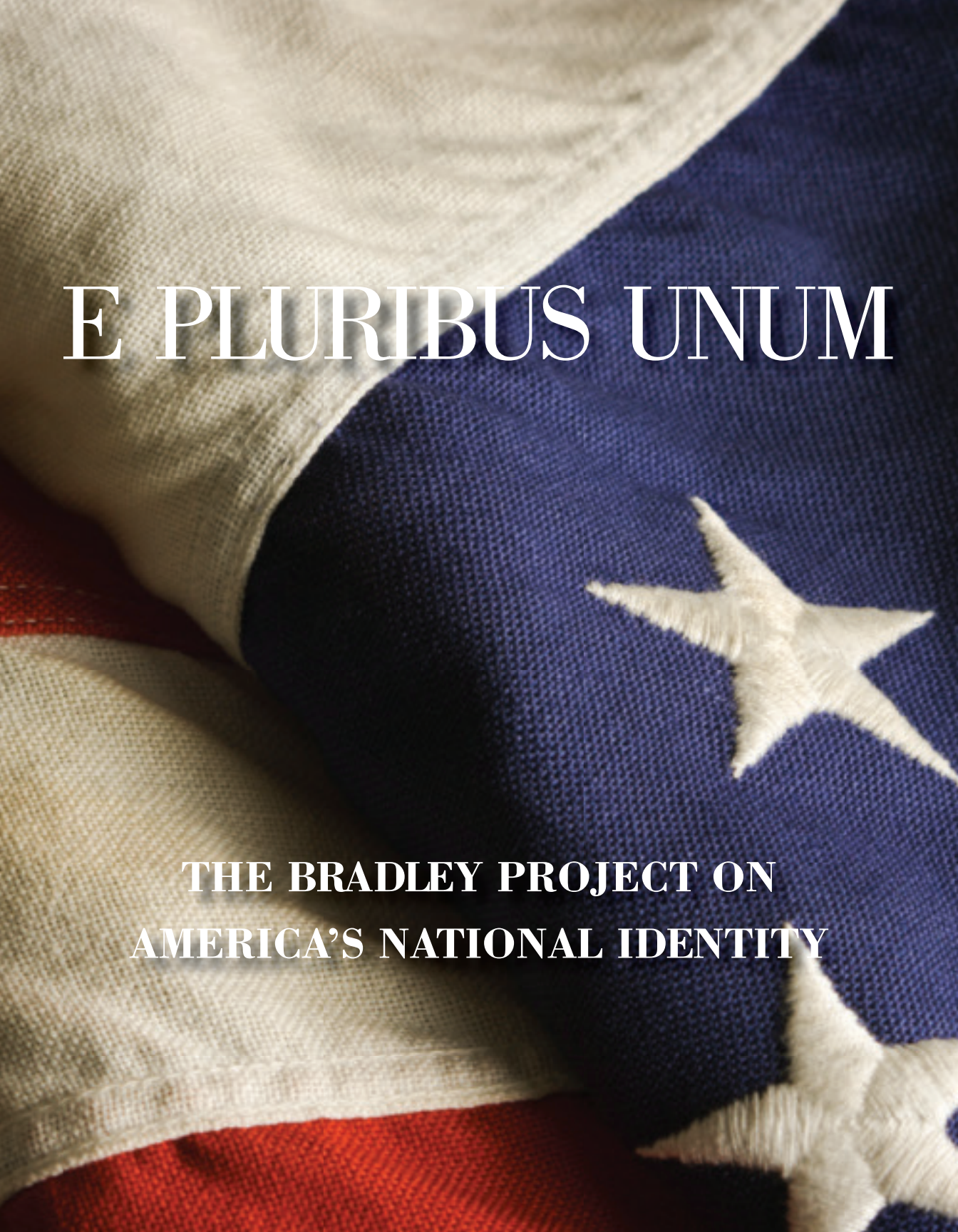
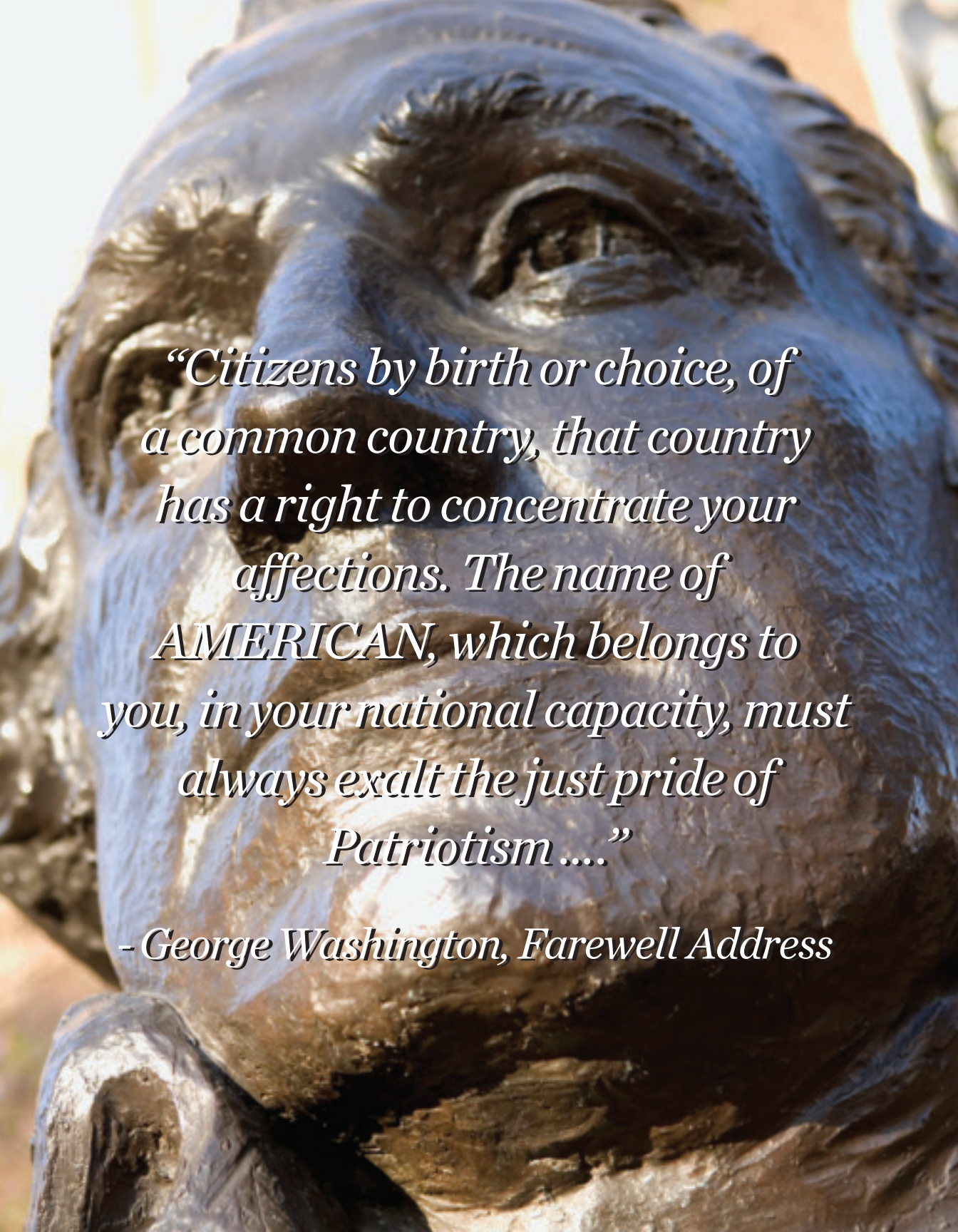


A close-up, high-resolution photograph of the American flag. The image focuses on the texture of the fabric, showing the white stars on a blue field and the red and white stripes. The lighting is soft, creating subtle shadows and highlights that emphasize the woven texture of the flag. The composition is a partial view, showing the upper and lower portions of the flag's design.

E PLURIBUS UNUM

**THE BRADLEY PROJECT ON
AMERICA'S NATIONAL IDENTITY**

A close-up, high-angle shot of a bronze statue of George Washington. The focus is on his face, showing his eyes, nose, and mouth. The bronze has a dark, weathered patina. The background is blurred, showing hints of other statues and a bright, outdoor setting.

*“Citizens by birth or choice, of
a common country, that country
has a right to concentrate your
affections. The name of
AMERICAN, which belongs to
you, in your national capacity, must
always exalt the just pride of
Patriotism”*

- George Washington, Farewell Address

E PLURIBUS UNUM



THE BRADLEY PROJECT ON AMERICA'S NATIONAL IDENTITY

June 2008

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

America is facing an identity crisis. The next generation of Americans will know less than their parents know about our history and founding ideals. And many Americans are more aware of what divides us than of what unites us. We are in danger of becoming not “from many, one”—E Pluribus Unum—but its opposite, “from one, many.”

