

Jordan Shepherd, Third Place Winner in the Mountain Region

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As Americans, we are a nation embodying images of power and respect. And what has brought us to this place of power and respect; it is our perseverance to pursue our desires until they become reality. Perseverance is a core civic value that has been exemplified throughout the history of our country, whether in our nations founding documents or shown in the lives of our American heroes. Because of the foundational value of perseverance in our country, even I see it in my own life.

"...These United Colonies are, and ought to be, free and independent states". Being an American means that we are willing to fight for what we want and persevere in anticipation of reaching our goals. The Declaration of Independence shows us exactly how much we were willing to persevere through the British attempts of continue control. Upon writing the Declaration of Independence, the thirteen colonies were prepared to persevere in a gloomy battle with Britain for their independence. This founding document stated that the colonists were tired of living under the wing of British tyranny; they were willing to show perseverance to obtain the freedom that they so greatly desired and deserved. Our country fought for 8 years for American independence and for our release "...from all allegiance to the British crown". As a direct result of our perseverance, we became an independent nation- able to create our own laws and allow our citizens rights not previously given us.

Frederick Douglas is a great example of an American man who displayed perseverance. All through his life he showed perseverance in his fight for freedom and equality. He demonstrated perseverance as a young slave in Maryland, showing interest in classical speeches and he showed perseverance as an adult delivering now classic speeches. As a man fighting for rights that many others didn't agree with, we can be sure that Douglas faced plenty of opposition and persecution from those who set themselves against his cause. Despite the numerous tests of his perseverance, he continued to use his first amendment rights to share his convictions in newspapers and through his autobiography. Frederick Douglas was a model American who showed the value of perseverance as he worked endlessly wanting to see his desires become reality.

Being an American student, I am constantly required to use steadfast perseverance to achieve goals I set for myself. Coming into my junior year, I am keenly aware of my limited years left in high school. Achieving a college degree is the path I want to complete in order to achieve the lifestyle I want to provide for a family one day. I have persevered to keep my grades high while participating in community service projects, student council, honors' classes , and other extracurricular activities in order to demonstrate my ability make my goal a reality. Coming from a single family home, I watched my mom's steady push towards her goal of a master's degree, even while parenting me as a young child. I understand the value of perseverance and hard work in order to pursue my goals until they become reality.

Although my displays of perseverance may not be as drastic and life-changing as those of Frederick Douglas, my small displays have changed my life. I stand on the foundation of perseverance set forth by my forefathers to achieve the goals I set before myself. Seeing my nation's history has taught me that any person can change the world with enough perseverance and resilience. Today my accomplishments my be small on a national scale, but tomorrow they may follow the path of heroes like Fredrick Douglas and pull from the resources of the Declaration of Independence, because I understand the civic value of perseverance.