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Volume 45 Number 4

Wednesday, July 1, 2026

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# Palmer Museum opens juried show of contemporary art for the United States' 250th

UNIVERSITY PARK — What does it mean to be American? The Palmer Museum of Art is examining that question in the special exhibition *Dreaming American Futures: Invitational 250*, on view now through Nov. 29. The major juried exhibition is mounted in response to the celebration of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence and includes artwork from 50 contemporary artists chosen from the Penn State and local communities. The Palmer Museum in the College of Arts and Architecture at Penn State is commemorating

the yearlong anniversary alongside other arts and cultural institutions all over the country. "In the spirit of democracy, we wanted to invite artists to submit works that reflect on what life is like in the United States and what futures can unfold here," said Amanda H. Hellman, the Alvin L. and Jean Y. Snowiss director of the Palmer Museum of Art. "This is the first open-call juried show we've had at the Palmer, so we are thrilled to be able to display works made for the people, by the people, in our community this year."

**50 Artists**  
The call for artists included Penn State students, faculty, staff, and alumni who reside in the state of Pennsylvania, as well as local artists who live within a 50-mile radius of State College. Nearly 300 entries were submitted, from which the 59 artworks by 50 artists were selected by a team of jurors. The five jurors included Janine Yorimoto Boldt, the Palmer's curator of American art; Fodayemi Wilson, artist and associate dean for access and equity in the College of Arts and Architecture; Philadelphia artist and Penn



— Photo courtesy Palmer Museum of Art

Penn State's Palmer Museum of Art will host a special exhibition, "Dreaming American Futures," through Nov. 29, 2026.

State alum Roberto Lugo ('14 MFA); Lori Fisher, director of the Bellefonte Art Museum; and Malavi Suresh, spring 2026 curatorial intern at the Palmer and third-year art history major studying medieval art and architecture from Europe and South Asia.

"I was impressed with the thought-provoking variety of submissions," said Boldt, who spent weeks reviewing artwork with the other jurors. "The selected artworks provide insight into some of the issues that most affect our community, our neighbors, and Penn State

students. "Even though we are living through a challenging moment, the exhibition is ultimately hopeful about our shared future."

### Four Themes

The selected artworks in the exhibition include paintings, sculptures, ceramics, mixed-media assemblages, photographs and works on paper from the last two years. Stylistically, the 2D and 3D objects run the gamut from naturalistic realism to full abstraction, but all center around four forward-looking themes relevant to many who call

the United States home: Activating Change, Bridging the Divide, Pursuit of Happiness, and A More Perfect Union.

The themes for *Dreaming American Futures* were identified by Palmer staff from visitor responses during a Palmer gallery installation on view during summer 2025. In the installation *Shaping American Histories, Dreaming American Futures*, visitors were asked to reflect on American artworks from the Palmer collection and give comments and thoughts on the nation's past, its present moment,

See **Palmer**/Page 3



— Photo courtesy Furong Zhang

Furong Zhang, "The Chaotic Stage," 2025, oil on canvas, 60 x 72 inches.

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## PALMER: burdens ... more universal than we often realize

(Continued from Page 1) and its potential futures. The themes for the artists to respond to in the 250th invitational exhibition were then derived from hundreds of comments written on sticky notes that were plastered across the gallery wall by visitors.

*Dreaming American Futures* artist Adwar Oguttuh, a 2026 Penn State graduate, said two of the themes especially resonated with him.

"At a time when division often dominates public discourse, the themes 'Activating Change' and 'Bridging the Divide' feel especially relevant because they invite us to see one another more fully," he said. "I hope visitors leave with a greater awareness of the unseen stories and burdens people carry and with a renewed sense of connection, recognizing that many of the burdens we carry in silence are more universal than we often realize."

### One Shared Nation

Visitors who explore the exhibition can reflect on the nation's past, examine the present, and imagine future possibilities through both overarching and personal takes on the American experience. Beyond the four themes, common threads that appear in the artworks include family memories, historical legacies, the American Dream, freedom of speech, the fragility and beauty of democracy, and cultural identities enriched by a long history of immigration. Each work also includes a statement from the artist about their art and experience.

"The United States is a nation built by immigrants," said Furong Zhang, an artist who lives and works in central Pennsylvania. "My painting *The Chaotic Stage* is deeply rooted in my personal Chinese

American immigrant journey, capturing the complex web of memories, emotions, and cultural rebirth that occurs when immigrating to a new country."

Tulu Bayar, artist and professor of art and art history at Bucknell University, has two artworks on view that are handmade silk paper prints from a portfolio featuring figures locked in embrace. The hugs speak "urgently to this moment," she said. "Before we can imagine a more perfect union, we must first learn how to hold one another with dignity, compassion, and love," she said.

*Dreaming American Futures: Invitational 250* will be on view until Sunday, Nov. 29.

### Related Programs

A variety of public programs will be organized throughout the summer and into the fall to engage the Penn State and surrounding community with *Dreaming American Futures*. To kick off those programs, the Palmer will host a celebratory community day on Thursday, July 2, with free, drop-in programs running all day from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. The event will include exploration of the exhibition, art activities, readings of notable and historical declarations by community leaders and Palmer staff, and a gallery conversation with a local author and artists, as well as free hot dogs, ice cream, cookies, and other refreshments throughout the day. Find more information on 250 Community Day: We the People and other summer programs related to the exhibition below.

### 250 Community Day: We the People

Thursday, July 2 - 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Celebrate the spirit of independence and

creativity at the Palmer with a festive day of art and community inspired by special exhibition *Dreaming American Futures: Invitational 250*. Visitors of all ages are invited to explore the Invitational, which features works by Penn State students, staff, faculty, and alumni as well as local and regional artists. At 11 a.m., start at the Overlook Pavilion for a guided walk through the Arboretum to learn about surprising and "revolutionary" plants. At 1 p.m., don't miss public readings of notable historical declarations read by community leaders, including the Declaration of Independence and rousing speeches by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Frederick Douglass, and other American activists. At 6 p.m., engage with local artists during a gallery conversation as they explore themes of change, connection, happiness, and the ongoing work of building a more perfect union. Drop in for an hour or stay for the day! Enjoy free food, art activities like making buttons, and gathering with others to reflect, connect, and imagine shared futures together. Free parking all day!

