

My grandfather was not a general or a green beret – he did not receive the Medal of Honor or a Purple Heart but what he did do was risk his life for his country. To make sure the strong tree of America would never fall, he, like so many others planted the roots to the trunk of freedom and democracy to ensure it would one day stretch its generational branches and bear the fruit of the future. My grandfather did this because he thought the future of his nation was more important than his life.

When I asked my grandfather why he joined the war this is what he told me: It was my duty to protect the freedoms of this country as so many others had done before me.

Fifty years have passed since my grandfather fought in Korea to defend this ideal and as distant as that may seem, his dreams for his nation and future hold a significant presence in the lives of Americans today.

Since the birth of our great nation it has been the lives of the soldiers who have defended our country that have allowed freedom to take root and build into the firm foundations of liberty that we entitle ourselves to everyday. Rights and freedoms that so many other nations can only dream about.

But what am I dreaming about? What do I want for my life in the future? We all depend on our government to give us life and nutrients so that we may bear fruit, but what do we want and need for this to happen?

I want an education that will allow me to live a life of work and comfort where the effort I put in is equal to the rewards I receive. I want security and not to be afraid of terrorism and cruelty. But what I need is to have my freedoms represented in my government so that they are never taken away.

But what is my generation doing to become involved in our nation to effect this change? With less than 1% of the United State population in the armed forces and only 49% of my 18 to 20 year olds even registering to vote it is clear that my generation is not recognizing the gifts given to us by the roots of the past. Where has all the commitment gone? If we don't care about our futures and try to make our voices heard then who will?

Am I over-exaggerating when I say no one?

And those freedoms and rights that our veterans have fought so hard to protect and maintain will fall, burned down by the very people they were trying to make a better life for.

But what if I took the pledge inside my heart that my Grandfather took almost fifty years ago. What if I allowed my branch to unite with the trunk of democracy and freedom so that I may spread my limbs out to the sun and give back to the support that has allowed me to reach the place I hold today? And to not stop there but to force my peers to recognize where their liberty stems from and connect with the tree that gives them life. What if it became my duty to protect the freedoms of this country as my grandfather, and so many others, have done before me?

I cannot defend my country as a soldier or influence its future by voting – so how can my voice be heard against the thousands of distractions to make my generation strengthen its branches and support our freedoms?

The answer is that I must use these distractions against them to make them change. Blogs, facebook, youtube, twitter, I will change these sites into the battlefield of a new war to take place, a war not of life or death; but a war for our futures.

I do not know if posting videos or blogs online to get my friends involved in voting and politics will be the perfect solution. But I do know that the things that I want in life, an education, job, and security, these concerns are not only my own but live in the hearts of many of my peers. And if I can use the gift of technology and media to make my generation interested in electing those who will dictate our future lives then together we will have made an everlasting influence on the future of this country.

My grandfather and millions of others have defended this nation's ideals and built a firm foundation for us so that we may live in peace and comfort. These roots have held up the trunk of freedom and democracy when a weaker base might have let it fall. And from this shining beacon new life has sprung, growing as my generations stretches out its leaves toward the sun. But unless we give back to the tree that gives us life there will be no hope, the branches that we have become will snap and fall as the storms of this world test our strength. So we must remember the roots that support us and the tree that allows us to live in the freedom of its strong limbs and we must use this to spread out our arms and involve ourselves in its future. Alone we cannot accomplish this task but together we will shoulder the duty to protect the freedoms of our nation and our country's future. Branches stretched out to the sky and leaves flowing in the wind, our nation will not only survive but flourish under the influence of my generation.