The Bradley Project on America’s National Identity was created to initiate a national conversation on American national identity, and to affirm the belief that what unites us is far greater than what divides us. A sense of national identity is necessary to enable individuals to transcend self-absorption and commit to the common good. Without it, America can neither perpetuate its institutions nor defend itself.

To inform its work, the Bradley Project asked HarrisInteractive to conduct a study on Americans’ views on national identity. While 84 percent of the respondents still believe in a unique American

identity, 63 percent believe this identity is weakening. Almost a quarter—24 percent—believe we are already so divided that a common national identity is impossible. In their minds, it is already too late. And young people—on whom our continued national identity depends—are less likely than older Americans to be proud of their country or to believe that it has a unique national identity. This is an identity crisis.

A NATION BASED ON AN IDEA

America is unique among nations in being founded not on a common ethnicity, but on a set of ideas. A nation founded on ethnicity perpetuates itself by the fact of birth. But a nation founded on an idea starts anew with each generation and with each new group of immigrants. Knowing what America stands for is not a genetic inheritance. It must be learned, both by the next generation and by those who come to this country. In this way, a nation founded on an idea is inherently fragile. And a na-

tion that celebrates the many ways we are different from one another must remind itself constantly of what we all share.

A SHARED HISTORY

A history is to a people what a biography is to an individual. “History,” wrote President John F. Kennedy, “is the means by which a nation establishes its sense of identity and purpose.” But America’s memory appears to be slipping away. On the 2006 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Civics Test, the majority of eighth graders could not explain the purpose of the Declaration of Independence. Only five percent of seniors could accurately describe the way presidential power can be checked by Congress and the Supreme Court.

The reasons for this failing are not hard to find—boring textbooks that lack narrative drive, a neglect of America’s heroes and dramatic achievements, curriculum standards that push the founding period out of high school into the lower grades, and teachers inadequately prepared in American history. Too often, students are taught more about America’s failings than its successes. Absent are

those “mystic chords of memory” that Abraham Lincoln believed held our country together.

The teaching of American history should include America’s great public documents and speeches, and books with compelling narratives. And the period of the American founding should be emphasized at all levels, including high school, by teachers who have majored in history. Students should first be taught about America’s great heroes, dramatic achievements and high ideals so they can put its failings in perspective. Meaningful, balanced history best prepares young people for informed democratic participation.

College does little to close the civic literacy gap. Studies show that large numbers of college seniors, even at elite universities, cannot correctly identify major national figures such as James Madison or phrases such as “government of the people, by the people, and for the people.” They are unable to define representative democracy or the separation of powers.

Most colleges do not require an American history or American government

course. Where history is taught, it is often taught as a fragmented history, a history of this or that group, not of the nation as a whole. **Colleges and universities should require for graduation a comprehensive course on American national history and government that includes the nation's great public documents and speeches.**

The preservation of American memory is not solely the task of our schools and colleges. We all have an obligation to remember what we owe to those who have gone before us. Schools used to be named after American heroes such as Nathan Hale and Clara Barton instead of just East Metropolis Junior High. That practice should be restored. On the Fourth of July, we need not only celebrate with fireworks, but also honor that dramatic moment when the colonists first declared to the nations of the world that America was free and independent. **Families, schools and colleges, businesses and civic organizations, and government at all levels should keep American memory alive by treating national holidays and historic sites such as Mount Vernon and Gettysburg as touchstones of national**



identity and as educational opportunities.

There was a time when all of us, and especially our nation's schoolchildren, celebrated George Washington's and Abraham Lincoln's birthdays. Today these great national holidays are collapsed into a generic Presidents' Day, as if Millard Fillmore and Chester A. Arthur were being honored. **Washington and Lincoln's birthdays should be restored as**

distinctive celebrations in place of the generic Presidents' Day.

There are dangers to certain kinds of patriotism, but there are equal dangers to no patriotism at all. There is a middle ground, “a patriotism of principles,” to use the language of the American Federation of Teachers, based on “a common core of history [that] binds us together.” Americans should embrace an informed patriotism that expresses our devotion to our country and our bond with our fellow citizens.

BECOMING AMERICANS

From the beginning, America has been, among other things, “a nation of immigrants,” and today the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island are among our most cherished national symbols. Many Americans accepted, even welcomed immigrants. And most immigrants embraced America, enjoying its many freedoms and often relishing their newfound identity. They insisted their children learn English and quickly became known as among the nation's most patriotic citizens.

Today immigration is at its highest levels since the 1920s. The more people

who come to this country, the more crucial it is that all become Americans in the fullest sense. America has successfully met this challenge in the past and can do so again, but it will take effort. **Newcomers to America should be encouraged to participate fully in American social, economic, and civic life.**

In a nation that celebrates its diversity, we need to remind ourselves that we are also part of “one nation indivisible.” Americans by a margin of 80 percent to nine believe that our schools should focus on American citizenship, not ethnic identity. Majorities of Latinos (70 percent) and African-Americans (54 percent) agree. Parents of schoolchildren, regardless of background, also concur. Eighty-nine percent of parents overall believe “there's too much attention paid these days to what separates different ethnic and racial groups and not enough to what they have in common.”

At one time there was an urgent concern for recognizing our differences, which allowed the contributions of minorities and immigrants to be fully told. But today there is also a yearning for national unity and common purpose, a desire to

appreciate what is great about America, and not just to dwell on its past wrongs.

Schools and colleges, businesses and civic associations, and all levels of government should promote special programs as well as special occasions that focus on what unites us as Americans.

The kind of unity Americans celebrate does not demand uniformity. On the contrary, it provides opportunities within which our distinctive ethnic traditions can flourish. It is fine if we all together celebrate our mutual differences—E Pluribus Unum with the Pluribus alive and well—but it can be a problem if each group just nurtures its own differences—Pluribus without the Unum. America is enriched by diversity. It is preserved by unity. **While appreciating the benefits of diversity, Americans should affirm their commitment to national unity, a shared culture, a common language, and defining ideals.**

Today the opposite idea seems to be taking hold. With single-minded emphasis on our differences, every group is encouraged to retain its separate identity. The United States is no longer “we the

people,” but “we the peoples.” The new attitude favors dual citizenship, multilingual ballots, and bilingual instruction rather than English immersion. Instead of one America, there are voices for many Americas, or even no America at all. Few would intend this result, but it may be the inevitable consequence of citizens not being able to communicate in a common language and placing other loyalties above their allegiance “to the flag and the republic for which it stands.” **We should not adopt policies that perpetuate division or that compromise our national allegiance.**

The tendency to separatism is sometimes unintended, the byproduct of well-meaning efforts to make minorities comfortable. Some universities, for example, have separate freshmen orientations, separate housing, and separate graduation ceremonies for different ethnic groups. Such programs have the unfortunate consequence of perpetuating divisions. **Universities, businesses, and civic institutions should avoid policies and arrangements that may tend to stereotype and divide Americans.**

TO PROVIDE FOR THE COMMON DEFENSE

One of the things that unites us as Americans is that, put simply, we are all in the same boat. We share a common future, we face common dangers, and we must provide a common defense. If the nation is threatened, we are all at risk. Part of American identity is being a citizen of a strong nation. Accompanying and reinforcing that identity must be respect for soldiers.

The solemn rows of silent graves at Arlington National Cemetery are a somber reminder that the blessings of liberty come at a price. A nation cannot long survive without full respect and support for those willing to pay that price. **Our schools and colleges, businesses, and civic groups should take time to recognize and honor those who are serving in the armed forces.**

The nation benefits from educated soldiers. Unfortunately, many colleges do not have on-campus ROTC programs and some vocally oppose military recruitment on campus. This sends the wrong message to young people willing to serve their country. **Colleges and universities should have ROTC programs on cam-**

pus and should give the same access to military recruiters as they do to other employers.

THE UNUM IS AMERICA

Citizenship is of a nation, and democratic citizenship is of a democratic nation. But some believe the idea of national citizenship is outmoded, not in keeping with the requirements of a global economy or the challenges of world peace.

Looking at the global economy, it seems to some that nations pose a barrier to the efficient movement of workers, investment, and technology. But there are other values at stake, such as what American companies owe to their fellow citizens and to the nation that charters and protects them. As captains of industry like Howard Hughes and Henry J. Kaiser proved in World War II, patriotism and good business do not have to be adversaries. **American companies should understand that they have special obligations to the United States and to their fellow citizens at home.**

Some educators also think the idea of national citizenship is outmoded. Phrases such as “global citizenship” and “citizens

of the world” are more commonplace in educational discussions today than “patriotism” and “national unity.” As one educator puts it, the Unum is not America, but the globe.

These discussions are not merely academic. They influence what the next generation will be taught. Since a person cannot literally be a “citizen” of the world or of a continent or any other geographical entity, the idea of “global citizenship” confuses and undermines meaningful civic education. **Civic education should be based on the distinctive features of citizenship in American democracy, not on the misleading idea that one can be a “citizen” of the world.**

CONCLUSION

In 1776, Americans put their lives on the line by declaring independence. They knew that, should they fail, none would survive. From this point on, Benjamin

Franklin said—and it was no metaphor—“Yes, we must, indeed, all hang together, or most assuredly we shall all hang separately.” Whatever the future may hold, America dare not face it divided and unsure.

