

PRIMER FOR AMERICANS

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You live in the United States of America. You are an American.

Real Americans like their country. They are proud of it. They think it is a good place to live. And they want to keep it good—to keep it getting better and better all the time.

Why is America the way it is? What makes it a good place to live? The answer is simply this:

Throughout our history most Americans have believed that every person has certain *rights and duties and responsibilities*.

Americans have believed that there are certain things that people *should do*, and other things they *should not do*.

They have also believed in certain things that people *are*, and *are not*.

These things that people believe are called *principles*. This book is an attempt to state the Principles of America in simple, primer fashion so that you can understand them, learn them, and remember them.

This is important. It was because earlier Americans believed in these principles and guided their lives by them, that America has grown to be the good place it is.

If all of us learn and remember these principles—if we also guide our lives by them—then we can help to keep America growing better, and better, and better.

And if we follow these Principles of America, we can help make the world a better place to live in, too.



7. The Right to Security of Person and Property.

Not just one, but three Amendments to the Constitution (4th, 5th and 14th) protect against illegal search and seizure, or loss of life, liberty, or property, without "due process of law."

8. The Right to Equal Protection before the Law.

As individuals are equally important, so laws must apply equally to all, without special privileges for any particular individuals or groups.

9. The Right to Freedom from Slavery.

This includes "the right to quit," for no individual may be forced to work for another.

10. The Right to Petition the Government.

The legally guaranteed right of the individual to "petition the government for redress of grievances" is evidence of the American belief that government is the servant, not the master, of the people.

11. The Right to Vote for people of your choice.

This is the individual's most potent weapon in the protection of his rights and freedoms . . . a weapon that to be effective must be constantly and wisely used.

The Principles of America hold that every man has . . .

12. The Right to a Good Education.

13. The Right to Live where he pleases.

14. The Right to Work where he wants to.

15. The Right to Join and Belong to an Organization.

16. The Right to Own Property.

17. The Right to Start his Own Business.

18. The Right to Manage his Own Affairs.

19. The Right to Make a Profit or to Fail, depending on his Own Ability.

There are other, similar rights of individual action which are Principles of America, but all of these individual rights may be combined in these two broad principles . . .

20. Every Man is entitled to Freedom and Equality of Opportunity.

21. Every Man may Earn his Living When, Where, and How he wants to.

There are also Limiting Principles . . .

Principles of individual *freedom* sometimes clash with those of individual *equality*. Therefore our rights as individuals must be limited, and those limitations are themselves *principles*.



22. The Rights of any Individual shall not Interfere with the Equal Rights of Other Individuals.

Your right to swing your arms stops where the other fellow's nose starts.

23. The Rights of any Individual shall not Interfere with the Welfare of the People as a Whole.

Freedom of speech does not give the individual the right to shout "fire" in a crowded theatre.

24. Every Individual owes Obedience to the Laws under which he Lives.

The individual has the right to talk against a law, to work and vote to change that law, but NOT to disobey that law.

Principles that are Patterns of Behavior . . .

Many of our principles of individual freedom and equality are guaranteed to us by law.

But we have other beliefs, other general rules of action and conduct that have grown to the status of principles. They have stood the test of time. They have worked. They have become a basic part of the way we live and of the way we look at things.

These principles, too, are foundations of Americanism. They are as true, if not more true, today than they were in 1850 or in 1750.

If America stays free, they will still hold true in 2050.

25. Every Man shall be Judged by his Own Record.

A man's family background, his race or his religion, is not as important as what that man himself can do, for Americans believe a man must stand on his own feet.

26. Every Man is Free to Achieve as much as he can.

We believe that where any boy may become President, where any man may achieve greatness, there is the greatest incentive for every man to do his best.

27. To Achieve anything, a Man should be Willing to Work.

Americans have always known that "you don't get something for nothing," that to get anything takes a willingness to work and to work hard.

28. Achievement also Depends upon the Ability to do a Good Job.

Add to "willingness to work" the ability to produce results and the combination is the basis for most individual achievement in our country.

29. Every Man has the Right to a Fair Share of the Results of his Work and his Ability.

Because of this belief, America has not only produced more goods, but they have been more fairly and more widely shared by more people than in any other country.

30. Security is the Ability of a Man to Provide for himself.

The only true security for any individual is the opportunity, the ability, and the determination to work and plan and save for his own present and future. Self-reliance is vital to individual independence and personal freedom. No man can be "proud and free" who depends on others for his security.

31. When an Individual cannot Provide his own Security, the Responsibility should be Assumed by Others.

We believe that no one should starve, or be without adequate clothing and shelter, so those who have more than their basic needs share the responsibility of providing the essentials of security for those who need help.

32. Every Individual must Deal Fairly with other Individuals.

Honesty, fairness, and personal integrity are virtues that help free and independent individuals get along with each other without losing their independence.

33. Fair and Free Competition is a Good Thing.

Americans have always believed that competition among individuals or groups encourages greater effort which in turn brings greater benefits to all.

34. Cooperation among Individuals is Vitally Important.

PRESIDENT EISENHOWER has said: "The freedom to compete vigorously accompanied by a readiness to cooperate wholeheartedly for the performance of community and national functions, together make our system the most productive on earth."

Principles of Individual Responsibility . . .

Freedom for individuals carries with it an equal responsibility to use that freedom wisely. Therefore, if we wish to remain free, we must faithfully fulfill our responsibilities as free men.

35. The Individual is Responsible for himself and his Family.

He must protect them and provide for their present and future well-being.

36. The Individual has Responsibilities to the Groups of which he is a Part.

He must give of his best to his community, his church, his employer, his union, and to every group in which individuals cooperate for their mutual benefit.

37. The Individual has Responsibilities to his Country.

He must be an active citizen, interesting himself in local, state, and national government, voting wisely, thinking and speaking and acting to preserve and strengthen freedom, equality and opportunity for every individual.

38. The Individual has Responsibilities to the World.

Man's horizons have expanded. What happens in the world affects him, and his actions can affect the world. Today, therefore, each man has a responsibility to act—and to encourage his country to act—so that freedom and cooperation will be encouraged among the people and the nations of the world.



For America's Future . . .

Most of us are still confident of ourselves and of our country. We do not claim perfection. But we have faith in our ability to move forward, to improve, to grow, to provide more and more individuals with more and more of everything they want and need in life . . .

If we, the people of the United States, want to have more material benefits, we must believe in and follow these two principles:

39. The only way we can Have More is to Produce More; and

40. As we Produce More, we must make it possible for More and More People to Enjoy that which we Produce.

If we, the people of the United States, want to have a better life, spiritually as well as materially . . .

41. We must stand firmly for our Beliefs, our Rights, our Principles.

WALT WHITMAN, writing nearly 100 years ago, put it this way:

"There is no week, nor day, nor hour when tyranny may not enter upon this country if the people lose their supreme confidence in themselves . . ."

There are those who would chip away our confidence so that their special brand of tyranny might creep into America. They must not succeed. So, let us ask of every plan, or act, or idea . . .

Is it With or Against the Principles of America?

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