. Kennedy once proclaimed “Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty” (Kennedy). This powerful quote demonstrates how the Founding Fathers’ values have been passed on to future generations. Even today, true patriots, like Joseph Warren, know when to stand up for their rights—even against a powerful oppressor.

Reading about all of the forgotten American heroes such as Dr. Joseph Warren made me realize something: Patriotism is not just devotion to our country; it is devotion to each other—the people of America. Throughout the Revolutionary War, hundreds of thousands of unprepared soldiers charged into battle not only for their country, but for their family. For their friends. Several thousand working-class citizens were killed during the September 11 terrorist attacks, and even more were injured or killed during search and rescue efforts. These Americans fought and died in order to secure a better future for their loved ones. I believe that patriotism is less about supporting your country or government, and more about supporting your fellow citizens.

Whether you are supporting a friend or family member in need or using your right to vote to support a government official, you are being a patriot. To me, patriotism is about fighting the good fight for your loved ones and your country, whatever those fights are. Like Steve O’Dell, I am forever grateful for men like Joseph Warren, who fought to secure my rights as an American citizen. *Saving Dr. Warren... “A True Patriot”* helped me realize that patriotism can come in all shapes and forms, but it all comes down to protecting three unalienable rights: Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Works Cited

“Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961.” *JFK Library*,

<https://www.jfklibrary.org/archives/other-resources/john-f-kennedy-speeches/inaugural-address-19610120>. Accessed 4 March 2025.

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