### Historical Declarations during Community Day

Thursday, July 2 - 1 p.m.

Enjoy public readings of notable historical declarations, including the Declaration of Independence and rousing speeches by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Frederick Douglass, and other American activists. Readings will be performed by community leaders, including Mayor Ezra Nanes; political activist, actor, and professor emeritus Charles Dumas; and Elaine Meder-Wilgus, president of Webster's Cafe; as well as by Palmer staff and others. *Readings will*



— Photo courtesy Adwar Oguttuh

Adwar Oguttuh, "Now You See Me," 2025, charcoal and graphite on paper, 40 x 50 inches.

include ASL interpretation by interpreter Gary Thomas.

### Gallery Conversation with Dreaming American Futures artists

Thursday, July 2 - 6 p.m.

Join us in the galleries for a special community reading and gallery conversation with *Dreaming American Futures* artists and Jeremy David Engels, Liberal Arts Endowed Professor of Communication Arts and Sciences and author of *On Mindful Democracy: A Declaration of Interdependence to Mend a Fractured World* (Parallax, 2026). The conversation will also include Assistant Director Joyce Robinson.

### Drop-in Tour: American Art & Social History

Sunday, July 12 - 2 p.m.

Discover the Palmer's world-class collections and exhibitions with a friendly and knowledgeable museum guide. Each tour explores a theme, lasts about one hour, and includes close-looking through discussion and experiential learn-

ing opportunities. Guided tours start in the Dr. Keiko Miwa Ross Lobby. Join us for these free drop-in tours. *Sign language interpretation for drop-in tours is offered upon request. Interpretation services must be requested in advance and are subject to interpreter availability. Please contact Bronwyn Flemming at bmf5778@psu.edu.*

### Art After Hours - Block PARTY

Thursday, July 30 - Free, drop-in, 5-8 p.m.

LEAP across campus to the Palmer Museum and the Arboretum at Penn State for a summer Block pARTY! Participate in art-making activities, explore your world-class art museum and gardens, and learn about other collections on campus with Museum Consortium members. Throughout the night, enjoy live music and refreshments.

### Drop-in Tour: American Art of Today

Sunday, Aug. 9 - 2 p.m.

Discover the Palmer's world-class collections and exhibitions with a friendly and knowledge-

able museum guide. Each tour explores a theme, lasts about one hour, and includes close-looking through discussion and experiential learning opportunities. Guided tours start in the Dr. Keiko Miwa Ross Lobby. Join us for these free drop-in tours. *Sign language interpretation will be provided for this tour by interpreter Gary Thomas.*

### Community Artist Conversations: Dreaming American Futures

Friday, Aug. 14 - Free, drop-in, noon and 2 p.m.

Join local community artists featured in *Dreaming American Futures: Invitational 250* for an afternoon of conversations in the special exhibition galleries. Hear directly from participating artists as they share insights into their work, materials, and ideas. Two group conversations will take place with one at noon and one at 2 p.m., each featuring a selection of artists. Drop in for one session or stay for both! This is a unique opportunity to experience the exhibition through local artists' perspectives.

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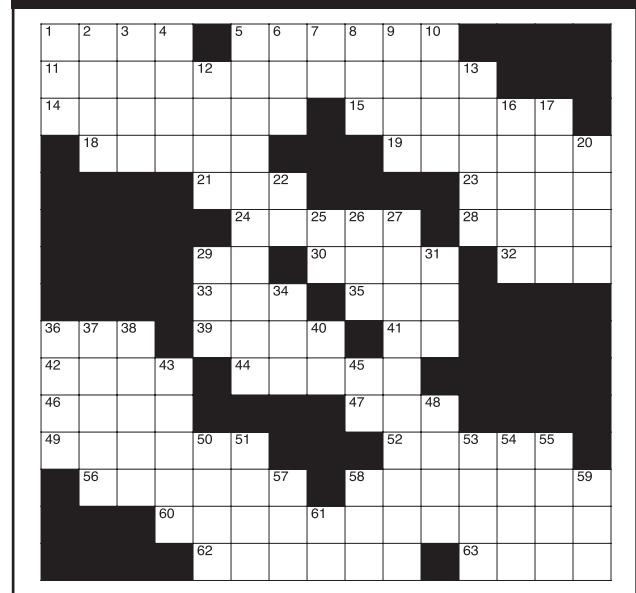
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**AD BARGAIN**  
**Crossword Puzzle**  
 Solution on page 5



- CLUES ACROSS**
- 1. \_\_ chat
  - 5. Statue near the Pyramids
  - 11. A process to change the look
  - 14. Herb
  - 15. Think about excessively
  - 18. Bass vocal part
  - 19. Supreme Allied Cmdr. of NATO
  - 21. A major division of geological time
  - 23. New Zealand parrot
  - 24. Cognitive contents
  - 28. Lump of yam
  - 29. Atomic #109
  - 30. Let go of
  - 32. Indian title of respect
  - 33. Whereabouts unknown
  - 35. Electronic data processing
  - 36. Drivers' licenses count
  - 39. Snake-like fishes
  - 41. They precede C
  - 42. Popular personal computers
  - 44. Intermediate community stage in ecological succession
  - 46. Wings
  - 47. Indicates position
  - 49. Pleasantly smooth or soft
  - 52. Jeweled headdress
  - 56. In slow tempo
  - 58. \_\_ Falls
  - 60. Reassertions
  - 62. Eras
  - 63. Hyphen

