

Throughout American history there have been many theories as to the makeup of this diverse nation. One of the most popular refers to America as the "great melting pot", suggesting that America is a place where all kinds of different cultures and beliefs combine to form a uniquely American identity. Thomas Paine here, however, seems to be ~~more~~ more in accord with the "tomato soup" analogy where it states that the essence of American culture is the tomato soup ~~is~~ that is, the so-called "American creed", a combination of liberty, self-government, social mobility, and economic independence, while other cultures add ingredients and spices to the soup, but does not change its nature as being a pot of tomato soup. Paine suggests that despite the diversity of American population, "the simple operation of constructing government on the principles of society and the rights of man" brings "cordial union" and serves as the basis of American society. ^{As the tomato taste is the basis of the soup.} I believe that although his assertion of diversity and the importance of rights of man seems to hold true today, that they continue to bring union is no longer accurate.

There is little doubt that America even today is largely an immigrant society. Ever since Lyndon Johnson loosened the quota system in 1965, every year ~~thousands~~ thousands, if not millions of people from all backgrounds pour into America, recently Asians and Latin Americans in predominance. However, while in the 1700s and 1800s the immigrants also came from different nations they often shared similar ~~beliefs in what a government should be~~ the European cultures as most ~~were~~ were from →

continuity, the integration of Asians and Latin Americans into a predominantly white society presents unprecedented difficulties. Community-first values held by many Asians contradict the value of personal liberty in America and most Mexicans remain loyal to their homeland, never becoming part of American society. In these cases "the principles of society and the rights of man" no longer serve as a binding force in uniting the American people; because of different cultures, these beliefs are no longer shared.

Another crucial issue in present-day America that threatens to tear the union Paine so optimistically predicts is the ever-~~more~~ radical political parties. Although both parties believe in what Paine calls "the principles of society and the rights of man", this common belief fails to unite them for they see distinctively different ways of achieving them. The recent budget standoff presents a clear example of discord, not concord, caused by our form of government — when the President and the Congress fail to agree, serious problems might occur. The arguments surrounding what the government can and should do elude Paine's characterization of America. These arguments are, however, not entirely detrimental to the American society. What Paine fails to recognize is that discord can sometimes be beneficial. When people possess the right to differ, when oppositional forces such as political parties fight to gain approval of the American people, we see possibilities of change — something only discord can initiate.

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