

## **An America Deserving of Pride**

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The American Constitution is one of the longest surviving written charters in the world. Written in 1787, ratified in 1788, and in operation since 1789, this document, created and written by the Founders of what we now call the United States of America, was a leap of faith and a venture into the unknown. When creating the Constitution, the Founders didn't know what to expect - would this document survive the test of hundreds of years or would it fall apart in the same fashion as the Articles of Confederation? Standing here today as a citizen of the United States, one can definitively say that the Constitution has stood the test of time. But if the Founders had been able to look forward into the country that we've built, would they be pleased with the results? I would argue that, in a lot of ways, America is drastically different from anything the Founders could have ever imagined. The Constitution was designed for a relatively small country, composed of only 13 colonies; a country in which enslaved peoples were determined to be only 3/5 of a person in the eyes of the law; a country in which the only people who could actively participate in democracy were white, property owning men. The country in which we now live, where citizens campaign for a more equal society with every fiber of their being, where citizens attempt to create a better, safer, more equitable world for future generations is an America that would've shocked the Founding Fathers to an indescribable degree. But even though America may not adhere to the original vision of the Founding Fathers, by continuing to fight and advocate for our natural rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, we fight for the most important part of the American experiment.

The fight for justice in America has been a continuing uphill battle since its creation. Though in many ways the Constitution was revolutionary in its ideas about equality and justice - those ideals weren't extended to a large part of the American population until much later in history. The irony of Thomas Jefferson's statement, "All men are created equal," said while he owned slaves, is an irony that is interlaced through many of our founding documents. It's hard

to understand how slaveholding individuals could advocate for equality while maintaining that owning another human being was a defensible stance. The failure to protect the five freedoms set forth in the First Amendment, for all Americans, regardless of race or sex, was one of the main failings of the Founding Fathers. But as we've seen our society grow and change, we've seen our Constitution grow and change alongside.

That and the continuing advocacy to uplift the voices of the trod upon and amplify the stories of those who have been disadvantaged by our often unfair society give me hope for the future of this country. The hope for a better future, the want for a better world, those are aspects of our current society that I believe the Founders would look at with pride. This year especially we have had to come together as a nation and rise to unprecedented challenges. With the death of George Floyd, we saw our country, and our world, come together to unite against the racism still ever present in our society. Major cities saw hundreds of peaceful protesters line the streets, individuals making use of their right to protest for the things that matter - every American's equal opportunity. When COVID hit the US, we were yet again presented with a challenge, one that we could choose to face or one that we could choose to ignore. And while there were individuals who refused and still refuse to wear masks even at the continued loss of life to this deadly disease, as a whole, I am impressed by the unity we have shown over the past couple months. These are unprecedented times and I don't think this year is anything any of us could have predicted. But the outpour of compassion we have seen around the country and the strength of spirit in the face of immeasurable hardship is an inherent quality of our citizens that is often overlooked.

If the Founders of this country were able to see the world we have created based on and around their words written however many hundreds of years ago, I don't think they would recognize it as their creation. And I don't know that this is a bad thing. The genius of the Founders was creating a document that would last, that would be amended and reinterpreted alongside the growth and development of our society. And as we look backwards in history we

are able to understand a little bit more about what lays ahead. If we were to look at the United States in 200 years would it be anything like what we've envisioned for our future? What can we do now to fight for that vision? What parts of the world can we question and reinvent to get closer to a future deserving of pride?