

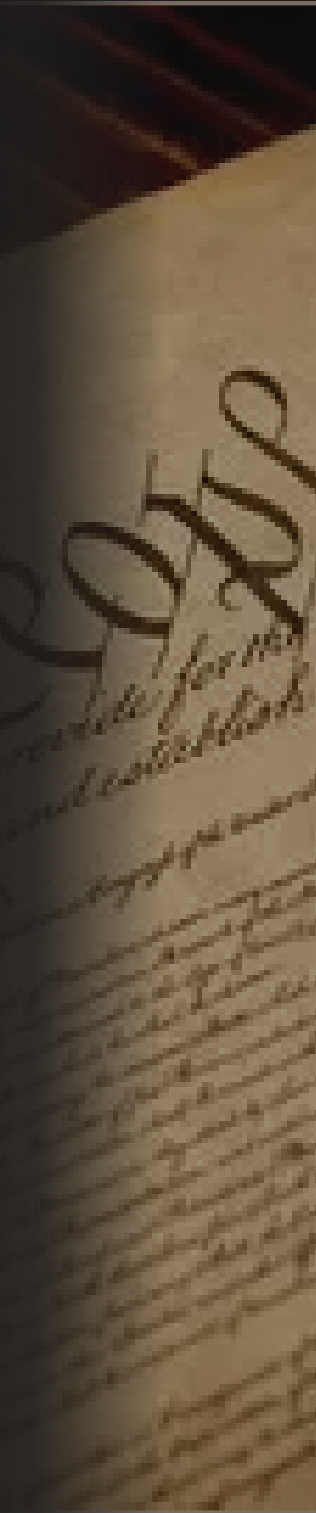
THE PROS & CONS OF AN AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

FROM A CRITICAL
HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Figure 1. Molly Pitcher at the Battle of Monmouth,
painted by Jean Leon Gerome Ferris.

THE ADVERSITIES OF LIBERTY

- Throughout history, liberty has often required courage and deep sacrifice.
- Independence often came at the cost of bloodshed.
- Citizens acted as protectors of freedom.
- Not all Americans experienced the true ideals of liberty.
- Nevertheless, many people continued the fight to expand equality, freedom, and unalienable rights for all citizens.

THE AMERICAN DEMOCRATIC PROMISE AND CHALLENGE

- Democracy promises citizens representation, equality, and freedom for all.
- The Constitution is centered around civic duty and citizens' participation in government.
- However, due to inequality and the exclusion of many minorities, these ideals have been questioned.
- The challenge of democracy lies in ensuring that no citizen is excluded from democratic promises and vision.



Figure 2. American Revolutionary War officers planning military strategy.

ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE'S WARNING ON THE PARADOXES OF DEMOCRACY



Figure 3. Portrait of Alexis de Tocqueville.

Alexis de Tocqueville was a French political author who observed how colonists formed democracy in America from 1831–1832.

Acknowledged democracy's strengths regarding equality and liberty.

Analyzed dangerous cracks within democracy, mainly:

- majority rule
- individualism
- soft despotism

All his findings are documented in his famous work *Democracy in America*.

THE RULE OF THE MAJORITY

- Majority rule is an important factor of democracy.

The majority, according to Tocqueville, is **“partly founded upon the idea that more enlightenment and wisdom are found in a group of men than in one man alone and that the number of legislators counts for who is elected”** (Tocqueville 288).

- Allows citizens to have a voice in laws and legislature.

- However, the majority can silence the voices, rights, and opinions of the minority.
- Disagreement with the majority = ostracization, scapegoating, and political strain.
- But, as people retreat from public life, democracy begins to die.
- **Example: Slavery exposed flaws in the majority and political institutions.**

THE BURDEN OF INDIVIDUALISM

- Equality is the political philosophy that all citizens should have equal opportunities and the right to think for themselves.
- Tocqueville warns equality can lead to individualism.
- Cartesian mindset = Every person for themselves.
- Individualism can limit community and civic engagement.
- There must be a balance between personal individuality and civic duty.

