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WHAT DOES FREEDOM LOOK LIKE?

"Free at last, free at last, thank God almighty we are free at last."—Martin Luther King, Jr.



Freedom can be broken down into many different concepts. Freedom to be yourself is the freedom to simply be you; you're allowed to be yourself, to dress how you want, to vocalize your opinions and thoughts. Simply be the best version of yourself.

Freedom can also mean that you're free from something. You could be free from your abusive relationship that you've been trying to get out of. You could be free from a long-term contract that you signed many years ago.

There is this image that comes to mind of a man with shackles on one wrist with both hands in the air. He is free from whatever had him shackled up.

When you're in jail or prison and you're getting released, walking out of those gates is like you breathe a breath of fresh air like yes, I'm free at last. (**Tameia Allen**)



Freedom is breaking free from something that has held you back for so long. (**Antoneah Armour**)



At the moment I don't feel very free.

Logically I know that's incredibly inaccurate. Really the problem lies in the timing of this topic

being presented to me.

I'll spare the gruesome details of my mental instability, but realistically how can I call myself free when I'm the one keeping myself shackled?

At the moment, freedom means being able to sit comfortably in a calm stillness, rather than sitting in anxious apprehension like prey being stalked by whatever thing is lurking just outside of your periphery. It's having peaceful mental clarity without being bogged down by the intense grating static of white noise.

Quiet, stillness, calm. That's what I think freedom looks like, at least for today. (**Kaitlin Birdsall**)



Freedom to me is being able to pursue an education. As black males in America, we haven't always had that luxury, so I'm going to take advantage. With all the controversy surrounding us, knowledge is the only way we can progress as a society. (**Jonathan Booe**)



ZiB, *L'oiseau en liberté [Bird at Liberty]*, 2021



Freedom to me is “freedom of the mind.” In the world we live in, freedom is never actually free and everyone hasn’t always had the privilege to exercise this right. My ancestors fought for me to be able to have lots of freedoms

they weren’t able to take advantage of, but my counterparts are also able to have freedoms I cannot utilize. As long as “man” has power over the rights of freedom, it will forever be abused and the scale will continue to teeter back and forth.

Life is not fair or predictable. The one thing we truly have control over is ourselves and our mind. The law and “man” can at any time take my freedom to speak, act, or pursue my dreams, but as long as I know I am the master of my own mind, I will always have the freedom to think, feel, and react the way I choose. So that to me is true freedom, something with its own uniqueness that rightfully belongs to me and cannot be taken. **(Jekeiria Booker)**



Freedom is having control over one’s life. It’s the ability to make one’s own decisions, to not be controlled by anyone or anything, to have the ability to think, act, or speak from one’s own heart, to do as one chooses for oneself, to not

follow what another says they have to. Freedom is our right, which we do not have in this country. We lost that. Having the right to govern ourselves would be freedom. **(Sarah Branch)**



Freedom is the feeling that I’m currently experiencing. Freedom from depression that took control of my life for so many years. Freedom from anxiety that stopped me from living, achieving, and experiencing the best version

of myself. Freedom from my negative mindset. Freedom from my drama-filled life. Freedom from seeking validation and love from others to make me feel good, to feel whole. “Freedom is the peace you cannot buy.” **(Gabrielle Brown)**



Peter Max, Statue of Liberty



Freedom is having the power to do and express what each person

wants, regardless of race, color, or gender.

I would like my family and me to be free in this country and be able to walk the streets without being marked as an immigrant or any other stereotype.

