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## Core Values in a Shared Democracy


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Sometimes our most important values are so clear,  
they risk becoming invisible.

Many people believe **Democracy** is another word for "**Majority Rule**" - - but nothing could be further from the truth.

Majority Rule is just another word for "Tyranny of the Majority". It is a form of government based solely on strength in numbers, not on wisdom or freedom or ethics or morality. True Democracy requires a social compact between its members. It demands shared core values guiding individuals and groups as they raise issues, settle arguments and ensure those decisions are embraced by its citizens. Shared values enable democracies to represent both the will, and the wisdom of its people.

The most stable democracies temper their natural power with their powerful compassion.

Often, shared values are codified in important public documents, like constitutions or laws, but are just as likely to be part of a cultural, religious or historical tradition capable of outliving generations of politicians or social movements. For example, Freedom of the Press is guaranteed by the American Constitution- but that freedom is irrelevant unless the people maintain a shared passion for truth, and support the press through their actions and words.

Today, as the country swings through one of its periodic cycles of political polarization, public religiosity and war- the need to bring shared democratic values to the surface is greater than ever before. Democrats and Republicans, Conservatives and Liberals, believers and agnostics- all should agree on some small set of values- or our democracy will crumble.

**Please click on the [center of the Core Value Logo](#) to learn more about the goals of this movement, and read about specific social issues these values help clarify.**

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## Four Shared Core Democratic Values



There are no unique and perfect set of core values, but this choice of four is a good place to start. They were selected by listing over a hundred key social issues confronting this country, removing those issues of a purely moral or temporal nature, and then reducing the remainder to a few key ideas.

These four shared values are easy to recall; powerful individually and insightful when combined. They are:

The Golden Rule  
Freedom to Be  
Responsibility for Others  
Accountability for Actions

A libertarian might be unhappy with a "responsibility for others"- conservatives might claim a "freedom to be" goes too far, and a liberal might insist a "responsibility for others" does not go far enough to protect us from ourselves. Which means these four core democratic values are just about right.

The Shared Democratic values logo (above) tries to capture all four doctrines in a single icon. You can click on any Core Value to discover more about its meaning, and each description illuminates potential solutions to many current challenges facing our democracy. Clicking on the center sphere returns you to this page.

Shared Democratic Core Values apply to both individuals and to organizations - no government can operate by a different set of rules than those lived by its citizens every day.

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### Core Values are Not Moral Judgments

Moral, ethical and behavioral rules are confusing similar- but that confusion can lead to bad decision and a dysfunctional democracy. The differences matter.

For example, in the Ten Commandments the prohibition against murder and stealing have their basis in moral and shared democratic core values. But, worshiping a single god, or a commandment against "coveting" represent purely moral decisions (a person can covet as long as they do not steal; society has no right to intrude on their mental beliefs. Good, upstanding citizens can worship one god, many gods or no gods). In a pluralistic society, when rules based on moral imperatives are at odds with core values, they should almost always be optional for individuals to observe, and the government must adopt a neutral stance regarding those moral issues.

Such moral and religious issues include:

- Premarital sex
- Death Penalty
- Prostitution
- Flag Burning
- [When human life begins](#)
- and similar, important concerns

### Strength is a Result of Tension.

All successful democratic systems are built on clear rules which at time are contradictory. Our constitutional federation is held together by three, often opposed branches of government- yet that tension forces everyone to sharpen their arguments and avoid responsibility for poor decisions. Dictatorships avoid disagreements by killing the dissenters- democracies welcome tension as a way to adapt their country to changing times. Without giving up its core value system.

Your freedom to travel ends at my property line. But, if you see me trying to murder another person in my front yard, your responsibility to others trumps my property rights, and you can rush in to help. My right to hold political or religious beliefs, no matter how distasteful and contrary to your own sense of morality, are mine and mine alone. I can publish those ideas, debate them in public, and raise my children in my image. But, if actions based on those beliefs cause damage to others, then I must take responsibility for rectifying that damage. If they cause my children to do damage to others, then others can step into the parental role to avoid further damage.

Only in this way only may balance be achieved.