- CLUES DOWN**
- 1. Corporate executive
  - 2. A plant used for flavoring food
  - 3. Opinion or belief
  - 4. Sheep in their second year
  - 5. Intensities of sound
  - 6. Indicates support for
  - 7. Expression of laughter
  - 8. OJ trial judge
  - 9. Pointed ends of pens
  - 10. True bugs genus
  - 12. Lawyers argue theirs
  - 13. Body parts
  - 16. Closes tightly
  - 17. World Heritage site in Nigeria
  - 20. Islamic calendar month
  - 22. Commercial
  - 25. "Westworld" actor Harris
  - 26. They \_\_
  - 27. Religious guilds
  - 29. Woman (French)
  - 31. Parts per billion (abbr.)
  - 34. Brew
  - 36. Spiritual leader
  - 37. Indigo bush
  - 38. Burn with a hot liquid
  - 40. Older citizen
  - 43. Scad fish genus
  - 45. Morning
  - 48. Line passing through the center (abbr.)
  - 50. Double S-shaped curve
  - 51. Small, thin person
  - 53. Older
  - 54. Mars crater
  - 55. Humanities
  - 57. Word element meaning ear
  - 58. To the \_\_ degree
  - 59. Residue
  - 61. It cools your home

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**Paws & Claws**

**How to tell bees, hornets and wasps apart**

People who spend any measurable amount of time outdoors likely have crossed paths with various flying insects that cohabitate in a typical yard. Some of the most ardent pollinators and pest control agents also have the potential to be dangerous if provoked. While most bees, wasps and hornets are content to go about their business, their stingers can make these insects formidable foes, particularly to those who are allergic.

According to The Best Bees Company, there are more than 20,000 known species of bees and more than 100,000

known species of wasps worldwide. Those who don't want to get too up close and personal with stinging insects may not know how to tell the different types apart. Bees, wasps and hornets are distinguished by their behavior, waist and body texture.

**Bees** If it has a fuzzy body, it's a bee. Bees tend to be non-aggressive and may be carrying pollen on their backs. They also live in wax hives. You'll likely see bees flitting from one flower to another in the warmer weather. Honeybees will die after one sting, advises PBS, but bumblebees and carpenter bees have smooth stingers that will not get stuck, enabling them to sting again.

**Wasps**  
 Wasps are stinging insects which can be social or solitary. Wasps have smooth, shiny bodies and narrow waists. They can be bright black and yellow or black and white. Wasps can sting repeatedly, says The Spruce, but they may not always be aggressive; it depends on the species. Yellowjackets are a type of wasp. They are sensitive to threats and not afraid to use their stingers. Another way to distinguish wasps from bees is that wasps hang their legs down while flying and bees keep them tucked in.

**Hornets**  
 Hornets are wasps and tend to be social in nature. They only construct paper

nests and can be more aggressive than other types of wasps. The Old Farmer's Almanac says hornets can be highly defensive with more painful stings, and also may be larger and rounder in size than other wasps. In the United States, the one true hornet species is the European hornet, which nest in trees.

It's impossible to avoid bees and wasps entirely, but individuals can be mindful of where they are making their nests. As these insects are important to the ecosystem, it's key not to exterminate them haphazardly. If a nest is problematic, it's best to have a professional come and relocate or remove it safely.





# Altoona Mirror Plus!



WEDNESDAY, JULY 1, 2026

## Bedford native reflects on creative writing career

**Award-winning author Bradley relishes pursuit of storytelling**

By COLETTE COSTLOW  
ccostlow@altoonamirror.com

Bedford native David Bradley believes that there is a story behind everything. “In order to tell a story, to really tell a story opposed to making a statement, is to embrace a different kind of logic,” he said.



Bradley

That approach fueled Bradley’s journey as a creative writer, as he published two novels, “South Street” (1975) and “The Chaneyville Incident” (1981), which received the 1982 PEN/Faulkner Award and an Academy Award from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters.

After finishing a 30-year career as a university professor, Bradley, 75, continues to write and give lectures, recently returning home to speak about Bedford County’s Black history, along with an “interrogatory” presentation inspired by Fredrick Douglass’ “Fifth of July” speech, questioning the appropriateness of celebrating the Declaration of Independence when slavery was still enforced.

Writing was an enjoyable pastime for Bradley as a child living in a very isolated community in Bedford, being the only child of the Rev. David and Harriette Bradley. “You could do it anywhere, and you didn’t have to ask anyone,” he said of writing.

His father worked as a minister for 20 years, serving at African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. Bradley said working at the church was an act of love for his father, who also conducted church history in the basement and published in a quarterly church magazine.

Associating history with dust and old books, Bradley wasn’t interested in history until later, when he realized that historical figures were real people with backstories. “You read what the his-

torians write, and there is a story there,” he said.

### ‘South Street’

After graduating from Bedford Area High School in 1968, Bradley applied and was accepted to the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia for creative writing.

Creative writing was an independent major at the time, so Bradley said that he had to develop his own program including both English and writing courses.

He said most of his teachers were good to him, as most were people on the fringes of their departments.

Bradley was always inspired by his surroundings, as one of his school assignments included a 300-page collection of short stories that drew inspiration from Bedford County.

But South Street, located across the river from the University of Pennsylvania, inspired him

**“I grew a lot, and my book grew a lot, and my understanding of what I knew grew up.”**

David Bradley, on time spent studying at Kings College London

to write his first novel. In Philadelphia, South Street was the southern border of the city, and when Black families moved north, South Street was one place they primarily settled.

Bradley recalled walking down the streets or visiting nearby bars, which became the basis of his story that was published a few years later.

“It was a small time in the city, and you got to know people and talk to people you wouldn’t usually talk to,” he said.

After graduating from UPenn, he packed his bags in 1972 and went abroad to Kings College at the University of London, where he majored in United States Area Studies. While learning in a new country, he said he practically rewrote his soon-to-be novel.

“I grew a lot, and my book grew a lot, and my understanding of what I knew grew up,” he said.

