

# America is Not a Flag

America is not a flag, no matter how beautiful.  
America is not a song, no matter how stirring.  
America is not a bird, no matter how majestic.  
America is not a line of cars or a brand of tobacco.  
And if you're an American who likes  
Neither baseball nor apple pie  
You're still an American.

America is not a slogan or catchphrase.  
America is not a style of clothing  
Or a way of talking  
Or a particular set of holidays,  
Customs or traditions.

America is not a set of borders  
Or an area of land.  
And should every American move  
To the surface of the moon,  
America would still exist.

America is Americans.  
And the Pledge of Allegiance  
Should be a pledge  
Made directly to your fellow citizens  
Instead of to a piece of cloth  
Or the word *Republic*.

America is your neighbors,  
Your friends,  
Your coworkers and your boss.  
It is the person in front of you  
In the checkout lane  
And the people in the cars  
All around you.  
It's the hero just back from the war  
As well as the criminal who just robbed  
An old man at gunpoint.

America is, was, and always will be  
The *people* of America.  
And America is only as strong  
Or as weak  
As those people.

Flags, songs and birds  
Are symbols of America.  
They are shortcuts that stand for  
“The United States of America,”  
And while they can be helpful  
At the Olympics and sporting events,  
They are not necessary  
And America would continue to exist  
*Just fine* without any of them.

People who hold these symbols as sacred  
Are advocating for a national religion,  
In contradiction to the principles  
Of freedom of religion  
And separation of church and state  
Held so dearly by our forefathers  
And codified in the First Amendment.

America is *a group of people*,  
Ideally all working together  
For their common good,  
Protecting each other  
And helping to ensure  
Everyone’s right to life, liberty,  
And the pursuit of happiness.

And therefore when you burn a piece of cloth,  
Or forget the words to a song—  
Or sing it in an “untraditional” way—  
You do no harm to America;  
But when you burn down your neighbors’ houses  
Or forget that they have rights and feelings,  
Just like you,  
You harm America  
In the greatest possible way.