

THIS WE BELIEVE

“. . . one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”

--From the Pledge of Allegiance, as revised in 1954 – composed by Francis Bellamy in 1892,
to coincide with the 400th anniversary of Columbus’s discovery of America.

“ONE NATION . . . INDIVISIBLE”

Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand.

--The New Testament, Matthew 12:25

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! --Psalm 133:1

Five arrows shall be bound together very strong, and each arrow shall represent one nation. As the five arrows are strongly bound, this shall symbolize the complete union of the nations. Thus are the Five Nations united completely and enfolded together, united into one head, one body and one mind. Therefore they shall labor, legislate, and council together for the interest of future generations.

--From the Constitution of the Iroquois Confederacy, ca. 1400
(pre-Columbian government on the American continent)

. . . [I]t is of infinite moment that you should properly estimate the immense value of your national Union to your collective and individual happiness . . . indignantly frowning upon the first dawning of every attempt to alienate any portion of our country from the rest, or to enfeeble the sacred ties which now link together the various parts.

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One of the expedients of [a political] party to acquire influence, within particular districts, is to misrepresent the opinions and aims of other districts. You cannot shield yourselves too much against the jealousies and heart-burnings, which spring from these misrepresentations; they tend to render alien to each other those, who ought to be bound together by fraternal affection.

--George Washington, Farewell Address, 1796

Whenever the white man treats the Indian as they treat each other, then we will have no more wars. We shall all be alike---brothers of one Father and one Mother, with one sky above us and one country around us, and one government for all.

--Chief Joseph, Nez Perce, 1830-1904

Let us at all times remember that all American citizens are brothers of a common country, and should dwell together in the bonds of fraternal feeling.

--Abraham Lincoln, Remarks at Springfield, Illinois, 1860

Let us all hope that the dark clouds of racial prejudice will soon pass away, and that in some not too distant tomorrow the radiant stars of love and brotherhood will shine over our great nation with all their scintillating beauty.

--Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham City Jail," 1963

There is perfect brotherhood underlying humanity, for all are servants of one God and belong to one family under the protection of Divine Providence. . . . There is brotherhood potential in humanity because all inhabit this earthly globe under the one canopy of heaven. (Abdu'l-Baha, New Jersey, 1912)

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The children of men are all brothers, and the prerequisites of brotherhood are manifold. Among them is that one should wish for one's brother that which one wisheth for oneself. (Baha'u'llah)

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The tabernacle of unity hath been raised; regard ye not one another as strangers. Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch. (Baha'u'llah)

--The Baha'i Faith

“. . . UNDER GOD”

Whenever the Confederate Lords shall assemble for the purpose of holding a council, the Onondaga Lords shall. . . offer thanks to the earth where men dwell, to the streams of water, the pools, the springs and the lakes, to the maize and the fruits, to the medicinal herbs and trees, to the forest trees for their usefulness, to the animals that serve as food and give their pelts for clothing, to the great winds and the lesser winds, to the Thunderers, to the Sun, the mighty warrior, to the moon, to the messengers of the Creator who reveal His wishes and to the Great Creator who dwells in the heavens above, who gives all the things useful to men, and who is the source and the ruler of health and life

--From the Constitution of the Iroquois Confederacy, ca. 1400
(pre-Columbian government on the American continent)

. . . [W]ith a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.

--Thomas Jefferson, Declaration of Independence, 1776

No People can be bound to acknowledge and adore the Invisible Hand, which conducts the Affairs of men more than the People of the United States. Every step, by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation, seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency. (First Inaugural Address, 1789)

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Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, Religion and Morality are indispensable supports. . . . [R]eason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle. (Farewell Address, 1796)

--George Washington

Statesmen, my dear Sir, may plan and speculate for Liberty, but it is Religion and Morality alone, which can establish the Principles upon which Freedom can securely stand.

--John Adams, 1776

If we ever forgot that we were one nation under God, we [would] be one nation that goes under.

--Ronald Reagan

We need legislation and federal action to control behavior.
We need religion and education to change attitudes.

--Martin Luther King, Jr., "The American Dream," 1961

. . . [I]n this day, the divine teachings must be sought, for they are the remedies for the present conditions of the world of humanity. (Abdu'l-Baha, New York City, 1912)

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What thing of value to mankind has ever come into being which was not first set forth either directly or by implication in the Holy Scriptures? ... Universal benefits derive from the grace of the Divine

religions, for they lead their true followers to sincerity of intent, to high purpose, to purity and spotless honor, to surpassing kindness and compassion, to the keeping of their covenants when they have covenanted, to concern for the rights of others, to liberality, to justice in every aspect of life, to humanity and philanthropy, to valor and to unflagging efforts in the service of mankind. It is religion, to sum up, which produces all human virtues, and it is these virtues which are the bright candles of civilization. (Abdu'l-Baha)

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Hearken ye, O Rulers of America and the Presidents of the Republics therein Adorn ye the temple of dominion with the ornament of justice and of the fear of God, and its head with the crown of the remembrance of your Lord, the Creator of the heavens. (Baha'u'llah, Palestine, 1868)

--The Baha'i Faith

" WITH LIBERTY . . . "

God is not merely interested in the freedom of brown men, yellow men, red men and black men. He is interested in the freedom of the whole human race.

