

## Welcome Home

### *A Reflective Essay on What the Word "Home" Means to Me*

"Home noun. 1. "Someone's or something's place of origin, or the place where a person feels they belong"(Cambridge English Dictionary). The word "home" itself is characterized as a noun, describing either a person, place, or thing. However, I understand home as a word that embodies each variation of the noun simultaneously. To me, home means the *people* in my life who love and support me. It means the *places* where I feel safe and protected. It means the *things* that I cherish closest to my heart. It means everything. Home is the foundation upon which the entirety of a life is built.

Two of the major gifts you receive from your loved ones, your *people*, are love and support - those are the things that make them your home. Edward Sharpe and the Magnetic Zeros sang "Oh, home, let me come home. Home is wherever I'm with you", words I believe truly illustrate the power your loved ones have to make you feel at home. The feeling of home is the feeling you get when you see that one person that makes the whole world melt away. That hug, that moment, that connection. That joy you feel giving and receiving gifts at holidays, anniversaries, or birthday celebrations. Only when you are with those **extraordinary** people, the ones you love, do you feel the truly world-melting joy. We share and celebrate these moments all out of love, and love can only reside somewhere we can call home. To The Cinematic Orchestra, "[It] is a place where I don't feel alone. [It] is a place where I feel at home". A home is

a place surrounded by those with whom it is okay to take a moment to heal, recover or pause, and where you are supported in doing so. Knowing they have your back and support you no matter what is uncommon in nature, and valued beyond recognition. Guidance and leadership based on mutual respect that sponsors you through the steps of a growing life. Unwavering, unfaltering, unquestionable support; this is what awards your sacred people the unparalleled title of home. Love and support are emotional branches that stem from your people, offering shelter. It can all be represented with simple equations:

Your people = love + support

Love + support = home

Therefore, your people = home.

Home can also be a *place*. From a geographical coordinate to a nook with a book, there is no denying that certain places feel at home. In *The Wizard of Oz*, the famous words “there’s no place like home” were spoken by Dorothy at a moment of desperation, longing, and exhaustion. After an extensive adventure all she desired was to go home, back to the security of family, the solidity of her life, and most importantly the safety of her home. A home is a place that emotionally buffers us from the crazy world that surrounds us. Unique to each person, a home can be found anywhere from a green space, to the kitchen of a friend, or the cottage of a loved one -all places that are home to me personally. A haven, a recovery suite, somewhere to just be; home is safety. We can only really appreciate and know the feeling of a home after leaving it, and “maybe that’s the best part of going away for a vacation - coming home again” (L’Engle, M). Home. It is just that feeling. It fills your whole body, and your world is complete. You are at peace and you belong. You can leave, discover, and journey but you will always find

yourself returning; it will always be there waiting. Your home. Just like during cleanup time in kindergarten when we put our toys back in their home, people too have homes - places where we belong. When you truly cherish the safety and protection offered by certain spaces, it is indisputable that a physical place can feel like home just as much as people.

A home as a *thing* offers an emotional affiliation to the characteristics of a home. When you think of home, likely one of the first things that comes to mind is a house. There is a reason that realtors “take pride in assisting individuals and families with one the biggest decisions and transactions they will make in their life” (Hoffmann, L). Why? That house symbolizes all that is a home and what it means to be home. Becoming that special place holding those special people. The setting for happy memories, the den during hard times. It is the place where it all happens. Its doors welcome residents and guests, its lights watch us grow, and its walls protect us. A house will always be a building, but it can also *be* a home. Humans require home by nature, and we need it with us wherever we go. Think about why kids bring stuffed comfort toys with them to foreign places. It is about that connection to their home - the house in which they belong, and the family with whom they belong. Hugging that stuffie is a reconnection to where they feel safe, sure, secure, settled, and sundered from the bad. It is a piece and reminder of home. Often you cannot physically be at those unique places with our valued individuals, but we as human beings still need to feel the power of home, so these solid and tangible representations are invaluable reminders of this presence.

The journey of our life is founded on the fundamentals of “home”. Each heart-filling hug from the person you missed the most, opening the doors to your childhood bedroom after coming home from school and taking it all in, to bringing a cherished portrait with you to a new

apartment, carrying a piece of home. All of those feelings of love, support, safety, and protection that constitute our life also represent the meaning of home, taking shape in the form of our people, places, and things. Just like a house is built on its foundational elements, our lives rise from the building block of home and all that it means.