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Untitled Essay by

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Third Place Winner in the 2022 PSR/Sacramento High School Essay Contest and recipient of a \$2,000 scholarship

A mountainous figure thudding his boot against the ground, upheaving the surrounding dust into smoke. Shaking the terrains, piercing the sky with his stance. He grips in his hands the key to a prosperous nation. We will no longer remain scrunched into our torsos from being suffocated by oppression, and we will all soon breathe freely, relieved of this pressure.

This is the image of the United States' ideals that we have been taught since childhood through media, books, schools, and people that were taught the same. Journalist and author William Greider's quote, "Americans cannot teach democracy to the world until they restore their own," is a clear contrast to this perception of the United States. It is wrong to disregard how American society is continuing to progress, and does offer us a hope for a better future, however it is also hypocritical to exempt the United States of criticism by comparing the country to other nations, or even its own past, as though American history is not intertwined with the systemic conflicts that continue to affect many of us.

Numerous neighborhoods today are still overwhelmingly segregated. Housing laws that historically targeted minorities, such as redlining where banks would refuse loaning to specific communities or land mandates that restricted where mainly people of color in low-income households could move, are one of the main factors for present-day housing segregation(1). This connects to voter suppression as gerrymandering, a tactic still being practiced today, is used to give one party an advantage by drawing districts in such a way that manipulates the value of different votes. As many neighborhoods are still heavily segregated, gerrymandering can be used to devalue low income and minority votes. In addition to discriminatory practices that affect voting, the January 6th capitol riot in response to President Biden being announced as the president elect is another prominent

example of how democracy in the United States needs to be protected. There was frequent rhetoric from Trump and his supporters of how this riot was a representation of freedom and the fight towards "voter fraud", however this event was an attack towards both real people and the democratic process of voting. Trump, at the same breath, denounced the Black Lives Matter protests despite 93% of them being peaceful, and despite how they aligned with the very first amendment that permits protest and free speech.

Democracy has evidently been restricted from marginalized groups throughout the United States' history. It is not always as blatant as literacy tests for African Americans wishing to vote, or Native Americans not being considered American until 1924. This is because discrimination and ignorance are creative. They can contort themselves and seep into any facet of our lives, and yet seem invisible or even favorable to those they don't affect. This can be seen in the countless situations where democracy was not upheld for all by the United States.

If we pride ourselves on freedom and equality, then we must enact it.

#### Footnote

(1) Austin Turner, Margery, Greene, Solomon. "Causes and Consequences of Separate and Unequal Neighborhoods". Urban.org, <https://www.urban.org/racial-equity-analytics-lab/structural-racism-explainer-collection/causes-and-consequences-separate-and-unequal-neighborhoods>