

## Moving Forward

Creating a democratic nation without liberally educated citizens is like riding a stationary bicycle; no matter how much effort is invested, no one is ever going to move forward.

In the early days of education, Plato was the first to see that schooling should be a tool for acquiring culture. Learning only the skills needed to earn a living simply was not good enough. Training both mind and body, expanding one's knowledge in a variety of subject areas, and utilizing these skills in all aspects of life were the steps to personal freedom. Thus came the genesis of the liberal arts, which became the foundation for ancient Greece, Rome, and all other societies that went down in history.

Now, hundreds of years later, the greatest democracy the world has ever known still revolves around liberal education. After all, democratic principles assume that the citizens of a nation are the best available leaders for the nation. We do not deserve the right to create, criticize, and change the government if we are too naïve to do so wisely and fairly. As John F. Kennedy said, "The ignorance of one voter in a democracy impairs the security of all" (brainyquote.com). Education is our obligation. Training of the mind and exposure to an array of ideas instills the kind of tolerance, civility, and creativity needed in the active citizens of a democracy; without these essential ingredients, it is all too easy for corruption to take root.

When it appears that our nation is stuck in a rut, people are quick to blame the government for its ineffectiveness. But what if the finger pointers were the true problem? In a pole from 2006, only forty-two percent of participants could name the three branches of the federal government (washingtonpost.com). Considering this and other similarly dismal statistics, it is hardly surprising that the American democracy is not functioning at full steam. Only more widespread incorporation of the liberal arts into education can give this nation the push it needs in the direction of progress.

"A people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power knowledge gives."

-James Madison

## Sources

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