A Presidential Award for American Citizenship should be created. The award would provide recognition at the highest level to students and new citizens who demonstrate exemplary understanding of and commitment to American ideals and institutions.

Each period of American history confronts many problems, but only two or three great issues. The great presidents succeeded because they provided leadership on behalf of national unity, common purpose, and shared sacrifice. In short, they reminded Americans of who we are and what unites us.

INTRODUCTION

AMERICA IS FACING AN IDENTITY CRISIS.

The next generation of Americans will know less than their parents about our history and founding ideals. And many Americans are more aware of what divides us than of what unites us. We are in danger of becoming not “from many, one”—E Pluribus Unum—but its opposite, “from one, many.”

In a series of working group meetings held in 2007, the Bradley Project on America’s National Identity brought together leading historians, political scientists, journalists, public figures, and educators, to examine four aspects of American life crucial to American identity: historical memory, civic education, immigration, and national security.¹

To inform its work, the Bradley Project asked HarrisInteractive to conduct a study on Americans’ views on national identity. The good news is that 84 percent of the respondents still believe in a unique American identity. The bad news is that 63 percent believe this identity is weakening,

and 72 percent are concerned about ethnic, cultural and political divisions. Almost a quarter—24 percent—believe we are already so divided that a common national identity is impossible. In their minds, it is already too late. Even more troubling, young people—on whom our continued national identity depends—are less likely than older Americans to believe in a unique national identity or in a unique American culture.²

All this represents a sea change. Unless these attitudes change, we could face a future in which most Americans will not champion American identity, will not be proud of their country, and will allow fellow citizens to have competing allegiances to other countries. A nation whose citizens no longer feel national pride or a unique allegiance to their own country is a nation that has lost its sense of national identity and perhaps its will to survive. This is an identity crisis.

CHAPTER 1

BEING AN AMERICAN

AMERICA IS UNIQUE AMONG NATIONS IN BEING FOUNDED NOT ON A COMMON ETHNICITY, LIKE FRANCE OR JAPAN, BUT ON A SET OF IDEAS.

Our first founding document, the Declaration of Independence declares, “We hold these truths” These truths include “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” ideals that continue to animate the republic. Our governing document, the Constitution, begins, “We the people,” not we the states, as some wanted, and certainly not we the partisan factions or ethnic groups. If we ask what unites us, the first answer is: the ideals announced in the Declaration of Independence and implemented in the Constitution.

These ideals are not a set of abstract propositions. They are embodied in American civic life and culture. They are based on a history that traces back to Magna Carta and the common law, to Athenian democracy and the Hebrew covenant. They have been tested again in the cru-

cible of our own history, most severely by what Lincoln called that “great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived ... can long endure.”³

The Declaration of Independence proclaims the preeminent values of liberty, equal rights, and self-government: “governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.” The Preamble to the Constitution emphasizes the importance of unity, justice, national defense, and “the blessings of Liberty.” The rights of citizens are spelled out in the Bill of Rights: to speak freely, to assemble peaceably, to petition, to have trial by jury, to worship freely. And on the Great Seal the founders inscribed their conviction that America was to be “A New Order For The Ages.” We were to be an experiment in democratic

self-government that would provide an example for all mankind.

George Washington in his Farewell Address advised Americans to be patriotic, moral, and religious. Thomas Jefferson stressed unity in his First Inaugural Address, reminding a divided nation, “We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists.”⁴ Condemning a series of lynchings in the 1830s, a young Abraham Lincoln urged that reverence for the law “become the political religion of the nation.”⁵ And in 1963 on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, Martin Luther King invoked “the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration ... [as] a promissory note” to all Americans.⁶

The Emancipation Proclamation, the women’s suffrage amendment, and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 are all landmarks that emerged from the founding ideals. Our flag, our pledge, our anthems, our holidays, our monuments, and our coins all reflect this creed.

An American, then, is not defined by race, religion, or ethnicity, but by faith in freedom, loyalty to democratic ideals, and fidelity to the U.S. Constitution. In 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt stated:

*... Americanism is a matter of the mind and heart; Americanism is not, and never was, a matter of race and ancestry. A good American is one who is loyal to this country and to our creed of liberty and democracy.*⁷

“This American creed is the cement in the diversified structure of this great nation The American Creed represents the national conscience.”

– Gunnar Myrdal

An American pledges allegiance, not to his family tree, nor to his political party or country of origin, but to the American republic and to “liberty and justice for all.” Com-

ing from all parts of the world, holding a vast array of religious and other beliefs, competitive in the marketplace and often partisan in their politics, Americans of all backgrounds and persuasions are held together, first and foremost, by loyalty to these democratic ideals and a commitment to the nation that upholds them.



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN AMERICAN?

When asked in the Harris survey, “What does it mean to you to be an American?” respondents, in their own words, reiterated the elements of the American founding idea, stressing above all *freedom*: free speech, free enterprise, free movement, freedom of religion, freedom of opportunity, political freedom, freedom from fear and tyranny, freedom to own property, freedom to get a good education, and freedom to pursue happiness. Speaking for many, one respondent wrote, “I am a member of the only country founded on an ideal.”

In addition to freedom, respondents in the Harris survey stressed the importance of the Constitution, the rule of law, fairness, patriotism, a common language, and the American way of life. Many mentioned pride and gratitude. One wrote, “I cannot

describe what emotions I feel when the national anthem is sung and to say the Pledge of Allegiance.”

Since their beginnings in the eighteenth century, American democratic ideals gradually gained acceptance, then swept through the world in the late twentieth century, allowing some scholars to designate America as the first universal nation. In 1910, ten nations were democracies; by 2005, one hundred nineteen of the world’s one hundred ninety countries had become democracies.⁸ As commentator Fareed Zakaria notes, “Democracy has gone from being a form of government to a way of life.”⁹ The democratic ethos is critical to American identity and, since no American is a born democrat, democracy must be taught in families, schools, universities, communities, and the workplace.

THE AMERICAN CHARACTER

America, however, is more than an idea. America is a way of life. Early commentators observed an abundance of land; large families, and assertive children; the importance of religion; an astonishing array of voluntary associations; and a hard-working population that was meritocratic, materialistic, competitive, and on the move. America was seen, above all, as a land of opportunity.¹⁰

Many of these characteristics remain today. Americans work more hours and take fewer vacations than do citizens of other countries. They have positive attitudes towards work. They remain fiercely competitive and achievement-oriented, proudly individualistic, fanatically entrepreneurial. Americans lead the world in productivity, patents, and Nobel Prizes.¹¹ Quintessential capitalists, they are experts at invention, manufacturing, and marketing. The result is a dynamic economy in which our richest people are self-made billionaires who, imitating Andrew Carnegie, give most of it away.

America, then, is more than an idea and also more than a nation of competi-

tive workaholics, skilled capitalists, and influential inventors. From the beginning, Americans had a high degree of literacy and respect for education. Thomas Jefferson reminded citizens, “If a nation expects to be ignorant and free ... it expects what never was and never will be.”¹² Only an educated population could vote, evaluate legislation, serve in Congress, sit on juries, and perpetuate democracy. By the end of the nineteenth century, America had created the most ambitious, comprehensive public school system in the world. A hundred years later, it could boast a massive system of public higher education.

From the beginning, Americans also preferred private giving and philanthropy to government assistance. They have donated astonishing sums of money to thousands of voluntary associations, churches, art museums, hospitals, and universities. At the end of the nineteenth century, Englishman James Bryce observed that “there is in the United States a sort of kindliness, a sense of human fellowship, a recognition of the duty of mutual help owed by man to man, stronger than anything in the Old World....”¹³



America was also the land of equal opportunity, shunning titles of nobility, aristocrats and fixed social classes. Here, said J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, an early observer of the American character, "... the idle may be employed, the useless become useful, and the poor become rich."¹⁴ In America, one could find land and jobs and unlimited outlets for ambition, for moving up the socio-economic

ladder, for achievement. From humble beginnings, Ben Franklin became a philanthropist, Abraham Lincoln a lawyer, Thomas Edison an inventor, Henry Ford a manufacturer, Dwight Eisenhower a general, Harry Truman a president. In a letter to John Adams, Thomas Jefferson described his vision of an aristocracy of virtue and talent: "An insurrection has consequently begun, of science, talents, and courage against rank and birth, which have fallen into contempt."¹⁵

THE AMERICAN DREAM

Jefferson's vision has become the American Dream—a singular term suggesting optimism and opportunity, reward for hard work, respect for talent, the chance to get ahead and to have a plot of land and a home of one's own.

When Alexis de Tocqueville visited America in 1831, he observed religious fervor, patriotism, and optimism. The characteristics Tocqueville noted in the early nineteenth century are now confirmed by polls in the twenty-first century. America is a remarkably religious nation, reporting high rates of church attendance,

prayer, and belief in God and an afterlife. More than Europeans, Americans connect morality to religion. Out of their religious commitment, they give billions of dollars to their churches, money that supports buildings, but also a staggering array of social services spread across the globe.

