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<http://studentsforliberty.org/blog/america-is-not-the-greatest-country-in-the-world/>

America is Not the Greatest Country in the World

Sarah Harvard
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I have been on this earth for 19 years, and not once had I ever felt that the United States was the greatest country in the world. All my life, I have never experienced a time of peace, prosperity, and freedom. I live in an era of recession, restricted freedoms, and war. To many, my sentiment towards the country I call home may seem unpatriotic. This is not true. I am an outspoken critic of the United States because I am a lover of my birth country. I care for it. I speak up when we do wrong. I speak up when we do wrong, because I want us to do better. I want us to succeed; indeed, I want us to become the greatest country in the world. I am patriotic. Before my time, we used to be the leaders, the revolutionaries, and the free; the land we call home used to be the path to opportunity, prosperity, and liberty — but we have lost the way.

They have taken away our literature, our ability to let our minds interpret freely and gave us propaganda, and force-fed our brains to accept policies that harm our interests. They have taken away our family members and sent them far off to a foreign land to fight a war based on twisted lies and hidden truths. They have taken away our right to property and prosperity, and they have tricked us to believe that capitalism is not only equated to corporatism, but that it's the root of our economic recession. They have taken away our vested powers to make the decisions for our country and gave those powers to failed organizations made up of leaders of foreign nations. They have taken away our ability to love whoever we were destined to love and have distracted us from realizing that marriage is a fundamental liberty that can never be interfered with. They have prohibited us from the victimless use of marijuana and have imprisoned many peaceful, productive members of society. They have taken away our belief that we can make a change and have sadly proven that our vote no longer counts.

We live in a time where Congress spends their time deciding that pizza is a vegetable. We live in a time where we place embargos on countries that are no longer a threat to the world. We live in a time where a president that sends more drones, sends more troops, and kills more soldiers and civilians is rewarded a Nobel Peace Prize. We live in a time where assassinating American citizens as young as 16 without a trial are considered progress. We live in a time where being detained indefinitely without due process and having our phones wiretapped are considered a necessary procedure to our security. We live in a time where we bang our war drums for the sake of war. We live in a time where we spend billions of dollars abroad in foreign aid to build schools, homes, and democracy. We, too, have poor education, foreclosed homes, and restricted freedoms. We live in a time, when the United States ranks 31 in math, 23 in science, and 17 in reading, out of 74 countries by the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development. This proves that my generation is among one of the worst generations in educational history. We live in a time where we lead the world in the number of incarceration rates, military expenditures, and rank 49th in life expectancy by the CIA Factbook. We live in a time where we mistake loving your country with thinking it's the greatest in the world.

In America, we vote based on who we relate to more or whose presence we enjoy rather than who will be in the best interest of the American people. In America, we vote more on *American Idol* than in elections. In America, we demonize and attack fellow Americans because of their religion or race, because of a miniscule fraction of religious fanatics that have constructed terror in this nation — they too face terrorism in this nation. In America, we come together when death has been brought to our enemies, not when we commemorate our servicemen or when we excel in all of human history. In America, being an advocate for liberty is equated to being insane and out of touch with reality. In America, we believe we're so powerful, yet we always feel so threatened.

Every time we defend America for a crime against humanity is a time where we put ourselves in more danger. Every time we victimize ourselves for the result of our past wrongdoing, we fuel ourselves to kill and commit more wrongs.

We used to not be like this. We used to be the best artists, the best poets, and the best thinkers. We used to care for what our representatives our leaders have said or done. We used to have representatives that actually read bills and argued for days on the wording of these governing documents. We used to wage war on tyranny, not people or individual rights. We used to love talking about liberty, not the *American Idol* winner or *The Bachelorette*. We used to be the country of opportunity and of prosperity — we used to be the country that respects and never infringes on anyone's rights. We used to be the country that believes we can always do better, indeed, we shall still be.

This is what makes us who we are and what we should be individually. A vision of radiant days ahead, belief in things unseen, and faith that here, in this nation, we are the writers of our own future, our own destiny. The belief that we hold the power to dictate and succeed in our own life; the belief that we don't need government to tell us who we can marry, what we can drink, or what we can do. This is what America is all about. And now it falls to us, our generation of youth, our freedom fighters, our liberty lovers, to write the next great novel of not only America's history, but also the world's history; to meet our tests, our challenges, our

opportunities, our dreams, and our right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It is our time to rise again; it is our time to secure our future.

I long for day where we stand together strong and enlightened. Our call to liberty is not only a ticket to a journey, nor is it a ticket to a better life; it is a ticket to change the world. It is our calling. We do not need magic, nor do we need authority. We contain the power in our hands from what we have touched, our ears from what have listened, our mouths from what we have spoke, and our hearts from what we have felt.

What lies in the world for us is limitless. I consider this planet, this world, as a canvas and our words as the stroke of a paintbrush. And our words have the power to either make the painting vibrant in colors. And our words have the power to put everything beautiful in this world in that painting. Our words will make a painting that will resonate our message — the message of inspiration, hope, compassion, and freedom. And that painting will be the self-portrait of the invincible greatness of the place I call home.