

**The American Dream – And Why We Need To Wake Up**  
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If one were to pull someone over at random on a street corner and ask them what this country's form of government is – you can expect what the answer would be: a democracy. Then perhaps one would ask that person what living in a democracy meant to them, and perhaps they would talk of such things as being able to vote for a leader, the concept of the free speech and the bill of rights, or any number of things that we have been taught about democracy from birth. Next, one could ask the person what President Bush means when he speaks of spreading “democracy” and “liberty” abroad as ideals to be sought after – and one would probably get a different answer just about every time that question was posed. Since we can identify what we have at home, why is it so difficult to conceptualize what the current administration is doing abroad? The answer lies, perhaps, closer to home than one might think – in the rhetoric of democracy. Turning on the television in today's society to listen to the words of our leader is not as simple as it perhaps once was. Now talk of spreading “democracy” and “freedom” to those who are oppressed might carry hidden meanings with it we, as Americans, would not be likely to admit – or perhaps even realize. What is the Bush Administration hiding behind its loaded rhetoric and divisive discourse? And, more importantly, how can we sift through the nationalistic undertones that seek to impair our good judgment and muddle our perceptions of reality, and gain an understanding of what is *really* going on both at home and abroad, under the guise of “democracy”? To understand the language and rhetoric used to propound ideas and philosophy is to understand the intent of the speaker, so let us start here – by analyzing the words of our leader to see if we can ascertain what really lies behind the veil of “democracy,” the shroud of “liberty.”

Most people underestimate the influence that language and rhetoric can have over a populace. However, one need only look at the results of the last election to see the substantial effect that rhetoric can have in persuading a people to go along with a particular viewpoint or take certain action. During his campaign, President Bush pushed for issues such as the war on terror and decidedly moral social issues, such as his stance to ban gay marriage through a constitutional amendment. This impact of this can be seen because the ballot in many states contained a space with which to vote for or against this amendment. The Republican plan was that having this on the ballot (giving people who felt very strongly on this issue the opportunity to vote on it) would draw out conservative voters in many states. And we can all see the result of this today, with the reelection of the President. This rhetoric against gay marriage (and consequently, placing on the ballot in key states) drew out many voters for Bush, who do not necessarily benefit from his policies. It seems strange that people would vote for the President in droves in a state such as Ohio when the outsourcing supported by the President has caused a record amount of unemployment in that very state. Why would people vote against their own economic well-being? The answer is rhetoric. This administration can use language as a tool to manipulate the American people into doing as they wish, even if the vast majority of the people do not benefit from (and even suffer because of) the negative policies enacted by the very man they are voting for. This is but one of many examples of the political power that language and rhetoric can have over a people. This also illustrates why understanding the ideas set forth in this paper is important because we all live in such a society that thinks nothing of manipulating its people under the charade of being “for” the people.

Before this paper begins discussion in greater detail of that very rhetoric that is used to sway the uninformed, specific questions need to be asked in order to focus its efforts – because to look at every contradiction in American foreign policy and the “democracy” that we live under would take much more space than this paper has here. So, there are several underlying questions that we can seek to answer that will help us to gain a greater understanding of the true intent of the current administration, and which will allow us to make a responsible democratic choice when the time comes again to select a new leader, and with him or her, a new administration. As one reads this paper, it is important to keep several questions in the back of one’s mind, in order to lay out a foundation from which the reader can build his or her own interpretation of the argument that will be presented. Who does this administration assume that it can speak for? The American public? It is important to understand this when analyzing the language and rhetoric it uses to propound its ideas and philosophy. For instance, when the President speaks of the United States in the communal first-person (that is, speaking of this nation as “us”), does he assume that he speaks for the entire American people so as to try to unify everyone with this type of inclusive rhetoric (as opposed to creating an oppositional identity – a concept that will be discussed in greater detail later in this paper)? Most would find this very presumptuous, taking into account the completely polarized state of our nation after the last election. Who does this administration speak to when it delivers speeches or addresses? And, perhaps, the most important question would be: How do those people that the government speaks to listen? Do they just accept what is spoon-fed to them? Or, do they question that truth so as to fulfill their democratic responsibility of staying informed so that a responsible decision can be made in the next election?

