

Can the American Experiment Survive?

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Presented by

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Can Our American Experiment Survive?

Forward

Now almost a year and half since my assignment and a world that has been turned upside down with the COVID 19 pandemic, I have taken many twists and turns to produce this paper.

Searching for inspiration and information I've realized that I, like many, am privileged by my race, but not necessarily by my gender. I have taken the privilege of being a white American Citizen for granted. I've trusted that my freedom, privileges and rights along with the rights of others will be protected. Benjamin Franklin warned in 1787 this may not always be the case.

Thanks to Will Clark for the topic. It has opened my mind to greater understanding and an even more steadfast belief in equality. I've come to the premise that the American Experiment represents the American Dream, which likely represents something different for each of us.

To understand the potential for survival, I needed to understand why America was called the "Great American Experiment". After all an experiment is generally an exercise in discovery, testing, modification, and retesting to determine an outcome. I would opine that the the American Experiment is an ongoing effort to be a more perfect nation, with freedom and opportunity for all, even as we continue to define "all".

The formation of the United States of America was and is a unique experiment among other countries and governments. So let's get started.

Can Our American Experiment Survive?

The statement that closes the Declaration of Independence is a testament to the risks taken by our framers and their commitment to ensuring a free nation. It reads, “And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, Fortunes and our sacred Honor.”(1)

In other words, they understood and acted willingly to risk everything to guarantee the rights outlined in the Declaration of Independence. Once they added their signatures to the document, they became traitors to the King of England, further demonstrating the risks they were willing to take for freedom.

The Constitution was ratified in 1788 and amended in 1789 with the adoption of 12 amendments. Ten of the amendments comprised the Bill of Rights and became part of our Constitution in 1791. As evidenced by Constitutional Amendments, our changing society allows for Constitutional change when needed, and so, does not insure a fixed outcome. Unless, of course, we, the citizens give in to authoritarianism and despotism.

We might recall that Abigail Adams implored her husband, John Adams, ‘not to forget the ladies’ as our framers and founders gathered to discuss the formation of an independent government. In those days there was a distinction between the rights of men and women.

(1) M. Spaulding, D.J. Robb (2002) p. 1 *Our Sacred Honor*, The Heritage Foundation.

This distinction was, of course, based on gender and the belief that a man's rights were bonded primarily by his liberties and especially his political liberties, while women's rights resulted from privileges and duties and not political in nature.

According to Rosemarie Zagari's article which appeared in the *William and Mary Quarterly*, April 1998, a group of young men gathered in Harrisburg Pennsylvania on July 4, 1804, to offer a toast to Independence and women. The toast was simply stated. "To the rights of men and the rights of women- May the former never be infringed or the latter be curtailed." (2)

I believe this hints at the bifurcation of rights made between mens rights, women's rights and the rights of black people, indigenous people and immigrants.

Women's equality, not to mention a women's right to vote and civil rights for people of color, were not part of these early debates for the most part. There were, however, early visionaries who supported freedom for slaves.

Our more perfect union was the result of many. Still, the 12 key figures were John Adams, John Dickinson, William Findley, Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, Thomas Jefferson, Richard Henry Lee, James Madison, Thomas Paine, George Washington and James Wilson. (All white men and most of European descent.)

(2) *William and Mary Quarterly*, (April 1998) 3d Series, Volume LV, Number 2

So committed to their effort and the importance of a unanimous agreement, those committed to abolishing slavery were willing to compromise their positions in favor of forming a free Nation first, thinking that abolishing slavery would be dealt with later.

The American Experiment's unique attributes acknowledged that the creator has bestowed individual rights and that those rights are aligned with the basic laws of nature and God. Even so, they recognized the shortcomings of humankind, their attraction to wealth, greed and the potential for abuse of power. They created a Constitution that limits government power through the separation of powers in the legislative, executive and judicial branches of our government, allowing for a system of checks and balances knitted together for the benefit of a free country.

There are differences between a Republic and a Democracy. For clarification, people are sovereign over a Republic and permit representatives to make laws, compared to a Democracy where a majority of people give authority to elected representatives. The United States is a hybrid. Democracy and Republic are often used interchangeably.

Today's partisan politics challenges the importance of the separation of powers and the legislative, executive and judicial branches' individual responsibilities. Often, the lines become blurred along party lines, and the recent death of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg has caused concern for the future of the Affordable Care Act and Roe V Wade.

