



## Iowa America 250 Student Contest

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Essay/Poem

Prompt 4: America's Founding Principles

My dad grew up in the Soviet Union hiding his Jewish identity. I have grown up in America, and from the moment I first learned about my religion and ethnic background, I have worn my religion like a proud badge. My friends accept me with my religion. As an eighth grade student, my dad scoured the library for books on his people, finding bits of truth between the pages of propaganda. When I was in the eighth grade, I had my Bat Mitzvah and I had all the books and resources I needed within arms reach. My dad could not apply for the university of his choice in spite of the first place in one of the Moscow Regional Math Olympiad Competitions, because he was a Jew. He had the "liberty" to choose between the University that took Jews, or service in the Afghanistan War. Whereas, I am a high school student narrowing down my college application list not based on my religion, but on comparably trivial matters such as passion, and possible scholarship. These are only a few of the privileges I hold by living in America.

It is through learning about my father's life in the Soviet Union, and comparing his conditions to those of my own in America, have I come to especially appreciate the principles that formed a strong foundation that our nation has extended over time to match new modern parallel expectations. They have guaranteed the advancement of our nation, toward democracy and equal opportunity, exemplified by the progress we've already made. Moreover, as events around the world unfold, I have come to be especially grateful for the "checks and balances" that these principles have on the leaders of our nation. In America, we have a set of guarantees that our liberties will be upheld. Where my father grew up, the liberties of the people were determined by each leader, who had the power to give or take them as they saw fit.

My dad first came to America by chance. His plan was to make a little money, and return home after his post-data research was over. One year later, he couldn't imagine himself willingly going back for good. Life in America was so much better: he had financial stability, the ability to buy himself more than just his food for the month. Best of all, he knew the future children he wanted to have would have much more opportunity, and would be able to live the life he never could have imagined as a child. As we approach the 250th anniversary of our progressive nation, it is time we take a moment to look past the issues and divisions that plague our nation, and come together to celebrate the progress our nation has made, to celebrate the nation we made out of our Founding Father's principles. The nation my father wanted to raise his kids in, the nation we treasure more every year.