To attempt to discover the true intent that is hidden behind the rhetoric that shapes and defines the “democracy” under which we live, this paper will employ a method known as critical discourse analysis. Using this alternative way of examining and analyzing rhetoric, this paper will select excerpts from the President’s speeches to scrutinize, not merely listening for the ideas contained within – because the way in which political speeches are written nowadays tend to cloud the issues – but for the more subtle aspects such as undertones and meanings that might not necessarily be readily apparent to the casual listener. After this has been completed, this paper will attempt to present a collection of evidence that allows the reader to have a better understanding of what the current administration’s intent truly is and where its allegiances truly lie. Does this government “of the people, for the people, and by the people” really exist to serve, or does it seek to manipulate those it has been entrusted to protect into forcing their views on others around the world? Through critical discourse analysis, perhaps the answer can be found, embedded deep within the partisan rhetoric and inflamed oratory that both inspires and divides this nation, this last bastion of the “democratic ideal.”

It is also important to understand exactly what *type* of democracy we live in. Democracy, as a system of government, allows the people to participate in their own governing, but there are two different ways of allowing them to participate. First is that of a participatory democracy, where the people have a direct say in what goes on, and what decisions are made in the government. The second form is that which we have in the United States: a representative democracy. In the United States’ form of democracy, we elect a President through an electoral college. We satiate our people’s need for participation by giving them the right to vote – and then allowing a much smaller

predetermined body of people to *actually* determine who will preside over the nation's government for the next four years. In fact, about 10% of American presidents have been elected to office without receiving the popular vote (Kunkee). That 10% includes our current President, who did not reap the popular vote in the 2000 election against Al Gore. So, in reality, our government for the people, *by* the people is really better categorized as *by some* of the people. Representative democracy allows for greater division in the nation because a state's electoral votes do not necessarily go to the person who won the popular vote in the state, so the people do not really have that much of a say in who is leading the country – it is merely an illusion of participation. Understanding this illusion is the first step towards rectifying the problem with it, and this does not only entail understanding the illusion of a government “by the people, for the people” that a representative democracy imposes on the American people, but it also means understanding the illusion of justice and freedom that the rhetoric of democracy creates to mask its true yearnings for power and the capitalist desire for the aggregation of wealth by whatever means necessary.

However, this paper will attempt to show that not all is lost – there is indeed hope for this country if we can sift through the nebulous rhetoric and empty promises that this administration so readily spoon-feeds the American people and realize that changes need to be made to our system of government if we want to change for the better. Iain Watson writes about this need for change: “...one way of rethinking the site and nature of democracy has been through a strategic radicalization of existing political institutions of representative democracy by forging a new local and national relationship between the governed and those who govern” (Watson 65). If we are to have any hope of change for

the better, we simply cannot seek to make changes to our existing way of governing. Instead, we must reinvent the nature and practices of democracy to be more inclusive and participatory. With increased involvement by the American people, we would not get involved in wars that drain our resources and alienate us from the rest of the world because the public outcry would *force* changes in the administration instead of just being a nuisance that the current administration seeks to overcome (instead of taking positive steps to unite the nation). By forcing a gradual shift from representative democracy to participatory democracy, we can change the nature of democracy itself, allowing for an increased role of citizenship (and thereby, contentment) for the American people. No longer would an administration be able to shroud its true intent from the people because a participatory democracy would allow the people to dictate the intent and aims of the government. The government would become a tool which the American people could use to change their lives (and perhaps those of the world) for the better, instead of becoming its own entity that controls the people for its own selfish, imperialistic purposes. By shifting control of the government to the American people, people would have a newfound desire to participate and become involved because what they have to say would actually matter.

Now, before we begin analysis of the rhetoric of democracy and how it is being used behind the scenes of politics to construct a social reality in which people accept everything at face value and do not question the decisions of this administration as long as it is for the “good of democracy,” we must first reach an understanding of what critical discourse analysis is, why it is important to employ, and what it can teach us. In her paper on “Critical Discourse Analysis and Composition Studies,” Pegeen Reichert Powell

discusses the remarks of the President of Miami University in Oxford, Ohio in response to a racist act that was committed on campus. In her analysis of his speech (and consequently, his rhetoric) she points out several ideas and concepts that are not necessarily obvious to his listeners – concepts that she refers to as the “discourse of diversity.” The methods with which she arrived at those conclusions will be my focus – that methodology being that of critical discourse analysis.

