

## Freedom of Speech

Guns fire in the distance. The command for open fire is raw in everyone's minds. The Chinese protests had been going on for weeks, students and workers calling for a democratic China and freedom of speech in Tiananmen Square becoming a regular sight. When the troops arrived, everyone held their breath, waiting for the government to make a move. They were the chess master; we, only pawns in their vicious game.

It was a massacre. The army had come in with tanks and assault rifles. The citizens had no chance. Hundreds were killed that night, thousands more wounded.

The next day, there was silence. There was no more shouting, no more gunfire, and no more screams of those being shot. All of China was in mourning. And for what? Speaking up for their beliefs? Advocating the changes they envisioned?

My father was seventeen during the Tiananmen Square Massacre, still going to high school in Beijing and living a couple miles away from a nightmare. This was the reality that he and my mom faced growing up in China. As a second generation American, I listen to these "horror stories" with a sense of finality. I know I am lucky to live in America, a country where freedom of speech is a right.

In the U.S., people complain about the government freely and there's always a part of me that wants to shush them, whispering "Someone might hear!" I guess that's my Chinese background. But here, even the president is vulnerable, can be impeached as easily as a Senate vote.

I grew up in this world of equality and freedom where others might disapprove of what I have to say, but will always fight for my right to say it.

And that is what freedom of speech means to me.