**Only in extremely rare circumstances should moral decisions become the rule of law.**

**The moral nature of society emerges from the moral behavior of its citizens- not from regulation. The best way to influence others to adopt your moral views of the world as their own, is leading by example.**

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# Freedom To Be



We are a nation of individuals who choose to live together in a shared democracy. We believe "all men are created equally", and that the "enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people".

Nothing is more important, nor more frustrating, than tolerating the uniqueness of every individual. Other countries, with more homogeneous societies, tolerate less diversity in behavior- often to the detriment of its citizens, and with burdensome limits on individuality in the name of consensus. We find a way to make diversity work, and turn it into a source of enduring strength.

The Freedom to Be encompasses all aspects of thought and behavior that define us as unique individuals. It includes the Freedom to Believe in God; or not to. The Freedom to Believe in Astrology divining the course of our lives; or of lives moving to the beat of Newton's Laws. The Freedom to speak our mind in public, and to act according to our beliefs. The Freedom to Be wrong. The Freedom to Belong to groups of our choosing, and the Freedom to Be left alone. The freedom to keep our thoughts to ourselves; to be ourselves in that most private of all places, our mind.

Like all core values, the one's scope is constrained by the other three. We can advocate for war or peace, but if we destroy property or lives along the way, must be held accountable for our actions. We can teach ourselves and our children our own particular version of the truth- but if our children are beaten, or abused, or make dangerous decisions as a result- the community can act in the parent's stead.

We are free to be ourselves, but recognize we cannot survive and prosper without relying on others.

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## Suicide

We are not free to murder others; nor cause injury or harm through our direct actions or neglect. But, it is our right as individuals to harm ourselves - no matter how unwise. We can tattoo our arms, eat a dangerously fat diet, jump off tall buildings attached to huge rubber bands, and finally- to take our own lives in a manner and time of our choosing. Certainly, some religious groups have moral objections to suicide. Certainly, most insurance policies differentiate their benefit payouts based on the cause of death. Certainly, our responsibility to others might impel us to counsel a friend to reconsider, and we must be accountable if we assist in a death. But in the end, suicide is the ultimate Freedom and its harm to society does not outweigh the Freedom to no longer Be.

## Birth Control

Reproductive decisions are among the most important decisions a family, couple or individual can make. There are many forms of birth control- abstinence, condoms, the rhythm method, the "pill", and [abortion](#)- among others. Some form of birth control is REQUIRED by all adults- simply letting nature take its course abdicates our accountability to a potential new life, and a responsibility to be prepared to raise them in a healthy and loving environment. While there remains an ethical question over [abortion](#), most forms of birth control (in particular condoms and the pill) do not destroy a fetus. Those forms must be available with little or no restrictions for adult use. Moral issues, such as a presumption birth control leads to promiscuity which leads to AIDs, or birth control encourages a society of single parents, has no statistical validity and more importantly, interferes with the Freedom to Be.

In particular, government foreign aid restricting the use of non-abortive birth control cannot be prohibited. Otherwise, we must be accountable for the deaths and despair caused by the spread of AIDs, or the birth of children almost certain to die in horrible conditions, because we let one moral concern lead to an immoral outcome.

## Head scarves, crosses and

Religious and political symbols are powerful reminders of who we are and what we stand for. In general, we have a freedom to "Be" ourselves, and to share our beliefs with others through public displays. However, in some circumstances wearing those symbols can be used to exclude or harass

<b>peace signs</b>	others. As long as coercion and favoritism is avoided or punished, then displaying these private symbols in public are welcomed.
<b>Snowmobiles</b>	A loud snowmobile coursing through a pristine valley is a travesty for some, or an exhilarating dash to freedom for others. While many see this expression of individuality as an insult to nature, many others view a street filled with antiwar protesters as a blight on America. As long as the damage done to the environment is small and recoverable, reasonable snowmobile access to national parks is consistent with democratic core values.
<b>Future Discussions</b>	Self-incrimination, Freedom of religion, euthanasia, ..

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# RESPONSIBILITY FOR OTHERS



In a perfect world, where every decision can be undone and people fully embrace the other three core values, **Responsibility for Others** is simply a moral imperative, rather than a key democratic ideal. In that perfect world, people accept accountability for their own actions, but not responsibility for another's mistakes. They might choose to help a stranger in distress, and in doing so (by the Golden Rule), encourage that stranger to be helpful in return; but neither are forced to cooperate.

