

Pride in America

Although America is not a perfect country, "We the People" have formed a more perfect Union. I would go as far as to say arguably that our Nation is the greatest of all times (GOAT). So then, why are so many Americans not proud of their country and what do we have to do to regain their pride?

In the most recent Gallup poll only 38% of adults say they are "extremely proud" to be American. This is the lowest in Gallup's trend, which began in 2001. So how exactly did so many become so pessimistic? Is the United States really so different today than it was 22 years ago? What has changed?



So perhaps so few Americans are proud of their country not because their historical conception of America has changed but because of the current state of affairs, involving deepening political divides, sky-high inflation, rampant crime, and other ills. This record-low level of extreme national pride comes at a challenging time in the U.S. as a pandemic-weary public is struggling with the highest U.S. inflation rate in more than four decades. Many have lost trust in our institutions. Americans of all stripes are increasingly distrustful of government. Pew Research found that just two in 10 Americans say they trust the government in Washington. Every night the evening news features stories that continue to sow outrage and division. Our kids are even being taught in school that America is an inherently racist country. An eye-popping 85 percent of voters say that things are going in the wrong direction for this country.

Americans are known for their optimism. America has come back from these conditions before and will do so again. This nation was founded upon some of the absolute best, most noble principles. And with genius's like George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, and James Madison, to name a few, a definitive document known as our Constitution was forged. These leaders were from different colonies, with different ideas about slavery and Native Americans, but they managed to bond together to forge an independent United States.

The impressive history of American independence was founded by an unshakable faith in American character that these men as well as many others had. Their actions might even be

considered as the seed to the current ongoing outpouring of American beliefs in freedom, equality, and justice.

Again, America is not a perfect country and never will be. Like all nations, it is a collection of human beings, and human beings are notorious for occasionally making bad decisions, being selfish, or otherwise simply blowing it. However, there is a lot right about this country, though often we get so caught up in the rhetoric, that we miss it. Even the most hardened cynics must agree that Americans are afforded some benefits that we take for granted.

Here are a few that if taken to heart and taught to everyone, American will once again be extremely proud of their Nation.

We can agree to disagree. While most modern countries allow freedom of expression, there are millions who live under regimes that view criticism of the current government as a crime worthy of punishment.

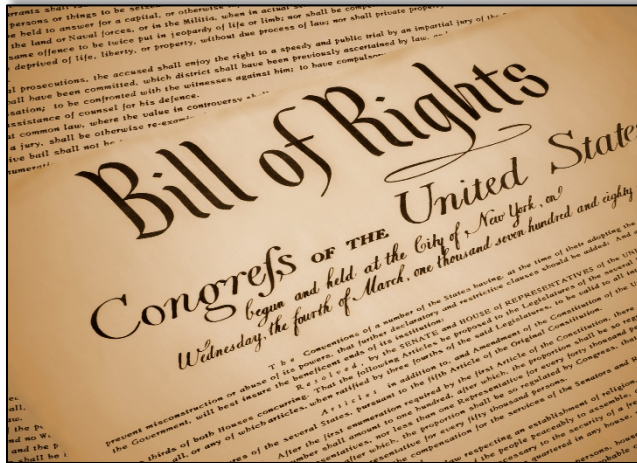


We can question our government without fear of retribution. That's a right that even some Americans would like to abolish in the name of patriotism, but we should never allow it. This abolishment would amount to control of the people just like some communist countries. Americans fought to have their voices heard whether others believed in what they are saying. Now this doesn't mean that you must take what someone is saying as "gospel." You have the right to accept or reject what they are saying and voice your own opinion.

We have freedom of the press. The U.S. has no state-run media, unlike many Third World countries. While the nation's newspapers, television and radio stations could take stronger stands on issues, the news and information that you receive every day has not been filtered through a government censor even though it might seem so. You have the freedom to watch and read any of them and accept or ignore their reporting.

We can worship whomever (or whatever) we choose. Sadly, history is replete with citizens suffering religious persecution and violence at the hands of both their own government, as well as from other religious groups (and, sometimes, even from factions within their own faith.) This has rarely been the case in America, however, where citizens are guaranteed the right to worship as they wish—or not worship at all if that is their desire—without fear of being arrested, persecuted, or shunned by the rest of society, as is so often the case in some countries.

There is no state religion. In fact, our country was founded by individuals who felt strongly enough about state-imposed religion that they packed up their families and set sail on difficult, tenuous trips to a new world that is now the United States of America.



That's why we enjoy the diversity of religious affiliations - not only mainstream Christian, but Jewish, Buddhist, Taoist, and Muslim. You even have the right not to worship or join a cult. Millions of people outside the U.S. do not have that right. No such "heresy" laws exist in this country, and never will.

At the same time, it's imperative to remember that your choice of religious affiliation may not be right for everyone. And you also have the right to change at any time. But you do not have the right to demand others to follow your religion or even acknowledge it as long as they do not deny your right of religious freedom.

We are a wealthy but generous country. Our country was built on capitalism and entrepreneurship. This allows many of us to own cars, homes, and nice clothing - and have enough money for education, vacations, and savings. We are able to be whatever we want to be instead of being told what we will do in life.