One year after graduating from Kings College, Bradley finally published “South Street” in 1975. Under the book description on Penguin Random House’s website, it states “South Street is a brilliant, heartfelt portrait of Black urban life and a man grappling with the messy, uncontrollable truths of life, love, and survival.”

However, his most iconic piece, “The Chaneyville Incident,” was a labor of love, as he invested a few years of research into the

piece before its publication.

### Sharing Bedford history

Bradley’s mother, Harriette, helped the Bedford County Heritage Committee write a book called “A Kernel of Greatness” in the early 1970s, detailing how Black people originally settled in the region and the incorporation of the Underground Railroad.

Bradley said his mother discovered that some slaves who used Bedford’s Underground Railroad died by suicide, as they didn’t want to return to their masters when recaptured.

She told Bradley that those slaves were buried at the Imes Cemetery, located off Route 326 near Chaneyville. They didn’t have headstones because no one knew of their names, but they did have markers.

“The people treated them like they were people in death,” Bradley said. “They were probably treated more humanly in life, and that amazed me.”

After graduation, Bradley was living in New York City working as an assistant editor in the trade books division of J.P. Lippincott & Co. and as a visiting lecturer at his alma mater, UPenn. With direct access to historical material, he said he quickly became submerged into Bedford’s story.

He published his second novel, “The Chaneyville Incident,” in 1981 with Harper & Row, now known as HarperCollins. The story follows historian John Washington after he returns to his Pennsylvania roots to investigate the death of his father and the incident involving the deaths of 12 slaves.

“It’s not just about the incident; it’s about the people who find the incident,” Bradley said.

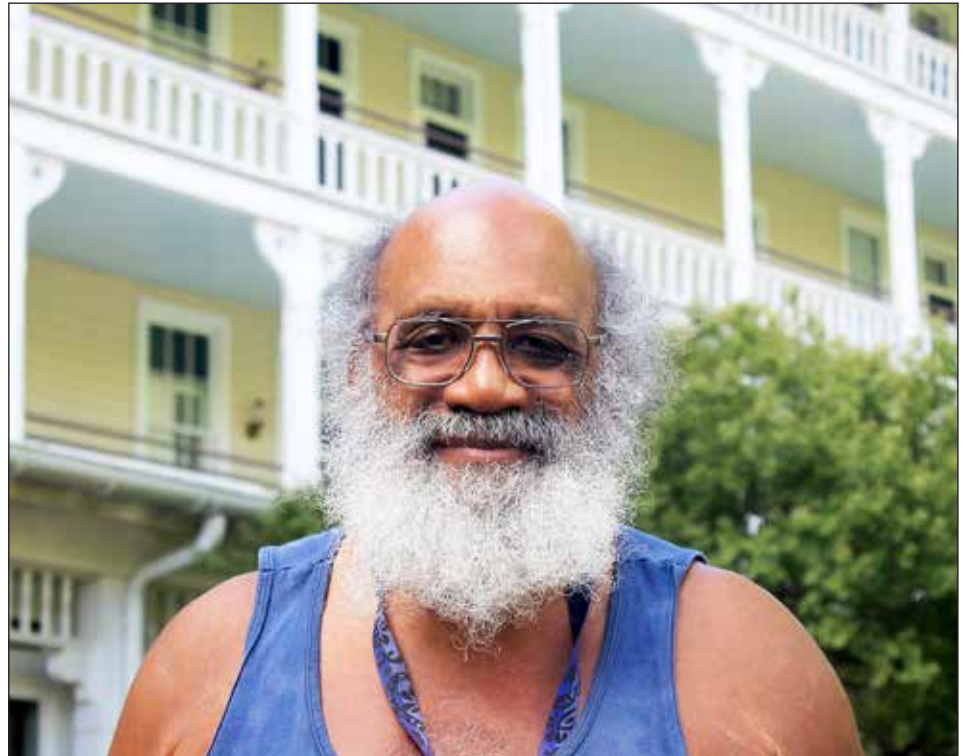
The novel received the PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction in 1982 and widespread recognition, as it was reviewed by the New York Times, Howard University and the Columbia Journal of American Studies.

The New York Times Book Review also selected Bradley’s novel as one of the best books in 1981.

“The man’s a writer,” American novelist Vance Bourjaily wrote in the review. “What he can do, at a pretty high level of energy, is synchronize five different kinds of rhetoric, control a complicated plot, convey a lot of information, handle an intricate time scheme, pull off a couple of final tricks that dramatize provocative ideas and generally keep things going for 200,000 words.”

### Leaving his mark

Bradley continued pursuing storytelling at a university level as a professor of English at Temple University for 20 years and an associate professor of fiction at Oregon University for 10



Mirror photo by Colette Costlow

Bedford-born and raised author David Bradley stands in front of the Omni Bedford Springs Resort Thursday afternoon before starting his weekend lecture series in light of Juneteenth and the Fourth of July.

years before leaving in 2013. He now resides in San Diego, California.

He also focused on creative nonfiction with pieces appearing in “Esquire,” “Redbook,” “The New York Times,” “The Los Angeles Times” and “The New Yorker,” among others.

His short story, “You Remember the Pin Mill,” published in 2012 with “Narrative” received the O. Henry Award in 2014.

In his free time, he enjoyed running marathons, as it helped him center his thoughts away from the page.

“It’s a great place to think,” he said. “It gets you away from any dis-

tractions and allows you to work through any problems.”

Jessica Sims, executive director of the Omni Bedford Springs Resort, remembered Bradley running through the area as she grew up knowing him.

She said she was excited to welcome him back to the area for the lecture series he participated in recently.

“I think it’s a special moment to bring him back where he’s from and speak about Bedford County,” she said.

Bedford County Historical Society member Kevin Mearkle said that “The Chaneyville Incident” brought awareness to the

story of freedom that took place in Bedford County before the Civil War.

He said its subject matter also contributed to his own book, “The Underground Railroad of Bedford County” and other current books, including “Summer of Meteors” by Kris Schaale.

As Bradley continues to visit his hometown each year, he said that he appreciates its extensive history.