Yet the world is imperfect. The facts required to make a sound decision are often hidden. Harm often emerges from the the actions (or inactions) of groups, making it difficult to assign culpability. Leaders may be accountable for their actions, but if the remedy is unrealizable (such as bringing a child poisoned by unsanitary food back to life), the government must step in.

Our long democratic history supports the concept of a "greater good". Religious and civil organizations take it upon themselves to build libraries, run soup kitchens, and volunteer at nonprofit hospitals. Individuals sacrifice their free time to tutor an immigrant in English. And governments take on responsibilities, such as defense or environmental regulation or social security, where no individual can hope to be as effective.

Our responsibility for others is a heavy burden- we may act too soon, or with a leaden hand, or without good cause. And we may choose poorly. But a society that does not recognize a responsibility to others loses the right to be called civilized.

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## Charitable Deductions

Government and individuals share a responsibility to help others. The government can and should encourage individuals to exercise this responsibility, providing those actions are not in violent conflict with other democratic core values. Charitable deductions can be one such incentive. If a charity uses their assets to promote their own moral agenda as well as helping others, they are well within their rights. However, if the government has abdicated its public responsibility by delegating the public good to charities with strong moral biases as a subterfuge to advance that moral agenda, such charitable deductions would be inappropriate.

## Teaching Evolution in School

Absolutely! To deny the truth of Evolution and its role in shaping life on Earth, is to deny reality. Evolution is among the most well confirmed of scientific discoveries, and it would be irresponsible to raise children ignorant of reality, and unprepared to participate as adults in a world that depends more and more on integrating complex scientific decisions into society.

We have a responsibility to teach children to think for themselves. Thus, it is very important to teach the scientific method, and (for older children) that science itself evolves and changes as new facts emerge. In that context, Intelligent Design can be taught as an example of a flawed, nonscientific theory (somewhere between Alchemy and Astrology in validity), to help students develop their critical thinking skills.

## Gay Adoption

There are millions of [abortions](#) which might not occur if more couples were open to adoption. There are millions of orphans or abandoned children who need to be raised by loving parents with appropriate nurturing skills. Studies show committed gay couples are at least as successful as traditional couples in raising healthy children. Our responsibility to children requires us to employ every resource at our disposal- and gay couples (and in some cases individuals) are one such resource that is under used and maligned.

We should be free to use our own property, and to use it unwisely. So we can plant cotton, even though it is a profligate consumer of water and energy- and let the capitalistic system decide our fate. We should be free to cut down trees, shoot deer, and dam rivers on our property. But only to a point.

Like it or not, we all live together on one planet, with one atmosphere, one supply of water and one

<b>Environmental Protection</b>	connected ecosystem. Volcanoes in the Pacific cause atmospheric haze which cause crop failures in Europe. Burning coal in the American West drops pollutants on the East which lead to numerous childhood diseases. While lawsuits and accountability can sometimes resolve these interacting conflicts, in many cases the damage is unrepairable. A dead species is lost forever. The 50,000 lives lost a year to air pollution in America are gone forever. Florida flooded by global warming is lost for millennia. In these cases, there is a strong responsibility to defer narrow, temporal human property rights in favor of the greater long term good. Sensible regulation, informed by unbiased science and balancing social needs, are the result.
<b>Child Welfare</b>	<p>In general, the individual Freedom to Be extends from parents to their children. Government and neighbors may suggest, but not dictate, how other people's children are raised. This is true even if the parents raise their children to accept blatantly erroneous facts- such as the inferiority of blacks, or that women have one fewer rib than men. As long as such guidance is reversible when the child becomes an adult and assumes independent decision making power, the family is king.</p> <p>However, some parental decisions are not reversible. These include physical dangers (child abuse, not wearing a motorcycle helmet, ..) and medical decisions (denying critical blood transfusions, avoiding inoculations, ...). In these cases, the government must intervene to avoid permanent damage to the child or to society.</p>
<b>Gun Control</b>	<p>There is no doubt the Constitution protects gun ownership. And, for many in society, gun collecting and hunting is a way of life for themselves and their community. So gun ownership should never be outlawed in the US. However, guns are dangerous weapons and are often misused with disastrous consequences. The need for accountability, and responsibility for others requires gun ownership to exist in balance with sensible regulation. This regulation (as in a "well regulated militia") should be consistent with the regulation of other balanced rights -such as the freedom to travel balanced by the licensing of drivers. So gun ownership should be permitted; all guns must be registered; all users must pass a licensing test, and mandatory insurance must be purchased to pay for those times when people use guns unwisely.</p> <p>Gun regulations are not a "conspiracy" to violate the Constitution- instead, they reinforce and strengthen this democratic right by assuring gun misuse will not someday result in their banning.</p>
<b>Future Discussions</b>	Stem cell research, intervening in foreign lands, immigration, zoning laws..

