

A blustering November morning Frederick Douglass is delivering his first abolitionist oration. 2004 in the Persian Gulf and Corporal Jason L. Dunham throws himself over a grenade to save his fellow soldiers, sacrificing his own life in the process. I'm six years old and I hug my father goodbye, not for the last time, as he boards another flight to Iraq. 2018, at 10am I stand and walk silently out of my math class to the flagpole where hundreds of my peers gather to hear the names of the 17 Parkland Florida shooting victims. 2020, I'm taken out of class for sitting during the pledge. 2021, my peers and I are called "anti-American" as we argue in U.S. History. It's the same day and I know I am not anti-American, I am a patriot. A patriot is not one ideology or political perspective; Patriots are those who are willing to recognize the failings of the nation they love and work to improve its flaws to create a better country. 2022, I think back to my own acts of patriotism which may be small and disagreeable to some, but nevertheless, it's 2022 and I am a patriot.

