

Rachel McDaniel
Courage Today

The courage of our founding fathers and their fellow patriots to bravely declare themselves free from British colonial rule in 1776 began a long tradition of courage as an American quality. Without the courage of our forefathers, America would not be the powerful country that it is today. It would not be able to function as a representative democracy and we would not be able to enjoy the numerous freedoms we do as citizens. There would be no way to keep the government relevant as changes occur over time, and there would be no hope for a more equal and peaceful tomorrow. In this time of economic, domestic, and international struggle, without the courage many contemporary Americans possess the future for our nation would be bleak.

After twenty years of being a dedicated employee at a local factory, a man gets laid off when three hundred jobs are outsourced to Mexico. With a family to support, he wakes up each morning to search for another job. Facing rejection day after day, this man never gives up. That is courage today.

After a broken arm and seven stitches, a woman decides enough is enough. Without looking back, she walks away from her abusive boyfriend. Through a local woman's shelter, she finds the help she needs to get a job to support herself and the strength she needs to get back her life. That is courage today.

After leaving their house, a gay couple holds hands while they walk along the street. Without flinching, they ignore the suspicious whispers and the disapproving glares they meet along their way. That is courage today.

After high school, a young man enlists in the army. With the desire to honor his family and his country, he is deployed to Afghanistan. Potentially sacrificing his future, this man fights bravely beside his fellow soldiers defending the freedoms that America stands for. That is courage today.

After growing up in turmoil and repression in their home country, a family immigrates to America. With their past behind them and their mind set on a brighter, freer future for themselves and an education for their children, they become naturalized. While maintaining their cultural identity, they create a new home in their new country. That is courage today.

After growing up in America and learning of the legacies of its many leaders, both the praised and the criticized, an African American man decides to take on the challenge. With the support of many, and the disapproval of others, he campaigns for change. As the nation heads towards an economic depression, he is elected president of the United States of America. That is courage today.

In the words of President John F. Kennedy, "A man does what he must—in spite of personal consequences, in spite of obstacles and dangers and pressures—and that is the basis of all morality." Courage is about being willing to live each day with the will power to stand for

what is right, despite the potential costs. As Americans, we must strive to live our lives courageously maintaining the integrity with which our great nation was founded.