“It’s a rich source, and I’m lucky to have it,” he said.

Mirror Staff Writer Colette Costlow is at 814-946-7414.

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To apply and for a more specific job description, email [blaircountybarassociation@gmail.com](mailto:blaircountybarassociation@gmail.com)

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**Samantha Diehl,**  
**Secretary to the Superintendent**  
**Chestnut Ridge School**  
**3281 Valley Road**  
**Fishertown, PA 15539**  
**Or [sdiehl@crlions.org](mailto:sdiehl@crlions.org)**

Candidates may also visit the district’s website at [www.crlions.org](http://www.crlions.org) and go to Employment Opportunities for additional information. Application Packets Deadline: 3:00 p.m. on July 6, 2026. EOE

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# AMERICA AT



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# A Nation's Story

## How America Reached Its 250th Anniversary

*The story of the United States spans 250 years of change, growth and adjustment.*

From a small group of colonies along the Atlantic coast to a nation that stretches across a continent, America developed through choices made over generations.

Its history reflects continuity shaped by adaptation rather than a single defining moment.

The nation's origins lie in the late 18th century, when colonists sought independence from British rule. The Declaration of Independence articulated shared principles, while the Constitution established a framework for self-government. Together, these documents balanced ideals with practical governance, creating a system designed to endure while allowing future revision.

Early national life required experimentation. Leaders tested approaches to finance, law and diplomacy, while citizens adjusted to a new civic identity. Establishing courts, regulating trade and organizing federal departments helped stabilize the young republic. The admission of new states expanded both geography and political responsibility, drawing diverse communities into a shared national project.

### Growth and Change

The 19th century brought rapid transformation. Transportation improvements

such as canals and railroads connected regions and supported commerce. Immigration increased population and cultural diversity, while industrialization altered work, cities and daily routines. These forces pushed institutions to evolve and required ongoing adjustment at local and national levels.

The Civil War tested the durability of the union and reshaped national priorities. Its aftermath required reconstruction, reconciliation and rebuilding across large portions of the country. Despite deep disruption, the nation continued to grow economically and territorially, reinforcing a commitment to shared governance and continuity.

The 20th century introduced global engagement and internal change. World wars expanded America's role on the world stage and accelerated technological development. Economic growth following World War II supported rising living standards, expanded access to education and increased homeownership, reshaping everyday life in communities across the country.

### Shared Experience

In the latter half of the century, advances in technology, transportation and communication further changed how Americans lived and worked. Interstate highways connected regions, air travel



reduced distance and new media reshaped information sharing. These developments influenced commerce, culture and daily routines in lasting ways.

Entering the 21st century, Americans continued adjusting to rapid innovation, demographic change and evolving expectations. New technologies reshaped communication and work, while communities adapted to economic shifts and population movement. These changes reflected continuity with the nation's long tradition of adjustment rather than departure from it.

As the nation reaches its 250th anniversary, its story reflects resilience built through adaptation. America's history is not a single narrative but a collection of shared experiences linked by common principles. That balance of continuity and change remains central to understanding how the nation arrived at this milestone and how it continues forward.

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# Founders at Work

## How Early Leaders Built a Lasting System

*The leaders who guided the United States through its earliest years faced an uncertain task.*

Independence brought freedom, but it also required the creation of a functioning government capable of uniting diverse states.

The nation's founders approached this challenge through debate, compromise and practical problem-solving rather than simple agreement.

Before independence was secured, the Continental Congress served as an early test of cooperation. Delegates coordinated military efforts, diplomacy and supplies while balancing regional interests. These early efforts revealed both the promise and limits of collective leadership across colonies with different priorities.

After the war, the Articles of Confederation provided a first attempt at national governance. While they preserved state authority, limited federal power and financial instability made coordination difficult. These shortcomings prompted reconsideration rather than abandonment of shared goals and highlighted the need for a stronger framework.

### Designing a Framework

The Constitutional Convention of 1787 became a turning point. Delegates debated representation, executive power and the balance between state and federal authority. Compromises such as the Great Compromise

addressed the concerns of both large and small states, while separation of powers created checks within government.

The resulting Constitution reflected practical judgment. It established mechanisms for lawmaking, enforcement and interpretation while allowing amendment. This flexibility acknowledged that future generations would face conditions the founders could not foresee.

Ratification required public trust. Essays later known as The Federalist Papers explained the proposed system and encouraged informed discussion. The addition of the Bill of Rights addressed concerns about individual freedoms, reinforcing confidence in the new framework and encouraging widespread support across the states.

### Putting Ideas Into Practice

Early leaders focused on making the system work. Establishing federal courts, organizing executive departments and managing national debt helped stabilize the young republic. Foreign policy decisions secured recognition and trade, strengthening economic independence and international standing.

Daily governance required patience and cooperation. Disagreements emerged over finance, foreign relations and authority, but structured debate allowed resolution without dismantling the system. Elections and peaceful transfers of power reinforced legitimacy and set enduring precedents for leadership.



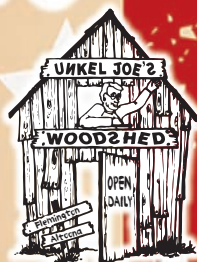
### Lasting Legacy

The founders did not expect perfection. They understood governance as an ongoing process shaped by participation and revision. Their work emphasized responsibility as much as authority and encouraged civic engagement at all levels.

Over time, the structures they created proved durable. Amendments, elections and evolving interpretation allowed the system to respond to new challenges while maintaining its core framework.

As the nation marks its 250th anniversary, the work of the founders continues through the system they created. Their emphasis on structure, debate and compromise provided continuity while allowing change, supporting a republic capable of enduring through changing times and circumstances for generations to come.

Happy 250<sup>th</sup>, America! from



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# A Growing Union

## How Thirteen Colonies Became Fifty States Over 250 Years

*When the United States declared independence in 1776, its borders stretched only along the Atlantic coast.*

Thirteen colonies formed a loose union, uncertain whether their experiment in self-government would last. Over the next 250 years, the nation expanded steadily, shaped by migration, negotiation and settlement.