On Saturday, September 26th of this year, President Trump nominated Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court; Barrett is a conservative jurist from Indiana who once clerked for Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia. Her nomination is the second closest supreme court nomination to an election in our history

In July 1848, the Declaration of Sentiments was introduced at the Seneca Falls Convention. It was written as a parallel to the *Declaration of Independence* for women, and recognized the rights of women as mostly equal to men. However, not in matters of government or the existing patriarchal society. It listed 16 areas including property rights, divorce law, education and employment as inequitable but did not include suffrage because it was considered too controversial. The *Declaration of Sentiments* was signed by 68 women and 32 men, including the abolitionist and freed slave, Fredrick Douglass. The writing of the “Sentiments” is credited mostly to the suffragette, Elizabeth Cady Stanton. (3)

Fast forward 132 years for women to gain the right to vote and 176 years after the Constitution’s ratification to see Civil Rights passed.

Freedom is the cornerstone of the Great American Experiment. Those who came willingly, came with thoughts of freedom from religious oppression, lords, kings, queens or dictators. A government by the people for the people, but not all people, just certain people.

(3) Wikipedia, wikipedia.org, *Declaration of Sentiments*

The framers set forth the guiding principles, ideals and values of a free but organized government, offering liberty and freedoms never previously realized. An organized republic governed by the people and the people's trusted representatives chosen to represent the people. Self-governance with freedom as the foundation to form a free nation.

Both the premise, and the promise of this new and unique form of governance is an extraordinary accomplishment. The framers developed the structure and framework of a free society that has, so far, withstood the test of time, civil unrest, world wars, and politics, all the while, trusting that the people would provide the stewardship to keep it.

Today, our founder's vision continues to give people from all corners of the globe and here at home the hope and expectation of equality and freedom, regardless of race, creed, color, gender, or status.

There are, however, some who believe their freedom and privileges supersede the rights and privileges of others. Our founders warned us about this, and put in place the three branches of government ensuring that our republic would not fall prey to a dictatorship or monarchy.

The freedoms and rights guaranteed by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights were given to an acceptable society of the day. As we all know, it has taken reforms and new laws to move our American Experiment toward greater equality, as evidenced by voting

rights for women in 1920, civil rights laws in 1964, voting rights in 1965 and the Fair Housing Act of 1968. This year, as we celebrate the 100th year of women's constitutional right to vote, it is noteworthy that the right to vote did not give women the right to hold public office or serve on juries.

Society looked very different in 1786, and yet, our founders gave incredible gifts to future generations. They provided the inherent advice, guiding principles, and governmental distinctiveness to change and move toward that 'perfect union' as the country continued to evolve.

One example of such evolution is the Equal Rights Amendment or ERA. First proposed in 1923, ERA has not been ratified in all 50 States. Virginia was the 38th state to ratify ERA on January 15, 2020. Of the states that did meet the 1982 deadline for state ratification, Alabama is the only state not to introduce ERA legislation. This year ERA finally met the standard for certification and ratification (Article V). However, the Constitutionality of ERA is disputed on both sides, with three lawsuits filed, two arguing for ratification. The other argued that the ratification process is dead because it did not meet the original ratification process and deadline.

We will have to wait to see these lawsuits resolved and if ERA becomes the 28th Amendment to the Constitution. By the way, Indiana was the 35th state to ratify the ERA.

Roe v Wade, discussions continue as a moral, religious, and social imperative. The United States Supreme Court ruled to protect a pregnant woman's right to choose an abortion without fear of government restriction or interference in 1973. Confirmations of opposing conservatives by the Senate have put Roe V. Wade in danger of being overturned, even though, according to Planned Parenthood's website, 73% of the population oppose overturning Roe V. Wade. As such, women continue to fight for the freedom to control their bodies and reproductive health. In 2019, New York passed its Reproductive Health Act which is hailed as one of the strongest protections for abortion access in the country, while many states continue to pass abortion restrictions. The impact of the death of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg on Roe v Wade is yet to be realized.

In 1860, the U.S. Census reported over 250,000 free black people living in the South. Although, it is believed many freed Black people were not counted. Sometimes Black freedom was granted upon the death of a slave owner. Others gained freedom because they were old and unable to work, some were freed because of their loyalty or escaped under fears of what would happen if they were caught. (4)

When a slave owner voluntarily freed a slave it was known as "Manumission." Some slave owners set slaves free as the abolitionist effort spread and some slaves gained freedom by paying for their freedom. Emancipation was the act of being freed.