In Gallup polls conducted in thirty countries, Americans emerged as the most optimistic. In *America Against the World*, Andrew Kohut and Bruce Stokes write, “Americans are more optimistic and happier than most people....”¹⁶ And in *American: Beyond Our Grandest Notions*, Chris Matthews observes, “We are both reluctant warriors and people of action. We lionize heroic losers and champion the underdog. Through it all, we remain the most optimistic people on the planet.”¹⁷

Americans fly their flag more often and celebrate more national holidays than citizens of other nations. In the Harris survey, 94 percent of the respondents said they were proud to be an American.

The American creed puts forth lofty ideals and at the same time calls for ongoing amendment of America’s weaknesses,

a powerful corrective for the mistakes of history, a beacon for a better future. American history abounds with corrective examples. Elizabeth Cady Stanton quoted from the Declaration of Independence to secure women’s rights. Prisoners in Japanese-American internment camps cited America’s founding ideals when they requested an apology and compensation from the United States Government. When Martin Luther King Jr. campaigned for civil rights, he turned to the words of Thomas Jefferson, who owned slaves but wrote: “All men are created equal.” Civil rights leader Roger Wilkins notes that despite our shortcomings,

*... there is also something incredibly right here. This isn’t the country that Washington and Adams and Jefferson and Madison and Hamilton and Franklin founded. It is not the country of Lincoln, of Teddy Roosevelt, or even FDR. It is so much better. And it is largely because of the civic idealism and the structure of national ideals*¹⁸

In short, being an American involves an ethos as well as ideas, a way of life as



well as a commitment to common values. It is based on a history that stretches into the ancient past and that has tested us severely on this continent. It is embod-

ied in distinctive attitudes to everything from how we worship to how we make our living. Beneath it all is an appreciation of freedom and a respect for one another.

CHAPTER 2

A NATION BASED ON AN IDEA

THERE IS A CHALLENGE THAT LIES AT THE HEART OF WHAT IT IS TO BE AN AMERICAN. A NATION FOUNDED ON ETHNICITY PERPETUATES ITSELF BY THE FACT OF BIRTH. BUT A NATION FOUNDED ON AN IDEA STARTS ANEW WITH EACH GENERATION AND WITH EACH NEW GROUP OF IMMIGRANTS.

In this way, a nation founded on an idea is inherently fragile. And a nation that not only allows but also celebrates the many ways we are different from one another must constantly remind itself of what we all share.

The first challenge is that our founding principles, our democratic institutions, and our common past must be taught and learned. New citizens, who adopt this country as their home, are expected to accept American ideals and institutions and its history as their own. The history of America belongs as much to Irish Americans like John F.

“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.”

– *The Declaration of Independence*

Kennedy, whose forebears came to this country in the late nineteenth century, as to the Daughters of the American Revolution whom Franklin Roosevelt addressed as fellow immigrants.¹⁹ New pedigrees are

as good as old when it comes to being an American.

Our history, institutions, and ideals must be taught not only to those who come here, but also to those who are born here. American democracy presupposes American national identity.

Government by the people requires an American people who share a civic culture and commitment to democratic self-gov-

ernment. Civic education is central to the perpetual renewal of American self-understanding. It promotes national identity and national unity by describing American democratic institutions, enumerating the obligations of citizenship, analyzing our founding documents, and reminding Americans not only of their rights but also of their responsibilities—to be informed, to vote, to serve on juries, to participate in voluntary associations. Forty of our state constitutions stress the importance of civic education.

John Adams advised, “Children should be educated and instructed in the principles of freedom”²⁰—a statement endorsed by all the founders. Since democrats are made, not born, public schools in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries assumed an obligation to teach principles of freedom in what came to be called “the civic mission of schools.”

CIVIC LITERACY GAP

But today American civic identity is threatened by a lethal combination of ignorance and apathy, and the civic commitment of schools needs to be renewed. On the 2006 National Assessment of Educa-

tional Progress Civics Test, the majority of eighth graders could not explain the purpose of the Declaration of Independence. Only five percent of seniors could accurately describe the way presidential power can be checked by Congress and the Supreme Court.²¹

And college does little to close the civic literacy gap, even at elite universities.

Losing America's Memory, a landmark study by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni in cooperation with the Center for Survey Research and Analysis at the University of Connecticut, studied the 55 top-ranked colleges and universities. While 99 percent of the seniors could identify Beavis and Butthead and 98 percent Snoop Doggy Dogg, less than one in four could identify the phrase “government of the people, by the people, and for the people” as coming from the Gettysburg Address. Most were unable to define representative democracy or the separation of powers. The study also showed that none of the colleges required American history of their students.²²

These results have been confirmed recently by surveys reported in *The Coming Crisis of Citizenship* by the Intercollegiate



Studies Institute. On a sixty-question test on basic themes in American history, government, and economics, college seniors averaged a failing 53.2 percent. More than half could not identify the opening words of the Declaration of Independence, define representative democracy, or explain separation of powers.²³

Other surveys show that many adults cannot name a member of the Supreme Court or the Vice President of the United States and that many citizens have no clear understanding of the rights granted by the First Amendment.²⁴ Americans attend schools for more years than ever before, but increased schooling has not produced higher levels of civic knowledge.

The teaching of American history should be strengthened by including more compelling narratives and primary texts, such as the Declaration

of Independence, the Constitution, and the great speeches and debates. The period of the American founding should be emphasized at all levels, including high school.

SOCIAL FRAGMENTATION

A related problem is social fragmentation. A few years ago, Harvard political scientist Robert Putnam wrote a book, *Bowling Alone*, that captured one aspect of the phenomenon—social isolation.²⁵ In his 2007 report, *E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and Community in the Twenty-first Century*, he described problems that can result when people withdraw into their own neighborhoods.

[They] tend to withdraw from collective life, to distrust their neighbors, regardless of the color of their skin, to withdraw even from close friends, to expect the worse from

*their communities and its leaders, to volunteer less, give less to charity and work on community projects less often, to register to vote less, to agitate for social reform more, but have less faith that they can actually make a difference, and to huddle unhappily in front of the television*²⁶

This social fragmentation, Putnam believes, “seems to bring out the turtle in all of us.”²⁷

Paralleling social fragmentation is diminished trust in political leaders, the media, the professions, business, unions, and universities. In the Harris survey, more than half said that political leaders, media and entertainment figures do not share their values. It is true that young people are realistic, tolerant, and inclined to volunteer; however, some are turned off by partisan strife and the tendency to divide America into political camps. And young Americans skeptical about public life will not likely develop a strong civic identity.

Historically, schools promoted our unity; today they emphasize differences. In the past, schools required an extended study of government. Today, high

schools require one government course, compared with three before the 1960s.²⁸

Growing up in the 1950s, New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg remembers learning about America by reading *Johnny Tremain* and reciting Longfellow’s “Paul Revere’s Ride.” Bloomberg told a *Newsweek* reporter “I am a believer in what I learned in seventh-grade civics.”²⁹

When loosely defined college requirements are no longer driven by students’ intellectual needs, civic education is the loser. As Professor Harry Lewis, former dean of Harvard College, explains,

*... students are much more interested in taking courses on the American Republic than professors are in teaching them. At research universities, especially, where the rewards come for creativity and novelty, the subject is not trendy enough for most professors.*³⁰

This, says Lewis, explains the massive decline in broad American history courses at the college level documented by ACTA and ISI. Civic education, instead, is increasingly replaced by “service learning” and related programs that engage students in community service but cannot



substitute for an understanding of this nation's founding ideals of liberty, equality and self-government, or its long struggle to live up to them.

The founders emphasized a connection between character and citizenship. In the 1776 Virginia Bill of Rights, James Madison wrote that a free government could be preserved only by “a firm adherence to justice, moderation, temperance, frugality and virtue,” the essential traits of democratic character. Today many political philosophers concur with Madison's insight. Harvard Professor Michael

Sandel reminds his colleagues that “... good citizenship also requires a certain moral disposition—or orientation to common purposes rather than simply to my own individual interests.”³¹

INFORMED PATRIOTISM

William Damon, Professor of Education at Stanford University, argues forcefully that rather than assuming from the outset a failed America, “students need to be given a sympathetic introduction to the workings of a democracy if they are to become good critics of the democracy.”³² They

need to see first what America does well before they see where America falls short. *Patriotism*, Damon notes, has become a forbidden word in academic circles. When it comes up, “the goal is usually to find ways to guard against its dangers.”³³

There are dangers to certain kinds of patriotism, but there are equal dangers to no patriotism at all. There is a middle ground, a higher ground, that the American Federation of Teachers calls “a common civic identity based on a patriotism of principles” grounded in “a common core of history [that] binds us together” and “unites us in a shared undertaking that is both our past and our future.”³⁴ The AFT report, *Education for Democracy*, was signed by a wide range of Americans, from Bill Clinton and Ted Kennedy to Jeane Kirkpatrick and Thomas Kean. **Americans should embrace an informed patriotism that expresses our devotion to our country and our bond with our fellow citizens.**

TEACHING THAT UNITES

A narrow emphasis on the ways we are different also endangers American citizenship. In a recent essay, Indiana University

professor John Patrick warns that the civic mission of schools is being eclipsed by an emphasis on group identities.³⁵ In a diverse nation that celebrates ethnic pride, American students need to understand that they also are part of “one nation indivisible.” Our shared allegiance to America and its principles is the foundation of civic education.