Early growth followed population movement. Settlers crossed the Appalachian Mountains in search of farmland and opportunity. New communities formed along rivers and trade routes, creating demand for roads, markets and local government. As populations grew, territories began seeking statehood and a voice in national affairs.

The process was deliberate. Territories drafted constitutions, organized governments and demonstrated readiness to join the union on equal footing with existing states. This approach helped maintain stability as the nation grew.

### Paths to Expansion

Some additions came through negotiation and purchase. The Louisiana Purchase of 1803 more than doubled the nation's size, opening vast areas to settlement and trade. Later agreements added territory in the South and West, reshaping the national map without military conflict.

Other states emerged from organized territories as railroads, farms and towns took root. California's rapid growth during the Gold Rush led to statehood in 1850, while states across the Midwest followed as agriculture expanded and transportation improved.

Each new state brought its own economy and culture. Coastal states often relied on trade and shipping, while interior states developed around farming, mining and manufacturing. Together, they reflected a wide range of regional experiences.

### Connecting the States

Expansion required connection. The National Road, canals and later transcontinental railroads linked distant regions and allowed goods and people to move efficiently. These networks strengthened commerce and helped create a



national economy.

Communication improved alongside transportation. Newspapers, postal routes and telegraph lines reduced isolation and kept citizens informed. Shared information reinforced a sense of national identity even as communities remained locally distinct.

By the early 20th century, the contiguous United States had taken shape. The addition of Alaska and Hawaii in 1959 brought new geography and cultures into the union, extending the nation's reach from the Arctic to the Pacific.

# 250

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# America's National Symbols

## How Shared Images Express National Identity

*National symbols offer a way for Americans to recognize shared history and values without a single voice or message.*

Over time, these symbols developed through custom, law and public use, reflecting continuity rather than deliberate design. Together, they provide a visual and cultural language understood across generations.

The American flag is among the most recognized national symbols. Its origins trace to the early years of independence, with stars and stripes representing unity among states. As the nation expanded, stars were added, allowing the flag to evolve alongside the country itself. Today, the flag appears at public buildings, community events and private homes, serving as a familiar presence in daily life.

The bald eagle became a national emblem in the late 18th century. Selected for the Great Seal of the United States, the eagle symbolized strength and independence drawn from classical imagery. Over

time, it appeared on currency, official documents and public monuments, reinforcing its role as a visual marker of national identity.

### Symbols in Everyday Life

Other symbols developed through shared experience rather than formal selection. The Liberty Bell gained prominence in the 19th century, especially as abolitionists used it to represent freedom and justice. Though cracked, the bell became a lasting reminder of ideals expressed at the nation's founding.

The Statue of Liberty arrived in the late 19th century as a gift from France and gradually assumed deeper meaning. For many immigrants, it marked arrival and opportunity. Over time, it became associated with welcome, civic values and participation in national life.

National songs and mottos also shape shared identity. "The Star-Spangled Banner," written during the War of 1812, became the national anthem in the 20th century. Phrases such as "E



"Pluribus Unum" emphasized unity among diverse states and people, reinforcing themes found throughout American history.

### Changing Meaning

National symbols do not remain fixed. Their meanings shift as new generations interpret them through contemporary experience. The flag, monuments and national imagery have been present during moments of celebration, hardship and reflection.

Symbols are reinforced through routine use. Schools, civic events and public ceremonies rely on familiar imagery to mark shared occasions. These repeated encounters help maintain continuity without requiring uniform interpretation.

National symbols also appear

in everyday spaces such as courthouses, libraries and town squares. Their presence reflects shared reference points rather than directive messages, allowing individuals to engage on personal terms.

Together, these symbols form a shared visual language. They persist not because they demand agreement but because they allow recognition across differences.

As the nation marks its 250th anniversary, national symbols continue to serve as familiar reference points. They connect past and present without prescribing interpretation. In doing so, they reflect a country shaped by shared images, evolving meaning and ongoing participation across generations.

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# A Nation of Strength

## America's Military Might and Fortitude Have Shaped Its Destiny

*American strength has never rested in a single institution or moment.*

From the nation's earliest days, it developed through persistence, cooperation and the willingness of ordinary people to meet unfamiliar challenges.

Over 250 years, that pattern has repeated across generations.

During the Revolutionary era, strength was measured less by resources than by resolve. Local militias formed from farmers, tradespeople and shopkeepers who balanced daily responsibilities with civic duty. Supply shortages, uncertainty and prolonged conflict tested endurance. Success depended on shared effort and the ability to persist without guarantees.

As independence took hold, national strength expanded beyond conflict. Roads, ports and early industries required sustained labor and coordination. Canals and railroads connected distant regions, allowing commerce and communication to grow. Communities adapted to new demands while maintaining local responsibility.

### **Growth Through Change**

The 19th century brought industrialization, reshaping how Americans worked and lived. Factories increased production, farms



adopted new tools and cities expanded. Strength emerged not only from output but from adjustment. Workers learned new skills, communities organized services and civic institutions grew alongside industry.

Periods of strain prompted reform and innovation.

The 20th century tested American strength on a global scale. Military service and national defense became central during times of conflict, supported by widespread participation at home. Manufacturing

shifted, research accelerated and communities organized to meet shared goals. Strength revealed itself as a collective undertaking rather than a single function.

### **Beyond Defense**

Following global conflicts, the nation invested in discovery and growth. Advances in medicine, engineering and transportation reshaped daily life. The space program demonstrated how long-term planning, scientific expertise and coordination could produce outcomes that extended beyond immediate needs.

In recent decades, rapid technological change introduced new challenges. Work evolved, information moved faster and industries transformed. Adaptability remained central. People retrained, relocated and redefined how they contributed, reflecting a long tradition of adjustment.