(4) www.USHistory.org

Even when black individuals were freed, early laws prohibited teaching blacks to read. Black people could not possess firearms or preach from the Bible. Some laws did not allow a Black person who left the state for an education to return to their home state. But perhaps the greatest suppression of all was a Black person was prohibited from testifying in court to defend him or herself.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was landmark legislation that prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, sex, religion or national origin. It opened the country's public spaces and schools to all people and made employment discrimination illegal. Title I of the act guaranteed equal voting rights. Title II guaranteed equal access by prohibiting segregation in public places. Title VII prohibited sexual discrimination, discrimination by schools, trade unions and employers doing business across state lines and with the federal government. Title VII also established the EEOC as a government agency. (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission)

Even so, the path to equality continues to be a struggle for Black and Brown people. In Adam Serwer's article, in the October 2020 issue of *Atlantic* magazine, he writes about the first awakening in 1868 when "white northerners were shocked and stunned by the terror against emancipated slaves in the South. Free men were dragged from their homes, beaten and run out town", as was the case with George Ruby. The latter was run out of Louisiana and ended up in Texas where he experienced more bias and racism. Some free men signed contracts with their employers that didn't allow them to look for other or better jobs.

President Andrew Johnson, (17th President) Lincoln's successor, felt emancipation and equal rights were an insult to white men. He supported "Black Codes" to control Blacks and, was impeached but acquitted by one vote of his abuse of power crimes for not implementing Reconstruction policies.

Historian Eric Foner, has written, according to Serwer's *Atlantic Magazine* article, that "500 mostly, southern white men were indicted in 1865-'66, for the murders of Blacks". There were no convictions or trials, and no one was held accountable for those murders. Foner cited one northerner as saying "Murder is considered one of their inalienable rights." (5)

Serwer's article mentions several accounts of abuse, such as, "In 1866, the New Orleans police joined in an attack on republicans organizing to amend the state constitution, killing most of the delegates. In Memphis that same year the police used a conflict, with black Union veterans started by the police, to justify shooting at Black veterans and civilians. The killing spree went on for days. In the case of Lucy Grimes, her former owner demanded she beat her own son. When she refused, he had her beaten to death. No one was convicted in these cases because the courts would not hear Negro testimony." (5)

Is it any wonder that black people are wary and suspicious of police intent and what they believe is "a reckless disregard for their lives"? (5)

(5) Serwer, A., "The Next Reconstruction", (October 2020), p.39–40, *The Atlantic Magazine*

History tells us this not new territory for our country. Police departments across the country have come under fire for systemic racism and the deaths of Black citizens.

In addition, gerrymandered district maps are used to support political interest and oppress voting rights. Today, we are experiencing another effort to suppress voting in the midst of a global pandemic. Recommendations to socially distance, and limit public exposure as much as possible are being abandoned due to efforts to challenge the efficacy of Absentee and Voting by Mail.

We have come a long way from the days of voter registration tests, rules for a voter's personal identification, rules for transportation options to voting polls, and limited poll and voter registration hours. All worked to suppress voters.

One might think that after 244 years this would be a non-issue. Sadly, we continue to experience efforts to keep people from exercising their responsibility and right to vote, guaranteed by the Bill of Rights' Fifteenth Amendment.

The Fifteenth Amendment was proposed in 1869 and ratified by proclamation of the Secretary of State in 1870, which states that the right to vote will not be denied or suppressed "on account of race, color or previous condition of servitude."⁽⁶⁾

As Americans, we are guaranteed the underlying ideal of freedom-freedom conditioned on the freedom of others. It is not unconditional freedom, but the freedom to work hard to achieve success, however we may choose to define that success

(6) Roddey Holder, A., and Roddey Holder, J.T.,(1997) p. 99 *The Meaning of the Constitution, Third Edition*

individually. As reported in *Atlantic Magazine* and written by James Adams in his 1931 book, *Epic in America*, “life should be better, richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement regardless of social class or circumstance of birth.” (7)

How did we come to this question: Will the American Experiment Survive? Perhaps the answer is driven by changing attitudes; and more liberal and younger generations of activists and the many communities that remain relatively segregated by geography, population and leadership. Or, perhaps our founders were too lofty and ambiguous in their expectations of future generations. Maybe it is because some of us are more literal than those who are conceptual. Maybe it is our conservative roots or our liberal ideas of a safer, richer and more vibrant world.

