

Strength in Diversity

From our humble beginnings, America has maintained a level of accountability and transparency unparalleled. Our Founding Fathers fought for the conception of this nation on the very principle that citizens should be allowed to disagree with authority. America's foundation is freedom of expression. In determining the culture of America, founders took a radical approach, although it may seem logical and commonplace to us. The framers of our government decided to celebrate vast array of culture, backgrounds, and perspectives. In most other cultures, especially at that time, uniformity was mandated. Career tracks were set, social norms were rigid, and any deviation made someone an immediate outcast. This fixed way of life fostered a toxic culture in which oppression of whole groups flourished, specifically targeting certain ethnic groups and religions. America, in contrast, did not have a uniform culture, allowing a variety of perspectives a seat at the table of governance. No singular ideology or culture dominated the colonies, putting the young nation in a unique position to create a roundtable of perspectives, holding each other accountable. The colonies had become a beacon of individualism where others sought asylum from oppression and tyranny. Because of the fragmented cultures, each individual brought tradition, genetic variability, and political perspective to the young nation, adding something to American culture. Maintaining this enthusiasm for diversity, America continues to build our own culture which is dynamic and accepting.

Americans do not have a defining feature. We do not look alike, nor do any two families have identical stories or traditions. What does unite us is our collaboration and deep-rooted belief that what makes us different makes us better. Our diversity as a nation makes us stronger. The ability to express our differences, both ideologically and culturally, fostered a culture of acceptance and collaboration. Instead of feeling oppressed and unjustly silenced, America's first amendment gives citizens the ability to contribute authentically and boldly. This outlet eases tension that would otherwise be pent-up and creates further connection to those around us. Outside perspectives may view Americans as lonely because America is not homogenous, and therefore we have no culturally guaranteed commonality with our neighbors. Instead, we use our first amendment rights to create connections around our hidden commonalities. The freedom to express opinions on current event and political happenings gives citizens a peaceful outlet to connect with others and create community around ideology, which ultimately makes American culture one of discussion and respect. Freedom of religion is similar in that there are many religions practiced in America. Religion is at the core of existence for many people and having the ability to freely practice religion fosters a culture of acceptance and allows for community to form around religion.

Creating community and expressing opinions are forms of civic engagement. Culture shapes policy and using our first amendment rights allows for a unified voice to government and decision-makers. The knowledge that our voice is heard and that exercising our first amendment rights by writing into media and legislators or protesting create actual change in policy keeps

America peaceful. These rights facilitate collaboration and expression and America's celebration of diverse thought through these rights unite us as a nation. The diverse viewpoints are also expressed through elected officials. Because diverse Americans vote, diverse Americans are elected, which maintains dynamic problem solving in our government. No other nation has the breadth of perspectives all represented in government.

People of all different backgrounds are welcome to voice their opinion and find their community in America. The freedom to express opinions different from our neighbor allows for discussion and collaboration, as well as accountability at all stages of influence. By celebrating ideological and cultural differences, we create dynamic policies that serve all of America, not just the ruling elite, which is unfortunately the norm in many other cultures. The freedoms acknowledged in the first amendment not only ensure that everyone gets a voice in the governance of our nation, but also bolsters the culture of acceptance and diversity so inherent to America.