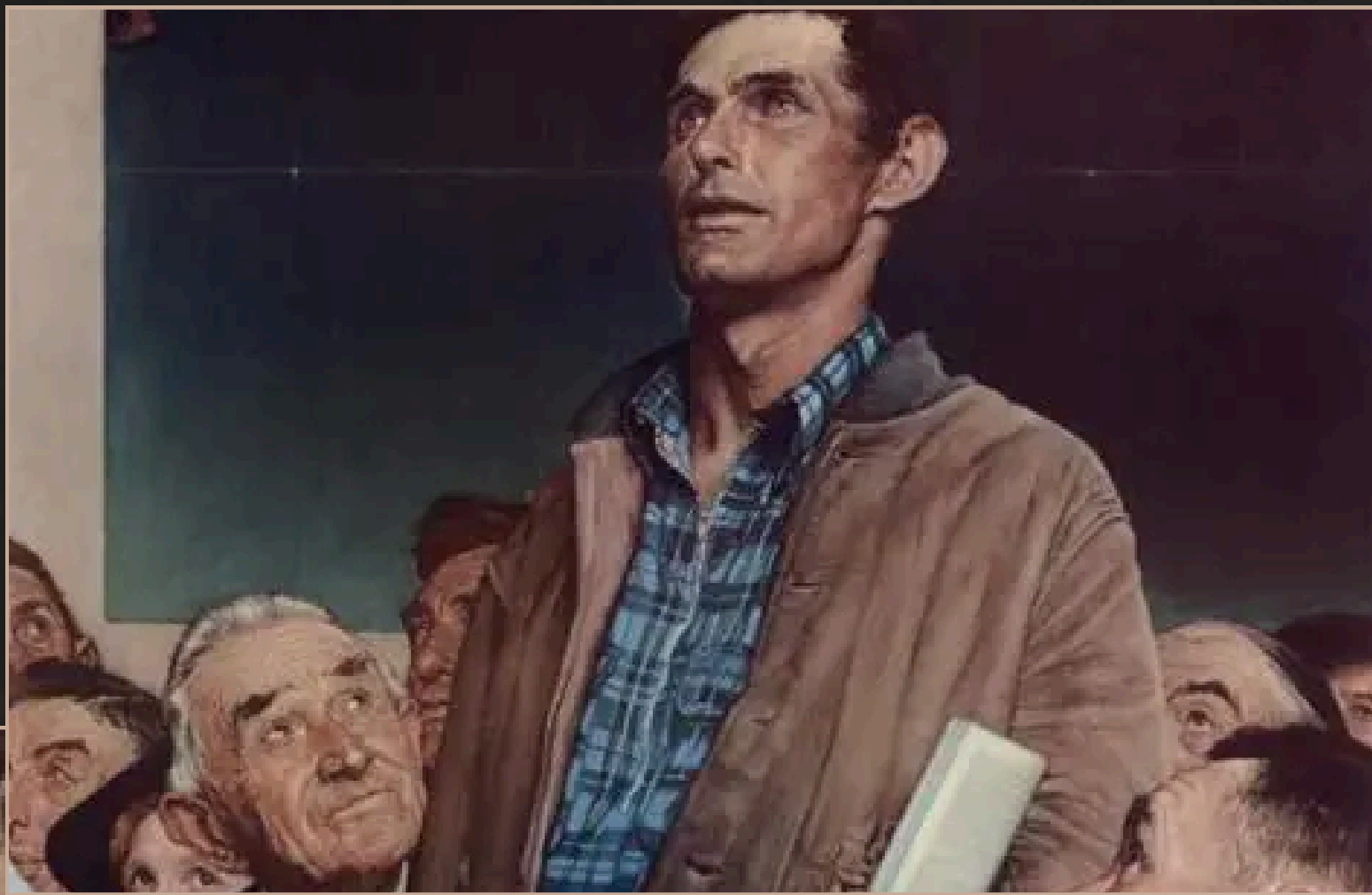


Figure 5. Norman Rockwell's 1943 painting "Freedom of Speech."



SOFT DESPOTISM & THE COST OF COMFORT

- Citizens abandon responsibility.
- Safetyism becomes the main focus.
- Parental relationship forms between the government and citizens.
- Freedom is not taken by force but is slowly surrendered overtime.
- Democracy weakens and transitions into a centralized government.

“Reduces daily the value and frequency of the exercise of free choice; it restricts the activity of free will within a narrower range and gradually removes autonomy itself from each citizen” (Tocqueville 806).

Figure 6. Surreal painting of a council meeting featuring a large green head sculpture.

SAFEGUARDING DEMOCRACY

In order to safeguard democracy, everyone must do what democracy requires.

- Protects the rule of law.
- Protects Constitutional rights.
- Encourages civic participation.
- Strengthens democratic institutions and community.
- Promotes unity of the people.

