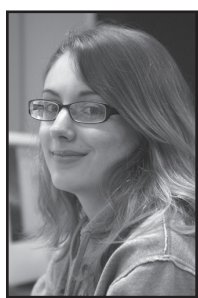


## The meaning of liberty

By Ashley Scoby

Americans have always been believed to be the type of people to take their rights and freedoms for granted. However, this is not fully obvious until you see just how important these rights are to the people who have grown up with less freedom. As I was interviewing Lexington Legends third baseman Ebert Rosario about baseball, the conversation suddenly took a turn towards something much more significant. When asked about what he liked most about living in America (as opposed to the Dominican Republic, where he grew up), Rosario gave a very simple answer that I would not have expected. I anticipated an answer such as more opportunities to play professional baseball, a better house to live in, maybe even the beautiful women. Yet Ebert Rosario answered with the one word that most Americans have forgotten the power of – liberty.

Rosario's answer got me thinking about just how lucky Americans are to have the rights that we have. The freedoms that the First Amendment guarantees all American citizens are probably the most important of all. The First Amendment gives Rosario the right to speak freely to the media. It gives



the media the opportunity to write freely about Rosario. It gives us all the liberty to question and challenge our government, worship as we choose, and assemble peacefully in an effort to make our country an even better one.

Rosario recognized the “liberty” that all Americans possess; most of us, however, do not. We share our opinions, we criticize the government, and we go to the church of our choosing, yet, how many times does the First Amendment and the significance of it even cross our minds? Once a day? A few times a week? Not at all?

Time after time, we take advantage of the rights that we are given. But do we appreciate them? Do we even understand them? Studies done by the Knight Foundation have shown that much of our population (young and old) don't agree with some of the rights guaranteed by the First Amendment. Almost 30 per cent of teachers surveyed thought that the First Amendment went too far in the rights that it guarantees. This is a strong example of hypocrisy, in my opinion – every one of the people surveyed were exercising their constitutional right to free speech, yet many were saying that some of those rights should not even exist. Where is the logic in that?

We as Americans exercise our rights every day, without even thinking about it. Yet the power behind the First Amendment,

and even the ability to understand it, seem to be decreasing as the years go by. More people are admitting that they don't understand the First Amendment, while others simply argue that it is too much. They don't appreciate what a gift Americans were given when the founding fathers of the United States signed the Bill of Rights. People who have lived in different places, where the liberties that we possess are not so easily achieved, realize what a privilege it is to live in a place where you can speak, argue and worship freely. Ebert Rosario appreciates what he has been given – without hesitation, he names “liberty” as what stands out to him about living in America.

The meaning and significance of liberty to any given person is different. But the main contrast is between the people who have been free all their lives, and the people who have seen the other side. The meaning of liberty is something that is important to us all in some way or another. However, the problem is the lack of appreciation for that freedom. Many Americans understand that they are free to speak and worship as they choose, yet are not thankful for that gift. Ebert Rosario, who is one of those people that have seen the other side of freedom, understands what is important about being an American. What's important is being able to understand and admire the meaning of American liberty.

## Remember those who help protect our rights

By Larkin Walker

It wasn't until this workshop discussion with Dr. Mike Farrell that the wheels in my head really started to turn and ideas started to come to mind about the First Amendment and what it means to me. I began thinking about the history of the First Amendment, what life would be like without it and how I use the rights it gives me.

Dr. Farrell started the class with a 14 question quiz about the First Amendment. When he set the quiz on my table and I realized what it was over I tried to gather all the information that I had stored over my almost twelve years of school but quickly realized that there really wasn't too much to pick from. When I got to the third question it read “The First Amendment guarantees freedom:” and there were three possible answers to pick from. I was lost.

After I read all three of the possible answers they all sounded like they could be a part of the First Amendment and I was stuck. I looked around at my friends around me and they didn't know either. We all four put the pieces of knowledge that we had together and used process of elimination to find the right answer.

In my generation, we aren't nearly as patriotic as generations past. Therefore, we don't consider the history of the United States and the battles that Americans have fought to create, defend and maintain the rights that we have today. We don't consider what these rights mean for our country. If I wanted to print an article about my angry opinion towards something that the government had done, I could. If I wanted to read the Bible in my English class when I'm given free time, I could. I can do all of these things because of the First Amendment, which is my right given to me as an American that cannot be taken away.

As I sat listening to what Dr. Farrell had to say to us about the amendment I began to ask myself questions about what my life would be like had I not had the rights guaranteed to me by the First Amendment. Being the very opinionated person that I am, I use this right on an everyday basis. I use it and never thank my ancestors, the people who fought for the rights and most importantly the people that fight today on the home front and overseas for the risks that they take to protect my freedoms. When I pass a United States Marine, soldier, police officer, whatever section they might be a part of, I don't take the two seconds out of my life to say thank you, thank you for what you do to protect my country and our rights.

My grandmother, who we called Mother New Jersey, marched with Civil Rights activist Martin Luther King Jr. to allow me rights not only as an American but as an African American. My ancestors and many other Americans' ancestors fought a long and enduring fight to give us what we take for granted today.

The First Amendment allows me the right to decide what I want to believe and what religion I want to follow. Because I can practice what religion I want to, I am the religious person that I am today. God plays a big role in my life and religion could have a different effect on my life if I did not have my choice of religions.