What is critical discourse analysis? The way in which it will be used in this paper will be to, instead of looking at a speech by the current administration for its general ideas and overall themes, this paper will instead focus on the actual language used, the rhetoric used to propound ideas and philosophies that might not be explicit to the casual listener. Powell writes that, “a focus on language is necessary to the study of discourse” (Powell 441). In other words, to understand and comprehend the scope of the language used by the speaker is to understand the underlying philosophical or political undertones on which the speaker bases his or her ideology and puts it into practice. By analyzing the key words and phrases that are repeated throughout whatever selection this paper is analyzing, it will construct a base of ideology that should be what is really implied by the speech, instead of allowing itself to fall victim to the common error of merely taking whatever is said at face value just because it comes from a higher “authority.” By analyzing the actual choice of language and rhetoric that is used, the practice of critical discourse analysis provides a better way to ascertain what a speaker truly means (that is, the politics and philosophy behind the terms that are used) when he or she uses “buzz” words, such as “liberty” or “democracy” to convey his or her ideas to the public.

Once we have a working understanding of what critical discourse analysis *is*, the next logical step is to determine *why* it is important in today's society to employ this method of truth-seeking. To do this, we must first appreciate the times that we live in. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, a very strong sense of nationalism had been imbued in the American people as a whole. And, while some of that nationalistic sentiment may have diminished in the years following the terrorist attacks, a decisive factor in the past election was the fight against terrorism and keeping the ideals of American "democracy" safe at home. These ideals, however, are not to be confused with the American vision of democracy that we live in today – that being a representative democracy. Instead, the ideals of democracy that people (myself included) generally associate with "democracy" are those of a participatory democracy – one that, as Thomas Jefferson wrote in the Declaration of Independence, is for the people, and by the people. But have we, as a people, truly reached an understanding of what that democracy is that we are so ardently fighting for? By the divided nature of the American public over the last election, it is clear that we have not. What, then, is the President speaking of when he talks in his speeches of democracy and liberty? If we merely take this at face value and view the President's foreign policy abroad (including that of preemptive war) as one that propones actual freedom and true democratic ideals like this government wants the masses to believe, we could be missing out on the real intent of what I believe to be American imperialism.

American imperialism? But are we not a democracy? This concept might surprise the reader initially, but I believe that the true intent, the true goal of this administration is one of increasing American imperialism around the globe. David Harvey, in his book,

The New Imperialism, talks about why the current administration's dogmatic pursuit of capitalism drives America to become more and more imperialistic:

Imperialism of the capitalist sort arises out of a dialectical relation between territorial and capitalistic logics of power. The two logics are distinctive and in no way reducible to each other, but they are tightly interwoven. They may be construed as internal relations of each other. But outcomes can vary substantially over space and time. Each logic throws up contradictions that have to be contained by the other. The endless accumulation of capital, for example, produces periodic crises within the territorial logic because of the need to create a parallel accumulation of political/military power. When political control shifts within the territorial logic, flows of capital must likewise shift to accommodate (Harvey 183).

I believe that we are in one of the "territorial crises" that Harvey speaks of with the recent invasion of Iraq. Harvey is saying that there exists a conflict between the two logics because in order to accumulate new territory, one must have the political and military power necessary to capture, occupy, and gather capital (such as the oil in Iraq) from it. But, this increase in political and military power is expensive, so the U. S. government is forced to attempt to acquire new territory from which to reap profit, which only further perpetuates the vicious cycle that was started when American capitalism began. And, in order to justify these new (and unfortunately necessary) conquests, the President uses the rhetoric of spreading democracy and freedom and fighting evil to mask the government's true intentions of an ever-increasing policy of American imperialism to finance itself and its ever-increasing demand for the aggregation of capital and wealth.

Instead of falling prey to this very naïve view of the true intent of American political policy (that being one that is benevolent and truly seeks to spread classic ideals of democracy and freedom to the oppressed peoples of this world), we can use the technique of critical discourse analysis, as employed by Powell, to seek a greater truth, a more implicit truth, a truth that despite its best efforts, the government cannot completely

hide. Powell writes that, “Discourse is not merely the function of those in power to reproduce their power but also is the function of those who challenge and change the nature of that power” (Powell 441). This statement is paramount in understanding why critical discourse analysis is so important to employ, especially in today’s society. Part of the responsibility of living in a democratic society is making sure that one is informed of what is going on in politics so that one can exercise one’s democratic right to vote someone into office that will be best for the nation. And, in today’s society – one in which politicians hide behind ambiguous goals and shallow promises – the responsibility becomes not merely to be informed of what the current administration is doing, but to be critical of it and how it is presented to the American people – to question the answers. If one lets oneself fall prey to the rhetoric handed out in speeches, then one will not be educating oneself as to who will make the best leader for our nation. In this age, where presidential addresses and speeches to the nation are not written by the President himself, but a specialized team of political writers who can twist the issues in such a way that they somehow manage to be on both sides of the political fence at the same time, the American public must be increasingly wary of what they hear. Critical discourse analysis gives people a means with which they can analyze the rhetoric of the current administration and get at least some small sense of its true intentions, allowing them to make a more informed and responsible decision for the fate of our nation in the future.

