

What the Constitution Means to Me

By: Michael Faccenda

“We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union...”

These words are immediately recognizable as the preamble of one of the world’s most unique, awe inspiring, and meticulously crafted documents. This very manuscript has continued to change the course of history. The Constitution of the United States of America also has the power to shape a young man’s life, such as mine, despite the fact that it was established 219 years before I was born. This is the beauty of a living document; it has the ability to intimately touch the lives of anyone who’s existence parallels the life of the document. The level of genius required to craft the world’s longest lasting charter of government shows you how much devotion our founding fathers had to the implementation and survival of this great nation.

A love for American history has characterized my childhood. This has led me to pursue every avenue to better understand the factors that have shaped the country I enjoy. As an American, understanding and protecting the Constitution is a sacred obligation that everyone in our country should work to fulfill. I agree with George Washington who stated that “the education of our youth in the science of government. In a republic, what species of knowledge can be equally important?” I can say with sincerity that the Constitution has shaped the trajectory of my life and my goals for the future. One of the most important impacts on my life comes from the versatility of the Constitution itself. The document is so all encompassing that it has influenced multiple aspects of my character and ethos. To start, the First Amendment guarantees my ability to practice my faith, as well as my ability to voice my thoughts to the community,

and in so doing, supports my strive to become the best version of myself I can be. The Second Amendment protects my capability to protect all of the freedoms that the rest of the Constitution grants. The Fourth Amendment grants me the comfort of knowing that my family and I can sleep peacefully knowing that intimate details of our lives are ours, and ours alone. The next several amendments define my freedoms to be protected by our legal system, which is extremely important to the preservation of honor, peace, and tranquility in my day to day life.

The Articles of the Constitution also have an effect on my life. There is splendor in simplicity, and the Constitution accomplishes this while also being intricate and meaningful. I know that I am truly lucky to be one of the many receivers of a blueprint for society as fitting as the Constitution. Wisely stated by James Madison, "If men were angels, no government would be necessary." People may not always be the most righteous. Despite this truth, mankind was able to recognize our faults and provide the framework for a system that helps every American work to better ourselves in life. This idea is illustrated by the fact that roughly 160 countries have modeled their constitutions after our own. In this way, the pages of the Constitution have touched the lives of people from every corner of the Earth.

One of the most brilliant aspects of the Constitution is often one of the most overlooked. The fact is that the Constitution does not grant us these rights, freedoms, and privileges, It only recognizes the need to protect the rights given to us, and all human beings, by God. If you look closely, you can see that a product of 1700's philosophy was not materialized until that point and has endured for the last two centuries. It shows that, like our founding fathers, who had varying personal beliefs, there are fundamental beliefs that we all should recognize in one another. This is essential to forming a more perfect union. Two men who devoted their lives to that ideal happen to also be two men that I wish to emulate. They are George Washington and Abraham

Lincoln. Not only were they responsible for preserving, and amending the Constitution; it can be argued that both men's character was shaped by that very document over the course of their lives. What I have seen is that you don't have to be an icon of American history for the Constitution to affect you in this way. All you have to do is read it and appreciate what it stands for.

Many Americans have family members that have served in the military, and I am no exception. In the Second World War, both of my grandfathers, one a Marine and the other in underwater demolitions, fought bravely to defend the country and our ideals. Americans throughout each generation have done the same in every conflict we have endured. Among the 400,000 service members buried at Arlington, they all have one important experience in common. Every one of them felt that our Constitution, and our country by extension, were worth dying for. That not only is an indicator as to why we should feel that the Constitution is important, but I feel it is a call to *live* for what so many have fought and died. In order to *live* for the Constitution, we must first understand what it is. At its core, the Constitution is a promise to the people to ensure liberty, peace, and the common good. By living these principles, each one of us are called to not only enjoy, but also share these tenets of our Constitution with others. JFK's Inaugural Address comes to mind.

Ultimately, the U.S. Constitution fulfills many roles. It is a guidebook, a love letter to liberty, a model, a gift, a lens to view my life, but mostly, it is a calling. A calling we can all find deep within our hearts, and follow throughout our lives. This is what the Constitution of the United States of America is to me.