

Make a Difference

BY VERONICA NULL

Why were the 13 colonies so passionate and determined to escape the rule of Great Britain? What was so precious and valuable to these colonists that thousands of them would lay down their lives during the American Revolution in order to obtain it? They wanted what we take for granted on a daily basis—freedom, independence, and the right to have each of their own voices heard. They wanted a say in how things were run; they wanted a vote.

Many Americans forget that it wasn't long ago that the right to free speech we have today wasn't a right at all. Can you imagine just how badly you'd want to have a say in things, if it wasn't allowed? That's the problem today: people have begun to have a lack of care and passion about voting because they take the right for granted. Immigrants from Cuba, who've lived under the oppressive, communist rule of Fidel Castro, know what it's like to live without these rights and freedoms. Just like our ancestors, these immigrants know that what we have here in America is special, and they too are willing to risk their lives just for the possibility of obtaining it—the freedom to speak your opinion and use it to vote.

With the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the 15th Amendment ratified in 1870, the 19th Amendment ratified in 1920, and the 26th Amendment in 1971, just about every citizen of the United States has the right to vote. Now, if we were to momentarily put ourselves in the shoes of African-Americans being beaten and thrown in jail for participating in civil disobedience or women being laughed at and criticized for rallying together—all simply trying to obtain the right of suffrage—more people might treasure the priceless freedoms that are taken for granted.

There are some Americans who acknowledge that they have an opinion, yet feel that their vote is one out of millions and will make no difference. If everyone

realized just how much each of their individual votes matter, together, the American people would be an indestructible force of nature. In 1920, the 19th Amendment to the Constitution had to be ratified by 36 states in order to be adopted. In Tennessee, the decision came down to a state legislator named Harry Burn, who'd previously said he would vote against suffrage. He wound up casting the 49th and deciding vote. The decision on whether women should be allowed to vote or not came down to one vote in Tennessee, so how different would history be had Harry Burn not thought his one vote mattered?

In the end, my vote may count as just one actual vote, but combine that vote with hundreds of thousands of other voters that share the same values and passions as me, and you have yourself a force to be reckoned with. Don't ever think your vote holds no power or importance because, contrary to popular belief, it does. **TBJ**



2013-2014 State Bar of Texas President Lisa Tatum with Veronica Null, who placed first in the editorial contest.

Many Americans forget that it wasn't long ago that the right to free speech we have today wasn't a right at all. Can you imagine just how badly you'd want to have a say in things, if it wasn't allowed?