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Is the United States Still Free?

Freedom is defined as, “the quality or state of being free: such as: the absence of coercion, or constraint in choice or action” (Merriam Webster). The six freedoms the constitution protects is speech, religion, press, assembly, the right to petition the government and the right to bear arms. Most people view these constitutional freedoms as a God-given right which is what has always distinguished us from other countries. Those rights are not dictated by man but by God. One of the most highly debatable questions we ask ourselves is why do we believe the United States is the freest country in the world? In the following paragraphs I am going to discuss how our freedoms, over the years have slowly been stripped away and why it's reached such a detrimental point in our society. I believe this is why there is such a deep divide in our country at this point in time, with many people picking a side depending on their values and ability to distinguish facts and propaganda.

One the main reasons for the decline of freedom in the United States is due to the increased control the government has taken over us and many of the restrictions they put in place. When certain events happen in our country, the government intervenes and creates restrictions which aren't always beneficial or solve the issue we are facing. One such recent example is the COVID-19 pandemic, to which we are still under Emergency Control, and keeps getting extended. At some point, we as American Citizens should be able to decide on our own what is best for our family, community and country, and exercise those rights of free will. “Some politicians play to fears that during times of disaster people will descend into a chaotic mess. Yet, the overwhelming scientific and historical evidence contradicts this pessimistic view of humanity. Scholars in disaster risk management have now debunked the idea of mass citizen panic as a myth that rarely occurs. Emergency powers tend to only go one way: top-down. During an emergency, the knee-jerk reaction is always to stomp-down, to reinforce those atop hierarchies in the state and significantly curtail the freedoms, voice and agency of citizens, often in a draconian fashion. I call this the "Stomp Reflex" (Kemp). Another example is the awful news of the school shooting in Ohio, the government decided that guns were the issue and that we should restrict the ability of citizens to obtain legal guns. Our second amendment clearly states the right of the people to keep and bear arms, which shall not be infringed upon. How can we let our constitutional right to protect ourselves be determined by the government who has constant protection for themselves while we are left to fend for ourselves, while simultaneously being told the police should be defunded. Gun control will only make matters worse by taking guns away from law abiding citizens and taking away the ability to defend themselves against people who get them illegally and commit more crimes. “Today, rogue governors, mayors, police chiefs, and sheriffs are still releasing murderers, rapists, and hardened criminal illegal aliens on to the streets of America. Gun control only affects law-abiding citizens and will not stop another crime or prevent another tragedy by criminals or evil people that do NOT obey laws.” (Steinburg). The Prohibition Act of 1919 is a perfect reference of the past that has shown us what happens when they prohibit legal use of

something we've always had; people end up finding a way to get it anyway, creating more chaos and destruction of the law, and making criminals out of law abiding, tax paying citizens. Social media is another example of government control and restriction of our God given freedoms. Freedom of speech and expression is a very important one in the United States, as many other countries' citizens face major consequences if they speak up. Social media gives everyone the opportunity to voice their opinions, views, and knowledge around the world. This is increasingly difficult to do with the censorship by big tech and our ability to hear both sides of an argument. When certain information or statements are censored to the public, it usually comes down to two reasons; they don't want us to know things or they want to push their own narrative to manipulate society into thinking otherwise. "Big Tech censorship is when companies like Apple, Amazon, Google, Microsoft, or Twitter get to decide what piece of media you can see or interact with on the internet. It's when they get to act as gatekeepers of the web, deciding which opinions you are allowed to share on burning issues and what contents are "safe enough" for you to consume." (Timothy). As stated previously, if we are not allowed to make decisions for ourselves based on all information available, then we are not a free people. The new catch phrase for the last two years is "misinformation," when they don't like the content and it's being used as an excuse to censor. This is one of the most dangerous areas of government intervention and is a clear path to Socialism or Communism and they are getting a great deal of help from big tech and media outlets.

