

# *Liberty should not be taken for granted*

by Agafangel 'Sonny' Merculief Jr.  
*for the Tundra Times*

In my few years of existence, I've come to gain a great respect for freedom through my personal experiences with it, lack of it and having it back again.

Although one may ask how much respect might be gained in such short time, particularly one of more years than I, I can only say that my possessing a strong upbringing helped to a great extent. Through this I've built a very strong sense of nationalism on this solid foundation.

It sickens me that many nowadays take this liberty, comprised of many liberties, for granted. Many years ago, and quite recently, many men of great

means or meager have banded together to serve our great country and defend its liberty, oftentimes with their very lives.

What is this thing we call liberty? For many it's the right to be oneself; to be free to express his or her own ideas. It intrigues me further to look upon the governments of many other countries, dictatorships as they were called, and reflect on how their people were able to go on living under such tyranny when such a strong example of freedom is set for them by the United States of America.

I spoke of my personal experiences concerning the lack of freedom. I spoke through the experiences of my parents and grandparents who were taken from their island home to pro-

tect them from the Japanese during the Second World War. Ironically, this was done by the government, and it was not very pleasant for the people.

There can be no one person to blame for said injustice and certainly not the ideals of our great country, but it serves to indicate that even our country is not without fault.

Many who were involved have paralleled their experience with the Cherokee "Trail of Tears," another great mistake made by men in power, not by law or decree of our beloved constitution. Although not permanent, the true irony lay in the fact that the temporary protective relocation was totally unnecessary.

The villagers came back to find piles

of cinders where homes once stood; and yet, they loved their country and the liberty they possessed.

How, you ask? The answer lies with the many years the Aleuts were enslaved, mistreated, killed and dishonored by the Russian fur traders. To them the relocation seemed so minute in comparison to what they suffered through, for they were still free and able to rebuild. And, so, they did. Their story serves as a model of loyalty and love for liberty and freedom: America's heritage — our heritage.

*Agafangel "Sonny" Merculief Jr. is a junior at Dimond High School in Anchorage. He is originally of St. George Island.*