### **Shared Capacity**

As the nation marks its 250th anniversary, American strength appears as an ongoing process. It is visible in steady effort between crises and in moments when communities come together. That resilience, built over time, continues to shape a nation defined not by permanence but by its capacity to endure and adapt.

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# American Firsts

## Milestones That Changed Life at Home and Beyond

*Throughout its history, the United States marked progress through a series of notable firsts.*

These moments reflected curiosity, persistence and a willingness to try what had not been done before. Over 250 years, American firsts often began as practical efforts to solve problems, then grew into developments that influenced daily life far beyond their origins.

One early example came in transportation. In 1807, Robert Fulton's successful steamboat demonstrated that powered vessels could travel upstream reliably. This advance transformed river travel, supporting trade and settlement along major waterways and helping connect inland communities to coastal markets.

Other early firsts followed a similar pattern. New tools and

methods were tested locally, then adopted more widely as their usefulness became clear.

### Breaking New Ground

In 1869, the completion of the first transcontinental railroad linked the eastern and western United States by rail. This connection reduced travel time dramatically and strengthened the national economy. Goods, people and ideas moved more freely across the continent, reshaping commerce and migration.

Innovation continued into the skies. In 1903, Wilbur and Orville Wright achieved the first successful powered airplane flight at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. Though brief, the flight demonstrated controlled, sustained air travel. Within decades, aviation became essential to transportation, commerce and national defense.

American firsts also appeared in communication. Alexander Graham Bell's telephone, patented in 1876, allowed voices to travel across distance. This changed business, personal relationships and emergency response, bringing immediacy to everyday interaction.

### Science and Service

The 20th century introduced firsts that reshaped health and science. The widespread use of antibiotics beginning in the 1940s improved survival rates and transformed medical treatment. These advances extended life expectancy and changed how communities approached public health.

In 1969, the Apollo 11 mission placed the first humans on the moon. This achievement required coordination across government, industry and education.

American firsts were not limited

to exploration. They also included organizational achievements, such as large-scale manufacturing systems and coordinated emergency response, which improved safety and efficiency.

### Everyday Impact

What unites these milestones is their effect on ordinary life. Firsts often moved from experiment to expectation, becoming part of daily routines. Steamboats, railroads, telephones and air travel all followed this path.

As the nation approaches its 250th anniversary, American firsts offer more than a list of accomplishments. They illustrate a pattern of testing ideas, learning from results and building on what works. That approach continues to shape innovation, reminding Americans that progress often begins with a willingness to try something new.



# 250

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# Voices of America

## Words and Expressions That Reflected Shared Values Over Time

*Across 250 years, Americans expressed who they were through words spoken, written and shared in public life.*

These voices came from many places and in many forms. Together, they reflected values that helped communities understand themselves and their place in a growing nation.

In the early years, public expression often appeared in speeches, sermons and printed materials. Town meetings allowed citizens to speak openly about local concerns. Newspapers carried editorials, letters and announcements that gave voice to everyday experience. These outlets helped shape conversation long before national media existed.

Expression did not require fame. Ordinary citizens contributed

ideas, opinions and observations that influenced how communities functioned and how neighbors related to one another.

### Public Words

Formal speeches played a visible role in American life. Leaders addressed communities during times of celebration, uncertainty and transition. These moments offered reassurance, direction and reflection, helping people make sense of change.

Public documents also mattered. Declarations, laws and charters expressed shared expectations about responsibility and participation. Their language emphasized collective effort and common purpose, reinforcing the idea that words could shape action.

Over time, public speaking expanded beyond official settings. Lectures, debates and civic gatherings brought ideas into theaters, schools and community halls, making dialogue part of everyday life.

### Everyday Expression

Music, slogans and shared phrases carried ideas beyond formal language. Songs passed along values and memory. Simple expressions appeared on signs, banners and buttons, reinforcing belonging and pride.

In more recent decades, technology broadened who could be heard. Radio and television amplified voices across distance. Digital platforms later allowed individuals to share thoughts instantly, adding new layers

to public conversation.

Despite changing formats, the purpose remained familiar. Americans continued using words to connect, persuade, comfort and celebrate.

### Listening Forward

Voices of America were never singular. They overlapped, differed and evolved. What united them was participation. Expression invited response and encouraged involvement rather than silence.

As the nation approaches its 250th anniversary, listening remains as important as speaking. The ongoing exchange of ideas, stories and perspectives continues shaping American life. In a country defined by many experiences, its voices together tell a story still being written.



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# The American Dream

## How Aspirations Shifted Across Generations

*The idea often described as the American Dream has never held a single meaning.*

*Instead, it evolved over time, shaped by economic conditions, social norms and personal expectations.*

Across 250 years, the dream reflected how Americans imagined opportunity and progress in different eras.

In the nation's earliest years, aspiration centered on independence. Land ownership and self-sufficiency represented security for many families. Owning property, sustaining a household and participating in local affairs defined success in a largely rural society. The dream focused less on advancement and more on stability within a new nation still forming its identity.

As the country expanded, those expectations began to change.

### Shifting Definitions

During the 19th century, the American Dream increasingly included mobility and improvement. For some, this

meant owning a business or mastering a skilled trade. For others, it meant providing education or opportunity for the next generation. Westward expansion and industrial growth reshaped how Americans viewed progress, tying aspiration to movement and economic change.

The early 20th century brought further adjustment. Urbanization and factory work altered daily life, while public education expanded access to learning. Aspirations broadened beyond land ownership to include professional advancement and steady income in growing cities. The dream adapted to new forms of work and living.

After World War II, the American Dream shifted again. The GI Bill expanded access to higher education and homeownership, helping millions of veterans enter new careers. Suburban growth reshaped housing and family life, while long-term employment became closely linked to stability and planning for the future.