As a society, we are gradually being pulled away from basic morality and religion and sometimes in ways we may not even notice. What brings a society together as a whole is our morals and values, and what is right and wrong. Morals and values based on religion is what drives our political views and how we raise our children and treat others. "U.S. church membership was 73% when Gallup first measured it in 1937 and remained near 70% for the next six decades, before beginning a steady decline around the turn of the 21st century" (Jones). The destruction of family structure, gender confusion, educational norms, parental rights over their children, etc. is what is leading to a takeover of our communities and breakdown of our national value system. "It takes strong families to produce upstanding citizens capable of providing for themselves. When a nation begins to look instead to its government to provide, it is on a path to societal collapse. Family breakdown brought about Rome's fall. It is bringing about the fall of Britain and America today" (Miller). We are being taught that these things are normal and acceptable on a daily basis through tv shows, social media, work place, and even in our schools. Although we may share the same morals and values, this does not support the idea of extreme ways of thinking. This creates non-free thinkers which has a negative impact on the world when there is an issue to be solved. Extremes create a distraction from actual research and fact-based knowledge. They tend to be based on emotions and not actual data and proof of the argument. When there is such an imbalance in the discussion and what and who can be heard and the importance of honest discussion of issues, we need to ask ourselves why are we not being told all the information with concrete data to make our own decisions about those issues. Many important topics are not discussed, instead the focus is on less important topics to distract us. For example, sex/human trafficking is one of the major problems in our country that needs to be discussed more, instead less significant issues are blown up in

the media to keep us blind. These arguments are being polarized by the government and the media in an effort to divide and conquer.

We are already given the right to freedoms such as choice, speech, etc. from the time we are born. Although when we apply freedom to our own individual lives, it can be viewed as a luxury, because we all have to work for it and get to the point where we feel like we have earned it to create the life-style we desire. Many people move to the United States for better opportunities than the ones they had in the previous country they lived in. Many people don't even realize how good we have it compared to other countries when it comes to the way of living and various opportunities for growth. We all choose our own path and act on the freedom and opportunities that were available to us; the life we end up with is the result of these. A major problem that I see on a daily basis is that many people in society lack motivation. Pain and pleasure goes hand in hand when it comes to success. Although someone who is not motivated would choose the route of instant gratification rather than hard work, which will not bring them long term success to build on. Receiving a reward for something triggers the dopamine in our brains which results in craving more. Although the things we consider as rewards may not always be beneficial to our lives; such as social media, excessive eating and drug usage, which are huge problems in the U.S. that continue to be promoted and rewarded. Things that give us instant gratification are not the reward we truly want. "Additionally, as we continue our quest for rewarding quick fixes, we start to experience a dopamine surge in our brains long before we actually experience any reward, and the craving associated with dopamine release hits us early, too. In the bigger picture, the more we overvalue instant gratification, the more likely we are to be distracted from longer-term, more meaningful goals. The constant checking of our social accounts or our exposure to auto-play features on streaming TV makes it difficult to maintain focus on actions that create long-term success and happiness" (Perlmutter). The build up or journey to the reward, or the work we put into it is how we can pursue and build success and create motivation. Individuals experience pleasure without prior requirement for pursuit which has a negative impact on society. This creates no motivation or strive to do better in life and leads to a downfall in the evolution of society and communities. No one is creating or thinking of anything new resulting in society staying stagnant in terms of growth and prosperity. We tend to follow norms and take the path of least resistance. This thought/ behavioral process holds people back from the knowledge they should have such as what's going on in the world. When we can't think for ourselves anymore we resort or start to rely on other sources that might not be true. Even worse, we can't point out when these sources are not telling the truth because we don't have the information ourselves.

There is a major problem in society when the place we get our basic knowledge from, our schools, are not teaching us the correct things. As said once by Sir Winston Churchill, "those who do not learn history are doomed to repeat it." Elimination or rewriting of history does nothing but brainwash us and keep us less prepared for future world events. "Through history, we can learn how past societies have changed and evolved based on the blueprint of our actions and mis-takes. Understanding previous accounts of history is essential. But many in the United States seem to think that our

students shouldn't learn about America's history with depth and breadth" (Choi). We cannot allow young people who are the future of our country to be incorrectly educated or not educated at all. "This educational malpractice isn't history, it's a false narrative. Students must understand how the present ties back to the history of the United States in order to become better citizens and scholars. Historical accuracy is needed, and this flawed mindset must be fixed now" (Choi). The change starts within ourselves and strong minded people that are not easily influenced by biased media creates a society that is harder to control in a negative way.

Hopefully it's not too late to bring about a compromise that will bring back the freedom we once had in the United States. When we look back at the past decade, we can come to realize that there are far more restrictions and control over our society than ever. The last thing we would want to happen is to turn into a socialist country. Socialism is the destruction of capitalism and capitalism is what allows any person from any background to achieve any dream. We need to strengthen our democracy and people in society in order to see a better future for all. One of the first steps I believe we should take is to go back to the basics and reestablish our basic value and belief system. By doing so, we can come to better solutions and hear all voices for the various world issues we face, in a simpler way.

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