



# LEFT AND RIGHT DIFFERENCES: HOW DO YOU JUDGE AMERICA?

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The Left and the Right view America and its history very differently. Conservatives view America as President Abraham Lincoln viewed it – as the “Last Best Hope of Earth.” While acknowledging America’s flaws, conservatives regard America as the best society ever created – giving more people of more backgrounds more freedom, more opportunity, and more affluence than any other society – and doing more good for more people in other countries than any society in history.

The Left, on the other hand, sees America as having been, and continuing to be, a very flawed country, morally no better than many, and morally inferior to many. The Left’s view is that America was founded by rich white males who were intent on protecting their race, their wealth, and in many cases, their slaves. America was and remains sexist, intolerant, xenophobic, and bigoted; a country of unacceptable material inequality, where the superrich and big corporations have far too much power and influence. The further left one goes, the more negative the assessment of America.

Here’s a telling example.

On my radio show, I once dialogued with Howard Zinn, arguably the most influential American historian of the second half of the twentieth century. Here is one part of our dialogue: Professor Zinn said: “If people knew history, they would scoff at...the idea that the United States is a force for the betterment of humanity.” When I said that America has done more good for humanity than any other country, Professor Zinn responded: America has “probably [done] more bad than good.”

For the Left, the moral flaws in American history are enormous, but all the unique good America has done both in America and abroad is minimized or ignored. Take the example of slavery. This terrible institution is the most widely cited “proof” of American evil. The problem with that judgment, however, is that every civilization in world history, even including African societies, practiced slavery – often on a far larger scale than America did.

But there are two other questions about slavery that must be asked in order to make a moral judgment about America: The first is: “Which societies were the first to abolish slavery?” Since all societies had slavery, that is a far more important question to ask than who had slaves. It turns out that all the societies that first abolished slavery were rooted in the Jewish and Christian Bibles and among them was the United States.

The second question that needs to be answered is this: Was America morally better than other societies in just about every other regard? And the answer is overwhelmingly yes.

America gradually became the least racist, least xenophobic country in the world. In no country do people of every race and ethnicity become accepted as full members of the society as do immigrants to America. And no country in history has fought for the liberty of others as much as America has. That is why, for example, 37,000 Americans died in Korea, a country that offered America no economic gain. The purpose was to protect Koreans from Communist tyranny. Today South Korea, where American troops are still stationed, is one of the wealthiest and freest countries in Asia. Meanwhile North Korea, the part of the Korean peninsula that America did not succeed in liberating, is the least free and poorest country on earth.

Without America, people around the world would suffer from far more tyranny, enslavement, and genocide. The countries where American troops have remained long after combat ceased – Germany, Japan, and South Korea – have prospered economically and morally. Countries that America abandoned – such as Vietnam and Iraq – experienced mass murder and other horrors. The Left, however, views nearly all of America’s wars since 1945 as expressions of superpower imperialism.

Days before the 2008 American presidential election, the Democratic candidate, then-Senator Barack Obama, announced: “We are five days away from fundamentally transforming the United States of America.”

Exactly so. The Left wants to fundamentally transform America; the Right doesn’t. Conservatives want to conserve America’s unique greatness and improve it where necessary, but not transform it. If America is fundamentally transformed, it will not become better than other nations. It will become like other nations.

I’m Dennis Prager.