--Martin Luther King, Jr.

. . . [H]e who would *be* no slave, must consent to *have* no slave. Those who deny freedom to others, deserve it not for themselves; and, under a just God, cannot long retain it. (1859)

--Abraham Lincoln

Under an autocratic government the opinions of men are not free, and development is stifled, whereas in democracy, because thought and speech are not restricted, the greatest progress is witnessed. It is likewise true in the world of religion. When freedom of conscience, liberty of thought, and right of speech prevail . . . development and growth are inevitable. (Abdu'l-Baha, Brooklyn, NY, 1912)

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May this American democracy be the first nation to establish the foundation of international agreement. May it be the first nation to proclaim the universality of mankind. May it be the first to upraise the standard of the Most Great Peace, and through this nation of democracy may these philanthropic intentions and institutions be spread broadcast throughout the world. Truly, this is a great and revered nation. Here liberty has reached its highest degree. The intentions of its people are most praiseworthy. . . . I will supplicate God for assistance and confirmation in your behalf. (Abdu'l-Baha, Washington DC, 1912)

--The Baha'i Faith

" . . . AND JUSTICE FOR ALL "

Does not wisdom cry out, and understanding lift up her voice? ...

"By me, kings reign, and rulers decree justice. ... Blessed are those who keep my ways." (Proverbs 8)

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As the earth brings forth its bud, as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations. (Isaiah 61)

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Says the Lord: . . . Let justice run down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream. (Amos 5)

--From the Old Testament

It will be worthy of a free, enlightened, and, at no distant period, a great Nation, to give to mankind the magnanimous and too-novel example of a people always guided by an exalted justice and benevolence.

--George Washington, Farewell Address, 1796

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

--Thomas Jefferson, Declaration of Independence, 1776

. . . This is the dream. One of the first things we notice in this dream is an amazing universalism. It does not say some men, but it says all men. ... It says that each individual has certain basic rights that are neither conferred by nor derived from the state. To discover where they came from, it is necessary to move back behind the dim mist of eternity, for they are God-given. Very seldom, if ever, in the history of the world has a sociopolitical document expressed in such profoundly eloquent and unequivocal language the dignity and the worth of human personality. ("The American Dream," 1961)

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Justice for black people will not flow into society merely from court decisions nor from fountains of political oratory. Nor will a few token changes quell all the tempestuous yearnings of millions of disadvantaged black people. White America must recognize that justice for black people cannot be achieved without radical changes in the structure of our society. The comfortable, the entrenched, the privileged cannot continue to tremble at the prospect of change in the status quo.

("A Testament of Hope")

--Martin Luther King, Jr.

Among the results of the manifestation of spiritual forces will be that the human world will adapt itself to a new social form, the justice of God will become manifest throughout human affairs, and human equality will be universally established. The poor will receive a great bestowal, and the rich attain eternal happiness. For although at the present time the rich enjoy the greatest luxury and comfort, they are nevertheless deprived of eternal happiness; for eternal happiness is contingent upon giving, and the poor are everywhere in the state of abject need. Through the manifestation of God's great equity, the poor of the world will be rewarded and assisted fully, and there will be a readjustment in the economic conditions of mankind so that in the future there will not be the abnormally rich nor the abject poor. The rich will enjoy his palace, and the poor will have his comfortable cottage.

(Abdu'l-Baha, New Jersey, 1912)

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[Justice and impartiality mean] to have no regard for one's own personal benefits and selfish advantages It means to consider the welfare of the community as one's own. It means, in brief, to regard humanity as a single individual, and one's own self as a member of that corporeal form, and to know of a certainty that if pain or injury afflicts any member of that body, it must inevitably result in suffering for all the rest. (Abdu'l-Baha)

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It is unquestionable that the object in establishing parliaments is to bring about justice and righteousness, but everything hinges on the efforts of the elected representatives. If their intention is sincere, desirable results and unforeseen improvements will be forthcoming; if not, it is certain that the whole thing will be meaningless, the country will come to a standstill, and public affairs will continuously deteriorate. (Abdu'l-Baha)

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Verily, justice is a lamp that guideth man aright amidst the darkness of the world and shieldeth him from every danger. It is indeed a shining lamp. God grant that the rulers of the earth may be illumined by its light. (Baha'u'llah)

--The Baha'i Faith