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What are the Greatest Attributes of our Democracy?

Picture... fireworks on the Fourth of July. The day that we celebrate our independence, these pyrotechnical wonders launch, shine, and then they're gone, the ashes scattered to the wind. One bright burst of patriotism, and then we return to our repetitive circadian rhythms. But our democracy is so much more than fireworks. Beneath all the sparkle of titles, medals and politics, democracy burns bright through the toughest times, its torch held high by our veterans, lit by the sacrifices they have made. Since its formation, America has undergone trials both internal and external, from the Civil War to the Cold War. But always, no matter our politics, Americans burn with a fierce passion to protect our way of government. So let's light up some of democracy's greatest attributes.

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines Democracy as: a government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them through a system of representation. In other words, a government created by the people, for the people. Everyone's voice is heard; or at least, they're supposed to be. As much as we like to believe that everyone is granted equal representation, unfortunately that is not the case. Some voices get unnecessarily loud, and some are drowned out. But the more people who participate in democracy, the more we encourage voting, the more equal it becomes. Our democracy is ever evolving into a 'more perfect union', and it is our responsibility as citizens to ensure that union.

So, now that we've lit the fuse by defining democracy and establishing its purpose, let's launch into why ours is so important.

America is one of the oldest and largest living democracies. Because of this, it's also highly developed, tried, and true. And one of our greatest strengths is our diversity. We have

been dubbed a ‘salad bowl’--a cultural mosaic. Many different cultures and ethnicities have been tossed together throughout our history to form the rich, diverse, multicultural society that we live in today. Our government represents thousands of people and thousands of ways of life, and that diversity makes us powerful. Women and people of minority backgrounds are rising up to take office, to be represented, and to be heard; from Martin Luther King Jr. to Ruth Bader Ginsburg. The more we can allow this to flourish, the more empathy we build as a nation and the more empowered all of us become.

Now let’s illuminate in a burst of color what is arguably the most important thing about our democracy.

This particular facet is deceptively simple, and something that many Americans, including myself, often take for granted; our freedom of choice. We all have choices. We all make them, whether good or bad, and they are the ones we live with. But to have as much freedom as we do in this country is rare in the corrupted world we live in today. Our freedom that is paid for every day by the sacrifices made by our men and women in the armed forces-- our veterans. And we must not allow ourselves to forget the privilege they have given us to express ourselves, to worship as we choose, to vote, and to be who we want to be. They have endowed us with choice.

Individually, we are all so different and so unique. But still we are unified by a fire that blazes in all of us. We are one people. One nation. One democracy. Today, we lit the fuse by defining democracy as a government by the people, for the people. Then, we launched into why our differences are one of our greatest strengths. And finally, we illuminated the privilege of choices, and the sacrifices made for us to have them. There are many aspects that make our nation great, and still there are areas we can improve. But we are not fireworks-- short and

passing with a legacy of ash. No, we are a blazing forge, a flame that does not waver with the strongest wind. Democracy may flicker, but it will never burn out.