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# The Golden Rule



The **Golden Rule** is such a hallowed touchstone of civilized behavior that every generation finds new ways to capture its power to inform.

*"Do unto others as you would have others do unto you"*

*"What's good for the goose, is good for the gander"*

*"What goes around comes around"*

*"Do not pass judgment until you've walked a mile in another man's shoes"*

*"There is not a man beneath the canopy of heaven who does not know slavery is wrong; for him" - -Frederick Douglas*

Some people live by the Golden Rule, while others need to be reminded. It is amazing how frequently a person will cleave tightly to their opinion as both right, reasonable and applicable to all, only to suddenly realize if their opinion were in the minority, how much they might chafe under the moral certitude of others....

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## School Prayer

The argument for school prayer usually claims school prayer is so banal as to be a generic plea to a generic god. But, if the proponents of school prayer truly believe their particular version is fair, then (by the Golden Rule) they should not mind if the Pledge of Allegiance says "one nation, under Gods", or "one nation, under the watchful eye of the Earth Mother", or so on. Since presumably this alternative wording might be found offensive by the very people advocating prayer in school, and since there is ample opportunity for organized religion outside of school, and private thoughts throughout the day, prayer should be prohibited in school and in other governmental settings.

## Equal Rights

If a women earning 80 cents for every dollar a man earns in the same job is fair, then a man should be willing to toss a coin, and swap salaries with a women coworker. If a white man protests being searched every time they board a plane, because their name is Tim McVay, then they should fight against the racial profiling of Arabs simply because of 911's connection to the Middle East.

Equal rights for others, is nothing more than equal rights for yourself.

## Torture

Yes, there are circumstances (such as the overused "ticking bomb" scenario) where torture is reputed to be justified. But, do we really want other countries to achieve their moral goals by torturing American soldiers or civilians? If we cannot stomach the idea of an American being kidnapped and held in secret for years by a foreign government or organization- how can we do the same to other citizens of the world? Torture is almost never justified, and we reserve the most severe accountabilities for torturers and ethnic murders.

In those extremely rare circumstances where the "ticking bomb" upends all four Core Values of Democracy, torture can be justified. BUT, the barrier to that decision must be higher than our usual protection against search, seizure, self-incrimination, etc. Our most recent experience with torture lowered the barrier of proof and oversight - and thus violated our most hallowed core values.

## Teaching Religion in School

Absolutely! To deny the role of religion in history, or its role in the live of our citizens, is to deny reality. Of course, the Golden Rule and the Freedom to Be teaches us that a course on religion must be even handed - not preferring by word or by inference one religion over another. It must fairly describe the successes, as well as the failures of religious belief through the ages. If a school is incapable of fairly portraying religion, and avoiding coercion of its students, then our Responsibility to others may require independent third parties to teach or audit such courses.

Since religion is usually first taught by family or ashram, religious courses in school might need to be delayed until High School, when students are more capable of dealing with opinions which may differ strongly with their upbringing.

**Future  
Discussions**

Gay civil unions or marriages, ...

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# Accountability For Actions



Accountability, at the end of the day, prevents any system of Core values from being misused. The **Freedom to Be** does not extend to harming others- whether by intent or by accident. Our **responsibility to others** cannot be used as an excuse to trample on the three other values- the system will seek restitution if this value is abused.

Both governments and individuals must be held accountable for their decisions. Individuals can be held accountable by their peers- who may choose to limit their cooperation and interactions to the bare minimum required by society's responsibility to others. Governments, in exchange for the power ceded them by the people, must be honest and clear in its dealings with the public. The core value of Accountability underlies the need for a court system, with proper laws and a neutral enforcement branch.