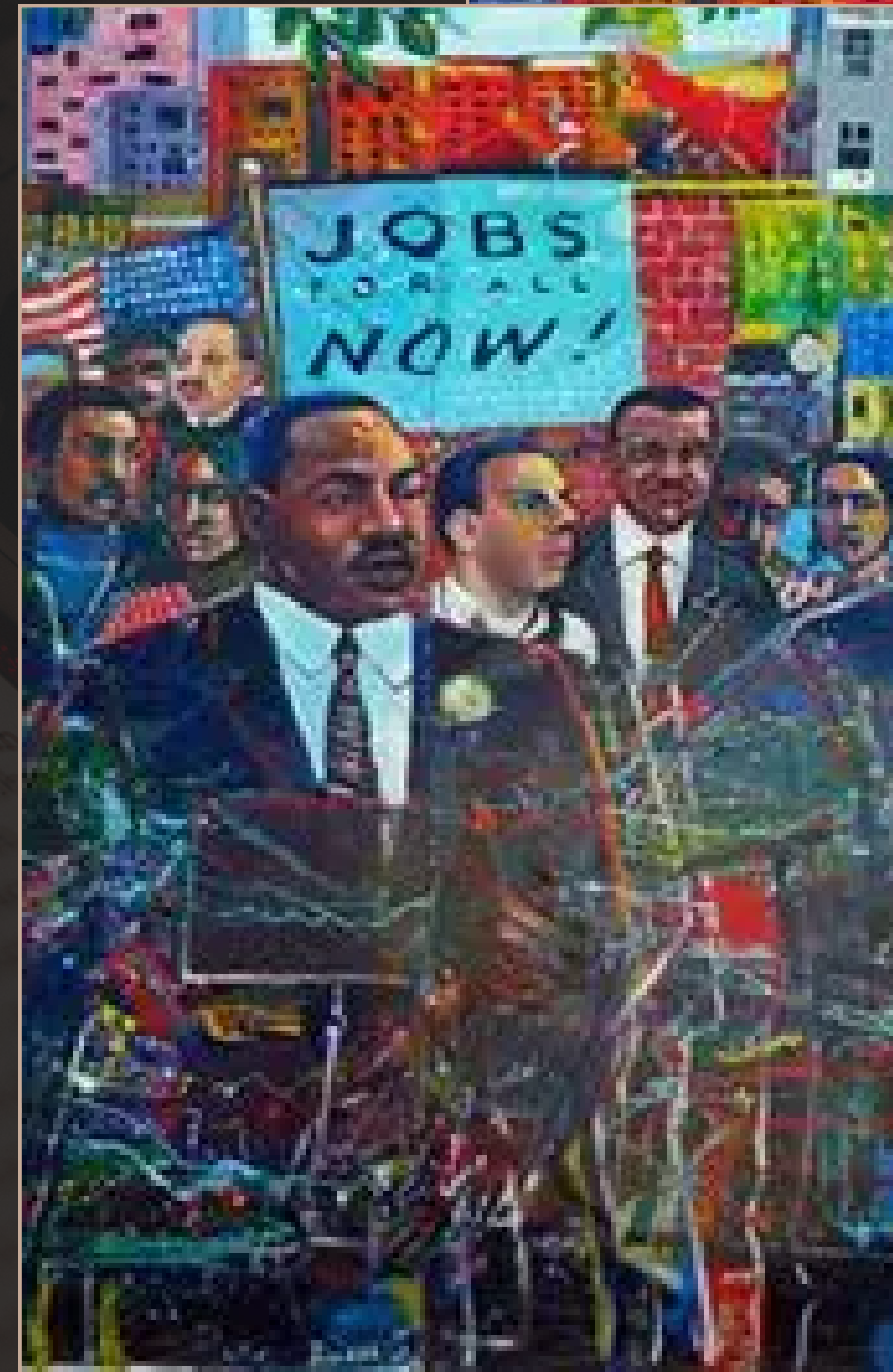


Figure 7. Painting depicting a civil rights march featuring Martin Luther King Jr.



CONCLUSION & THE ONGOING FIGHT FOR A TRUE DEMOCRACY

Pros of Democracy

- Liberty
- Equality
- Civic participation
- Unity

Cons of Democracy

- Majority rule
- Individualism
- Soft Despotism

- Democracy is not perfect. It is imperfect and requires constant revision.
- It is composed of imperfect men and women with human flaws and discrepancies.
- It is only through the unity of the people that a democracy survives and continues to live up to the nation's principles.

**“let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan- to do all which may be achieved and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations”
(Lincoln, Second Inaugural Address).**

THANK YOU

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