



This Thanksgiving, don't take our freedoms for granted

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As we approach the Thanksgiving holiday, I think it's a good time to pause and reflect on everything we have in common in this country. Certainly, we spend enough time obsessing over what divides us.

I believe we have much to celebrate; consider the following:

Americans are service oriented. Helping others get through tough times is embedded within our collective DNA. When disaster strikes, Americans are not afraid to roll up our sleeves and help our neighbors get back on their feet.

Americans are free to speak their minds. We can criticize, ridicule, denigrate and mock those in power without being immediately imprisoned, beaten or put to death. Many of us take this for granted; we shouldn't.

Americans truly understand the value of diversity – and not just racial, ethnic or gender diversity. The United States has never been a paint-by-the-numbers culture; we have been abstract cubists since the beginning.

Americans are not afraid to engage in the political process. We live in one of the very few countries where we have the opportunity – and the obligation – to get rid of those we feel have not served us well.

Americans are concerned about social justice. I am convinced, local and regional exceptions notwithstanding, most of us value equality for everyone, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender or socioeconomic status. The xenophobic, misogynistic, homophobic racists among us are the exception, not the rule.

Americans are remarkably tolerant when it comes to our religious affiliations. Unlike many places around the world, we can disagree about doctrine, but we do not feel the need to kill those we believe God approves of less than us.

Finally, Americans understand that the freedoms we enjoy are not a given and realize that democracy only works if truth is aggressively pursued on a daily basis.

Happy Thanksgiving!

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