I feel that there are many people in this country who are disapproving of the minority community. **(Fredy Carcano)**



The meaning of freedom to me hits home, not only because I have spent almost a decade in prison but also because I had an enormous amount of vices that kept me captive. From depression to drug addiction, I was held in a cage that did not allow me to move forward in life. Today I am out of prison and free to pursue my higher education. I do not struggle as much with certain vices, but I do now have the tools to get through any situation life throws at me. I am free to be happy, free to pursue my dreams, and free to make better decisions in life. I am free, free, free! **(Mark Español)**



Freedom to me is being free, free from racism, free to speak whatever, do what you want to do. The only thing that's free is the food pantry. Freedom is not really free. I'm grateful that we're not slaves and we didn't have to go through the things our ancestors had to go through. Freedom is living at my own will, being me doing what I like, not what I'm told. In this country I don't believe we are free. Some people are still being prisoners and that's against our will. Everyone is free to speak, to work, and to do what they like until

they run into the law, and then no one is free. In order to be free, we need better people and better laws. **(Curtrice Foster)**



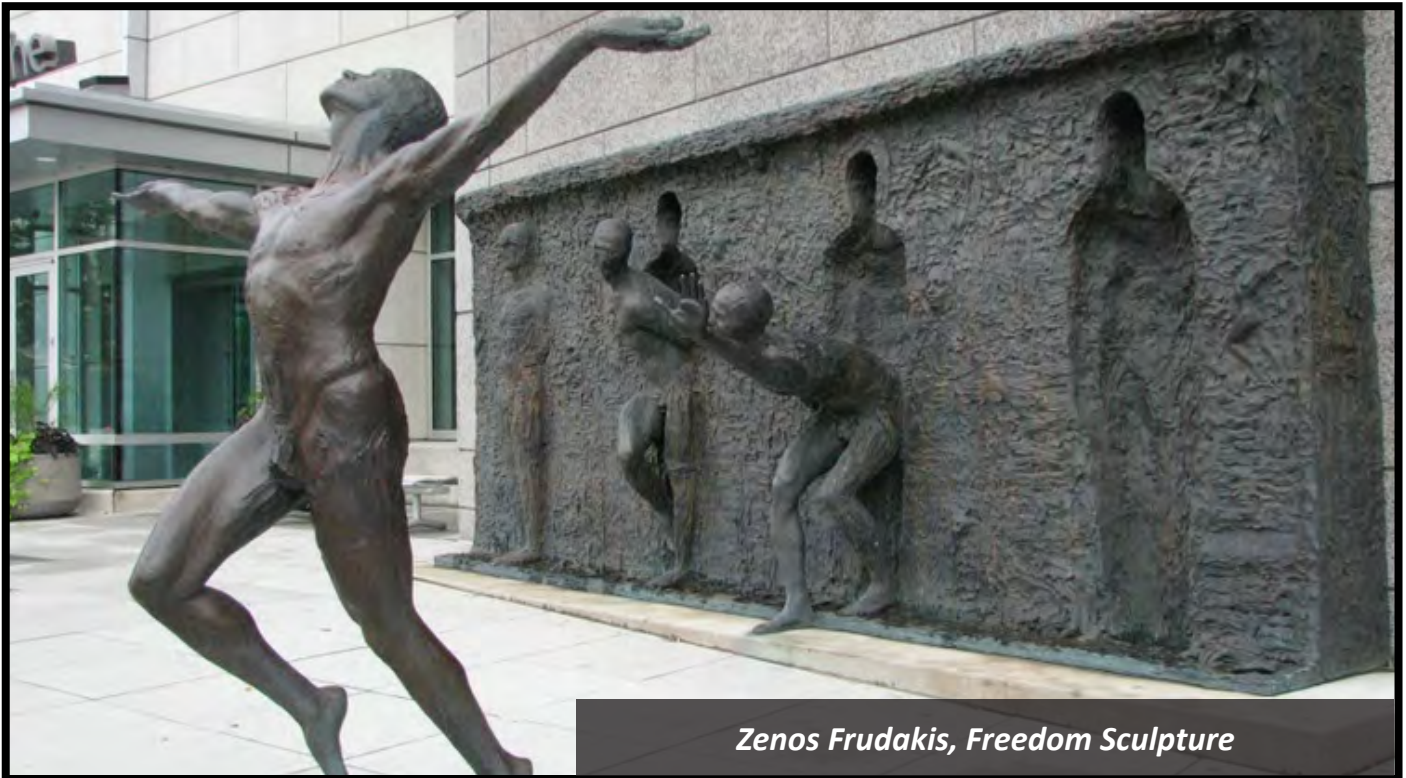
Freedom to me looks like a white feather flowing in the breeze of the wind, from a peaceful swan. It moves and roams free of spirit with no formal destination. Being free to me is living comfortably with no rush, no harm, and no stress. I'm free to speak my mind whenever and wherever, able to express my feelings. Freedom makes me feel able—able to dive deep into myself and my history to learn who I truly am and where my people come from. Freedom is being free to find new beginnings.