Without the First Amendment I would not be the person that I am today. I would not be as creative, I would not be the individual that I am. I might even act, think and speak differently than what I do now. I am thankful for my rights given to me by the First Amendment. They make me the person I am today.



## The importance of the First Amendment

By Parys Grigsby

Imagine a world in which you were told what to do. Not so different from today's America, is it? Every one answers to someone giving directions, relaying instructions, and making demands. There is always a higher authority.

Now imagine a world in which you were told what to think. That scenario provokes deeper thought than the previous. Being told what to think strips one of all of their dignity. It removes the option of standing out and being an individual. The government, or group that determines appropriate thoughts, would have an absolute authority. The 1791 ratification of the First Amendment to the Constitution removed all threat of the United States government acquiring that much power.

Finally, imagine a world in which journalists were told what to print and broadcast. The world would completely change! The ideas would be biased and only reveal what the person, or people, deemed as “acceptable.” The citizens would only know what the people in charge wanted them to know. Information would be withheld at an unsurpassed rate. America would no longer be the democratic nation that it is today. The simple assurance that no single individual, group of people, or governmental organization can gain that power makes the First Amendment the most important addition to the United States Constitution.

The First Amendment shapes the lives of so many, yet they rarely understand its importance in their daily activities. It guar-



antees the freedom of speech and the freedom of the press. It allows the people of America to serve whichever higher power they choose without fear. It protects American citizens' right to petition the government and gives the right to assemble in a peaceful manner. The five aforementioned freedoms are so underappreciated. Very few truly understand that their lives would resemble the lives of those living in dictatorial countries if the First Amendment was never added to the Constitution or if it was taken away.

After realizing what freedoms were granted in the First Amendment, I found a greater appreciation for living in America. I then understood that everyone's self-expression is protected by the document that shapes our country. When I choose my clothing, pierce my ears, and dye my hair, the First Amendment protects me. Every Sunday morning when I choose to attend the Church of Christ, the First Amendment protects me. Whether one chooses to serve God, Allah, or decides not to serve any higher being, the First Amendment protects them. When one listens to their favorite genre of music or attends their desired type of movie, the First Amendment protects them. If the government makes decisions that Americans do not like, they can protest. People are free to assemble peacefully in order to bring about changes in their environment. Those who read newspapers or watch news broadcasts are assured that what is being said has not been censored by the government by the words of the First Amendment. It removes the threat of persecution because of one's choices and actions. It grants people across the nation the freedom to be who they want to be. The First Amendment to the Constitution outlines our lives, making it the most important addition to the United States Constitution.

## Young people take freedom for granted

By Drucilla Thompson

The First Amendment guarantees us the freedoms of speech, of religion, of the press, to petition the government and the right to assemble peaceably. I feel that young people in the United States do not understand the significance of the First Amendment. Notably, I feel that young black people take the First Amendment for granted. For a multitude of reasons, they do not know how the civil rights movement helped black people actually be able to exercise their First Amendment right of freedom of speech, of the press, and to petition the government.

Young black people take the First Amendment for granted because they were born with the right to say what they want in front of whom they want without really having any real consequences. Older and wiser black men and women appreciate the First Amendment more because when they were growing up, many times when they exercised their freedom of speech they



suffered consequences that could mean they were put in jail, lynched, or killed some other way. One example of this is a young boy named Emmett Till who, while visiting his grandfather in Money, Miss., in 1955, was killed by two Caucasian men: one an owner of a grocery store, the other the store owner's brother. They abducted, beat, and shot Emmett Till because it was said that the young boy made a comment to and whistled at the grocery store owner's wife. If this is not a tragedy, I do not know what is. This young boy was killed because he exercised his First Amendment right of freedom of speech.

Young black people do not know what it means to be beaten, get blasted by water hoses and chased by dogs -- all things done by police on Bloody Sunday, an event where many innocent people were killed and injured coming together for civil rights. Moreover, police, people who are supposed to protect the community no matter what color you are, did these actions. Police attacked innocent people because they were petitioning the South's state and local governments to have Jim Crow eliminated in the South. Young black people today can all

join together and walk and not be executed or injured because they are using the First Amendment right to assemble peaceably.

Last but not least, young black people can start a newspaper and not have to deal with people trying to kill them or burn their establishment all because of them publishing a weekly newspaper. This was not the same story for Charles Tisdale, a publisher for *The Jackson Advocate* in Jackson, Miss. The office of the *Jackson Advocate* was firebombed, riddled with bullets, burglarized, ransacked, firebombed again, and Mr. Tisdale received many threats on his life. All this was done because Mr. Tisdale exercised the First Amendment right of freedom of the press.

Many young black people really do not understand the significance of the First Amendment. I believe that young black people would better appreciate the First Amendment if they knew more about the history of the First Amendment in our country. If they knew more about what it was like before the First Amendment was applied equally regardless of race, then they would better understand the significance of the First Amendment.

## Dow Jones High School Workshop offers many thanks to supporters

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Faculty member Alyssa Eckman designed and laid out the workshop newspaper with assistance from Deborah Chung. Yung Soo Kim took photos of the students and provided other photo help.

UK students Patrick Nally and Tahnee Taylor served as camp counselors. Workshop co-director Lisa A. Brown

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