



Museum & Archives of Rockingham County & Charters of Freedom  
Essay Competition

Title: "What does patriotism mean to you"?

**By Winning Essayist, Maria Wilson - 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
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*What does patriotism mean to me? Well, they might not say it, but in most of the places around the country, patriotism is who has the biggest flag hanging out the window of their truck or who can wear the most American themed merchandise. When I think of what Patriotism is, a flag and eagle first pop into my head, but that isn't what I want to see, and the image makes me dig deeper.*

*The normal definition of patriotism is showing support for and loving your country. People use that in all different ways, but to me a lot of those ways don't seem right. On January 6th, hundreds of people stormed the U.S. Capitol and I certainly don't think that was patriotic. Patriotism isn't just supporting one person or group of people, it is supporting what the government does, giving them ideas, and encouraging the people around you to help the country.*

*When you show too much support for a person or group who you think is trying to help the United States, you start to turn against the people who don't agree with you, and that causes arguments and problems in the country. I think a big part of patriotism is accepting what happens in your country and instead of spending your time leading rallies and complaining, try to fix what has happened in a safe and logical way. If someone you didn't want to be president won the election, instead of trying to kick them out of office, show a little support and work with the people in your community to help assist the United States. Try to inspire everyone to work together and work a little harder to become one country.*

*Patriotism must have one definition that everyone can agree with and stretch however they want, such as showing support and love for your country. That doesn't have to stop us all from having our own*

*definition of the word. My way of being patriotic is not to own a ton of flags and go to rallies but to quietly do what I can to support the country by keeping up with what is going on, helping encourage others to vote, and going out to help my community. I think that not everything patriotic is about flags and elections, and small things are just as good for the country. You can show support for the United States in thousands of ways like picking up trash and helping your neighbors out.*

*I know the question is what is patriotism to ME, but a key part of my definition is letting the people who like to loudly show their opinions and speak out, do their thing. If some of us are quietly supporting our communities, it makes the country better. If some of us are loudly supporting our country, it makes the country better. The best part of my definition of patriotism is that anything and everything you do to support your country is important. It is how we get through every day, with millions of awesome people believing in their own ideas but doing the same thing; they're helping America to advance and grow.*