



## Palm Beach Fellowship of Christians & Jews 2016 Essay Contest

### **Second Place – Julien Verret**

Western Pines Middle School (Grade 8)

Teacher: Steve Gordon

#### **Liberty**

In today's society there can be many different definitions of liberty but to me it means equality and freedom. This means you can make your own individual choices both in your public and private life, as long as it doesn't break the law or impose on anyone else's freedoms. You can express yourself and your beliefs without discrimination from others. You will in return reciprocate respect and tolerance of others and their lifestyle.

In the United States we have several freedoms or liberties. For instance we have the freedom of religion allowing us to worship and believe in whatever faith we choose. Catholics, Christians, Presbyterians, and Methodists usually choose to worship in a Church. Jews usually choose to worship in a Synagogue while Muslims usually practice their faith in a Mosque. They all dress and act according to their faith. We also have the freedom of sexuality which means we are free to love regardless of race or sexual orientation. Recently same sex marriages have been legalized nationally after many years of debate. We also have the freedom of speech which lets us speak for ourselves and voice our opinions regardless of popularity. Along with those we have the freedom of press which allows the press such as media on television and newspaper to report national and world events without libel, slander or propaganda. These are just a few rights in America, which are very good examples of liberty.

Liberty is just as important and valued today, as it has been in the past. Many of our troops have fought and died and continue to do so today to protect our basic rights. In some other countries like North Korea, China, Russia and Cuba they have little to no liberties. Totalitarian governments, Dictatorships and Communist governments rule with an iron fist by forcing their ideology and rule on their people. Those citizens give up their freedoms and liberties in exchange for their safety. Some are actually told how many children they can have and how many jeans they can buy. They are forced to work in horrible conditions at very young ages for pitiful wages. In comparison, we have work place regulations, minimum wage laws and child labor laws to protect our people from exploitation. Unfortunately we often take these for granted but they are to be treasured and kept sacred. One of our most precious liberties is our right to participate in the choosing of our leaders by voting. Every citizen can vote for their representatives and for certain laws at the local, state and national levels.

In conclusion, the choices we make daily without a second thought, are a precious luxury for those who live without the freedoms we Americans expect. We are so lucky to live in a country where every citizen is considered equal and valued regardless of ethnicity, religion or sexuality. God bless America! To me liberty means "live and let live."