

“Is This the Country the Founders Envisioned?”

The ambitious “American Experiment” began nearly 250 years ago at the will of a dozen wig-wearers with a craving for independence, and has since persisted into our present pursuit of liberty, equality, and justice. As we navigate the complexities of modern politics, it is easy to wonder if we have strayed from our founder’s ideals. Is this *really* the country the founders envisioned?

To answer this question, we must consider what exactly these men had in mind for their young country. While these fellows surely were no strangers to disagreement, there are a few common values they all sought to exemplify in the budding nation.

Chiefly, the founders sought a country immune to tyranny. With a hefty list of grievances against King George III, these men wanted to decentralize and limit the power of government to prevent the rise of a dictatorship. To ensure this, they instituted a separation of powers with checks and balances.

Some argue that this has restricted the scope of government beyond consequential impact, leading to constant gridlock and unreliable social programs. Others would say this has not been emphasized enough, with the position of president growing to encompass overwhelming power and trivial celebrity status.

Another intention of the founders, as eloquently asserted by Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence, was to establish that “all men are created equal.” Yet as we all know, this widely quoted phrase was not truly meant to encompass *all* people, excluding slaves, women, homosexuals, and other minority groups. The fathers emphasized popular sovereignty and representation, but only to the extent that wealthy and well-educated white men could maintain positions of power. Their so-called inalienable rights certainly became alienable when a black man could be considered the chattel of plantation owner in the South.

Nowadays, we strive for equality far beyond the founders sought. Americans take great pride in our diversity, and work to ensure equal rights for *all* people. It is such an unfortunate trick of fate that our current struggles against racism, sexism, xenophobia—and all the other -isms and -phobias you can list—are inexorably intertwined with our country’s deeply rooted, exclusionary history.

Lastly, the founders wanted an adaptable government. While they couldn’t possibly imagine the invention of the iPhone or the popularity of a hip-hop musical

about one of their lives, these men were wise, forward-thinkers in creating a flexible institution. The “living document” upon which our government is founded is the longest-lasting, most successful Constitution in the world due to its ability to be amended.

Nowadays, it is commonplace to become overwhelmed with the constant political discourse and debate in the news. However, the discordant nature of American politics is embedded into our country’s framework. Back then it was Federalists versus Anti-Federalists, now it’s Democrats versus Republicans, liberals versus conservatives. This battleground of opinions and the necessity of compromise, whatever your opinions of it may be, is a result of the founder’s anticipation of a changing world with changing attitudes.

So, is this country what the founding fathers envisioned? Well, in many ways yes, but in many others, no. From political parties to foreign neutrality to the size of the military, this game of would they/wouldn’t they could continue forever, with compelling arguments for both sides.

We can never truly know how our founders would feel about their experiment today, and even so it surely would not be a unanimous opinion. But to be honest with you, I’m uninterested in this game of hypotheticals. More relevantly, I think we should be asking ourselves the following: Are we working towards creating a country our future generations can be proud of? Will they revere us for our audacity and insight the same way we regard the founding fathers? And most importantly—Is this the country we envision for ourselves?

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