

Reading

What Is Democracy?

“E pluribus unum.” (Out of many, one.)

—Motto of the United States

“And that brings me to my definition of power, which is simply this: the capacity to make others do what you would have them do. It sounds menacing, doesn’t it? We don’t like to talk about power. We find it scary. We find it somehow evil. We feel uncomfortable naming it. In the culture and mythology of democracy, power resides with the people.”

—Eric Liu

“‘Democracy’ refers to a set of procedures; it doesn’t ‘govern’ anything or anybody. Democratic citizens govern.”

—Danielle Allen

“Democracy is based upon the conviction that there are extraordinary possibilities in ordinary people.”

—Harry Emerson Fosdick

“Democracy is a process, not a static condition. It is becoming, rather than being. It can easily be lost, but never is fully won. Its essence is eternal struggle.”

—William H. Hastie

“Chief among our gains must be reckoned this possibility of choice, the recognition of many possible ways of life, where other civilizations have recognized only one.”

—Margaret Mead

“Democracy means not ‘I am as good as you are,’ but ‘You are as good as I am.’”

—Rev. Theodore Parker

“In a democracy, the highest office is the office of citizen.”

—Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter