



What is Progress?

by Gray Fuller

America is a nation born from both foundational and feeble principles. These are life, liberty, equality, freedom, the pursuit of happiness.

America was proudly founded on these long ago, and yet in 1776, African Americans lay in shackles, women were confined, and homosexuals were outcasted... When we look at progress, and what it means, we often think of moving forward, away from the past and into an enlightened future. But in America, what it has come to mean in practice, is sliding backwards.

Back to '76, back to the all-white-star-strutted and partial slave-owning cast of founding fathers. Today, society and administration still manages to fulfill the immoral and unequal ideals of those men by dressing them in a modern-day America disguise.

While our representatives claim to be

moving forward we are actually taking ten steps back.

"The United States is, at its core, people."

And unlike bureaucracies, systems, and machines, people are malleable; when faced with change, they react in volatile ways, sometimes with embrace and other times with anger - so advancement is both loved and hated by America. Progress means everything to some, and nothing to others. Its dictionary definition is to move forward. However, in action, humanity has made it a subjective term, making it an inward and outward experience. There is no one way to move forward: no standard, no rigid objective, no quota. Where is the goal? At what point, if ever, will America's promises be finally fulfilled?

Look back on our past. Slavery.

Genocide. Segregation. Imperialism. Oppression. America has never truly realized its ideals.

There's no more Middle Passage, but there is a new expression of Jim Crow.

“People of color are still being targeted by voting restrictions, we are still being gunned down senselessly by White cops, and I still sweat each and every time I get pulled over.”

The confederate flag still flies high in the South; each time it reminds me of the limitations of racial equality, and of the restrictions of the advancements we have made.

Look back on the struggle for the right to love. Non-hetero sexuality was illegal. Today, national law acknowledges everyone's right to have a relationship and marry the same sex. Activists fought hard for LGBT visibility and equal opportunity in this country, and yet now even the word “gay” is being censored in schools.

Look back on America— this supposed shining beacon of hope, this proud and powerful nation which seemed untouchable. Our elections were attacked. A mob stormed our capitol. Democracy was threatened. Rioters ransacked the chambers of the people we elected to represent us. They attacked the foundation of this nation, and plundered those sacred ideals which we use as guidance.

Consider the gun debate. Sandy Hook. Columbine. Now Buffalo and Uvalde.

As we reflect upon the countless killings of our past, we are already nearing 300 mass shootings this year. Insanity is when you repeat the same actions expecting different results. We have been reliving the same traumatic events and resulting debates for decades, and nothing has really changed.

Today's America is January 6th. It's the return of school shootings and mass murders. It's the end of Roe v. Wade and gradual protection reduction for gay and trans people. Today's America has been battered and pummeled, bogged down and slowed up, but it's better than it was. It's an incredibly sad, unrewarding thing to note, but is it progress? Not only has American PROMISE and POLICY become further apart, but it has fundamentally changed this nation's people. “Our” country may never fully embody its primary convictions towards equality and justice, but it has performed well as a vessel to steer ourselves on the journey to their fulfillment. Maybe that's what America really is— a meager pickle merchant on the sea eyeing, as King would put it, a distant promised land.

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