The Harris survey found that Americans by a margin of 80 percent to nine believe that our schools should focus on American citizenship, not ethnic identity. Majorities of Latinos (70 percent) and African-Americans (54 percent) agree. Parents of schoolchildren, regardless of background, also concur. According to a Yankelovich/Public Agenda survey, 89 percent of parents overall, 88 percent of African-American parents, and 80 percent of Latino parents believe “there’s too much attention paid these days to what separates different ethnic and racial groups and not enough to what they have in common.” Moreover, 84 percent of parents overall, 81 percent of African-Americans, and 80 percent of Latino parents would be “upset or somewhat concerned” if their child were “taught that America

was, and still is, a fundamentally racist country.”³⁶

At one time there was an urgent concern for recognizing our differences, which allowed the contributions of minorities and immigrants to be told. There has been great progress on that front. But today there is also a yearning for national unity and common purpose, a desire to

appreciate what is great about America and not to dwell on its past wrongs.

Schools and colleges, businesses and civic associations, and all levels of government should promote special programs as well as special occasions that focus on our national ideals and what unites us as Americans.

CHAPTER 3

A SHARED HISTORY

A HISTORY IS TO A PEOPLE WHAT A BIOGRAPHY IS TO AN INDIVIDUAL. WHAT AMNESIA IS TO AN INDIVIDUAL, LOSS OF CIVIC AND HISTORICAL MEMORY IS TO A NATION.

We need to know who we have been to understand who we are. Historian Gordon Wood explains:

*We Americans have a special need to understand that our history is what makes us a nation and gives us a sense of our nationality. A people like us, made up of every conceivable race, ethnicity, and religion in the world, can never be a nation in the usual sense of the term. It's our history, our heritage, that makes us a single people.... Up until recently almost every American, even those who are new immigrants, possessed some sense of America's past, however rudimentary and unsophisticated. Without some such sense of history, the citizens of the United States can scarcely long exist as a united people.*³⁷

Today there is a drumbeat of evidence that our national memory is ebbing away. The most recent NAEP Report Card

describes only 14 percent of seniors at or above “proficient” in historical knowledge and understanding and 53 percent as “below basic.” Moreover, the numbers of those “proficient” among children of recent immigrants is considerably lower, indicating a special challenge if we are to prepare these newcomers for informed participation in democratic institutions.³⁸

At the college level, students are equally ignorant. The American Council of Trustees and Alumni study found that, even at elite universities, only a third of graduating seniors knew that Washington—not Ulysses S. Grant—commanded at the battle of Yorktown, the culminating battle of the American Revolution. Only one in four knew that James Madison was known as “the Father of the Constitution” or that the Battle of the Bulge took place in World War II. Most could not identify

the opening words of the Declaration of Independence.³⁹ Tests sponsored by the Intercollegiate Studies Institute showed that seniors, even at elite universities, did not have any more historical and civic knowledge than when they entered as freshmen. They had forgotten as much as they had learned.⁴⁰

LOST MEMORY

Where history is taught, it is often taught as a fragmented history, a history of this or that group, not of the nation as a whole. And it is often taught with a one-sided emphasis on the failings of America to the neglect of our successes, as if the aim of civic education were to make students ashamed of their country instead of committed to its ideals. Absent are those “mystic chords of memory” that Lincoln believed held our country together.

In a sense, it may not be natural for Americans to connect to history. We are present-minded and future-oriented. We have more leisure time than our ancestors

had, and more distractions: one hundred channels, the Internet, video games, sports events, iPods, cell phones, and movies that all banish history from our attention.

And our schools do not compensate for these distractions. Group-produced text-

books are poorly written and lack narrative drive. At the K-5 level, history takes a back seat to mathematics and reading. In grades 6-12, history teachers in many states are not required to major in their subject.

Teachers must depend on state curriculum frameworks that are wary of facts and chronology, and that tend to push the foun-

dational period of American history out of high school into the lower grades. Historian Sheldon Stern recently analyzed the Advanced Placement U.S. history curriculum and praised it for the rigor of its test but concluded, “Almost completely missing is the story of the origins of American liberty and equality, the common civic

“The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the course of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.”

– Abraham Lincoln



core that became our nation's defining characteristic.”⁴¹

Textbooks should be supplemented with primary documents and books by authors such as David McCullough and Doris Kearns Goodwin that tell about the lives and events that constitute the drama of American history. A foundation for understanding American history should be laid in the primary grades by including national holidays, heroes, songs, and poems. Stories of heroes and heroines

in American history should be major components of the social studies and reading curricula in K-5. The founding period should be covered at all levels, including the senior year. And teachers of history should be required to major in history.

At the college level, students are rarely required to take an American history or American government course.⁴² Business majors have increased; history majors have declined. Increasingly, students report that the goal of a liberal arts education is to get a good job, rather than to reflect on life's meaning or to prepare for a life of active civic participation. Professors prefer to teach their specialty rather than introductory courses. And social history, which focuses often on the history of particular groups, is displacing the political, diplomatic, and military history that tends to present the larger national narrative that unites all Americans. As Gordon Wood comments,

For much of the academy, constitutional history, with its concentration on the actions of dead white males, is much too old-fashioned, and not to be compared in importance with cultural and social history,

*especially of the sort focusing on issues of race and gender An understanding of our constitutional past would seem to be an integral part of a liberal-arts education, but few of our undergraduates have an opportunity to gain such an understanding.*⁴³

The same could be said for other aspects of national history. Historian Robert David Johnson has documented a startling decline of new faculty positions in political, military, diplomatic, and constitutional history. He concludes, “There are whole segments of the American past that are simply being eliminated through staffing decisions.”⁴⁴

In some universities, courses on the American political tradition have been developed in the government departments. These courses also make an important contribution to civic education, but they are rarely required for graduation.

Colleges and universities should require knowledge of America’s national history and its democratic political tradition as a condition of graduation. Courses in American history and government should include the Declaration of Independence, the

Constitution, and other primary texts such as great speeches, the Federalist papers, and landmark Supreme Court decisions. Faculty should be hired who are prepared to teach these subjects, not just narrower specialties.

Not only do students know less history, the history they know is grim: the Puritans banished Roger Williams, the Constitution ignored women, Thomas Jefferson owned slaves, Andrew Jackson caused the Trail of Tears, nativism tar-nished immigration, Andrew Carnegie fought with workers. While all these statements are true, they need to be balanced by competing truths: Puritan strength of purpose, the Constitution’s wisdom, Thomas Jefferson’s genius, Andrew Jackson’s courage, immigrant gratitude, Andrew Carnegie’s generosity.

A 2000 report from the American Textbook Council concludes, “The old master narratives in yesteryear’s textbooks—faith in progress and patriotic pride—have vanished, too rosy and innocent in view. What has replaced them is too often a nation that has repeatedly fallen short of its ideals” Instead, young people “learn about a nation’s shame-



ful past, learning about events in such a way as to undercut civic confidence and trust.”⁴⁵ As Chester Finn, former Assistant Secretary of Education, notes, the grim and gloomy school is ascendant and social studies teachers are “inclined to view America’s evolution as a problem for humanity rather than mankind’s last, best hope.”⁴⁶ American history properly taught improves judgment and increases wisdom. It also promotes national identity and national unity by recalling to our mind stirring events and phrases such as Daniel Webster’s “Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable”;

the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments; the Emancipation Proclamation; Jim Thorpe’s triumph at the Olympics; Charles Lindbergh’s flight over the Atlantic; American troops on Normandy beach; Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream”; and Ronald Reagan’s “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall.” Momentous events—battles, speeches, heroes and monuments—evoke gratitude, pride, and sorrow.

THE MIRROR OF HISTORY

“History,” wrote President John F. Kennedy, “is the means by which a nation establishes its sense of identity and purpose.”⁴⁷ We see

who we are, Walter Lippmann once wrote, in “the mirror of history.”

To the credit of contemporary American historians, our portrait of the American past is more realistic and complex than those of triumphalist historians and includes coverage of groups previously marginalized. And an inevitable tension exists between the desire to confront the harsher side of reality, which often intrigues historians, and the need to inspire students with the nation’s ideals and struggles, which remind us of our common cause.

Schools should not slight their civic mission by giving students the impression that America’s failures are more noteworthy than America’s achievements. They should begin with the study of America’s great ideals, heroes, and achievements, so that its struggles can be put in perspective. A broad-minded, balanced approach to the American story best prepares young people for informed democratic participation.

