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## “America’s Treasured Creation”

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Since the beginning of our country, we have believed that we are great because of one thing – the voices of our people. We are able to show off this greatness because of how American democracy usually works, and we even try spreading its influence across the world, as we attempted to do in Vietnam, South America, and more. However, it has become increasingly obvious in recent years that despite attempting to spread our great system of government, there are cracks and flaws in said system, like chinks in our armor.

If you were to look at presidential elections from the last two decades, you would find news outlets reporting on protests against the winner. While protest is protected by the first amendment, giving people the right to express themselves and their concerns, there are times where these protests against the democratic system have gone too far. The most recent example of this occurred on January 6th, when a large number of Trump supporters, including sitting members of Congress, attempted to challenge this "great system" not by democratic process, but by violently storming our nation's Capitol to undermine the election of now-President Biden. This shocking act put American democracy's weaknesses on display, showing the world that although it may seem like a great and effective system, it can be easily corrupted and destroyed. Who would want to follow a model of government that has been proven to be weak?

Looking back, American foreign policy changed after World War II. In an effort to avoid "the domino effect," the United States attempted to push democracy onto any country we thought might have a chance at following a more totalitarian system, such as Vietnam or Nicaragua. These attempts often failed causing greater instability in the world and influenced the Cold War. Our push for democracy sustained heavy damage and suffered many losses. It may have avoided extinction, but it certainly didn't emerge unscathed.

Domestically, the US had its own issues during this time, from the Red Scare to Jim Crow laws. While these issues are in the past, their effects are still felt. Today the US is allowing the restriction of voting rights, the gerrymandering of districts and the Citizens United ruling, which allows big money to flow into our political system without transparency. These actions work to undermine American voices. We now see a tear in the process, a wound in the side of America's treasured creation. So, why are we forcing that pain, that weakness onto other countries? American democracy hasn't worked in quite a while, despite it being one of our most cherished possessions.

When William Greider wrote that "Americans cannot teach democracy to the world until they restore their own" twenty years ago, he had no idea what fools we'd look like today. If America doesn't fix its issues, bring together the rift it has created, and seal it before it can get any worse, then we have no right to make others follow our ways.