

STAFF EDITORIAL

LET FREEDOM RING

— the editorial board voted —

13/6

agree

disagree

Protesters and dissidents shape America into the country imagined by our founding fathers

+BY SAMANTHA JOSLIN

Walk down Main Street America and you will see all of the tokens of patriotism: red, white and blue flags swaying, hats and shirts plastered with our president's mantra, bumper stickers proudly boasting that "I VOTED."

The Oxford Dictionaries define patriotism as "vigorous support for one's country." Americans are raised to feel and express something we flippantly call "patriotism." But does waving a flag make you a patriot? Does casting a vote? Can patriotism be so cheap that a couple of gestures and some vague feelings make you patriotic? Not in my book.

Read the Declaration of Independence. Once you sift through that fancy language and archaic vocabulary, you'll find the ideas that our ancestors literally fought for. The bloody war for liberty is what gave America its inspirational start, and our Declaration of Independence and Constitution alike have guided us from that monumental time on.

At the start of our country, Separatists felt patriotism because of the liberty, freedom and equality they were granting people of all nationalities — this was something that the world had never experienced. However, was everyone really equal? There was slavery from the very start; how could our founding fathers promise equality? Even now racism and discrimination are common in our country. Americans are not patriotic because of what America is; they are patriotic for what America promises and for what it has yet to become.

At first glance, this new generation of millennials may

appear less patriotic than older generations — we may appear not patriotic at all. We complain loudly about America's faults. Surveys by the American National Election Studies (ANES) have shown that we are far less moved by the American flag waving in the sky or by the Declaration of Independence than our parents and grandparents were.

But does that mean that we are not patriotic? Definitely not. We show our patriotism in a different way. We don't love America simply because it is America. We love America for the ideas it represents, the opportunities it promises and the freedom it embodies. Furthermore, we complain about America because these great ideals have not yet become a reality.

Looking back, you will not find a time when all races in America were considered equal, as the Declaration of Independence claimed. The very start of America was stained by slavery; the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 passed because Americans felt that Chinese immigrants were stealing their jobs — sound familiar? Even today, racism and discrimination are big problems.

Although there has never been absolute equality in America, the idea has inspired us for centuries — an idea that we can explore now, an idea that we are exploring.

Young Americans have not known great danger or an imminent threat to their freedom. Maybe that's a good thing. Now, we have the chance to fight the injustices happening within America's borders, not without. We can work out the kinks in our own country, find ways to make America better — to make America the country

that it set out to be, but never was.

In a survey published by the ANES, respondents were presented with this statement: "It is not really that big of a problem if some people have more of a chance in life than others."

While 57 percent of millennials (18-33 years old) disagreed with this statement, only 37 percent of the older generation (68-87 years old) felt the same.

Millennials have a stronger drive to achieve the equality and freedom promised in the Constitution. This is why we protest. This is what America is all about: equal opportunity and equal rights, and the freedom to protest when those rights are threatened. People in America today are not protesting America; they are protesting the lack of Americanism in the country. It's the idea of America that spurred our founders and ancestors on — the concept of freedom and peace. We have a chance to make that idea a reality.

A patriot is defined in the Oxford Dictionaries as "a person who vigorously supports their country and is prepared to defend it against enemies or detractors." Protestors and complainers are patriots, if on a tamer scale than our ancestors who took up arms to give America the freedoms we still believe in. America wouldn't exist if no one complained about unfair taxation, after all. From the outcry of protestors today, the America of our founding father's dreams can be realized. Patriotism doesn't have to be battles and fancy documents. Patriotism is believing that your country can be great, and working to make it so.