The preservation of American memory is not solely the task of our schools and colleges. It is fitting that all of us remem-

ber what we owe to those who have gone before us. Businesses and civic groups, neighborhoods and families should all take pride in our heritage and create opportunities to honor it. Schools used to be named after American heroes such as Nathan Hale and Clara Barton instead of just East Metropolis Junior High. That practice should be restored. On the Fourth of July, we need not only celebrate with fireworks, but also honor that dramatic moment when the colonists first declared to the nations of the world that America was free and independent. There was a time when all of us, and especially our nation’s schoolchildren, celebrated George Washington’s and Abraham Lincoln’s birthdays. We looked with awe and appreciation at the enormous accomplishments of these two great leaders without whom we might not be a nation. Today these great national holidays are collapsed into a generic Presidents’ Day, as if Millard Fillmore and Chester A. Arthur were being honored.

Washington’s and Lincoln’s birthdays should be restored as distinctive celebrations in place of the generic Presidents’ Day.



University of Chicago professor Amy Kass suggests the creation of an American Calendar that marks through the course of the year those individuals and events that have defined the nation. These days present opportunities for schools and civic organizations, not only to honor those who gave us the nation we inherited, but also to enhance the civic education of all of us. In a similar vein, Gordon Wood advocates the concept of “sites of memory” developed by Pierre Nora in France. He points out that young people no longer know what Fort Sumter is, or Appomattox, or Yorktown. James Rees, executive

director at Mount Vernon, confirms this impression: “Families no longer know the significance of Mount Vernon or Monticello or Bunker Hill. Yet these are the only places our history becomes literally visible and tangible.”

Organizations are already beginning to address the problem. The Bill of Rights Institute produces extensive classroom materials incorporating the use of America’s founding documents. The National Endowment for the Humanities funds seminars for school teachers to study with scholars at historical sites of national significance. NEH chairman Bruce Cole also

recently announced a new program being sent to libraries and schools around the country: “Picturing America,” a presentation of forty dramatic images that tell the story of our nation.

Teachers and students can mark Washington’s birthday by restoring his portrait to a place of honor and celebrating his character, leadership, and accomplishments. And families can schedule

at least one trip annually to a national landmark to feel and live the history that is America.

Families, schools and colleges, businesses and civic organizations, and governments at all levels should keep American memory alive by treating national holidays and historic sites as touchstones of national identity and as educational opportunities.

CHAPTER 4

BECOMING AMERICANS

EARLY POETS AND WRITERS CELEBRATED AMERICA AS A REFUGE, A FRESH START, AND A LAND OF FREEDOM, OPPORTUNITY AND WEALTH.

Among those who signed the Declaration of Independence were eight first-generation immigrants; among those who led Americans in the Revolutionary War were John Paul Jones, born in Scotland, and Alexander Hamilton, born in the West Indies. Americans welcomed immigrants—and immigrants came by the millions: before and after the Revolution, during the Irish Potato Famine and the European revolutions of 1848, during the period of European population growth in the late 1800s, and when steamships shortened the passage to America. Immigrants built the Erie Canal and the Transcontinental Railroad. They fought in Union armies. A Hungarian immigrant, Joseph Pulitzer, founded the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*; a Scottish immigrant, Alexander Graham Bell, invented the telephone. Frances Cabrini came to America from Italy to organize schools and orphanages and be-

came the Catholic Church's Patron Saint of Immigrants. From all over the world, America lured the ambitious, talented and enterprising. From the beginning, America has been, among other things, "a nation of immigrants," and today the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island are some of our most cherished national symbols.

This large-scale immigration was not without friction. New England Protestants shunned Catholics and claimed immigrants brought diseases and crime. Workers in California said the Chinese were the wrong color and worked for low wages. At the same time, some immigrants found it difficult to adjust to the norms and mores of their new home. Prejudice and strife are clearly part of the historical record. Equally important—and astonishing from an historical perspective—was that prejudice did not lead to ethnic wars, that toleration prevailed over bigotry,

and that the overwhelming number of immigrants, a short-time removed from their native countries, became identified with America's culture and institutions. German-speaking soldiers fought on the Union side in the Civil War, Japanese-American units had exemplary combat records in World War II, and today Americans whose ethnic heritages span the globe are defending America abroad.

Many Americans accepted, even welcomed immigrants. And most immigrants embraced America, enjoying its many freedoms and often relishing their newfound identity. What made relative harmony possible was the combination of economic opportunity and a self-conscious effort to become Americans. Not merely a nation of immigrants, America was a nation of immigrants who were expected to—and usually did—fully embrace their new country. Assimilated immigrants rapidly became Americans, not only grateful for land and jobs, but

also loyal to the ideals of democracy—political equality, private property, and religious freedom—and eagerly embracing the American proposition.

FIRST-GENERATION AMERICANS

Those who arrived in the early decades of the twentieth century were intensely committed to becoming Americans.

When one immigrant wrote his autobiography, he proudly titled it *The Americanization of Edward Bok*, and his story mirrored that of many of his fellow immigrants. In the open response section of the Harris survey, one respondent wrote, "I am told that my great-great grandfather

"You can go to live in Turkey but you can't become a Turk. You can't go to live in Japan and become Japanese. But ... anyone from any corner of the world can come to America and be an American."

– Ronald Reagan

said the proudest day of his life was when he legally became a United States citizen." These newcomers insisted their children learn English and they quickly became known as among the nation's most patriotic citizens.

New immigrants and citizens alike understood that a common language and



common loyalties promoted social peace, facilitated commerce, grounded civic participation, and mitigated social conflict. Their insight is still valid as our newspapers attest today. Divided societies—Serbia, Lebanon, and Kenya, for example—are fraught with tragic conflict. No nation is immune from such divisions; it requires effort to avoid them. And in an era of terrorism, national unity is not just desirable, it may be a condition of survival.

“America’s genius has always been assimilation, taking immigrants and turning them into Americans,” observes journalist Charles Krauthammer, himself a Canadian immigrant.⁴⁸ Becoming a full partner in a new country is not easy on the

immigrant. This change requires not only passing a naturalization examination to qualify, but learning a new language, navigating a new culture, and obeying unfamiliar laws. “This is what we as a country did a century ago with eastern European immigrants,” former cabinet member Henry Cisneros explains. “Americans in the early 1900s were not shy about asking the new immigrants to learn to speak English and commit to their new country.”⁴⁹

It may not be easy, but full involvement in American life can offer enormous advantages: upward mobility and economic opportunity. While immigrants often start at the bottom of the economic ladder, they tend not to stay there for long. “Perhaps

the most striking pattern among American ethnic groups,” notes economist Thomas Sowell, “is their general rise in economic conditions with the passage of time.”⁵⁰

THE CHALLENGE TODAY

Today, it is estimated that one in eight people living in the United States is an immigrant, the highest level since the 1920s. The more people who come to this country, the more crucial it is that all become full participants in American civic life and culture. This goal is supported by 89 percent of the public, according to the Harris survey. America has successfully met this challenge in the past and can do so again, but it will take effort.

In New York City the Gilder-Lehrman Institute of American History welcomes new citizens with a compilation of historical documents and images as a tribute to their new status. Similar programs should be established across the country.

Newcomers to America should be encouraged to participate fully in American social, economic, and civic life. Efforts by government, as well as schools and colleges, businesses, and civic organizations should be promoted

to ensure new citizens learn English, understand democratic institutions, and participate fully in the American way of life.

Americans rightly prize their pluralism, but pluralism presents a challenge as well as a blessing. Harvard sociologist Orlando Patterson warns that, for all its benefits, “... pluralism is socially divisive. No society can survive for long without a common set of values whereby other members can be judged and consensus can be achieved.”⁵¹ Walter Lippmann spoke of “the public philosophy” as that framework of values and ideas that, broadly speaking, Americans hold in common, and which provides a reference point for resolving our debates and disagreements.⁵²

Today a new philosophy, almost the opposite of Lippmann’s, seems to be taking hold. With single-minded emphasis on our differences, every group is encouraged to retain its separate identity. The United States is no longer “we the people,” but “we the peoples.” To this way of thinking, loyalty to one’s native land is as important as loyalty to America, and the rewards of being in this country need not be repaid in undivided allegiance.

The new attitude sanctions dual citizenship, multilingual ballots, and bilingual instruction rather than English immersion. Instead of one America, there are voices for many Americas, or even no America at all. Few would intend this result, but it may be the inevitable consequence of citizens not being able to communicate in a common language and placing other loyalties above their allegiance “to the flag and the republic for which it stands.”

According to various studies, social fragmentation results in recent immigrants more likely to date and marry only within their own community, more likely to have divided loyalties, and more often indifferent to becoming full partners in American society.⁵³

Historical ignorance, civic neglect, and social fragmentation might achieve what a foreign invader could not.

As we celebrate our diversity, we should not adopt policies that perpetuate division or that compromise our pledge of allegiance to “one nation indivisible.”

OVERCOMING SEPARATISM

We look to the public schools to fulfill their civic mission. In 2001, sociologists Alejandro Portes and Ruben Rumbaut published a massive longitudinal study of 5,000 students with immigrant parents from all over the world. Their study reveals an astounding fact: After four years in an American high school, immigrant youths were not more but less likely to consider themselves Americans.⁵⁴ This is not their fault; it is ours.