Could it be that current-day needs and expectations for governance and political change are far from the needs of our representative government of those early days? Maybe it is because we don't teach our history accurately, or require civic classes in our schools.

Perhaps it is really about white fear and a mentality that different is less? From the time Europeans and American Europeans struck out to take over lands and territories, it is no secret they brought terror and practiced barbaric acts.

(7) Barada, P., (28 July 2020), Greensburg Daily News

Is white fear then, based on the fear of loss of white power or perceived white superiority, if people of color have equal rights and a leadership foothold in society? Is this deep-seated fear shame for past, and present crimes against people of color, indigenous and immigrant people? Is this the ongoing cause of systemic racism? Is white fear seated in fear of loss, shame, and a sense of being better than?

Glossing over previous mistakes, our history and treatment of Black people, Native Americans, Women, Children and LGBTQ individuals does not build trust and understanding among these populations.

Whatever one might think, our founders provided the framework to be the greatest nation on earth. This requires each of us need to understand our past truths and biases and take responsibility to work to protect the rights and privileges of all Americans. Anything less marginalizes our country and our integrity at home and on the world stage and will result in social and economic decay. I believe it is a moral imperative to stand up to the ideals of the framers and the expectation of America.

The winds of change are blowing hard from environmentalists, women, people of color, young people, LGTQB people and people with disabilities who no longer accept that equal rights and the right to pursue life, liberty, and happiness does not apply to them.

Movements like the Black Lives Matter, the Women's March and #Me Too, Occupy Wall Street, the Fight for \$15, Dreamers, Tennant's Rights, Voting Rights, the Green New

Deal, the March for our Lives, Indivisible, Democratic Socialism, and public and workplace accommodations for people with disabilities are reminding us, sometimes painfully, of our past history and present-day failure to deliver on our founding ideals for all people.

There have been 11 key movements over the past decade that have resulted in nationwide activism supporting change. I'd like to take a few moments to share them with you today as reported by Peter Drier in the January issue of the *American Prospect*.

Occupy Wall Street began in 2011 and spread to hundreds of cities. While the movement disappeared, it promoted the idea of narrowing wealth equality or the one percent versus the 99 percent. Targeting Wall Street, the super wealthy and corporate America created an American conversation about economic inequality, corporate greed and how the super rich have damaged the economy and our democracy. Today, more Americans believe that Wall Street banks and big corporations have too much political power and influence and that they do not pay their fair share of taxes. Occupy Wall Street is responsible for altering and continuing this national conversation. (8)

Black Lives Matter was a hashtag that started as a result of the murder of Trevon Martin at the hands of a self-appointed neighborhood vigilante. This movement has become the backdrop of a national campaign against systemic racism against black people and people of color like Michael Brown, Eric Garner, George Floyd, Breonna

Taylor, Andres Guardado, Rayshard Brooks and Jacob Blake, shot in the back seven times by a police officer. Through BLM, Americans have become more aware of police abuse, bias, and black people's treatment, particularly black males. BLM is trying to pressure political candidates and community leaders to address racial disparities and treatment.(8)

Women's March and #Me Too were the largest protests in our history, with over four million participating across the country. According to the Internet, Dana Fisher reported in her book, *American Resistance*, that 58 percent of those participating contacted a public official and 40 percent attended a congressional town hall meeting. We all witnessed what happened during the 2018 midterm elections with a significant increase in women voting. The arrest of Harvey Weinstein and firings and/or retirements of high-profile men in politics, business and industries across the country, challenged predatory behavior, changed workplaces for all women and has helped grow the #ME Too movement. (8)

Dreamers, children of immigrant parents born in the United States or brought to the US as young children and regard the US as their home, organized to demand treatment as full American citizens, leading to the Dream Act which passed the house but not the Senate. The activism of the DREAMERS inspired the passage of the California DREAM Act, which led to the Deferred Action for Childhood Act or DACA. The Trump administration eliminated DACA and expanded deportations resulting in more opposition to Trump's policies. (8)

Tenants' Rights result from competition between middle-class families who can't afford to purchase a home and low income families dependent on rental housing. As a result, landlords raised rents, and renters had to spend a higher percentage of their income on rent. Renters across the country refused to pay their rents, demanding rent controls, eviction protections, and funding for affordable housing and rental housing. New York City and the State of California have enacted tenant protections and laws that limit rent increases. (8)

