

Rhys Williams

SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

HONORABLE MENTION

Rhys Williams, 15, of San Diego, is an incoming junior at the School of International Studies at San Diego High School. He is fascinated by all things pertaining to the legal system and hopes to one day become a federal judge.

OUR CONSTITUTION: WHAT THE AMERICAN DREAM MEANS TO ME

The American Dream is a powerful idea, one that draws thousands to our country every year. It promises wealth, prosperity, equality, and the hope for a better tomorrow to all who dare to Dream. Some of these people were my family, and some may have been yours. It gave them the strength to succeed, to prosper, and they became shining examples of true Americans. My grandfather was a poor farmer in Mexico, once upon a time. He sold his farm, and he and his family moved to San Diego, set on obtaining a better life for their family. After many years of hard work, he bought a house in Claremont, settled down, and started a family. This family grew quickly, and all throughout their children's early years, they pushed education as the means of success, constantly expressing their happiness at the American education system. This family went on to succeed even further, with members becoming district court judges and attorneys, enforcing the laws and defending the rights of many. My mother, the youngest of their children, went on to work in the San Diego Police Department, and is currently one of the highest ranking civilian positions. The family went from poor Mexican farmers to successful Americans; living in houses they owned, in one of the most expensive cities in the continental U.S.

I think this is exactly what the American Dream is. It is the hope that people feel when they arrive, the desire to succeed, and the motivation to continue this success even in the face of hardships that may seem insurmountable. It is what allows us to continue to succeed not just people, but as a nation. We started out as a small group of British resource colonies, but thanks to the formation of the American Dream, a dream of a better country that we the people were in charge of; we became the strongest country on Earth, financially and militarily. This dream is the foundation that our country is built on, without a doubt. It allows us to stand in the face of adversity, and make changes to the status quo that may not otherwise be made. IN some countries, you cannot speak your mind without sever repercussions, but not in America. The Bill of Rights protects our ability to speak freely, be tried fairly by a jury of our peers, and receive the same treatment as others, regardless of race, gender or ideologies. These and more rights are protected, and allow us freedoms that in other countries are unheard of, and beyond the wildest dreams of many.

These rights are protected the most by our judicial system. In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled that separate schools are indeed, not, equal. This protected the rights set in the Equal Protection clause of the Fourteenth amendment of the Constitution of the United States, and opened the door for an end to discrimination across the country. In 1966, the Supreme Court ruled that the police

have an obligation to inform prisoners of their rights. This resulted in the famous “Miranda Rights” that police must recite upon every arrest, protecting the personal rights of the arrested individuals. In 1974, the Supreme Court ruled that not even the president is above the law, reminding those in power that the country is run by the people. These rulings were all landmark cases, and these rulings all supported the American Dream. The first ruling, *Brown v. Board of Education* began the changes that extended this American Dream to people of all races. The second, *Miranda v. Arizona*, protects the rights of all people who are arrested, and further reinforces the American concept of “Innocent before proven guilty.” The third ruling, *U.S. v. Nixon*, shows that not even the president of the United States can violate the rights of others, lest he be impeached and punished like anyone else.

The American Dream is an ideal unique to this great country. It was the foundation of the country, as well as the driving force behind the success of its citizens. It allowed even the poorest of immigrants to become wealthy beyond what they ever could have hoped for, and to become part of something bigger than them, the greatest country on Earth, the United States.