The tendency to separatism is sometimes unintended, the by-product of well-meaning efforts to make minorities comfortable. Some universities, for example, have separate freshmen orientations for different ethnic groups. Colleges, in turn, set aside separate housing for students of various backgrounds. One university, for example, boasts four such dorms: Casa Zapata (Chicano, Mexican-American), Muwekma-tah-ruk (American Indian/Alaska Native American), Okada (Asian-American), and Ujamaa (Black/African-American).⁵⁵ And, as their farewell to campus life, students now participate in separate graduation ceremonies at many

universities, receiving ethnic symbols as their parting gift.⁵⁶ Students often report warm bonds with their fellow ethnics, in part because of these experiences, but one wonders how well they prepare the students to think of themselves as Americans. University of California linguistics professor John McWhorter, himself an African-American, is concerned: “Campuses are precisely where many black students learn a new separatist conception of being ‘black’ that they didn’t have.”⁵⁷

Universities, businesses, and civic associations should avoid policies and arrangements that may tend to stereotype and divide Americans. Instead, they should encourage programs and practices that emphasize what unites us.

“THE PROCESS OF BECOMING AMERICAN”

Reflecting the new way of thinking, the head of the Office of New Americans in Illinois—the official in charge of drawing new citizens into American culture—was quoted in the *Chicago Tribune* as saying, “The nation-state concept is changing. You don’t have to say, ‘I am Mexican,’ or, ‘I am American.’ You can be a good Mexican

citizen and a good American citizen and not have that be a conflict of interest. Sovereignty is flexible.”⁵⁸

For the late Congresswoman Barbara Jordan, sovereignty was not flexible, nor was being an American optional if you wanted to be a citizen. In 1995 she wrote a powerful essay in the *New York Times* that addressed the question head-on, not afraid to use a now unfashionable term. “There’s a word for all this,” she said, “It’s Americanization. It’s the process of becoming American.”⁵⁹ She understood that becoming an American is not just a matter of having your paperwork in order. It is also a matter of head and heart.

While public policy may sometimes be muddled on these issues, public opinion is not. In the Harris survey, respondents overwhelmingly supported assimilation and Americanization. Eighty-nine percent agreed that “Americanization, including learning English and embracing American culture and values is important in order for immigrants to successfully fulfill their duties as U.S. citizens.” The same poll revealed that 73 percent of respondents agreed that individuals should be required to give up loyalty to their former country



when they become American citizens, and 84 percent believed that English should be the official language of the United States.

In a recent Rasmussen poll, 77 percent of Americans said that those who move to America from other countries should adopt American culture. Only 13 percent indicated they believe immigrants should maintain the culture of their home country. Most significantly, the Rasmussen report noted that these figures have changed little over time.⁶⁰

Unlike Europe, America welcomes and integrates immigrants who fully identify with their new country. This does not require that they give up customs their families may have brought with them from other lands. The kind of unity Americans celebrate does not demand uniformity. On the contrary, it provides opportunities

within which our distinctive family traditions can flourish. From St. Patrick's Day to Cinco de Mayo, Americans are proud of ethnic festivals, food, parades, and newspapers. It is fine if we all together celebrate our mutual differences—E Pluribus Unum with the Pluribus alive and well—but it can be a problem if each group just celebrates its own differences—Pluribus without the Unum. Whatever our attachments may be to family, neighborhood, or heritage, our allegiance must be to the nation that protects us and our freedoms. America is enriched by diversity. It is preserved by unity.

While appreciating the benefits of diversity, Americans should affirm their commitment to national unity, a shared culture, a common language, and defining ideals.

CHAPTER 5

TO PROVIDE FOR THE
COMMON DEFENSE

ONE OF THE THINGS THAT MOST UNITES AMERICANS IS THAT, PUT
SIMPLY, WE ARE ALL IN THE SAME BOAT.

We share a common future, we face
common dangers, and we must provide
a common defense. If the economy
weakens, we all suffer. If rights are not
respected, no one's rights are safe. If the
nation is threatened, we are all at risk. But
we can defend only what
we believe in and, since
the principles of this
nation are not inherited,
they must be taught.

To provide for a com-
mon defense, we must
have a commitment to one another, based
on a common understanding of what it
means to be an American. But intellectual
assent is not enough. Our dedication to
America—as a land, as a people, and as a
set of ideals—must be passionate enough
to fight for and, if necessary, to die for. The

*“Our chief usefulness to
humanity rests on our
combining power with
high purpose.”*
– Theodore Roosevelt

solemn rows of silent graves at Arlington
National Cemetery are a somber reminder
that the blessings of liberty come at a
price.

A nation cannot long survive without
full respect and support for those willing
to pay that price. As for-
mer Harvard University
president and Secretary
of the Treasury Lawrence
Summers has said, “We
may wish that it were oth-
erwise, but in this world—

at this time—we are free because we are
strong. And we must be grateful to those
who support the strength of our country:
the men and women of the U.S. military.”⁶¹

After Vietnam, some Americans lost
faith in a military that was accused not
only of losing the war, but also of commit-

ting atrocities. In the intervening years, Americans' lack of respect for our soldiers and their profession has been somewhat repaired. The military has gained respect, not only for being a fighting force but also for successfully running what has been called "the world's largest school system." Its contributions to American life include, as former presidential advisor William Galston observes, the fact that it has achieved "a stunning level of social integration."⁶²

SUPPORTING OUR MILITARY

The nation benefits from an educated military. Many high schools have Reserve Officers Training Corps programs which make an important contribution to this goal. Unfortunately, many colleges refuse to have ROTC programs. Some of our best-known colleges, including Harvard, Tufts, and Yale, allow students to participate in ROTC programs only if they go off campus, requiring cadets to commute to other colleges, sometimes a great distance away. Many colleges so strongly oppose military recruitment—while welcoming other employers—that they were willing to fight a losing battle all the way to the Supreme

Court to prevent it. Whatever reasons colleges may have for these attitudes, they certainly send the wrong signal to young people willing to serve their country.

Colleges and universities, as well as high schools, should have ROTC for students interested in military careers and educational opportunities, and they should give the military the same access to their campuses as other employers.

Increasingly, young Americans are uncomfortable with the military virtues of obedience, endurance, and self-sacrifice, preferring individualism, comfort, and affluence. In previous wars, everyone knew about Sergeant York, Audie Murphy, and Captain Eddie Rickenbacker. Today awarding the Congressional Medal of Honor to an American soldier who died fighting in Iraq receives scant media coverage.

It is obvious that soldiers must believe in the nation to fight effectively. Less obvious is that civilians must believe in soldiers if the nation is to be defended.

Kathy Roth-Douquet and Frank Schaeffer, authors of the book *AWOL*, have also bemoaned the relative



lack of Ivy League graduates in the military. As Roth-Douquet, a Clinton White House official, wrote in a 2006 commentary, “When the deciders are disconnected from the doers, self-government can’t work as it should.... We need to be intellectually capable ... but we also need to be morally capable, which means we need a moral connection to those Americans we

send into harm’s way. Moreover, we need the largest pool of talent from which to draw those troops. Military work must not simply become fee for service.”⁶³

Our schools and colleges, businesses, and civic groups should take time to recognize and honor those who are serving the nation in the armed forces.

CHAPTER 6

THE UNUM IS AMERICA

THE FACT IS THAT AMERICA IS ONE NATION AMONG MANY, SOME OF WHICH DO NOT SHARE AMERICAN VALUES, MUCH LESS OUR NATIONAL INTERESTS.

People can say, “We are citizens of the world,” but it is the nation—not the world—that defends us. American democracy exists; a world democracy does not. We vote in American elections, secure our rights in American courts, and call American police when threatened. For all our vital interests, we look not to the world, but to America.

Some ask whether this kind of thinking is out of date and lacks vision. The very idea of nation-states, of national sovereignty, and of national defense may seem to some an obstacle to international cooperation and peace. It may seem preferable to think in terms of global economies and global ecologies, multinational institutions and multinational corporations, world citizenship and world courts. Some dream of “a world without borders” in which people, money, and information

have no national home and confront no national barriers. Or, as one educator puts it, the Unum is not America but the globe.

KEEPING AMERICAN BUSINESS AMERICAN

What is an American businessman’s main responsibility—to his country or to the bottom line? It’s an open question. Looking at the global economy, it may seem to some that nations pose a barrier to the efficient movement of workers, investment, and technology—perhaps a compelling analysis from a purely economic point of view. But there are other values at stake. There is what we owe one another.

One cannot readily dismiss the benefits of open world markets and a lively exchange of products, services, and ideas, but in the minds of many Americans, the question persists whether this economic vision doesn’t leave something out—our responsibility to the nation that char-

ters and protects American companies. Respondents in the Harris survey were concerned that in a globalized world our corporations have more loyalty to profits than to America. Sixty percent stated that it is a “bad thing” that corporations “consider themselves to be global companies with no more responsibility to America than to any other country.” Foreign policy expert Walter Mead observes, “You do find today again a growing populist suspicion of whether big business is truly patriotic.”⁶⁴ But patriotism and good business do not have to be adversaries. In World War II, captains of industry like Howard Hughes and Henry J. Kaiser put their country first and still built economic empires.

