

Matthew Greene Marshall, June 9, 2025

America at 250: A National History More Complicated Than Just Black & White



List of Silhouettes:

Rainbow - The rainbow will always represent joy and happiness. But today, it means something more. Now, the rainbow flag is a symbol of hope and inclusion in the LGBTQ community that's so ubiquitous it's hard to imagine a Pride celebration without vivid banners flying overhead and outfits made from every color in the rainbow.

<https://www.alexandani.com/blogs/the-wire/symbol-meaning-rainbow?srsltid=AfmBOopLPKR8j7QAW0ovBfqsILkM0I14Z0hJSsn82V8LqCgkhUraKUnm>

Statue of Liberty – She is an icon, a national treasure, and one of the most recognizable figures in the world. She is the Statue of Liberty, a national symbol synonymous with the American ideals of equality, democracy, and freedom.

<https://www.statueofliberty.org/statue-of-liberty/overview-history/#:~:text=Each%20year%20millions%20who%20cherish,freedom%2C%20inspiration%2C%20and%20hope.>

Liberty Bell - The Liberty Bell is a well-known symbol of freedom in the United States. The bell was first made in 1752 for the Pennsylvania State House, now known as Independence Hall. It also has a Bible verse written on it: "Proclaim LIBERTY throughout all the Land unto all the inhabitants thereof" (Leviticus 25:10). In the early 1800s, people who wanted to outlaw slavery called it the "Liberty Bell" and used it as a symbol for their cause.

<https://bensguide.gpo.gov/liberty-bell-1753#:~:text=The%20Liberty%20Bell%20is%20a,England%2C%20and%20shipped%20to%20Pennsylvania.>

Raised Fist – In 1968 the fist really became associated with the black power movement during the Summer Olympics in Mexico City, medal winners John Carlos and Tommie Smith gave the raised fist salute during the American national anthem. Tommie Smith stated in his autobiography that he saw it as a "human rights salute", as a form of protest against ongoing racism and injustice in the United

States and throughout the world. Although it never stopped being a symbol of Black pride, the clenched fist has made a major comeback with Black Lives Matter.

<https://www.nicolagreen.com/blog/struggle-solidarity-power-the-history-of-the-iconic-raised-fist#:~:text=1960s%20The%20Black%20Panther%20Party,the%20%E2%80%9CBlack%20Power%20salute.%E2%80%9D>

Flag - No other symbol captures the power and glory of our nation like the American flag. It has flown as our national emblem in some form without interruption since 1777. The Stars and Stripes embodies the very qualities that make our nation great: liberty, justice, freedom, love of country and national purpose.

https://nyassembly.gov/member_files/063/20050930c/#:~:text=The%20American%20flag%20has%20stood,nation%20like%20the%20American%20flag.

Native American - Native Americans have experienced discrimination at the hands of European settlers during the colonial era and the white majority in the United States for over four hundred years. In that time, there have been a wide variety of policies towards Native Americans, some with good intentions and some bad, but none seemed to resolve the clash of cultures and the difficulties faced by Native Americans. They have rarely enjoyed liberty and equality in the American system of self-government.

<https://billofrightsinstitute.org/essays/native-americans>

White House – For more than two hundred years, the White House has stood as a symbol of the Presidency, the United States government, and the American people. Its history, and the history of the nation's capital, began when President George Washington signed an Act of Congress in December of 1790 declaring that the federal government would reside in a district “not exceeding ten miles square ... on the river Potomac.”

<https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/history/facts.html#:~:text=For%20two%20hundred%20years%2C%20the,government%2C%20and%20the%20American%20people.>

Bald Eagle – The Second Continental Congress selected the Bald Eagle as the U.S. National Symbol on June 20, 1782. Bald Eagles are unique to North America, making them our eagle; they are strong and independent; they are survivors. They are majestic, bold, and faithful. They are a symbol of strength and determination.

<https://eagles.org/what-we-do/educate/learn-about-eagles/bald-eagle-usas-national-symbol/>

Peace Sign – Although the V-sign was popularized during World War II as a call for unconditional victory over fascism, it morphed into a celebratory gesture immediately after the wars in Europe and Asia ended, in May and August 1945. “American hippies took the ‘V’ for ‘Victory’ symbol and converted it into a more general ‘peace’ sign that conveyed the hope that the war in Vietnam would end rather than be ‘won,’” according to Nancy Armstrong and Melissa Wagner, authors of Field Guide to Gestures.

<https://www.history.com/articles/v-sign-victory-peace-symbol>

America – The newest states are Alaska and Hawaii, with Alaska being admitted as the 49th state on January 3, 1959. Hawaii followed as the 50th on August 21, 1959. In the intervening 172 years, 47 additional states were created. Sixteen states formed in the 18th century, 29 in the 19th century, and five in the 20th century.

<https://usafacts.org/articles/when-was-your-state-founded/>