What is your understanding of freedom?

This may sound like a simple question, but the deep meaning behind it is significant. Freedom is a privilege and not everyone realises that. A thing so self-evident, yet so vital for our existence.

When we look up this word in the dictionary, two definitions come up. The first one says that it is the power or right to act, speak or think as one wants. However, it has not always been that way. Freedom has always been something to fight for and many times it was not successful. In the past, people were forced to submit to different rulebooks and regimes, that often did not include the opinion of the individual. Wars and political conflicts, different religious believes, or the colour of the skin did not allow people to express themselves. Thankfully, things have changed over the past few decades, but sad to say, there are still countries that create an unacceptable environment for their inhabitants. The environment of fear and suppression.

Had it not been for the brave and strong people in the past, the world as we know it would be such a different place now. I would not be standing here as a young and free woman, I would not have the chance to be educated, to say what I truly feel, if the fearless and courageous women before me had been too afraid to speak their minds and had not fought for women´s rights. But it was not just women that suffered in the past. If one did not have sufficient financial security or a social status that was appealing, their choices were limited, including job opportunities, education, and overall life quality.

I am grateful for Human Rights, which allow us to live a happy life regardless of who we are. They include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and many more. The question is, can we put our rights to use? If we are given the power to act, why cannot we change injustice and social stereotypes? If we are given the

opportunity to say something, why do we suddenly feel like our voices will remain unheard? Over the last few years, many organisations and associations have been founded to help with the issues on this topic. It is not an easy task to convince people that everyone should feel safe and free, but their hard work is slowly paying off and we are slowly getting to a place where we should have been much more sooner.

The second definition of this word reflects on the state of not being imprisoned or enslaved. Although it may sound like a completely obvious statement, how often do we feel this way? Whether it is in our homes, jobs, our communities or even in our thoughts, we should never feel tied down and restricted. Society has taught us not to think nicely about ourselves, to doubt our feelings and consider them irrelevant. Topics such as mental health, sexuality, body positivity or race equality has always been taboo. But we have proved the opposite. The most important thing is to feel free in your own body and your own mind, to feel loved, heard and to be surrounded by people that care about you. I hope it is understood nowadays that what we look like, what we believe in and who we choose to love is acceptable. What truly matters is who you are as a person and how you treat others.

However, there is one thing we should take into consideration. Freedom does not mean the loss of discipline. Certain rules must be obeyed in every part of the world. If not, it would only cause anarchy and chaos. Rules and regulations are beneficial and effective unless they are restrictive and unfair.

All in all, I really do believe that we, as a society, have made a huge step in embracing freedom in our everyday lives. Nevertheless, we still have a long way to go. I am staying hopeful for our future and I have so much faith in this generation, which I am a part of, to change the world we live in for better.