



A 21ST CENTURY DEFINITION OF FRATERNAL PATRIOTISM

The way that we define and demonstrate patriotism must be different than when this Value was originally conceived. Our international organization and vision demands a definition that emphasizes humanity over national identity. So, from the moment we are introduced to patriotism as fundamental to making “our nation the land of justice, freedom and opportunity,” we should focus on the protection of those basic, universal rights and values.

Patriotism is unique compared to our organization’s other values because it reflects both attitude and action. A person who exemplifies silence, charity, purity and honor has built a strong foundation to practice patriotism. Patriotism is loyalty, commitment and reverence. A patriot understands his role in the family and community, and carries himself with a sense of purpose.

We should understand patriotism as a form of active citizenship. Active citizenship includes five traits that, when performed in concert, will help us to build a better, more conscientious, more capable world. These traits are:

- Critical independent thinking
- Learning to value differences
- Strong work ethic
- Community service
- Self-Worth

Independent thinking is not solitary thinking, or simply having an opinion. It demands an active pursuit of knowledge, the attention of a mentor, a genuine curiosity and the willingness to learn. It is more than just going along with others’ popular ideas.

Learning to value differences requires direct observation, dialogue and patience. In order to value difference, we have to discern difference. Some ways to enhance this are to change your daily routine, engage a stranger in conversation, study abroad, take your three-day weekend to travel, attend a new place of worship and ask more questions.

Patriotism requires the dedication, commitment and a strong work ethic. Patriotism is being accountable and not being overcome by laziness and excuses. It is the driving force behind our belief that anything is possible within the scope of human endeavor.

Whereas charity provides us with a guiding character of generosity and a general altruistic commitment; Patriotism connects that philosophy directly to the community where we live. It takes charity one step further, knowing that we do not just give our time and treasure for the sake of helping others, but we do so to intentionally promote the well-being of our community which we are intimately bound to.

Self-worth challenges the patriot to see where he can best improve his community, whether local, state, national or international. Through self-examination, one can determine how you can best devote commitments to contribute to exemplify virtues that make the world better. It challenges you to stand up for freedom, fairness and opportunity, and to oppose tyranny and selfishness.

Many think of military service as the epitome of patriotism because it can involve willingness to sacrifice, even to the point of death. The parent, the teacher, the activist or the whistleblower can be every part as patriotic as the soldier, and this does not minimize the importance of military service.

Ahead of our 175th Anniversary, we evaluate each value in the context of our organization today. We are an international organization. We now reflect the experience of our multicultural brotherhood. The same principles that Patriots once connected to the U.S. still apply to the world. Respect for others and national symbols, seeking to help the downtrodden, standing against tyranny and for freedom, promoting justice, holding people accountable for actions, willingness to suffer sacrifice for the greater good, working hard to contribute to a better world and reaping the benefits of hard work, openness to hear the positions of others even if you never agree, being a good steward of the world and its resources. These can be applied in many nations or cultures. Patriotism can be exemplified through many examples:

- Writing letters to your local paper or elected officials on current events or issues
- Volunteering in your community, at your school, church, or local hospital
- Hosting debates on campus or circulating petitions
- Attending town hall meetings, school board meetings, civic association meetings
- Registering to vote, then turning out
- Choosing an occupation that makes others' lives better or protects their freedoms

One of our greatest challenges in our 175th year will be moving from differences of opinion that may be strictly academic in nature, to having an obligation to actually correct the narrative. Active citizenship and the practice of patriotism require courage. Many of the patriotic tenets designed to protect freedom and justice for all, are under immense scrutiny. Public trust in government, media and education are at all-time lows.

We are witnessing the effects of decades of moral decay that has allowed corruption to fester and apathy to proliferate in many countries. Partisan politics often supersedes doing the right thing for the people. Patriotism is complicated and controversial because it is so closely construed with political ambition. Many of us continue on with our day-to-day lives seemingly unaffected; you cannot be apathetic and patriotic.

In order to embrace our value of patriotism, we need a restoration of civility. We have to prioritize honor over power. We need to have confidence in our leaders (and must choose the right ones), to have faith in our institutions, a sense of self-worth but also a commitment to a common goal. Patriotism, expressed as active citizenship, is best described by our metaphorical Pinnacle of Fame: always strived for, never achieved. True patriotism is as personal as it is communal.