While Powell’s work does not mention democracy anywhere within it, her analysis of the discourse of diversity proves to be a very good lens with which to observe the seamy underbelly of this administration, and the true intents and goals that it masks by appealing to the democratic, freedom-loving sentiment of the American people. Using

critical discourse to break through this illusory veil, we can begin to get a glimpse of the true power that this administration holds, whether they make it known or not (and they do not). Using only the rhetoric of “democracy” and “liberty” in his speeches, the President can “motivate others to take actions they might not otherwise take” (Powell 441). Even though Powell is not writing about the Bush administration, this point remains constant – those in positions in power can influence those under them by appealing to emotion, to the side of people that is not governed by rational, conscious, deliberate action – but to that which is a spontaneous, passionate *reaction*. By using the technique of critical discourse analysis, we can introduce conscious, learned thought where it is not expected to be, and thereby arrive at the true intent of those in authority – that they seek to mask their true reign over the populace behind a shroud of “democracy,” or another such concept that many people idealize.

However, this “ideal” of democracy is terribly effective not for the person it is said to protect, but as a tool for the person that wants to manipulate his people. It is the very fact that democracy can mean many different things to many different people that makes it such an effective tool for pacifying the populace. Kevin Mahoney writes about diversity, “[Diversity] is such a useful term to spearhead a new hegemony [the predominant influence over others] because many different groups can agree with its general goal of tolerance and acceptance” (Powell 453). The same can be said of democracy. When Mahoney speaks of using a term such as diversity (and, for my intent, democracy can be used as well) – a term that is widely accepted as a good thing – as a front for introducing a new predominant order (such as a militaristic one that gets itself involved in wars for its own inscrutable purposes), he reinforces the fact that rhetoric and

language both possess great power for manipulating people. By basing a new administration around an benevolent term such as diversity (or democracy), you can make the vast majority of people agree with you on misleadingly moral grounds, when in reality you care nothing for such things. By merely associating a particular change in policy with a term that people want to see enacted, you can garner support for your position. This serves to further reinforce the important fact that rhetoric can be used to front political change and power just as much as armed troops can. In fact, when you truly consider this fact, it becomes painfully apparent that democracy is merely being used to appeal to a broad base of Americans just to cull their votes – something that would not be readily apparent unless one was versed in the technique of critical discourse analysis.

Powell also speaks of another flaw in her work – yet another reason why the rhetoric of democracy is so effective in convincing the American populace to go along with an administration that they might not agree with. Because the very nature of democracy is such that people are able to define democracy in whatever way they wish (through whatever democratic deliberation they might employ), the “nebulousness of this usage allows the speaker to avoid fulfilling the promise. So, the status quo is maintained through assertion of an unquestioned singular, stable vision of the good” (Powell 455). By using ambiguous, yet loaded terms, such as “democracy” and “liberty” and “freedom,” this administration can convince the American people to offer their support, and then not fulfill certain campaign promises that were made because the language of politics today is so ambiguous that politicians never really have to commit to any stance, so the public does not see broken promises for what they are – a small minority (such as

the rich) might have their vision of democracy fulfilled, but the vast majority of Americans feel might feel slighted (but could say nothing because the administration never really promised much of anything in the first place).

The government's abuse of rhetoric's power to control does not stop here, however. We can look at our nation today, and see how divided it is. Someone or something may win the majority of the vote, but there might still be 49% of America that does not approve of whatever is going on. Why is the country so divided? Are we not all part of the same "great" country, one conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal? Does everyone really have the say that the democratic system mandates that they should have? The answer to why we are divided so can be found very close to home – in the speeches and addresses of those in power. Powell suggests that the President of Miami University creates an "oppositional identity" when he speaks of the university as "we" (Powell 449). Out of this springs the old mantra – you are either with us or against us. The President even goes so far as to come out and say this exact phrase, saying to the global community that remaining neutral in the war on terror is not an option – that they are either "with us or against us" in our efforts to seek out and eradicate all forms of terrorism (CNN.com). The very fact that he speaks of the views, goals, and policy of his administration as "us" or "America" creates an oppositional identity – those who do not believe in what this country is doing or has become (and there are many such people) are made to feel like they are not a part of America – something that many people do not wish to be associated with, so they comply with the goals of this administration so as not to be labeled "un-American." To imply that someone is un-American or un-patriotic because they do not believe in the war in Iraq

