

Defining Patriotism

True love of country is not just about what we have done in our past but must include a hope and unswerving commitment to what we may yet accomplish for our future (our children and grandchildren). For far too many, patriotism is only measured in the praise of cherished symbols that have come to represent some sort of measure of an individual's love of country. It seems if one does not subscribe to this interpretation of patriotism or if they criticize the government or attempt to change how things are, they are somehow condemned to hate, scorn, or even worse, labeled an unpatriotic traitor. There is a great deal missing from this scenario.

Patriotism is not about symbols . . . it is about understanding the value they represent to create the type of future we all say we want. Alone, these symbols carry little meaning. Without the commitment to honor what they truly stand for, some have taken these precious symbols of Americanism and used them to represent hate and prejudice and exclusion. It is okay to conserve what was and be the care takers of democracy as long as it includes everyone. It is also okay to see Americanism as an ideal, a safe harbor for change and innovation and long as we remember what made this country great! We must be able to both openly support and openly disapprove of our government and each other without one's patriotism or love of country being called into question. After all, isn't this why freedom is so important in this country?

We must work together to defeat those who would separate us with mere symbolism and continue the unfinished work of coalescing our faith and our ideals to continue our journey of reaching that sometimes elusive goal of truly becoming the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA . . . not just in symbolism and words but in the spirit and faith that we can do better than we are doing right now. Through continued commitment and sacrifice, we will find those *"better angels of our nature"*.

Dr. B