Do I believe that the country I live in is free? My country is somewhat free. Some people are free and some aren't. Jails are one example of not being free. My country needs help when it comes to freedom. We should set up programs and build buildings for those struggling with their freedom, including buildings for those who are too free perhaps—the homeless. Homeless people are indeed free of bills, but how can they survive with no money? Money is another example of freedom. Money relieves stress but can cause many problems. **(Gerresa Homesly)**

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Delacroix, Liberty Leading the People



Zenos Frudakis, Freedom Sculpture



I am glad to have the freedom to express myself with my voice, to vote, and to live wherever I want to in this world. But there are still a lot of people out there that are still trying to take our freedom away with hate, hate speech, and mass shootings for whatever reason they want and feel. **(Tyrone Hudson Sr.)**



I usually define the concept of freedom as being liberated from something. From this perspective, I personally relate freedom with the liberation of my family and community from oppression. Unfortunately, the history of my ancestors [in Ecuador] is overlapped with a lot of pain and blood by the conquerors. My community lived through more than 500 years of slavery, violations, abuse, and torture. Just in the beginning of this century, a visionary named Dolores Cacungo helped our indigenous communities to raise their voices for their rights. She fought against the system of oppression, thus helping our indigenous communities to be respected for our right to speak the native language, the right to have land, and the right to education in our

own language. All of this means freedom to me. Freedom is the right to live as any other human being. **(Aida Inunca)**



Freedom to me means not having a to-do list. Freedom to me means clocking out of work when I'm off work the next day. I'm taught that this country is the land of the free, yet I can't recall a time where this "freedom" really applied to me. **(Tierra Kimbrew)**



A day when you can rise with no regards to time. Honey, lemons, and turmeric filling my lungs with my spiritual juice. Misting my plants, deep inhales when I cat-cow on my yoga mat. I am resilient; I am a limitless being. Daily affirmations remind me I am a queen.

I am responsible for my contributions to the world. With my mindfulness I utilize my ability to journal and set the tone for my day. As the sun begins to rise and the dove sings my favorite melody, I start my day hanging out with an old friend named Freedom. It's nice to see you again. **(Monèl Long)**



Freedom is a very big word with a very important meaning and concept for me but also with a lot of responsibility. Freedom looks like a butterfly with the right to fly without any impediments.

Freedom for me is also like a wildflower that blooms without being obstructed in its own space, in its own glow, in its own identity.

I consider myself free to choose the path that I want to continue walking on the trail of opportunities that life can bring. I consider myself free to say no to things that are not good for me or the rest of my family.

I am free to take a rest and listen to my interior voice, which often tells my gut what to do and how to make the right decision. In some cases society tells me what is supposed to be best. For me, freedom is having the right to choose to do the things I love to do.

