

What Free Expression Means to Me

When we express ourselves, we show that true bravery and courage lie in the deepest of souls and in the most elegant of minds. You can see the strongest architects of social perspective. You can decipher a beautiful skeleton's scars. You can make out a broken body with a story. There's a story within every expression. There's a life within every glance. There is a world full of possibility even through the times when expression is needed most, the world tries to ban who we are.

Free expression to me is just a soul and mind trying to prove that what they want to do for themselves should be celebrated and not unallowed. Free expression is not letting others see the cracks in the papier mâché costume you've constructed out of fractions of ideas and parts of a hidden personality without fear of feeling illegal. It doesn't matter how messy your masterpiece is, it's about how you feel in your celebratory costume.

There is someone in every cloud of gray and in the blades of grass, humming with the bees and dancing on the spores from a dandelion puff, a beautiful, carefree person is waiting to soar. There's hope in one's spirit, and there is a beautiful person woven into a messy sculpture, waiting to be set free.

Free expression is allowing someone to show a glimpse of identity. It allows a fully unapologetic soul to do what they need for themselves. It allows them to feel safe in their skin without feeling unprotected by the government. People can find love, respect, and acceptance for themselves when they are safe enough to express themselves.

When I am looked upon, some people see a quiet girl-boy who can't make up his mind. There is an overwhelming fear I possess when I want to express myself the way I need to. Free expression is a necessity. A basic human right. And for people like me, it's a form of survival from ourselves and our poor dysphoric minds. Our bodies don't fit the way we feel they need to be.

Now there are barriers. Now there are bans. I am a boy with the physical embodiments of a woman. And this country- my country is trying to separate and keep their kids away from people like me. My own state is proposing to legalize gender-affirming care for kids like me. They are destroying our self-worth, and our ability to express ourselves freely. They are destroying our chances of survival all because of a prejudice they back up with religion.

When I socially transitioned I thought cutting my hair, and changing my name and pronouns would make them see me as a real boy, but I was wrong.

I've learned that expression isn't always about how you look or dress. It's about how you advocate for yourself. It's how you stand your ground and let the world know who you are even if they don't like it. It's about not caring who knows. I show it by walking proudly. I show it by

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wearing the trans flag on my back. I advocate for those who need to see a boy like me. I give a voice to the people who don't yet know how to express themselves.

School makes it hard to express myself. There are rules against people like me. I get harassed simply for being myself. They try to put me in a box. I won't let them. Just because I don't fit into a 'typical' category doesn't mean I'm a nobody. Sometimes my world feels like there's a blanket over my head and my entire world feels suffocated. My life is dark and I am alone.

I am a gentle flower waiting to bloom. I am the last raindrop falling from the faucet. I have confidence engraved in my brain. I have empathy carved into my heart. I have love stamped in my soul, and I understand that I am different. I am an artist. I am expressive in every art form I desire to create.

I am a poet in the sense that I have a weakness for metaphorical simplicity. And a craving for deep messages welded from strung-along thoughts. I am a puppet in the world of every master of the marionette. The ventriloquists have me wrapped around their fingers. I am a mime, silent and misfortunate. People's hate locks me in my soul and I feel powerless and afraid. From their words, I feel that I am a quiet burden of sorrow.

But, no- I am loud! I am a shooting star. I am a jack-in-the-box waiting for the right moment to burst with personality and excitement. I am still me. I am blossoming like a springtime daisy, unapologetically ok with myself. I won't stop showing who I am even if someone wants to take away my pride.

Free expression is how I can take all the hate I feel against myself, and use it to give others a voice. To show people that the longing for love and acceptance can be done. Where the world can finally see their stripes, and they finally feel like who they are is enough, because who they are is perfect and worth celebrating.

Free expression can save the lives of the fallen and worlds of the broken. It will let them live without feeling the political forces of the hateful people trying to ban them from existing.

If we can freely show our stars the broken can happily breathe without a blanket darkening their world. We will defeat hate and express ourselves fully without fear of the law. So please, don't be afraid to express it! If we continue to stick up for what we believe in we will be seen and we will show the world, and this country how brave and courageous we are.