

My Personal Reflection

As immigrant to America, and now an American citizen, I have a lot of respect and pride in our country. After experiencing life in South Africa and watching the struggles that my friends and family face there, I have already gained a patriotic pride for the opportunities and freedoms of the United States. After taking the year long course called Advance Placement United States History. I have learned more about our blessed country and appreciated the many wonderful things that our forefathers and leaders had done for us. Many American prior to us, have sacrificed their lives for the liberties that many of us take for granted today. After listening to the experiences and Stories that Mr. Richard Cromer shared with me, I was able to learn firsthand of the hardships that many American citizens faced to protect our country.

Mr. Cromer through the interviews expressed his love for his country and explained that that was one of the main reasons he enlisted in the first place. He explained that ancestors before him and after him in his family have all volunteered to help out the army, which begs the question: "Why?" Why are these innocent lives willing to put themselves at the risk of death? The simple answer is nationalism—pride in one's country. This love for one's country is enough. Mr. Cromer and other veterans like him, were able to put the needs of their country

ahead of their own priorities. This self sacrifice and selfless act shows great devotion towards America. To have such love and passion about anything, to put it before your own needs and desires, is simply remarkable. As an eighteen year old boy, with only one semester of education at college, Mr. Cromer was able to realize that his country needed him and that was enough for him to drop what he was doing and serve his country.

This makes me wonder, does everyone eventually feel this selfless attitude towards something or someone they love? I know that I have felt this way many times, towards friends and family and even people I barely know, but I have never truly considered if I feel this way towards America. As a prospective doctor—specifically a surgeon of cardiology or neurology—I only truly felt passion for this field in the hopes of helping others. I hope that through my medical studies and surgical procedures I can help those who are suffering. I would be just as passionate to work in this profession if there were no benefits for me, only as long as I am helping others. The sacrifice in time which I would be in school instead of being out in the real world living my life is to me a worthwhile sacrifice. I have also made countless sacrifices for friends and family only because I love them too much to hurt them. In relationships, when you determine the motives and wishes of both parties, a simple evaluation of how important this issue is to oneself can determine

if it is worth fighting about or if a compromise or agreement can be met. Using this tactic, one sacrifices his or her own desires for the better of the group or of the one who they love.

After giving much thought and considering Mr. Cromer's words that each person, irrespective of their gender, should serve some amount of time in the army because it builds character and teaches one a lot, I pondered if I could actually sacrifice my dreams and plans for my future and enlist. This being said, Mr. Cromer is not asking for complete dedication of one's entire life, but rather, just a few years. This seems actually quite manageable. It also seems rather educational. After years in the army one has a great sense of value on life. One gains a worldly perspective for the separation from society gives one the time and ability to find the truth in life. This method of finding oneself and finding oneself and finding who they are meant to be was a similar theme in the writings of Henry David Thoreau, who left society and lived among nature in search of his identity. The main difference between seclusion from society in nature verses in war is in war the idea of death is constantly on your mind. The stresses involved with military life and the discipline causes one to find what is important in life. Whether you are a delinquent or a regular obedience citizen, the experiences of war can really help one to mature. But, all this aside, do I have the stamina or the willpower to give up

my dreams for the better of my country—not for the educational value or the honors and medals, but purely for my love for the land of the free and home of the brave?

That is an extremely tough question, especially for a foreigner as myself. Although I am a citizen of America, I am also quite loyal to my home in South Africa. I have pride in both countries. South Africa is my home—it is where I was born and it is where my family lives—and it will always hold a very special place in my heart. On the other hand, America has provided such great opportunities and has open doors to possibilities that I could have never imagined. So although I cannot choose which country I am more loyal to, I can proudly say that as a dual citizen of both countries, I would gladly stand up and protect both of them if called upon. I may not be cut out to be a soldier in combat however, but I would gladly be there in war standing among my fellow people where duty calls and where I would be most useful. I could truly see myself sometime in the future being a medic for wounded soldiers, for as Mr. Cromer says, war will never end.

As sad as it may seem, there will never be an ultimate peace. There will never be a world free of turmoil and discourse. Being a Hindu and a great admirer of Mahatma Gandhi, I truly believe that there are other ways of handling situations than with violence; however, I am not ignorant to the fact that others

may not feel this way, and with the vast amount of technology out there, destruction seems not only possible, but quite probable among the world for centuries to come. This is why it is important to have ready volunteers who care enough for their country to fight for it.

While growing up, I always found it quite ironic that men would fight to bring peace. But after learning about how the atomic bomb had actually saved more lives than it destroyed, this ironic situation seems to hold some truth. Although lives are being destroyed in the end, it is for the benefit of the entire country. A group of innocent souls are willing to give up their lives for the good of their country—for a better world for everyone else. That is honorary. It is noble. This selfless act goes beyond more than a few medals and a handshake can describe. It is impossible to describe in words or in action how honored I am to have known someone who would risk his life for not only his country, but his countrymen, his fellow citizens—for although he may not know them and they may not know him, he would rather put his life at risk to save others. When I hear the song "I am proud to be an American | Where at least I know I'm free | Well I'm proud to say the men who died | They gave that right to me," I have a new perspective and appreciation for the lyrics. I, too, as an American citizen, am proud of all the men and women who have fought

for our country and our liberties which we seem to take for granted. Thank you to all our war heroes out there for all you have done.