Why the Constitution is Relevant Today

Isaac stood over the windowsill, briskly sweeping the shattered pieces of window glass into his hand. The broken shop window left a gaping hole in the building, bordered by shards of glass; the Star of David that once hung so brilliantly from the window was now shattered upon the hard wood floor. A glimmering tear ran down Isaac's face. *Why are we terrorized by these Pogroms? Why can't they leave us alone?* Isaac could only remember the fierce words of his father at the last Pogrom, "This is the last straw. We are moving from Russia to America!" Isaac thought often of America, the land of the free. The idea of America preoccupied his mind day and night. America. The word rang in his ears like joyful music.

America. What makes America the great country that it is? Why is America the land of the free, the home of the brave? Why, for over 200 years, have people from all over the globe come to America to seek freedom and a better life? Where does this freedom come from?

Nearly two centuries ago, the Founding Fathers gathered together to lay the foundation for a new nation and wrote the Constitution. They built this nation on a foundation of freedom and equality, "in order to secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity." The Founding Fathers wrote the Constitution intending to secure liberty for themselves and their descendants. Today, all Americans are those descendants, the posterity. The Constitution is *our* document of freedom. The Constitution gives us liberty and makes America the great country that it is.

After the Founding Fathers signed the Constitution, they wrote the first Ten Amendments, the Bill of Rights, to secure the freedoms of the people for as long as the Constitution remains. The most fundamental of these amendments, the First, guarantees the

people their freedom of conscience; to speak, print, gather, and worship in the way they see fit. Without these rights in the Constitution, the people could be easily subjected to tyranny.

Unfortunately, tyranny is alive and well. Many countries persecute religious denominations; they destroy the property of worshipers, take away their rights, and even kill them for their beliefs. In these countries, citizens have no rights, no freedom to worship, no Constitution to protect them. Yet, America is different. America guarantees its citizens the right to practice their religion in the manner they choose. The Constitution guards against the persecution of religion. For centuries, immigrants have come to America for religious freedom. Even the Pilgrims, the first immigrants to America, sailed here for religious liberty.

The Constitution is a very old document. The Founding Fathers wrote it centuries ago, in a completely different context. Does that mean it is not relevant today and that it cannot apply to present day America? Certainly not!

The Constitution is our foundation. It forms our government, and how we are governed. The fact that the Bill of Rights was formulated hundreds of years ago should not matter. The fundamental rights listed in the Bill of Rights are applicable to all Americans, for all time. It is through the protection of the Constitution that the people of America are to be safely governed. It is through the Constitution that the citizens of America are free. The Constitution is a shield against tyranny. If the people hold to the Constitution and defend their rights in that document, their liberties shall never be encroached.

Amendment 1 of the Constitution states:

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"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

These rights and freedoms, guaranteed in the Constitution, are foremost and fundamental. Because of the Constitution, citizens are allowed to speak freely in public, even if it is against the government and its officials. Because of the Constitution, citizens can write complaints against the government and can distribute them. Because of the Constitution, citizens can gather together and form groups for their own purposes. Because of the Constitution, citizens can worship in any way they wish; they can practice their religion without fear of reprisal. Because of the Constitution, citizens are allowed to act in all these ways without oppression from the government.

The Constitution is the bulwark against tyranny. It is a shield of freedom in the hand of the people. It is entirely relevant today. Let us never forget the Constitution, for it will protect us from oppression and from the government which was established for our security. Our Constitution ensures that the government shall never be perverted into tyranny. As long as the Constitution endures, the freedom of America will endure. As long as the Constitution secures the blessings of liberty, the citizens of America will be secure.

America's past, present, and future are bound and kept free by its Constitution. In short, the Constitution *is* America.

America beckons, *"Give me your...huddled masses yearning to breathe free."*