

Adam Finney

“One man with courage makes a majority.” These words were spoken by Andrew Jackson, and are still very true to this day. Courage can mean many things to many people. Even small acts of courage like voicing a unique opinion and being willing to take criticism can lead to great change in society and the views of people around the world. Courageous behavior in the lives of our forefathers eventually led to our country’s existence. The modern meaning of courage is similar to the actions of the men who rebelled against Britain, against slavery, against segregation, and against terrorism today.

Courage can be pushing through the fear of death and the unknown. Military men and women run into battle full of fear, but have the courage and self control to persevere because they know if they were to just give up, we might not have the freedoms of today. My cousins are in the Navy and Air Force. They know they will be in immediate danger at times, but the realization that the impact that they can make is bigger and more important than their individual lives is what keeps them in it. The need for all of the freedoms we share in this country can drive people to do amazing things, whether they are fighting against people who want our freedoms taken away now, or were rebelling to gain our freedom in the first place. The meaning of courage is in the heart of these Americans.

It also takes courage to take a stand against the beliefs of the time. The men and women who sailed to the new land in search of freedom of religion and the rights they believed they should have were brave enough to act and even die for the possibility that America would become a place of freedom. Many descendants of these men and women fought against the perils of slavery and oppression. The freed slaves’ children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren spoke out against the inequality of laws and societies’ thoughts against them. In the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Whatever course you decide upon, there is always someone to tell you that you are wrong. There are always difficulties arising which tempt you to believe that your critics are right. To map out a course of action and follow it to an end requires courage.” People who have this courage can turn a minority belief into a majority belief, making a great change for the better.

The meaning of courage can also be helping a group of people or even an entire country. But just trying to help one person or one family can make a drastic change. A few years ago my parents adopted three sisters because they felt it was a way they could give back to the world with all their blessings. They knew it would be difficult, but they had no idea what was to come. A couple years later, the girls’ mother had another baby whom we fostered for the first year of his life. We grew attached to the child as much as any other family member. The mother had been off drugs for only a year, and apparently this made her a more fitting parent than the people who nurtured and loved this child for his whole life up to that point. “Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen,” Winston Churchill wrote. My parents had the courage to swallow their pride after fighting to keep this little boy. They offered to help the mother with the baby because they knew it would be the best thing given the situation and they hoped the mother might eventually realize he belongs with his sisters and responsible, loving people who can care for him. Being courageous means not being selfish but standing up for those who can’t stand up for themselves.

Courage is shown in a variety of situations, and everyone has a chance to show it. Courage is a man in the Air Force, or the people who started this country, as much as it is parents fighting for the best for a little boy. Anyone who knows they will face a difficult time but still strives to do the right thing shows the courage and spirit of the founding fathers of this very country.