Voter Rights. Reverend William Barber II, provided leadership to the weekly "Moral Monday" protest against Republicans taking control of both houses in the North Carolina legislature and Governor's office. This movement spread to other states and became part of a campaign to restore voting rights and increase voter turnout among African Americans. (8)

The Green New Deal started with student activity demanding their college institutions divest stocks in corporations that profit from the use and possible abuse of fossil fuels. Since its inception, more than 1150 governments, universities, pension funds, and others with more than \$11 trillion in assets committed to divest holdings in fossil fuel. This led to a movement to stop construction of the Keystone XL Pipeline, elevating the need to address climate change and jobs, which led to the Green New Deal. The idea to reinvest public and private resources in energy-efficient jobs, creating green industries and public facilities. (8)

March for our Lives is the result of a gunman taking aim at students and teachers with an automatic rifle at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland Florida in February 2018. The shooter killed seventeen people and injured seventeen others. Since the mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School, where 27 children and teachers lost their lives in 2012 there have been over 2178 mass shootings, 2,458 people killed and over 9,000 wounded. Resulting in an increase in young voters and a congressional win for Lucy McBath, whose 17 year old son was shot to death at a gas station by a white man who complained about loud music. McBath had already decided to seek the seat after the shooting at Parkland in February 2018. (8)

Indivisible: A Practical Guide for Resisting the Trump Agenda is a movement started by former congressional staffers in 2016. The purpose was to help progressives take action against Trump's "bigoted and anti-democratic" agenda, similar to what the Tea Party tried to do against Obama. After the document went viral, more than 3,800 local 'Indivisible' chapters were established, with one chapter in every congressional district by the end of year. Indivisible is responsible for training and mobilizing new activism and organizations like "Swing Left", and "Sister District Action Network" and responsible for recruiting activists in crucial battleground states. More than 116 million or 49 percent of eligible voters showed up to vote during the mid-term elections, the highest turnout since 1914. Indivisible chapters continue to grow as the 2020 general election gets closer. (8)

Democratic Socialism supported heavily by millennial and younger voters without the Cold War's historical perspectives. They generally support ideas that were not popular in the past and popularized by Presidential candidate, Bernie Sanders and resulted in the election of Democratic Socialist Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York and Rashida Tlaib of Detroit to Congress. These young activists support universal health care, tuition-free college, a \$15 an hour federal minimum wage, and more seats on company boards, green jobs, environmental controls and other ideas that are becoming more popular. (8)

The Fight for \$15 started as support for a \$15 an hour minimum wage in 2010. The minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour has not increased since 2009. A Brookings Institute report released in November 2019 found that 53 million people aged 18 to 64 or 44 per cent of all workers earn low hourly wages. According to the National Employment Law Project, 24 states and 48 cities and counties will raise minimum wages in 2020. It also reported that Walmart, McDonalds, Disney and Bank of America have or will raise their pay scales. (8)

The common thread here is on people's rights, and equality. Whether or not we all agree, these movements are trying to make people's lives, and circumstances better. Narrowing the wealth gap may help reduce health and social problems and increase economic growth. Reducing and eliminating systemic racism is critical to preserving and improving our American way of life. The distrust on all sides is a weakness that can

(8) Drier P., The Decade in 11 Movements, *The American Prospect*, 8 January 2020, www.prospect.org

allow the distribution of mis-information, lies and create an opening for our adversaries to sow doubt and division. Equal rights for the other half of our workforce and improving the work place by eliminating predatory behaviors should be everyone's expectation. Educating future generations is a responsibility that we owe our communities and country. This includes DREAMERS, who are good for our economic growth and our democracy.

Protecting and creating affordable fair housing and eliminating exclusionary restrictions and zoning laws will ensure affordable, safe and healthy housing choices. Actively recognizing and eliminating efforts to suppress voter rights is fundamental to our freedom.

I believe in efforts to preserve and protect our environment through clean energy, green job creation, environmental regulations and emission controls, providing safer and more equitable workplaces, stopping gun violence, raising the minimum wage so more workers and their families can survive and thrive and participate in our economic success and improve our reputation on the world stage.

If these movements are successful, the potential for new laws and changes will be the result of citizen-led efforts and influence that supports individual pursuit of life, liberty and happiness. It expands the rights promised in our Constitution to more people.