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## Law Suits

Being **held accountable** is meaningless unless someone is charged with doing the holding. Our court system provides a neutral forum to uncover facts and to assess penalties. The courts are not isolated arms of the government- they implement laws passed by citizens, and citizen juries interpret those laws. Despite some high profile cases where the legal system veered out of control, in general law suits protect individual rights and society from the lack of accountability of others. If the right to sue is reduced, we must be sure other mechanisms of equal capability are in place- and currently, law suits are among our most effective tools. Otherwise, this core value becomes valueless.

## Smoking and Drinking

Smoking and drinking are, to the greatest extent, a personal choice with mostly personal consequences. An alcoholic may lose their job; a smoker may lose their life. Clearly, a drunk driver must be held particularly accountable for any accidents they cause, and smokers should pay more for insurance- since both know the risk inherent in their lifestyle choice. Greater freedom is always tied to greater accountability- and once a person is shown to misuse that right, society is justified to impose reasonable restrictions.

Laws prohibiting minors from drinking or smoking should be unnecessary, as these are moral judgments as well as best left to parents- but our responsibility to others sometimes requires (when serious harm can be anticipated and its effects cannot be reversed), restricting minor's behaviors.

## Financial Transparency

If a legislature passes a law, they have a responsibility to accurately and honestly convey the cost of implementing that law. Hiding costs through subterfuge (e.g. turning a "tax" into a "license fee", or forcing states to take on federal responsibilities as a way to give the impression of cost reduction) means the government is shirking accountability- unacceptable in a democratic society.

Similarly, the tax system is now so complex, inconsistent and impenetrable to the average citizen, that it is nearly impossible to ascertain the effect of new tax levies on ourselves or on our children. You cannot be accountable for what you cannot understand- simplifying the tax system (which absorbs about a third of all economic activity), is a priority.

## Future discussions

Freedom Of Information Act, Just Wars,

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# How To Help

We welcome your comments and constructive ideas. If you want to help improve the quality of our shared democracy, here's how:



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1. Change starts first within ourselves. Apply these four core values in your everyday conversations. Rely on them as you make decisions for yourself, with your family, and with your community.
2. Gently help others adopt these core values through your example and interactions.
3. Start a blog to encourage an open dialog. While this site will not offer a message board, please send us your ideas or links to other Core Value sites (a link page will be posted in a few weeks). We may also sponsor a few online debates.

As new ideas or better thinking emerges, we will update this site. Remember, as Thomas Jefferson remarked in his first inaugural address- *Error of opinion may be tolerated where reason is left free to combat it.* Help us do better.

4. Show your support. We hope to make available buttons, balls and bumper stickers with the Four Shared Core Values logo- until then, a pdf of the logo can be downloaded by [clicking here](#) and the entire site can be downloaded as a pdf [here](#).
5. Join us on facebook

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# LINKS

A collection of links related to Core Democratic Values- continuously updated.

Please contact us if you have suggestion for additional links.



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## Political

[The Charters of Freedom](#)  
[The Republican National Committee](#)  
[The Democratic National Committee](#)  
[The White House](#)  
[Annenberg Political Fact Check](#)  
[The Heritage Foundation](#)  
[Reason Magazine](#)  
[Common Cause](#)

## Religious

[The National Council of Churches](#)  
[Center for Inquiry- Secularism, Humanism and Skepticism in Action](#)  
[Evangelical Questions and Answers](#)  
[Fordham Center on Religion and Culture](#)  
[Catholic Questions and Answers](#)  
[Islam and the Koran and Quran Links](#)  
[The Sojourner's Value system](#)

## Other Core Values Sites

[Center for Civic Education and their Core Values](#)  
[The Institute for the Study of Civil Society](#)  
[The First Amendment Center](#)  
[The Dali Lama's Nobel Prize acceptance speech](#)  
[Roosevelt's Four Freedoms](#)

## Single Issues

[BBC on Religion and Ethics in abortion](#)  
[Creationism-Intelligent Design](#)  
[AAAS Resources on Evolution and the National Academy of Sciences](#)  
[Global Warming](#)  
[WNYC Brian Lehrer roundtable on the Establishment Clause and Religion](#)  
[Protecting the First Amendment at the Freedom Forum](#)

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## The Challenge of Abortion

There are few issues confronting our nation today more divisive than abortion. Core Democratic Values cannot "solve" the abortion issue, but they can help focus the debate on a civil solution - a solution that turns out to raise even larger questions than our society is ready to face.



