

On December 16th, 1773, a man named George Hewes painted his face and hands with coal in a blacksmith's shop before heading to Griffin's Wharf.¹ Armed with only a hatchet and a determined heart, Hewes joined fifty-nine other men² and embarked on a bold mission. The setting sun cast faint rays over the scar on his head, which he had acquired some years earlier when he had attempted to prevent a British officer from beating a boy.³ As the evening grew dark, the men slipped onto three British ships and began to dump crates of tea into the murky waters below. Under the gaze of the British fleet, the men completed their task in just three hours before making their way back to their homes, leaving behind an unforgettable moment in American history. The events of that night, later known as the Boston Tea Party, would become one of the most famous events in the American fight for independence.

Today, the phrase "no governance without a say" continues to echo in our nation, serving as a reminder of the impact that the Boston Tea Party had on our country. The event demonstrated the people of the colonies were willing to fight for their rights as their voices were not to be silenced. The message of unity and of fighting for what you believe in deeply resonated within me, and it was this sentiment that guided me in my journey as a Chinese immigrant in the United States. As I continue to grow, I realize that my ideals of freedom and representation are quite like those that shaped our nation.

John Jay, the first chief justice of the United States, once remarked "Those who own the country ought to govern it".⁴ The first legislative example of the concept is most clearly articulated in Article I, Section 2 of the Constitution: "The House of Representatives shall be composed of Members chosen every second Year by the People of the several States".⁵ Section 2 is a critical aspect of the framework for the United States, as it has a significant impact on the political landscape of the country. The House of Representatives ensures that the people of the United States have a voice in the federal government, thus resulting in policies that are reflective of the values and priorities of the people and not just the interests of a few individuals. The purpose of bicameral legislation is best surmised by James Madison: "[A free government] consists in the one case in the multiplicity of interests, and in the other in the multiplicity of sects. The degree of security in both cases will depend on the number of interests and sects".⁶ Simply put, the security of a free government depends on the quantity of the various respective

¹ Hawkes, J. (1834). In *A retrospect of the boston tea-party: With a memoir of George R.T. Hewes, a survivor of the Little Band of Patriots who drowned the tea in Boston Harbour in 1773* (p. 38). essay, S.S. Bliss, printer.

² The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica. (2023, August 16). *Boston Tea Party*. Encyclopædia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Boston-Tea-Party>

³ Hawkes, J. (1834). In *A retrospect of the boston tea-party: With a memoir of George R.T. Hewes, a survivor of the Little Band of Patriots who drowned the tea in Boston Harbour in 1773* (p. 33). essay, S.S. Bliss, printer.

⁴ Hofstadter, R. (1948). In *The American political tradition and the men who made it* (pp. 15–16). essay, Knopf.

⁵ Article I - Constitution Annotated. (n.d.). <https://constitution.congress.gov/constitution/article-1/>

⁶ Hamilton, A., Madison, J., & Jay, J. (2009). Federalist no. 51. *The Federalist Papers*, 119–122. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230102019_20

groups of people it governs. A greater number of interests and involvement results in a more secure nation.

However, Section 2 failed to accomplish some of what it set out to do. At the time of its passing, only white men were allowed to vote. Jay himself, despite advocating for equal representation, owned slaves.⁷ “The City upon a Hill”⁸ had failed to uphold its promise as a beacon of hope. Our Founding Fathers knew this, and as such wrote in measures to ensure the will of the American people would reflect changing times. One example is the 14th Amendment, which states “All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States”.⁹ Its ratification in 1868 ensured those who had been governed without a voice in legislation could finally vote for the change they believed in. The amendment was a tremendous milestone in American history and paved the way for other civil rights legislation, such as the 15th and 19th Amendment. It is the reason for the ruling of landmark case *Loving v. Virginia*, in which the Supreme Court unanimously declared laws banning interracial marriage unconstitutional, as per the 14th Amendment.¹⁰ In doing so, a Florida statute that prevented interracial marriage was overturned as well (although *McLaughlin v. Florida* overturned interracial cohabitation,¹¹ it did not overturn marriage).

As the child of an interracial marriage between a Chinese woman and a Caucasian man, *Loving v. Virginia* resonates deeply with me and holds particular significance in my personal and family history. The case showed me the importance of the protections our Founding Fathers put in place to ensure the will of all American citizens would be recognized *de jure*.¹² It can be difficult to reconcile the multicultural aspects of my identity with the legislators I see on my television screen. As of December of 2022, Asians and Pacific Islanders only make up 3.9% of Congress.¹³ Facing discrimination since moving to America made my otherness all the more discernible. For the first time in my life, I grappled with what it truly means to be *American*. As time went on, I became more cynical about what I considered to be the myth of America. It is only when researching this essay that I realized the value of the American identity.

Ultimately, George Hewes and I want the same thing. America contains multitudes, and to discredit that would do it a great disservice. The nation's history is a tapestry of both triumph and tragedy, with moments of greatness juxtaposed against profound darkness. We are plagued by division and mistrust, yes, but we are bold, courageous, and full of hope. The Boston Tea Party, the Constitution, and the 14th Amendment were not moments that marked the dawn of a

⁷ *Slavery and the extended family of John Jay*. Northeast Slavery Record Index. (2019, June 21). <https://nesri.commons.gc.cuny.edu/slavery-and-the-extended-family-of-john-jay/>

⁸ Winthrop, J., Towner, L. W., Way, P., & Boorstin, D. J. (1966). *A model of christian charity*.

⁹ Fourteenth Amendment | Browse | Constitution annotated | congress.gov ... (n.d.-b). <https://constitution.congress.gov/browse/amendment-14/>

¹⁰ Frederickson, C., & Wurman, I. (n.d.). *Loving v. Virginia (1967)*. National Constitution Center – constitutioncenter.org. <https://constitutioncenter.org/the-constitution/supreme-court-case-library/loving-v-virginia>

¹¹ Lee M. Miller, *Constitutionality Of Miscegenation Statutes - McLaughlin v. Florida*, 25 Md. L. Rev. 41 (1965)

¹² Latin for *by law*. The phrase is particularly prominent in terms of segregation legislation, as segregation policy that came from the courts was known as *de jure* discrimination. The term was often used with *de facto* discrimination, in which discriminative practices such as segregation occurred in society after legislative change.

¹³ Manning, J. E. (2022). *Membership of the 117th Congress: A Profile*. Congressional Research Service.

new era and cannot be viewed as such. Rather, they are steps taken in this beautiful experiment for social and political equilibrium. In a melting pot of voices striving to be heard, allow me to add mine:

My name is CC. I like art, history, and sci-fi novels. I have a white dad and Chinese mom. And no, I was not born here.

But I am an American. Don't you ever forget.