only serves to create further divisions in the American populace, creating a “house divided.” And that house cannot hope to stand when people who do not support the war are labeled as not supporting our troops—the men and women who are giving their lives for what they believe to be the spread of democracy and the liberation of the oppressed when in fact our administration cares nothing for such things. Creating these artificial categories of “we” and “they” only serves to divide an already divided nation even further – for the good of none.

However, the intent of this sort of oppositional rhetoric is not to divide – but to create a more unified voting base. And, for many American voters, this administration has succeeded. By forcing people not to take an opposing viewpoint (by instilling in them a fear of not being included), the President and his administration are able to create a sense of community and participation, however forced it may be. By using rhetoric to propound ideas in such a way that it forces Americans not to want to be seen as disagreeing with the current administration, it more or less strong-arms Americans to adopt the position of those in power, and vote accordingly, thus creating an artificial sense of community. And, because everyone is voting along the same imposed lines in support of what those currently in power are doing already, they have a contrived sense of participation as well, because what they voted for is being put into place. However, they forget that they voted for certain policies in the first place only because they did not want to be associated with the oppositional identity that the administration’s rhetoric initially created.

Now that we can fully appreciate the fact that there is always more than meets the eye (or ear) in what this administration tells its people, and how critical discourse

analysis works and why it is important, let us examine specific examples to truly get a sense of “democracy” in America, and the rhetoric of that “lofty ideal.” In his State of the Union address in January of 2002, the President stated, “America will lead [the world] by defending liberty and justice because they are right and true and unchanging for all people everywhere” (whitehouse.gov). Right away, from just this one simple sentence, one can see how important a role analyzing rhetoric can play. Instead of saying that America will set an example to the rest of the world by defending liberty and justice, he states that America will “lead” the world in this regard. In so doing, the President not only instills a sense of pride in the American people (making himself a more desirable leader and appealing to a sense of nationalism), but also establishes to the world community that America will be the leader in spreading freedom, and because we are spearheading the fight to uphold “liberty” and “justice,” anyone who opposes our policy for any reason is categorized as being against these things, creating the oppositional identity that Powell speaks of. Moreover, using words such as “defending,” “liberty,” “justice,” “right,” and “true” makes the President’s message sound like something Americans should adopt and take to heart. By using an abundance of language that construes America as being in the right on this issue, the President can make his position seem like the right one to enforce.

In the same address, the President also speaks of our “opportunity” to take action, saying:

This time of adversity offers a unique moment of opportunity -- a moment we must seize to change our culture. Through the gathering momentum of millions of acts of service and decency and kindness, I know we can overcome evil with greater good. And we have a great opportunity during this time of war to lead the world toward the values that will bring lasting peace. (whitehouse.gov).

By saying that we are faced with a “unique moment of opportunity,” he establishes a sense of urgency to make a decision to act. We know this administration was seeking to invade Iraq quickly because it accused the United Nations of doing nothing to resolve the state of affairs in Iraq and so it went to war unilaterally. And, to make the American people believe that this particular course of action necessary, the rhetoric in the State of the Union not only uses the word “terror” in some form over 30 times, but also makes clear that something needs to be done – and quickly, for the window of opportunity to act is fleeting. Obviously, the U. S. has been in times of crisis before, but since this administration had its own goals to achieve, the President speaks of this time as being different from all others. What makes this particular crisis so much graver than the ones before it? Why did this country not take action against Hussein after he invaded Kuwait in 1990? What makes this time so different?

And, perhaps the most important part of this particular excerpt (and probably the whole speech) is when the President states that we must seize this particular moment to “change our culture.” Just as Kevin Mahoney states, the President is “spearheading a new hegemony” (a change in the predominant culture) by using terms such as “service,” “decency,” “kindness,” and “overcoming evil with the greater good.” To legitimize acts of imperialism (preemptively invading a sovereign nation without apparent cause), and to change our culture and outlook to one that accepts this sort of police action, the President uses these terms that everyone wants to be associated with, when in actuality this administration does not care one whit about spreading “kindness” and “decency” through “service.” Again, the President speaks of America as “leading” the world to adopt values that will bring peace to all men. By labeling our invasion of Iraq as a quest for peace, the

President can attract support for the invasion all the while masking the actual reasons for the preemptive strike. Not only this, but again he is creating an oppositional identity – this time between “good” and “evil.” By categorizing the actions of the current administration as the “greater good,” acting against evil, he makes the implicit statement that if you do not agree with what this country is doing, then you support evil – something which no one wishes to be labeled as doing – so they blindly pledge their support. Again, this is a prime example of how a particular form of rhetoric can be used to control people.