The abortion landscape is usually divided into two camps- ProLife and ProChoice. The ProLifers maintain all life is sacred and that human life begins at conception. Abortion, therefore, is the same as murder. The ProChoicers maintain that women have a right to privacy, a right to control their own bodies, and a right to choose the time and place to start a family- at least until the end of the first trimester, as codified by Roe v. Wade.

The **Freedom to Be** colliding with the **Responsibility for Others**.

Clearly, these two philosophically opposing viewpoints address each other from two completely unrelated premises. It is hard to even acknowledge both camps are debating the same subject- we hear two monologues instead of one dialogue.

Yet neither of these positions epitomize strong, consistent and defensible points of view.

For ProChoicers, using the word "choice" implies abortions are no more important than deciding between red or white wine for dinner. ProChoicers appear to demean life, and take "murder" as casually as a fashion statement. Often, they point out 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of all pregnancies are naturally aborted- so why not one more? Presumably, this implies we can kill a child if both of his parents have already starved to death... And, they seem to ignore the messy fact that perhaps two human lives are now intertwined, so privacy rights are less clear cut.

ProLifers, on the other hand, are often against effective birth control and seem to ignore the harsh reality faced by many mothers who will either raise children under dreadful conditions, or may seek out unsafe abortions no matter what the law mandates. The quality of life matters less than the quantity. ProLifers claim to support a "culture of life" from conception, but then neglect to effectively support that child with adequate social programs, respect for the parent(s), and an equal fervent concern for the quality of that life after birth.

In other words, the debate is larger than the initial act of abortion. It is about the relative value of human life, from conception to completion. Which is why determining the exact moment of human inception may be besides the point.

For many Buddhists, who do not condone the killing of a worm let alone a fetus, abortion is clearly murder. While the Old and New Testaments never directly mention abortion, most Judeo-Christian religious leaders believe the commandment against murder extends to the fetus at some early date- perhaps at conception, perhaps 40 days later, but certainly sooner than the first trimester- an arbitrary date set to roughly extend below any chance of fetal birth viability. Other people believe an embryo is not human until it develops from a mass of undifferentiated cells to a fetus, with well defined organs and nerves. [Other religions and groups](#) lay somewhere in between.

But the real question is not the point in time when an embryo "becomes" human (which is a philosophical, and not a scientific issue), but are all humans entitled to the same rights, at all stages in their life? In other words, is it acceptable to kill some humans and not others, simply because of their age or circumstances? Is ending a life, always murdering a life?

Our society chooses to ignore the unpleasant fact that we make this distinction every day, on adults who unambiguously qualify as human. The **Golden Rule** is broken when:

*In war, we chose to bomb and kill tens of thousand of Iraqi civilians before launching a ground attack, in order to save a few American lives. Clearly, American lives are more valuable than Iraqi lives.*

*In charity, we deny effective birth control to Africans because of moral concerns over promiscuous sex and AIDs, though statistically it is absolutely clear 3/4<sup>th</sup>s of all those children conceived without birth control will die quite horrible deaths. Would we condemn American children to the same fate?*

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*In pregnancy, we allow pollutants, cigarette smoke, poor nutrition and other environmental hazards to affect the health of a fetus. Tens of thousands are spontaneously aborted each year, and perhaps a million more go through life with reduced mental capacity, or physical infirmities. All without triggering a legal case, or a sermon from the pulpit.*

*We honor those people who bravely give their lives to save others (whether by choice or by circumstance), yet we undervalue the lives that might be saved by embryonic stem-cell research.*

In other words, why single out abortion as a unique case where human life is ended by choice or inaction- since every day both ProLifers and ProChoicers terminate lives with few consequences?

Each side understands abortion is part of a greater social agenda extending beyond the question of when human life begins. Both sides are wary of compromising on the issue of abortion, in fear that other related rights will be undermined, or undervalued.

In this context, abortion is just one more example where our **Responsibility for Others** is being applied in too narrow a regime to earn credibility. As a country, we will never come to a satisfactory solution to the abortion debate if we ignore the greater context over the relative value of human life. This context includes the death penalty, "just" wars, death by inaction, abortion, euthanasia, embryonic stem-cell research, and a host of related issues which must be understood as aspects of one single subject.