The ability of anyone to start a business and become wealthy in this country, as compared to most other nations, is one of the hallmarks of what America is all about. The United States is replete with stories of immigrants who stepped off the boat at Ellis Island, speaking no English and carrying \$10 in their pocket, and who went on to become fabulously wealthy within just a few years. Of course, there are no guarantees that everyone will succeed, as business failures and bankruptcies are a part of capitalism, but in America even if one fails, they have the chance to dust themselves off and start over again if they wish. In contrast, most other countries are so over-regulated and heavily taxed that it is almost impossible to start a business from the ground up, which is why we see so many people coming to this country to set up shop.

Of course, many of America's finest inventors came here from other countries, but that doesn't detract from the fact that it was in America that they found the right combination of freedom and financial resources to do amazing things. Much of this creativity has to be credited to America's entrepreneurial spirit and quest for knowledge, the two elements essential to getting things done.

Granted, we are a wealthy nation, but the amount of aid we provide other countries when compared to the rest of the industrialized world is remarkable. Fully one percent of America's budget or about twenty-six billion dollars annually goes to help other nations around the world (and that figure doesn't include interest-free and low interest loans).

For the most part though, Americans are a generous lot who are among the first to come to the rescue when disaster or famine strikes, not just with taxpayer dollars, but with private relief efforts as well.

We are a literate nation. Oh, there are about a dozen countries with higher literacy rates than the U.S., but if you consider that 97 percent of American adults can read then that's pretty impressive. Sure, there are countries that have a slightly better literacy rate, but this proves that our schools are still teaching young people how to read.



Now, we need to ensure that they leave school with the necessary skills to succeed in the workplace and the rest of society.

We are the world's leader in culture and entertainment. The impact of American music, literature, and entertainment on the cultures of other nations cannot be underestimated. When people turn on their television sets in Abu Dhabi, South Korea or Brazil, chances are they're watching an American sitcom or drama that has been dubbed into their language; when they turn on their radios, or plug in their iPod, there's a pretty good chance they're listening to an American singer or musician; when they go to the movies, it's often an American film they're going to see.

We have also co-opted such overseas creations as tennis, symphonic music, poetry, drama, salsa, dance, and fiction and put our distinct stamp on them.

This has had the effect of spreading Western concepts of freedom and personal liberty around the world, igniting democratic movements, and making America a driving force for change—especially among the young. Despite a lot of America bashing over the decades, apparently people still like what they see, which is why so many are willing to risk deportation and, in some cases, even imprisonment, to come here.

We are the defenders of democracy. America's willingness to defend democracy and prevent oppressive regimes from expanding their totalitarian rule around the world, often at great cost in

terms of lives, resources, and money, is one of the hallmarks of America. Its willingness to take the lead in defending democracies whenever they are threatened and of getting involved in humanitarian efforts, even when they were not to our advantage to do.

It doesn't always end in success, of course, but the willingness to stand up to tyranny and oppression is unique among nations throughout history, who have oftentimes been all-too willing to turn a blind eye to genocide and oppression if it weren't in their strategic interest to get involved. Yes, we've been burned a few times in the process and, unfortunately, have been willing to prop up oppressive, anti-Communist regimes over the years but, for the most part, America tries to get it right.

We are a diverse melting pot of culture. With rare exception, all of us have ancestors who are not native to this continent. Many of our descendants came here to achieve a better life for their families.



America's historic role as a melting pot of many diverse cultures is unique among nations on the planet, who tend to naturally segregate their populations according to race and religion. As a result, people today, of many different ethnic or religious backgrounds, proudly identify themselves as Americans. Meanwhile, in some other countries, people still identify themselves according to their culture, language, religion, or ethnicity.

This process did not come easily or quickly, of course, for the natural inclination of human beings is to shun those outside of "the tribe," but because of the unique character of this country, such divisions proved to be impractical, and they eventually fell by the wayside. This was most fortunate; consider what the history of this country would have been like had it broken into numerous nation-states based on ethnicity, religion, and culture. Most likely there wouldn't even be a United States today, but a plethora of small and mid-sized countries much like we see in Europe, with all the strife such divisions naturally manifest.

This melding also has the advantage of making American society a unique blend in which each assimilated culture brings a touch of itself to the table, much in the same way that adding different spices to a dish creates a unique taste all its own.

Today, our culture has become terribly homogenized, yet it retains a depth and breadth that few others can experience. We can celebrate the diversity of our talents, abilities, and interests, as well as our national origins, religious affiliations, interests, backgrounds, and abilities.

Today, while America may seem like it's the same old red, white, and blue, we are also a country of yellow, brown, green, purple, black, pink, orange, and gray.



We are an evolving Nation. As was said in the first sentence, America is *not* a perfect country. It has made mistakes in the past, and doubtlessly will in the future. What makes it great, however, is its ability to admit when it is in error and change the way it does things. It's not always pretty, and it may take some time to work through the process but, once it identifies something about itself that needs to be changed it eventually does the right thing.

In contrast, many countries to this day not only refuse to make amends to those who suffered under their care, but in many cases even refuse to admit to their sordid past at all, preferring instead to live in a state of denial.

America! What a great place to live.

Thanks, Semper Fi, and Stay Safe !

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