Freedom for me is having been able to emigrate to this country even when I was single. In the town where I am from, it was not customary for

women to emigrate to another place without being married; it was said women who emigrated alone were rebellious and disobeyed customs from the parents. I am grateful that my mother broke those parameters in my life, gave me the opportunity, and allowed me the freedom to emigrate to the USA to continue dreaming and reaching goals. The most important thing is to visit my father who emigrated when I was four years old, as I hadn't seen him for 16 years. **(Maricela Martinez Munguia)**



I'm free from the pain and the suffering of my ancestors. I'm free to get an education. I'm free to be me, a woman of color who can make decisions for myself and my family. I'm free to use my voice and say I want to be treated

equal. I'm free to make choices for my future. Just knowing the definition of freedom and being given an opportunity to experience what freedom looks and feels like is amazing. Not to be free doesn't make any sense to me. Freedom in my eyes is a sunny morning, birds tweeting, and the lovely smell of flowers. **(Lavinia Miller)**

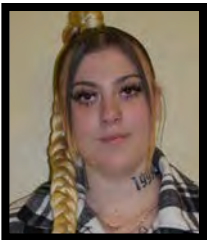


Faith Ringgold, Freedom of Speech



Freedom feels like a bird flying from one tree to another, looking for food or shelter. Freedom is flying freely with no limitation or laws to follow. Freedom is flying in a vast space where possibilities are countless. I started to learn

about Buddhism because I can finally say that Darmah (protection of the mind) has freed my mind from the negative thoughts about myself (delusions). Darmah has given me the freedom to believe that I can accomplish enlightenment. Enlightenment is the ultimate freedom! **(Saul Naxi Perez)**



Freedom to me is being able to express who you are and what you believe in unapologetically, without insecurities or barriers of what anyone else thinks or feels. I don't believe we have achieved

freedom in this country as a whole yet. People are constantly judging each other based on society's "ideal" image on how everyone should look and act, when everyone is their own individual and

has every right to be their most authentic self. Social media plays a big part in this as well as the older generations who grew up and are taught one image, race, role etc. as the right way. **(Keely Nelson-Gray)**



I think that freedom is when you can do anything you want because it's a right we all have. In other words, freedom is something you are entitled to. Some freedoms guaranteed by the Bill of Rights

are freedom of speech and religion. The soaring bird image is an eagle. I think we have partially achieved freedom in this country because there is still racism out there. But freedom is very important and is something you are entitled to. **(Gael Rodriguez)**



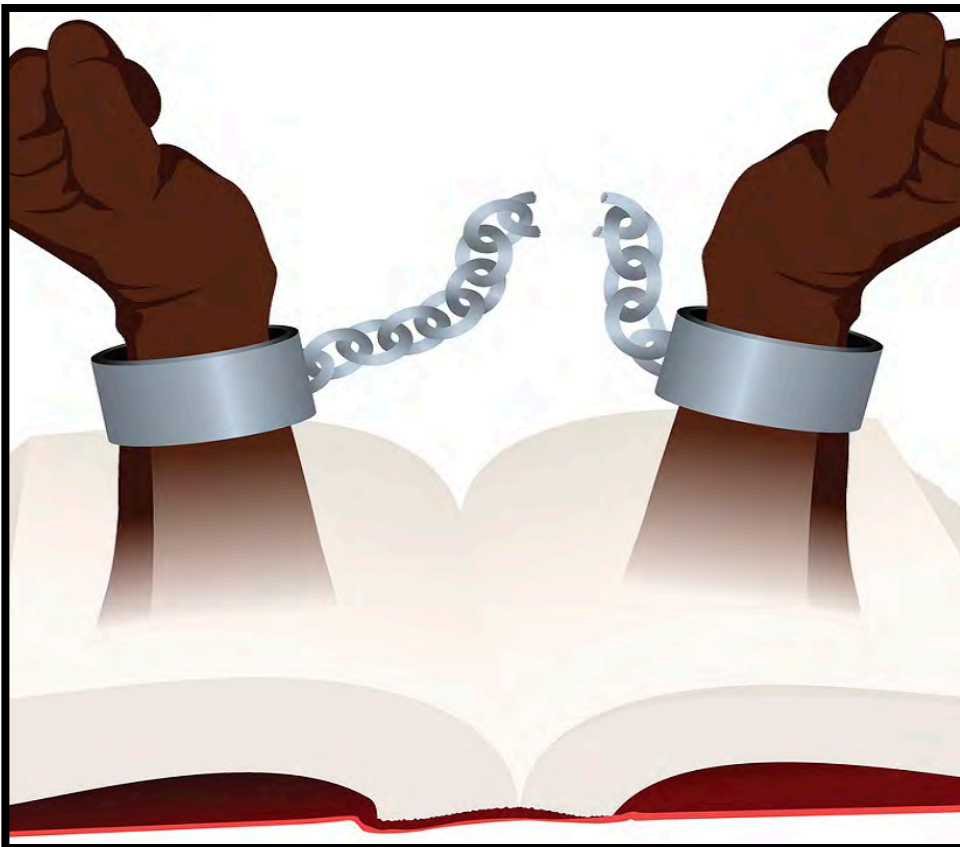
What freedom looks like is peace, a state or period in which there is no war or war has ended. Freedom feels like God already won the battles overcoming all