### Changing Expectations

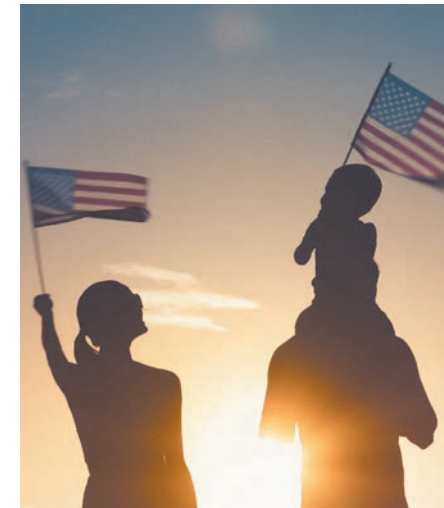
In the latter half of the 20th century, the dream continued to evolve. Higher education became more common, and career paths diversified. Success was increasingly defined by personal goals as well as material security. Creative fulfillment, service and work-life balance gained importance alongside traditional measures of progress.

Economic shifts also influenced expectations. As service industries expanded and manufacturing declined in some regions, Americans adjusted their definitions of opportunity. Technology and mobility opened new options, allowing individuals to pursue paths less tied to location or a single profession.

Rather than offering a fixed outcome, the American Dream provided a framework for imagining progress shaped by circumstance and choice.

### An Enduring Idea

The American Dream has endured because it remains flexible. Each generation revised it in response to



changing conditions rather than rigid standards. Its meaning expanded to accommodate new realities without losing its core focus on opportunity.

As the nation approaches its 250th anniversary, the American Dream continues as an evolving idea. It reflects the freedom to define success in personal terms while responding to broader social and economic change. Across generations, that adaptability has allowed the dream to remain part of the American story.



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# America at Work

## How Labor Shaped the Nation's Growth

*Work has always been central to the American story. From early farms and workshops to factories, offices and digital spaces, labor shaped daily life and national development.*

The ways Americans worked reflected changing technology, geography and opportunity, while reinforcing shared expectations about effort and contribution.

In the nation's earliest years, most Americans worked close to home. Agriculture dominated, supported by small trades such as blacksmithing, milling and carpentry. These occupations anchored local economies and fostered self-reliance, while trade networks connected communities to broader markets.

As the country expanded westward, work followed settlement. Farming adapted to new regions, while mining, logging and transportation supported growth. Canals and railroads created new jobs and allowed goods to move more efficiently, tying regional economies together and encouraging mobility.

### Industrial Shifts

The 19th century brought industrialization. Factories changed how goods were produced and how people earned wages. Urban centers grew as workers sought opportunity, while new industries created demand for specialized skills and training.

Labor organizations emerged as workers sought improved conditions and stability.



Over time, laws addressed hours, safety and compensation, reflecting evolving expectations about work and responsibility. These changes occurred gradually, shaped by economic conditions and public discussion.

The 20th century introduced further transformation. Manufacturing expanded during wartime production, while postwar prosperity supported growth in construction, education and service industries. Offices and professional roles increased, reflecting changes in technology and organization.

### Modern Economy

Late in the century, automation and computing altered workplaces again. Jobs shifted toward information, healthcare and technology, while traditional industries adapted to new tools. Global trade influenced production, distribution and employment patterns.

Remote communication expanded where and how work could be done. Telephones, computers and internet-based tools reshaped collaboration and productivity. These changes affected both

large organizations and independent workers across the country.

Small businesses continued to play a central role. Family-owned shops, farms and service providers remained economic anchors in towns and cities. Entrepreneurship offered pathways for innovation, local investment and community stability.

Work also shaped civic life. Newspapers, unions, schools and civic organizations reflected occupational identity and shared responsibility. These institutions reinforced connections between labor, information and community participation at the local level.

Economic transitions required adaptation. Workers retrained, industries reorganized and communities adjusted to shifting demand, reflecting the nation's long pattern of responding to change.

### Looking Ahead

As the nation reaches its 250th anniversary, work remains a defining feature of American life. Though tools and industries change, the emphasis on contribution and adaptability continues.

America's work history shows a pattern of adjustment rather than replacement. Each generation built on prior effort, responding to new conditions while sustaining economic participation. That tradition remains central to how the nation moves forward.

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# Looking Ahead

## How Recent History Offers Clues About What Comes Next

*Looking ahead has always involved uncertainty. Throughout American history, change arrived unevenly, shaped by innovation, migration and shifting expectations.*

Rather than following a single plan, the nation has repeatedly adjusted course in response to new conditions. Recent decades provide useful context for understanding how that process continues.

After World War II, the United States experienced rapid growth that reshaped daily life. Suburban development expanded housing and changed transportation patterns, while expanded access to education opened new opportunities for millions of families. The GI Bill helped veterans attend college and enter new professions, influencing long-term economic mobility. These changes unfolded gradually, influenced by economic conditions, public policy and personal choice rather than a single defining moment.

The second half of the 20th century brought additional transitions. Manufacturing remained important, but service industries grew as offices, retail and professional services expanded.

Global trade increased, connecting American businesses and consumers more closely to international markets. These shifts altered how and where people worked, especially in urban and industrial regions.

### Shifts in Society

Social change also influenced the national direction. The civil rights movement reshaped laws, institutions and expectations, expanding participation and opportunity in public life. Education systems, workplaces and communities adjusted over time, reflecting broader changes in who had



access to economic and civic life.

Technology added another layer of change. The widespread use of personal computers and later the internet transformed communication, commerce and information access. Businesses adopted digital tools, while households adjusted to faster communication and new forms of connection that reduced distance and time.

These developments did not affect every community in the same way. Geography, industry and local resources shaped how change was experienced across the country.

### Recent Adjustments

In the early 21st century, new patterns emerged. Advances in digital technology supported remote work and flexible schedules, changing how Americans balance work, home and community. Shifts in retail, logistics and media reflected new consumer habits and expectations.

At the same time, supply chain disruptions and economic uncertainty renewed attention to domestic production and trade policy.

In recent years, the United States moved toward a more protectionist approach in some areas of trade and manufacturing. This shift reflected concerns about resilience, security and economic stability rather than ideology alone.



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