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Benjamin Franklin Scholar Award Essay

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The Value of True Security

“They who would give up an essential liberty for temporary security, deserve neither liberty or security.” –Benjamin Franklin

Our great nation was founded on the basis of undeniable rights which ensure everlasting security for all. The United States of America took a stand to empower the common man, declaring that Americans would be forever free, with promised rights and liberties. Men like Benjamin Franklin realized that troubles would come and go, but if Americans could endure them with a level head they would triumph over all short term tribulations and claim long term security. The concept of security is completely embodied in Franklin’s statement because only a free person whose basic liberties are protected by law is truly safe from calamity. Calamities befall all people because of the imperfection of this world, but the ultimate and unrecoverable crisis is losing your right as a person to be acknowledged, respected, and protected by your government. Essential liberties must be coveted as precious weapons of justice and peace in order for the permanent security of all Americans to be obtained.

A wise man would not relinquish essential liberties for any amount of temporary security. Only a fool gives up something as priceless as his liberties in exchange for something so fleeting. The liberties and rights enjoyed by Americans protect them from becoming indebted to another man or body of officials. If a citizen settles for temporary security, when the next disaster arises the once again frightened citizen will find that it is “necessary” to give up yet another of their rights. This cycle will not end until the individual has been denied all rights during his or her futile quest to find temporary security. Only when the individual is stripped of the most essential liberties and is left standing naked and disillusioned, will the true cost of temporary security be fully comprehended.

Americans have always been a tough and courageous people. In this modern world in which the push of a button can end a civilization, America must now be exceptionally brave and fearless. The thought of losing our rights as Americans seems far fetched, but is actually a very real threat. In fact, many people have already been scared by dangers which they don't fully understand, to the point which they believe that forfeiting some small rights is necessary to their survival. Take for instance the suspicion of American Islamic terrorists leading some people to the willing surrender of their rights of privacy, otherwise known as the Patriot Act¹. Once something as simple yet powerful as privacy on phone lines has been compromised, other more valued rights suddenly become not as valuable in the eyes of the fearful. Americans must end this cycle by valuing each of their rights as equally priceless assurances of their long term security.

As a united nation America must stand firm on the simple yet solid foundation which is the rights of all people to enjoy liberty and freedom. Only then will Americans be able to

¹ *USA Patriot Act*. n.d. Financial Crimes Enforcement Network. 3 October 2008
<http://www.fincen.gov/statutes_regs/patriot/index.html>.

weather each and every temporary hardship and proudly emerge from the storms as a solid and powerful people. When Americans relearn the value of their liberties and recognize the inconceivable worth of freedom, they will realize the outrage of tossing these blessings to temporary frights in hopes of immediate satisfaction and safety. Once Americans have learned to triumph over trivial trials without sacrificing their precious rights, Americans will be honored as a people who have learned to fear nothing.

If Benjamin Franklin's words are heeded Americans will tap into the assurance of permanent security that equal rights and liberties provide, and no longer be threatened by the temporary set backs of the world. Then the aspirations set by the visionary founders of America will be reached. All people will finally grasp the truths which are indeed self evident and embrace their "certain unalienable rights" as priceless tools of justice². In this modern world of terrors and uncertainties, Americans must withstand the temptation to trade the power and security they have in their democratic government for weak shields of temporary stability. Rather, in full confidence and knowledge of their permanent security, all Americans must wield their voice in America's government as a powerful weapon. Each person's liberties are essential and priceless, capable of rendering wise decisions and creating ultimate security for all U.S citizens. Americans must recognize the value of their liberties and protect the greatest security of all: the security of knowing that their voices have influence and power in their government.

² *The Declaration of Independence*. n.d. Independence Hall Association. 4 October 2008

<<http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/document/index.htm>>.

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