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“Building A Stronger Democracy”

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The term democracy is derived from the Greek word “demos,” meaning people, and “kratos,” meaning rule; thus, at its core, a democracy is a system where the people rule. In the United States, we mainly practice democracy through elections, where citizens elect individuals to represent them in every office at the local, state, and federal level. However, division and social/political unrest have declined the power of our democracy.

In 1992, when William Greider published his book, America was relatively more peaceful than it is today. However, there were numerous events that threatened to shake the stability of the nation. The trial of police officers in the Rodney King beating ended in a not-guilty verdict, which sparked violent riots in Los Angeles. People of color are not being treated fairly by the criminal justice system, and despite years of protesting, people are not being heard. Sadly, the Rodney King case was not an isolated incident. The Black Lives Matter movement has amplified more cases that would have otherwise gone unnoticed; George Floyd, Trayvon Martin, Breonna Taylor, Daunte Wright, and more.

Fast forward to the 2010s and our democracy has only declined further. The war on terror, which began after 9/11, ushered in an era of invasive data collection, which was only worsened by the rise of social media. Even as people protested this, the need to protect national security was placed above the needs and privacy of the people.

Now, in 2022, the United States has been labeled a "backsliding democracy in a new report from the European think tank International IDEA" (Sundaresan). We saw this decline well into former President Trump's term, but the turning point was in late 2020. Morale was low as COVID-19 sent the world into panic; people were separated and healthy people were contracting the virus (many even passing away). After President Biden was elected, former President Donald Trump and many of his supporters baselessly questioned the results of the elections so he could hold onto power. As the

hallmark of America's democracy, elections are critical; his actions unnecessarily destroyed his supporters' faith in our democracy.

The January 6th Capitol insurrection shocked the nation as rioters attempted to interfere with the traditional process of counting electoral votes. How could Americans retain faith in their democracy when the President was actively attempting to subvert the will of the majority? As bleak as it sounds, we can restore America's democracy. Advocating for increased voter turnout and increasing transparency surrounding government operations will strengthen the connection between the people and the government. Through local connections (such as voluntary associations and grassroots groups), citizens can "come together and relearn the power of citizenship and community" (Wolf). To nations across the world, the U.S. used to be inspiring, a beacon of hope. America needs to return to that example and show the world what it means to listen to and protect "we the people."

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