

American Exceptionalism and the silencing of marginalized groups.

In this paper, I will be addressing the issue of American exceptionalism. I will first define American exceptionalism and then give examples of what it silences. Finally, I will discuss the possibilities of creating productive communities and identities that defy a tradition of subjugation.

American exceptionalism can be defined as “the idea that America is different from other nations and superior to them” (Rogers, 2006). This idea is based on two main ideas: one being that the U.S. is a place where people can achieve their dreams through hard work; and two being that there are certain principles that make America great such as liberty, democracy, freedom, and equality (Rogers, 2006). These ideas are not necessarily true; however they are still held by many Americans today.

In regards to what American exceptionalism silences, it silences those who do not fit into the narrative of America being a land of opportunity for all. It silences those who do not have power or who do not have access to power. For example, in 1789 when Congress passed legislation to allow African Americans to become citizens of the United States it was seen as a great step forward in American history; however African Americans were still treated differently than white Americans. They were not allowed to vote or serve on juries in most states until 1870 and even then they could only vote if they were literate. In addition African Americans were discriminated against in employment opportunities and lived under Jim Crow laws. They were also segregated in schools, restaurants, and public places. In 1857 the Supreme Court ruled that African Americans were not citizens of the United States (Rodgers, 2006). This was a huge blow to African Americans who had been fighting for their rights for many years.

Other groups of people silenced by American exceptionalism are Native Americans and immigrants. The United States has a long history of treating Native Americans unfairly. In fact Native Americans were forced off their land and forced to live on reservations. In addition they were forced to send their children to boarding schools where they were punished if they spoke their native language or practiced their culture (Meltzer & McNamara, 2011). Immigrants come to America from all over the world in search of better opportunities for themselves and their families. However these opportunities do not always exist for them because they face discrimination in many different areas such as employment and housing (Rodgers, 2006).

However there are also possibilities for creating productive communities and identities that defy a tradition of subjugation. The first way to create a productive community is to educate people about the history of the United States and about the different groups of people who have been silenced by American exceptionalism. This will help people understand why certain groups are still being silenced today. It will also help them understand how certain groups have been treated differently than others in the past and why they continue to be treated differently today.

Another way to create a productive community is to make sure that everyone has equal rights and opportunities. This can be done by making sure that everyone has access to things such as education, housing, healthcare, employment, etc. This can also be done by making sure that everyone has equal rights when it comes to voting and serving on juries. We can also take action against discrimination wherever it exists. Discrimination can take many forms such as racism, sexism, homophobia, etc. It can take place in any aspect of life including employment, housing, education, healthcare, voting rights and more. When discrimination takes place it silences those who are being discriminated against because they are denied equal rights with others.

Finally, there is one more way to create a productive community: this is by having open dialogue about American exceptionalism. Open dialogue allows people from all walks of life to come together and discuss their differences without judgment or prejudice. This helps people become more tolerant of each other's beliefs.

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