

“What Citizenship Means to Me...”

Each citizen is entitled, through our *Constitution of the United States*, to a list of freedoms, freedoms that many other countries do not have. Along with our freedoms, comes a list of responsibilities. While human rights of citizens are denied to no one living in the United States, it takes a lot more than just living ones daily life to truly represent citizenship. Being a citizen of the United States of America is one of the highest held offices. When one compares it to how members of other countries live, it is an honor to be a part of our country.

Dictionary.com defines citizenship as “the state of being vested with the rights, privileges, and duties of a citizen.” However I like to define citizenship with eleven simple words. These words form the perfect acronym of **C.I.T.I.Z.E.N.S.H.I.P.**

Caring is an important trait for all citizens to have. One must care about others, the environment, the well-being of schools, and even the person driving in the car next to them. One of the assets of living in America is that we are a caring nation. We are a nation built on helping others and looking out for our neighbors. This is evident from the various programs such as Welfare and Social Security that help even our most floundering citizens get their feet back on the ground. It is imperative to be caring as a part of Citizenship. Citizenship is being caring.

From the birth of our nation through present-day, **innovative** people are essential to further our ever-developing nation. As a citizen we are expected to find new ways to better our world. We can help design new technologies to solve our energy crisis, compose a new bill to

help out our neighborhoods, or even simply participate in a local fundraiser for charity. It took several very creative, and genius minds to think outside of the box and write the *Declaration of Independence* in order to establish our great nation and we must continue on this path with our new ideas. Our great society was not created overnight. If it were not for the people before us who had the initiative to think outside of the box (and to break away from England) you would be reading this with a British accent. Citizenship is taking charge of our own fate and developing things that may never have been thought of before – someone has to do it. Citizenship is being innovative.

A good citizen is **trustworthy**. A trustworthy person always does the right thing and does not lie or cheat ones way through life. Because we are granted so many freedoms as citizens, a lot of our nation's rules are based on the honor system. We do have police and authorities to check occasionally, but for the most part we are independent people, who have independent lives, and who only check in with the government when necessary. A reliable person is a very large key to citizenship. Citizenship is being trustworthy.

Living one's life to **inspire** is a duty of a citizen. In everything we do we empower others to do better. Through payroll increases, grades, and even personal satisfaction our nation thrives from competition. Even inspiring others to do more good in the world is important. I remember the commercial, whose product I do not recall, but where one person helps another by picking up papers that someone dropped, someone watching this then helps out a different person by holding open a door, a different person sees this and performs some act of kindness to someone else. Pretty soon the entire city is helping each other. Though this is just a

commercial, in theory this really does work. Sometimes the little things that we do for people can make a big difference, and in turn those actions will put them in a good mood to do the same thing for someone else. It is a never ending spiral that truly defines citizenship.

Citizenship is daring to inspire.

Zeal is crucial in any successful nation. It is the devotion, interest, and enthusiasm that each citizen brings to the table that truly establishes an institution of such caliber as the United States of America. It is important that we, as citizens, take an interest in things going on around us and throw ourselves full-heartedly into everything that we do. Citizenship is having zeal.

Being **engaged** in everyday activities is a citizen's job. Whether it be a work force, school, college, military, volunteer organization, or a political position it is important to be involved. When it is election season, as citizens, it is our duty to make sure that we are well informed on all of the candidates. On Election Day, we must select the people we feel will be the best for our great nation, not just who posted the most ads to our television. Citizenship is defined by this participation. Citizenship is being engaged.

A citizen must have of a general sense of **nationalism** and pride for one's nation. After all, the United States of America is one of the greatest places to live. Being patriotic through celebrating the Fourth of July, standing up for the pledge, and promoting America as a wonderful place to live is fundamental to citizenship. If America's own citizens do not support our government, then who else is going to? Citizenship is nationalism.

Service to our country is vital towards possessing the quality of citizenship. Young men and women can enlist in the military, army, navy, and marines to help defend our nation. As

the citizens back home, it is our job to support those currently serving and our veterans who have served. Even without signing a military commitment citizens can serve their community or local government. Citizenship is service.

Citizens are defined as **heroes**. Being a hero does not mean that one has to pull babies out of burning buildings, serve in seven wars, or anything out of the ordinary. Being a hero means serving one's community and being available to volunteer one's time. Men and women who serve in wars are heroes in my eyes because they are the reason I am still alive, but my mother is a hero to me also because without her, I would never have grown up in such a productive and loving environment. Everyone has their own definition of a hero; it is important to be able to be someone's hero. Citizenship is being a hero.

One of the greatest things about America is its diversity, and branching from this, its **individuality**. Every single, different citizen in this country is a piece of the puzzle of our great nation. Each citizen brings something new and different to the table. Part of living in America is that we can be different from the next person and believe in different things than the person after that. Our individuality is what makes us beautiful. As a citizen it is our duty not to conform our thoughts and ways in support of something we do not believe in. In America everyone's opinion counts. Citizenship is individuality.

A citizen must, last but certainly not least, be **practical**. One must realize that the government is not going to do everything for them and to not expect that. Part of being a citizen is monitoring whether one's request is reasonable or not. We live in a big world. A citizen must have common sense and be able to make intelligent decisions. Knowing that one

cannot ask the government for large sums of money or extravagant privileges is beneficial. Just like our forefathers developed a nation on the basis of the *Constitution of the United States of America* and the *Bill of Rights* to fit everyone's needs, we cannot expect that every individual desire of each citizen in our whole country will be met. However, we can rest assured that our government will do the best that it can. Citizenship is being practical.

As citizens of the United States of America we are united under our national government. Although our country does not deny, accept or discriminate citizenship to the people of America based on gender, sex, religion, ethnicity, or race, it is our job as citizens to exhibit citizenship. I attest, just like the *Preamble to the Constitution of the United States of America*, that "We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity," must proudly represent America with our citizenship and all that it entails with our **Caring, Innovative, Trustworthy, Inspiring, Zeal, Engaged, Nationalist, Service-oriented, Heroic, Individual, and Practical** selves. **C.I.T.I.Z.E.N.S.H.I.P.**, to me, is what makes the United States of America such a spectacular country – such a spectacular home.