

Maya Hess

Voice of Democracy

American History: Our Hope for the Future

One of America's wise leaders, Franklin D. Roosevelt once wrote in a campaign address "We are a nation of many nationalities, many races, many religions-bound together by a single unity, the unity of freedom and equality. Whoever seeks to set one nationality against another, seeks to degrade all nationalities." This quote can be perceived in many different ways. I believe what Franklin is trying to say is we are one. Each and every one of us living in the United States of America has an equal right to be here. We are all human beings. We are all made the same. We all have bones in our body, veins that carry blood to our heart and eyes that look at the world around us. We have lungs that take in a deep breath when we see something extravagant. We are human. We are equal.

Take a second, and think about the world you are living in. Think about the events you have learned about in school or that you have seen on the news. These events go back from Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination to the 9/11 terrorist attack and to the Las Vegas mass shooting that occurred recently. There are hundreds of devastating crimes committed everyday around America and they have one trait in common; that one trait is hate. Hate is a strong emotion to have in your heart. Hate can drive humans to do unimaginable things. Hate is the cause of our pain. Hate is why we are not at peace. "Hate begets hate; violence begets violence; toughness begets a greater toughness. We must meet the forces of hate with the power of love." -Martin Luther King, Jr.

Have you ever wondered why people feel the need to hurt others? Whether it is seeing your friend being called names over social media or seeing shootings and killings occur in your country. I know I have wondered why. I am older now, fourteen to be exact, and I understand why. It is because of that little bug called hate. Hate fuels the violence. Every fire needs somewhere to start, every car needs gas to run, every plane needs fuel to take off, so does hate. Hate has to start somewhere and it has to have a reason to be brought about. We can take this statement to science. John Locke had a theory called *Tabula Rasa* that proposed each human was born with a “blank slate” and our experiences and education was what shaped us. None of us are born with hate in our hearts. We are given reasons to allow hate to be born, then grow into an evil plant with thorns that cut those around us. We need to put a stop to that.

Stopping hate in America. That sounds like a daunting task. Maybe it is, maybe it is not. We will not know until we try and we must try. Choose kind. It is as simple as that. New generations are born everyday, new minds are exposed to this world. No baby opens their eyes and decides to hate someone. They are taught those ways as they grow. Try imagining a world where there is no hate. Where hate is defeated and diminished and your children can grow up feeling safe and loved. That world is difficult to foresee because we are so far from it. Our future depends on choosing kind. We will always have challenges. In America’s democracy we face challenges everyday, but those challenges test our democracy and allow us to learn better ways to teach our kids, create better jobs, better ways to protect our homeland and better ways to shape our country’s future. We are equal. We need to believe that, not only in America, but in our world. Your life truly depends on it.

I am human. You are human. We are all diverse, but that does not mean we are not equal. Our diversity is what makes us who we are. Diversity is a beautiful thing, not a burden. No matter who you are, or how different we are from each other, we are all ordinary people. Each and every one of us on this earth have the power to do something to help make our future better. We need that. Our ancestors have not come so far for us to destroy our chance at making America what it once was and better. We are all created equal. The message pushed the black slaves to make the railroad and find their way to freedom. They knew they were better than to be treated as slaves or anything else than the white men. This message pushed the African Americans to fight with Franklin D. Roosevelt for the Four Freedoms in World War II. The four freedoms are freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear.

America has the potential to become something amazing again. We need ordinary people making extraordinary changes to our country's future. We need to believe we are equal. Our future does not just depend on it, but our and our children's lives do too. Believe and achieve. That is what this country wants. That is what America needs. If you can believe it, you can achieve it. We need to achieve a greater future, and we can. It starts with one step. Just put one foot in front of the other, and begin. Begin walking towards a future of opportunity. A future of love and equality. We can do it, we can achieve greatness, and we can do it together. United as one.