However, the rhetoric used by the President does not just serve to portray America (that is, the America as governed and controlled by the current administration) as being in the right and to instill a sense of urgency to act (however rashly) in the American people, but also makes a point to instill fear in the populace, appealing to a different, yet very strong emotion as yet another illegitimate reason for why we should act, act quickly, and act precisely in the way that the current administration wants us to. Instead of being informed as to what is going on in the world so we can make our own decisions for the nation (after all, we are *supposed* to be a democracy), the present administration rather instructs us as to *exactly* what conclusion we should draw from the “evidence” presented. In the very same State of the Union address, the President states:

Our cause is just, and it continues. Our discoveries in Afghanistan confirmed our worst fears, and showed us the true scope of the task ahead. We have seen the depth of our enemies' hatred in videos, where they laugh about the loss of innocent life. And the depth of their hatred is equaled by the madness of the destruction they design. We have found diagrams of American nuclear power plants and public water facilities, detailed instructions for making chemical weapons, surveillance maps of American cities, and thorough descriptions of landmarks in America and throughout the world (whitehouse.gov).

Reinforcing the fact that our cause is “just,” he makes statements that blatantly appeal to the vast majority of the American people’s sense of fear that directly followed the 9/11 terrorist attacks (keep in mind that this speech is given but four months from the actual attacks). By emphasizing the hatred of the individuals he seeks to destroy, and the fact that they “laugh about the loss of innocent life,” he is able, for many people, to categorize the enemy as demonic, as not even human – which is a powerful way with which to encourage people to war. History tells us this – it is much harder to kill a human being than just some “gook” or “kraut” that your government tells you is threatening your very way of life.

Most importantly, perhaps, the President seeks to justify his request to press on in this fight against terror (because we have been shown the “true scope of the task ahead) by trying to convince the American people that their very country is in danger, not some ambiguous ideal. He accomplishes this by merely mentioning the “fact” that the government has uncovered terrorist plots to attack civilian targets, such as power plants, water facilities, American cities, and landmarks – targets that affect *everyone*. Has the government really uncovered such plans? And, if they have, are they really a cause for concern? To the person who is afraid to come out of his or her home after the attacks that happened mere months ago, merely offering the possibility that his or her life and the lives of everyone around may be in danger is more than enough for that person to vote in favor of a preemptive strike. Analyzing this rhetoric from a rational, detached perspective, one can easily see that it is a cheap political trick to scare people into acting a certain way. However, someone who looks up to their President, the highest authority in the land (except for God), these words would no doubt persuade that person to act

precisely how the administration wants them to. This is why it is more important than ever to be always vigilant, forever critical of everything that is stated by anyone in a position of government – only then can we seek to make informed, rational choices about the future of this nation.

So, what does all this mean? Is our country's future as bleak as one might think? I believe that there is still hope for us yet, but only if we change our very perceptions of democracy and become not only informed of what is going on in politics on the highest level, but become critical of it, to uncover its true aims. To correct the problem, we must first understand what it is, and why it is there in the first place. And, to do that, we must begin by analyzing the rhetoric that is used to veil the inner workings of American politics. In short, we must learn to question the “answers” that this administration is so eager to spoon-feed its people. We must ask ourselves, are we really the participatory democracy that many people idealize us to be? If the answer is no, and we merely exist under a representative democracy in which we are being taken advantage of to further the self-serving goals of the current administration, then we cannot merely seek to make changes to the system that is currently in place, because the drives of capitalism will inevitably turn such changes into corrupt alterations that only bolster the position of those that would abuse their power. Instead, we must seek to reinvent the very nature of democracy in America. We must strive for a system of government that does not require the insatiable appetite of capitalism to drive it, but instead is truly *by* the people, *for* the people – a system that increases civic participation in decision-making and redefines the role of citizenship to one that actually carries weight in the greater scope of things. Is

such drastic change possible in the relatively static society in which we live in today?

Well, it starts with you.

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