

American Studies

U.S. History

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### American Values of Equality and the Right to Assemble.

In the Bill of rights, a set of American values were created in order to protect the rights of the people from the government. Specifically, one of the values that Americans live by is equality. The Declaration of Independence stated, “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” (US 1776). However, today the value of equality is not being lived out by Americans. Additionally, Americans also value the right to assemble or protest. In the first amendment it states, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances” (United States Constitution. Art./Amend. I, Sec. 3). On the contrary, the value of the right to protest is also not being lived up by Americans. Clearly then, the core values that Americans live by are not being lived up to because of the lack of equality and the right to protest.

To begin with, today, America is not living up to its values of equality because the country hasn't put enough effort to stop and spread awareness of racial inequality. For instance, racial inequality in the United states, during this current situation, it is getting worse and worse. The COVID-19 pandemic is not helping with this situation, as many people are showing

discrimination and hate towards Asians. This is because the virus was first discovered in Wuhan China and has spread all over the world. Many people are blaming China for the virus. To add on, president Trump also isn't helping with this issue because he constantly uses the terms "China virus" or "Kung flu." When the president was called out for these racial remarks he announced, "It's not racist at all. No, it's not at all. It's from China. That's why. It comes from China. I want to be accurate" (Trump Has a Penchant for Calling the Coronavirus the 'Chinese Virus' or 'Kung Flu'). The president continues to use these terms to describe the virus even though many people have called him out saying that his language and actions are xenophobic. As a result, his actions have influenced many of his supporters, spreading racial inequality and normalizing racism towards Asians. Trump uses his white supremacy in order to scapegoat his failure to help the country through this pandemic and his xenophobia. The amount of inequality today is affecting many minorities. Some are even afraid to go out of their house in the fear of getting verbally abused or physically assaulted. The hate crimes towards Asians during this pandemic have surged. Specifically, some have been called "bat eaters", and told to go back to "their country", literally set on fire, and assaulted (COVID-19 and the Surge in Anti-Asian Hate Crimes). The pandemic is not only spreading a virus, but it is also spreading racial inequality. Inequality is very present in America and its core value of equality is not being lived up to.

Another core value America hasn't lived up to is the right to assemble. The amendments, states that Americans have the right to protest. In the past few months, the death of George Floyd brought many people together to help spread awareness. In particular, this summer in Seattle, many peaceful protestors gathered and marched towards police stations to show their support for the black lives matter movement. However, in only a few minutes, the police officers started

spraying tear gas, throwing grenades, and firing at the crowd (Watch This Protest Turn From Peaceful to Violent in 60 Seconds.” *The New York Times*). The protesters did no harm to the officers, they just peacefully gathered to speak up about their opinions. So why did the officers feel the need to spray innocent people? The unnecessary amount of force used by the police against the protesters was a violation of their human rights. To add on, between May 26 and June 5, there were 6 incidents that involved police using a baton and numerous cases of unnecessary tear gas and pepper spray used to disperse the peaceful protests. Even some law enforcement officers used these tactics specifically on medics (US Law Enforcement Violated Black Lives Matter Protesters' Human Rights). It's not that the police officers themselves are bad, it's that the law enforcement is corrupt. The first amendment clearly states and protects the right to assemble. The black lives matter protests have illustrated how the law enforcement officers violated the basic right of freedom to protest.

To summarize, America is currently not living up to its core values due to the lack of equality because of the racial inequality going on throughout the pandemic and also the value of freedom to assemble, due to the police officers violating the rights of peaceful protesters. For this reason, many minorities feel mistreated when trying to speak or stand up for their basic rights and opinions. The COVID-19 pandemic is also causing racial inequality towards Asians to be normalized. In addition, the peaceful protesters during the black lives matter movement helped to display how their right to protest was not respected. As one can see, equality and the freedom to assemble are not being lived up to Americans today. The government should take action to end using unlawful forces in order to break apart people who are speaking their opinions. Citizens should educate themselves on topics and speak up for their own rights.





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