powers of the enemy. Freedom is undefeated. Freedom means light is always at the end of the tunnel. **(Kiana Sims)**



Freedom to me looks like a mentality without restrictions. Freedom

means free from guilt or systematic standards set up to place limitations on your ability to think for yourself or process emotions naturally generated. Freedom is the ability to live in your truth without the judgments from others because you don't fit into a specific group. Freedom is just that, free, and should not cost you your happiness! **(Dominique Smith)**





Freedom is the ability to wake up in the morning in your own home. Freedom is being able to pay your bills on time. Freedom is knowing that our children are healthy and happy. Freedom is a deep exhaling breath of relief, a heavy weight off your shoulder, and finding a purpose to live.

Freedom to me is everything that makes us laugh and smile. Life comes with so many problems and hardships. Sometimes it is too much to take all at once and you can feel shackled. Breaking a piece of that chain is a grasp of freedom. Taking control of your life and outcome is freedom. Trying to be a better you is freedom.

I cannot say I am completely free, but I am free to be unapologetically me. I'm free to laugh, sing, smile, and cry if I need to. I have the freedom to go anywhere I please and light up the room. I have the

freedom to be a great mom, student, and the best me. Freedom in my mind is a choice, and I choose to be free. **(Tiara Smith)**



"Libertad" means freedom in Spanish. Freedom is a word that can mean a lot of things but not actually mean free. I have freedom but can't vote. I have freedom but I'm limited to certain things. **(Roxanna Sobrevilla)**

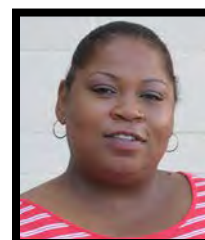


I believe freedom comes when you stop caring about what others think of you. Care more about what you want to do with your life. Please you, love you, take care of you. "Be who you are, not what the world wants you to be."

I think I have achieved freedom. Every morning I wake up and make my own decisions, from what I want to wear to what life choices I'm going to take, creating life like I want. I am free. **(Lupita Valerio)**



To me, freedom is having the space to do exactly what you want to make you happy. I picture freedom as a hot summer day where kids are running freely, everyone on the block can be friends, and the possibilities of fun are endless. In my opinion, we haven't achieved freedom. We aren't free to do what we want, love who we want, or simply be ourselves. I continue to advocate for women to do what they want with their bodies, for people to love who they want, and for people to at least be able to have their constitutional rights. **(Andrea White)**



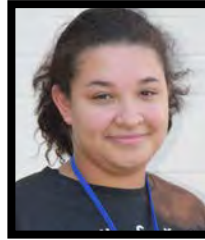
I am not free. I don't even know what free looks like, but I imagine that freedom is being unafraid. **(Mya Whitson)**



