

What it means to be an American



"Being an American means being part of a wonderful, multicultural world ... What I find unique about being an American is seeing so many different races every day.

"My school, Ben L. Smith High School (in Greensboro) is an international high school. One day, every year we have International Day, a day set aside to celebrate the different cultures we have at Smith. "I am proud to be part of a big multicultural group. I love to learn about the different cultures that exist in the United States today. I believe ... having so many ethnic groups makes America a very unique country.

I am proud to live in America, a place where people of many races reside."

— Whitney Taylor, 17, Greensboro



"What I like about America is that you have creative freedom. There's creative freedom for all sorts of pursuits.

Everything from fashion to photography to painting to sculpting, so that's really important to me.

I can dress however I want. "Another thing that's really important to me is choices.

Everywhere you go, there are so many options.

There are so many restaurants ... schools, professions. In other countries there are only so many jobs you can have for your gender. In America, we can do all the same things as men except pee standing up. ... "There are so many different types of people (in Greensboro) — different ethnicity, ages, people come from all over.

I'm not from here, but I'm here today, meeting all sorts of people."

— Julie Henderson, 23, Greensboro



Joan Hunt has visited 31 countries, and she lived in England for six years.

She's filled her home with art and furnishings found around the globe, including this painting (purchased in Spain before the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.) "I have friends of all nationalities, races and religions. At times, if necessary, I have always defended America. I cherish and believe in our Bill of Rights. I have always been eternally grateful for the opportunities provided me by

my country. Certainly, I was never embarrassed by it.

"Sadly, I am now. Never before has our country been so divided by hatred and that in itself is self-destructive. If we continue on the same self-destructive path we have been on since 2001, the America I grew up in and loved will cease to exist. ...This world cannot withstand losing the America of our past — and neither can our grandchildren.

They deserve better than this."

— Joan A. Hunt, 70, Greensboro



Patricia Rose calls herself an Army brat. Her father, William Pollock Jr., served two tours in Vietnam. He was 78 when he died in April.

Since then, Rose has sorted through her father's things. In it she discovered, and was moved by, an article about the American flag and how it is folded, and the meaning of each fold. She was given the flag draped over her father's casket after his burial June 16

at Arlington National Cemetery. "To me, it's always been beautiful.

I love marching bands, I love displays of patriotism. "God bless the families who have loved ones overseas and God bless our soldiers and volunteers that have put themselves in harm's way to provide us peace."

—Patricia Rose, 48 High Point



Phil Weaver visited France with a mission basketball team in 1998.

His time there, he says, convinced him that despite recent friction, there is a special bond between Americans and the French.

“Every night at 6:00 p.m., the Champs-Elysees (Paris’ main thoroughfare) is closed for a memorial tribute at the Arc de Triomphe. One night a month, the ceremony includes an American honor

guard. We had been lucky enough to arrive at the perfect moment on the perfect day. ... “Both national anthems were played as the two honor guards marched to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier under the Arc (de Triomphe.)

The U.S. honor guard was comprised of veterans of the D-Day campaign.

I am not certain how affected the others were because I couldn’t see them through my tears.”

— Phil Weaver, 57, Greensboro



“As a young girl of color growing up in Greensboro, the majority race of this city and country did not always make me feel like I was a real part of this country. ... I remember one day being hit in the back of the head with an egg.

They did just awful things. ... I remember seeing the hurt in my parents’ face. “I was blessed with parents, Comey and Frances Enzlow, who devoted their lives to nurturing

and educating my brothers and me into believing that we were truly very special people.

“I have learned in this country that not everyone is going to like me, but I can attempt every day of my life to live a life worthy of respect.”

— Modgie Enzlow Williams, 56, Greensboro, with her mother Frances Enzlow



Alice Jones grew up in Reidsville. She now lives in Greensboro, a mother to two children, grandmother to 5, great-grandmother to one.

"You know, in Reidsville, we grew all of our food. We always had plenty of vegetables, ham, corn on the cob, watermelon. I had to help in the tobacco. I had to walk to (elementary) school, three miles each way. "I just love it (in America.)"

I don't think I would have lived to be this old, if I had not been an American with my freedom and opportunity." Jones says the news these days is sometimes just heartbreaking.

Like after Sept. 11, 2001, and recent hostage deaths in the Middle East.

"Sometimes when I read that, it makes me cry, just killing all those people, and how they killed that (American hostage Paul) Johnson man. I don't know, it just made my heart bleed ... I don't know where the terrorists are, but I just keep on going."

— Alice N. Jones, 69, Greensboro

"I am a 69-year-old grandma ... I had never written a line of poetry until March of this year, had never even read it very much, but God gave me a special blessing this year."



Grace Hill has since written nearly 70 poems, including this excerpt from a piece called "America."

*For America has 50 States, all of them beautiful, too!
We don't have to go out of the USA to find the best,
There's mountains, oceans, castles, vineyards as well as
the rest, Of God's beauty wherever we look, The
scenery is awesome — just like in a book!
And look at our churches — one on every block,
Freedom to be a Baptist, Methodist or a member of any
flock.*

*To live in America is not just a dream, God planted us in
North Carolina, one of the better states it seems.
So many foreigners would like to be us, Living in*

America, and trying to get here is a must!

So what if we have taxes to pay? I'd rather pay them than live elsewhere any day!

— Grace Hill, 69, Gibsonville

*To be an American and the pride I feel, when I see the flag of my country mighty,
rippling in the breeze.*



*To be an American and feel the
pride I feel, hand over heart, a
beautiful anthem, sung for all
to hear.*

*To be an American and feel the
pride I feel, I shout it proudly;
bold and loud even from the
distant shores.*

*To be an American and feel the
pride I feel, my country's cries
of sorrow; beauty, wrapped in
mangled steel.*

*Yes, to be an American and feel
the pride I feel, an American*

strong and mighty born from greatness far and near.

— Ashley Coote, 18, Greensboro



"I think especially about what it means to be an American woman ... In India, brides regularly die as a result of dowry disputes, and infant girls are still being abandoned in China.

Many Nepalese poor still sell their young daughters, and we've all seen the Afghan women in their burkas. "In the year 2004, this is utterly appalling. And it makes me so grateful for myself and for my daughter. ... I think about it all the time because she's such an opinionated little thing.

In so many other places, her little spirit would be crushed before it even had a chance to develop. ... "To know that she can be and become herself, whatever that means, gives me such hope. Oh certainly, people will disagree with her, as they often do with me.

And America itself is far from perfect — we make horrific mistakes. ... "But I can say that wherever and whenever I want. I can write it, sing it, march about it, and have it published in my local paper.

That is the point. To live in a country where diversity of opinion and personality is not only tolerated but sometimes even celebrated is truly magnificent, and it is the seed that someday will become humanity's dream come true."

— Melissa Burris, 39, Greensboro, with her 4-year-old daughter Abby