If we do not look outside our self-interests, we will continue to divide into chaos. Our ideals, governed by fair and equitable laws and social norms, will continue to be eroded and our democratic values forgotten.

The Government that our founding fathers crafted was the first written constitution by the people, for the people and the first to embrace people's rights under a Bill of Rights that set out individual rights, provided for the separation of Church and State - ensuring religious choice and growth by recognizing States rather than settlements or colonies and an independent judiciary to review and provide oversight of legislation and laws of the States and Nation.

We generally accept that the Constitution is under the watchful guardianship of the Supreme Court. This guardianship is in addition to ensuring equal justice under the laws of the land, with obligation to no one. As previously mentioned, the recent nomination of Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court is the 2nd closest nomination to an election in our history. Senate hearings are scheduled, and Senate Majority Leader Mitch Mc Connell plans to bring the nomination to a vote by mid-October. The recent Covid 19 outbreak including several senators and the President could delay the process. Even so, there is concern the appointment will put Roe v Wade and the Affordable Care Act at risk, especially for people with existing medical conditions.

So, can our “Great American Experiment Survive?” I believe it can as long as its future is in the hands of the people. Elected officials can not abdicate their responsibility or act in ways that supports Daniel Deznier’s assertion that they are “not inclined to check his power”. (9)

We all have a stake in inequality. We have a responsibility to hold elected officials accountable. We have a specific need to hear and respect our differing views and trust in each other that we are united in our belief in America and the right to live successful lives as we define them individually.

To help conclude my comments, I asked my friend, City Councilwoman, Sharon Tucker the simple question, “Do you think the American experiment can survive?”

This is what she shared with me.

“Since the experiment never really took women or other ethnicity's (white men only) into account, its survival would depend wholeheartedly on its ability to evolve and become inclusive. I agree that the original spirit of the movement was to create a type of Freedom and equal rights, but doing so it created room to imprison.”

“The thought that all men are created equal continues to be challenged when equality varies based on the man. African Americans are constantly reminded of their exemption from the "Experiment" by the disparity of justice.”

“Although I believe our democracy has to be protected, I also realize that democracy and our Republic performs differently based on ones birth right.

(9) Deznier, D., July 3, 2018, *Washington Post*

Those of us who are non-white men, still believe in an opportunity to become equal, which keeps the experiment moving forward.” (10)

We know, fundamentally that our rights do not supersede the rights of others, although we don't always act as though that is true. It is essential to open our minds and our hearts to understanding, and we must face our past truths to create a stronger country and healthier communities for future generations.

We are not a perfect nation, of which we are reminded often by our critics abroad and at home. We say, we believe that all men and women are created equal by our creator and entitled to certain unalienable rights. Do our actions, laws and attitudes support this or have we given freedom and rights for every one a convenient pass? I believe the time has come to fulfill the Great Compromise's expectation and ensure freedom and equality for all. The separation of powers in America's three branches of government provides the checks and balances for the equal and fair application of power.

Unfortunately we have witnessed over the last decade or so, significant declines in legislative and executive traditions, separation of powers and objective debate. All the while, public indifference continues to increase. If this trend continues and the balance of powers continue to shift, and more authority is vested in the executive branch and supported by a singularly focused legislature, our Great American Experiment could come to an end.

(10) Tucker, Sharon, (11 September 2020) via email

Responsibility and success are in our hands, the country's current guardians. Our chosen representatives are selected to represent our views, not their personal interests, personal religious beliefs, or safeguard and build their personal wealth or fall under the spell of one person to support particular interest groups.

It is up to us, the citizens, to hold each other accountable along with our elected representatives, and ensure that all have the opportunity to share in the compact of this country, regardless of gender, color, sexual orientation or birth. We must keep a watchful eye for the warnings and deceptions that could bring the Great American experiment to an end.

I believe, the Great American Experiment can survive if we face our truth, understand that our fears will destroy and divide us. Hold elected representatives accountable to the people and realize that our freedom is conditioned on the freedom of every American.

In the recently published book of articles from the Atlantic writers, *The American Crisis*, David Frum warns, "that the gravest threat to American Democracy - and the quality that the president and his associates were counting on above all else-is public indifference." (11)

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(11) Frum, D., (September 2020), "How to Build an Autocracy", p. 405, [The American Crisis](#)

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