What freedom looks like to me is being comfy and cozy in a little space that I own in a nice community, not being judged for the color of my skin. What freedom looks like to me is not having to wear my body down

working for pennies just to live check to check. What freedom looks like to me is my voice being heard and respected and my people protected. What freedom looks like to me is having more time with my children and being able to show them the world. What freedom looks like to me is my children having the same privileges and opportunities in education and other extracurricular activities. What freedom looks like to me is knowledge because knowledge is power. What freedom looks like to me is not worrying about the things Black people have to worry about. What freedom looks like to me is being able to go anywhere I please and not be judged. What freedom looks like to me is equal opportunity in the workplace. (**Amanda Willis**)

I am not free. Not free from the world and not free from myself. I am scared to be in white neighborhoods that scream “Black Lives Matter” but will back the blue if you make one mistake, one



wrong move. Little girl with that nappy hair. The black community that thinks I’m too whitewashed to be a part of the culture. I was raised by a white woman who couldn’t do my hair and would forget to put Vaseline on my face.

I am not free. Freedom is equality and we are not equal when men take away our rights as women not caring about what we want and what is best for us. My body, his choice. Freedom. Freedom is never free. You must sacrifice everything you’ve ever had and still be beaten back down to your knees. (**Sinetra Wilson**)



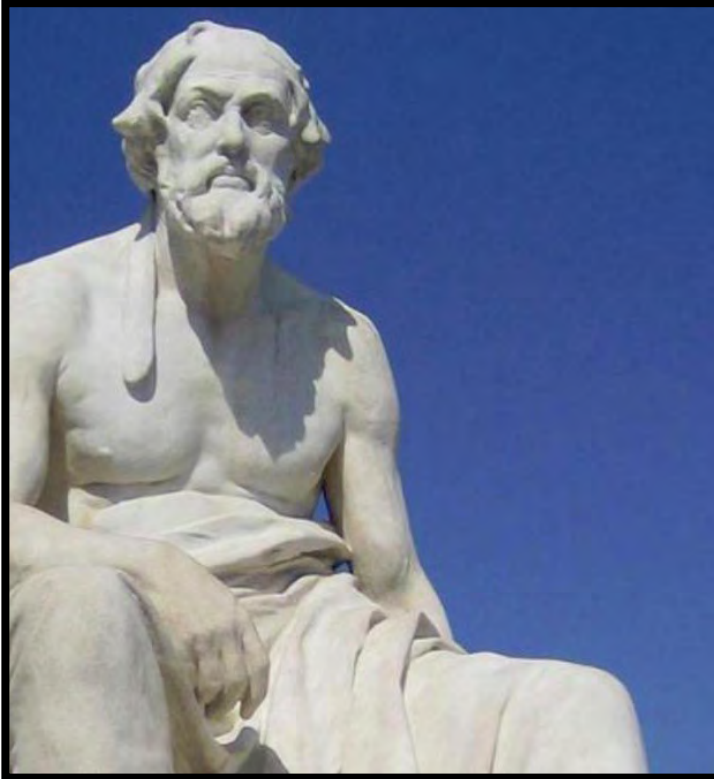
What freedom looks like to me is to not be tied down to anything in life, to do what I wanna do, to make my own decisions and mistakes and learn from them. Life itself is freedom. The world we live in is freedom. What we go through

is freedom. To be able to just speak, to be able to vote, to be able to love: all of this is freedom. To walk with my head held high is freedom. Everything I go through is freedom--the freedom to be free. (**Zykia Wilson**)