While American companies, especially multinational corporations, have responsibilities toward their partners abroad, they should understand their special obligations to the United States and to their fellow citizens at home.

BEING CITIZENS OF A NATION

Citizenship is, by its very nature, national. Democratic citizenship is citizenship in a

democratic nation. One of the challenges we face is that the idea of national citizenship is weakening. Some believe the notion is outmoded. They think we are living in a “postnational” world and talk of “de-nationalizing” citizenship. Some are sharply critical of the teaching of American history precisely because it promotes a sense of common identity. These ideas represent another severe challenge to our national identity, namely, that some of our leading thinkers do not want us to have one.

These discussions are not merely academic. They influence what the next generation will be taught. Will they be taught to be Americans and to identify with the American past, or something quite different? Phrases such as “global citizenship” and “citizens of the world” are more commonplace in educational discussions today than “patriotism” and “national unity.”⁶⁵

This new thinking reflects in some cases a utopian idealism, a naïve desire to imagine a world without conflict—a noble goal perhaps, but unrealistic. It reflects in other cases an economic vision—seeing nations as inconvenient obstacles to free market flows.



Writer Bruce Bawer warns about a trade-off: “The more one considers oneself a global citizen ... the less one considers oneself an American citizen whose loyalty is to the Constitution and its creators.”⁶⁶ George Mason University professor Jeremy Rabkin agrees. Global governance has a nice ring, he believes, but “it contradicts sovereignty, our right to be different.” Educator Sandra Stotsky approaches the issue in more concrete terms: “What does global citizenship then consist of, to whom does one pay taxes, for whom does one vote as one’s representative or executive, where are the elections and who will protect our individual rights?” Experts in international relations, including those who welcome giving greater power to unelected international

bureaucracies, now speak of a resulting “democracy deficit.”

For those who accept the “post-national” way of thinking, the rewards outweigh the risks, permitting authoritative global solutions to global problems, even if these solutions violate the interests and override the laws of some countries. Most Americans are not so sure. Of respondents in the Harris survey, 66 percent asserted that when the U.S. Constitution and international law conflict, the Constitution should be our higher legal authority. And 83 percent think of themselves as “more a citizen of the United States than a citizen of the world.”

Since a person cannot literally be a “citizen” of the world or continent or any other geographical entity, the idea of

“global citizenship” confuses and undermines meaningful civic education. Young people need to understand that to be a citizen is to be the citizen of a nation, and to be a democratic citizen is to be a citizen of a democratic nation.

Civic education should be based on the distinctive features of citizenship in American democracy, not on the misleading idea that one can be a “citizen” of the world.

CONCLUSION

IN UNION SQUARE PARK IN NEW YORK CITY, A LONG LAWN IS FLANKED AT ONE END BY AN EQUESTRIAN STATUE OF GEORGE WASHINGTON AND AT THE OTHER BY A SOMBER STATUE OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

In the center of the park is the Independence flagstaff constructed in 1926 to celebrate the 150th Anniversary of U.S. Independence. On the south side of the staff, the Declaration of Independence is inscribed in bronze. Etched in stone and encircling the staff are these words of Thomas Jefferson: “How little do my countrymen know what precious blessings they are in possession of which no other people on earth enjoy.”

The Bradley Project wishes to renew America’s focus on her blessings: unparalleled abundance, domestic peace, liberty, equality of opportunity and entrepreneurship, the world’s first constitution and oldest lasting democracy, rule of law and respect for property, religious faith and religious liberty, patriotism and respect for dissent, public education and preemi-

nent universities, an influential culture, technological prowess, a strong military under civilian control, a market economy and private philanthropy, vigorous debate, a commitment to work and achievement, increasing equality and declining racism, a diverse population, and a history that elicits pride. All these blessings are part of the American identity, made possible by our founding principles, and paid for by the triumphs and tragedies that mark our history.

In 1776, Americans put their lives on the line by declaring independence. They knew that, should they fail, none would survive. Benjamin Franklin warned his colleagues, “Yes, we must indeed, all hang together, or most assuredly we shall all hang separately.” Those options still face America, and we would be wise to heed his warning.

A Presidential Award for American Citizenship should be created. The award would provide recognition at the highest level for individuals in four categories—students, new citizens, first generation Americans over the age of 60, and Americans with at least one immigrant parent—for their understanding of, and commitment to, American ideals and institutions.

Each period of American history confronts many problems, but only two or three great issues. The great presidents have been those who faced these issues with courage and imagination. They succeeded because they provided leadership on behalf of national unity, common purpose, and shared sacrifice. In short, they reminded us of who we are and what unites us.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THE PROJECT

The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation established the Bradley Project on America's National Identity in 2007. During that year, the Project brought together leading historians, political scientists, journalists, public figures, and educators to examine four aspects of American life crucial to American identity: historical memory, civic education, immigration, and national security.

The Project is grateful to the following for contributing their time and ideas:

Richard F. O'Donnell, Executive Director, The Bradley Project on America's National Identity; Michael Aeschliman, Boston University; John Agresto, Philanthropy Roundtable; Michael Barone, journalist; Peter Berkowitz, Hoover Institution; James W. Ceaser, University of Virginia; Linda Chavez, Center for Equal Opportunity; Lionel Chetwynd, President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities; Michael Cromartie, Ethics and Public Policy Center; Paul Donnelly, formerly, U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform; Ross Douhat, journalist; Lucien Ellington, Foreign Policy Research Institute; Amitai Etzioni, The George Washington University; Richard Fonte, former director, "We the People" initiative, National Endowment for the Humanities; John Fonte, Center for American Common Culture, Hudson Institute; Hillel Fradkin, Center on Islam, Democracy and the Future of the Muslim World, Hudson Institute; Francis Fukuyama, Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies; William Galston, University of Maryland; Charles Glenn, Boston University; Eugene Hickok, former Deputy Secretary of Education; Carol Iannone, *Academic Questions*; Fred Iklé, Center for International & Strategic Studies; Tamar Jacoby, ImmigrationWorks USA; Robert David Johnson, Brooklyn College; Robert Kaplan, United States Naval Academy; Amy Kass, University of Chicago; James P. Kelly, III, The Federalist Society for Law & Public Policy Studies; Charles R. Kesler, Claremont McKenna College; Charles Krauthammer, journalist; Mark Krikorian, Center for Immigration Studies; Peter Levine, Tufts University; Herb London, Hudson Institute; Chris Matthews, journalist; Bill McClay, University of Tennessee;

Walter McDougall, University of Pennsylvania; John J. Miller, journalist; Anne Neal, American Council of Trustees and Alumni; Marvin Olasky, University of Texas at Austin; John O'Sullivan, founder, New Atlantic Initiative; John Patrick, Indiana University; Orlando Patterson, Harvard University; James P. Pinkerton, journalist; Jeremy Rabkin, George Mason University; Noah Pickus, Director, Kenan Institute for Ethics at Duke University; Mike Ratliff, The Jack Miller Center for Teaching America's Founding Principles and History; Bill Schambra, Bradley Center for Philanthropy and Civic Renewal, Hudson Institute; Gilbert Sewall, The American Textbook Council; Fred Siegel, Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art; Matthew Spalding, B. Kenneth Simon Center for American Studies, The Heritage Foundation; Sandra Stotsky, University of Arkansas; Sol Stern, Manhattan Institute; Gordon Wood, Brown University; Ruth Wattenberg, *American Educator*. The project coordinator was the American Council of Trustees and Alumni.

Primary authors of the report were Peter Gibbon and Jerry Martin.

THE SURVEY

The Bradley Project commissioned HarrisInteractive to conduct a survey to inform its work. The survey of American citizens took place from December 10, 2007 to December 17, 2007 and results are discussed in the report. A total of 2,421 individuals, U.S. citizens aged 18 and older, completed the survey. The questions and answers cited are available on the Project's website www.bradleyproject.org.

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Michael W. Grebe, President

In 1903, Lynde and Harry Bradley established a business in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, which became the Allen-Bradley Company. In 1985, the Rockwell International Corporation acquired the Allen-Bradley Company and a significant portion of the proceeds were dedicated to establishing The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation. The Bradley broth-

ers were committed to preserving and defending the tradition of free representative government and private enterprise that has enabled the American nation and, in a larger sense, the entire Western world to flourish intellectually and economically. The Bradleys believed that the good society is a free society. The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation is likewise devoted to strengthening American democratic capitalism and the institutions, principles, and values that sustain and nurture it. Its programs (www.bradleyfdn.org/program_interests.asp) support limited, competent government; a dynamic marketplace for economic, intellectual, and cultural activity; and a vigorous defense, at home and abroad, of American ideas and institutions. In addition, recognizing that responsible self-government depends on enlightened citizens and informed public opinion, the Foundation supports scholarly studies and academic achievement.



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