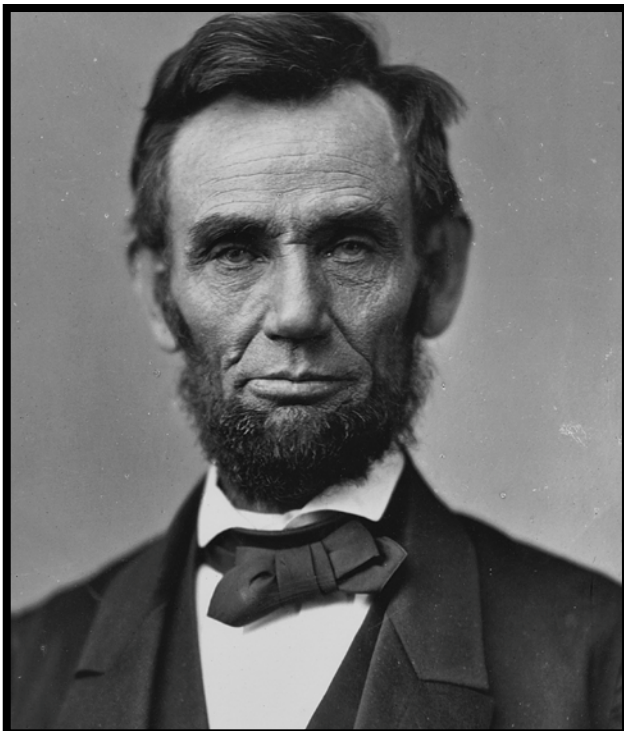
Jacob Lawrence, To Preserve Their Freedom

FAMOUS QUOTATIONS ABOUT FREEDOM



“The secret to happiness is freedom... And the secret to freedom is courage.” – Thucydides

“No one outside ourselves can rule us inwardly. When we know this, we become free.” – Buddha



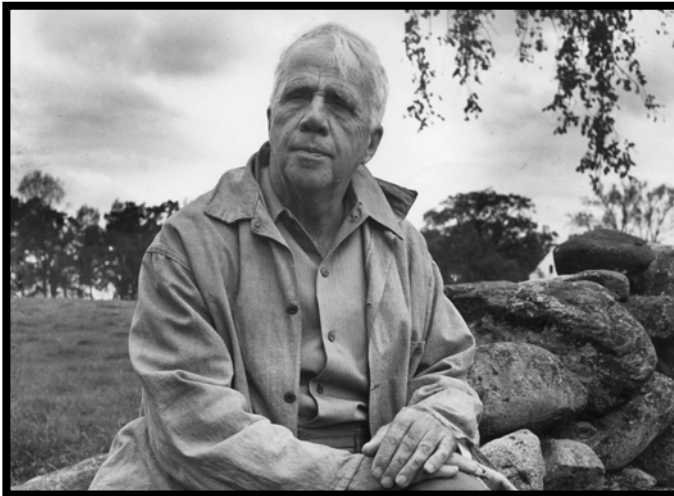
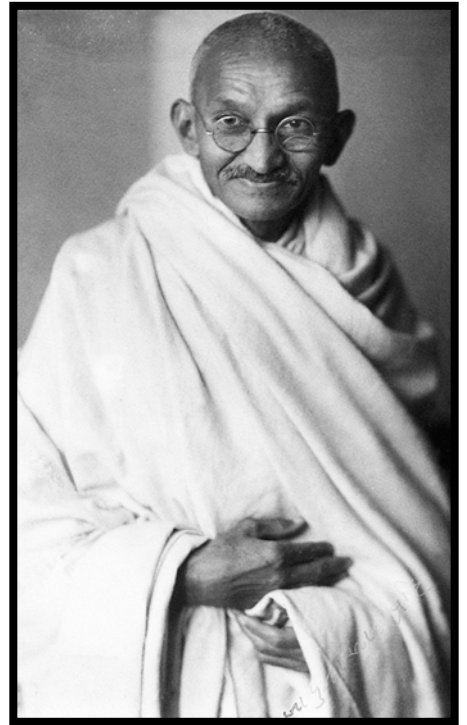
“Those who deny freedom to others deserve it not for themselves.” – Abraham Lincoln



“Lock up your libraries if you like; but there is no gate, no lock, no bolt that you can set upon the freedom of my mind.” – Virginia Woolf

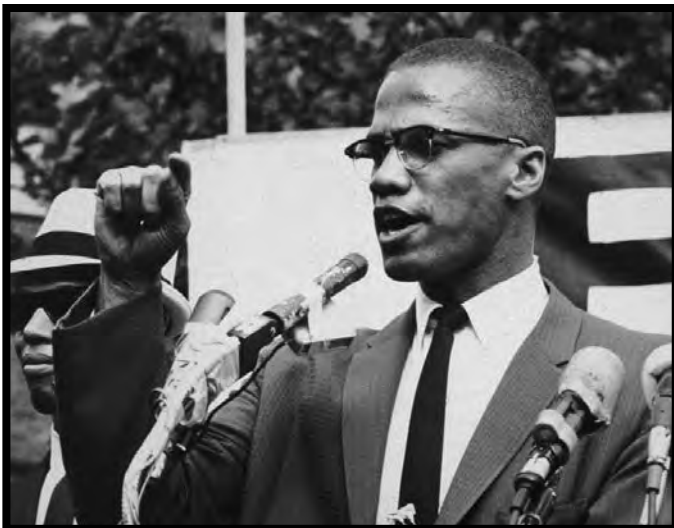
"Freedom is not worth having if it does not include the freedom to make mistakes." – Mahatma Gandhi

"For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others." – Nelson Mandela



"Freedom lies in being bold." – Robert Frost

"Better to die fighting for freedom than be a prisoner all the days of your life." – Bob Marley

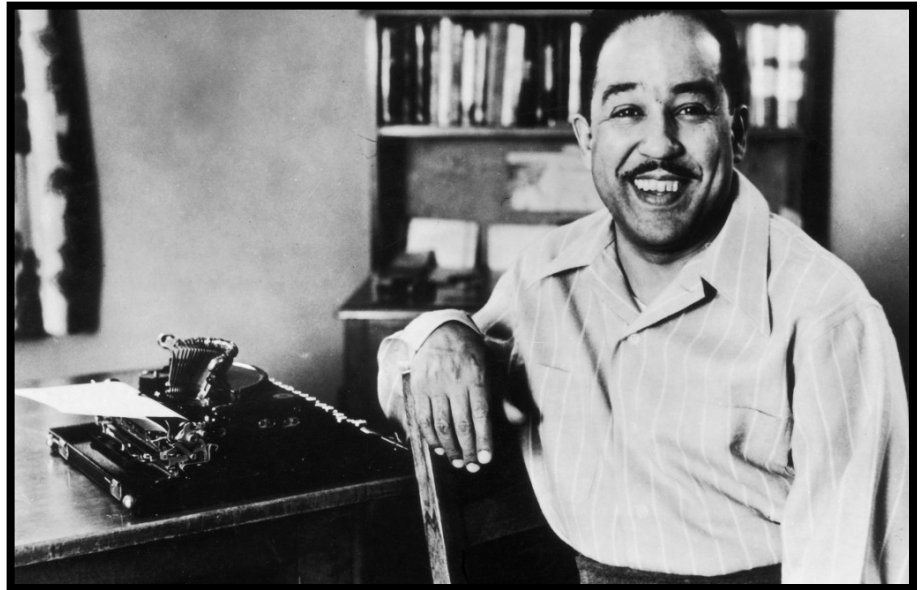


"You can't separate peace from freedom because no one can be at peace unless he has his freedom." – Malcolm X

LANGSTON HUGHES ON FREEDOM

FROSTING

Freedom
Is just frosting
On somebody else's
Cake--
And so must be
Till we
Learn how to
Bake.



FREEDOM

Freedom will not come
Today, this year
Nor ever
Through compromise and fear.

I have as much right
As the other fellow has
To stand
On my two feet
And own the land.

I tire so of hearing people say,
Let things take their course.
Tomorrow is another day.
I do not need my freedom when I'm dead.
I cannot live on tomorrow's bread.

Freedom
Is a strong seed
Planted
In a great need.
I live here, too.
I want my freedom
Just as you.