Today we are creating a patchwork of laws and regulations with no coherence. We need an open debate on the entire issue of life first, and then legislate second. These four core values are the first step to framing that debate.

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Accountability for Actions

Freedom to Be

Core Values  
for a  
Stronger and Fairer  
Democracy

The Golden Rule

Responsibility for Others

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## Core Values in a Shared Democracy



Sometimes our most important values are so clear,  
they risk becoming invisible.

Many people believe **Democracy** is another word for "**Majority Rule**" - - but nothing could be further from the truth.

Majority Rule is just another word for "Tyranny of the Majority". It is a form of government based solely on strength in numbers, not on wisdom or freedom or ethics or morality. True Democracy requires a social compact between its members. It demands shared core values guiding individuals and groups as they raise issues, settle arguments and ensure those decisions are embraced by its citizens. Shared values enable democracies to represent both the will, and the wisdom of its people.

The most stable democracies temper their natural power with their powerful compassion.

Often, shared values are codified in important public documents, like constitutions or laws, but are just as likely to be part of a cultural, religious or historical tradition capable of outliving generations of politicians or social movements. For example, Freedom of the Press is guaranteed by the American Constitution- but that freedom is irrelevant unless the people maintain a shared passion for truth, and support the press through their actions and words.

Today, as the country swings through one of its periodic cycles of political polarization, public religiosity and war- the need to bring shared democratic values to the surface is greater than ever before. Democrats and Republicans, Conservatives and Liberals, believers and agnostics- all should agree on some small set of values- or our democracy will crumble.

**Please click on the [center of the Core Value Logo](#) to learn more about the goals of this movement, and read about specific social issues these values help clarify.**

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## Four Shared Core Democratic Values



There are no unique and perfect set of core values, but this choice of four is a good place to start. They were selected by listing over a hundred key social issues confronting this country, removing those issues of a purely moral or temporal nature, and then reducing the remainder to a few key ideas.

These four shared values are easy to recall; powerful individually and insightful when combined. They are:

**The Golden Rule**  
**Freedom to Be**  
**Responsibility for Others**  
**Accountability for Actions**

A libertarian might be unhappy with a "responsibility for others"- conservatives might claim a "freedom to be" goes too far, and a liberal might insist a "responsibility for others" does not go far enough to protect us from ourselves. Which means these four core democratic values are just about right.

The Shared Democratic values logo (above) tries to capture all four doctrines in a single icon. You can click on any Core Value to discover more about its meaning, and each description illuminates potential solutions to many current challenges facing our democracy. Clicking on the center sphere returns you to this page.

Shared Democratic Core Values apply to both individuals and to organizations - no government can operate by a different set of rules than those lived by its citizens every day.

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### Core Values are Not Moral Judgments

Moral, ethical and behavioral rules are confusing similar- but that confusion can lead to bad decision and a dysfunctional democracy. The differences matter.

For example, in the Ten Commandments the prohibition against murder and stealing have their basis in moral and shared democratic core values. But, worshipping a single god, or a commandment against "coveting" represent purely moral decisions (a person can covet as long as they do not steal; society has no right to intrude on their mental beliefs. Good, upstanding citizens can worship one god, many gods or no gods). In a pluralistic society, when rules based on moral imperatives are at odds with core values, they should almost always be optional for individuals to observe, and the government must adopt a neutral stance regarding those moral issues.

Such moral and religious issues include:

- Premarital sex
- Death Penalty
- Prostitution

### Strength is a Result of Tension.

All successful democratic systems are built on clear rules which at time are contradictory. Our constitutional federation is held together by three, often opposed branches of government- yet that tension forces everyone to sharpen their arguments and avoid responsibility for poor decisions. Dictatorships avoid disagreements by killing the dissenters- democracies welcome tension as a way to adapt their country to changing times. Without giving up its core value system.

Your freedom to travel ends at my property line. But, if you see me trying to murder another person in my front yard, your responsibility to others trumps my property rights, and you can rush in to help. My right to hold political or religious beliefs, no matter how distasteful and contrary to your own sense of morality, are mine and mine alone. I can publish those ideas, debate them in public, and raise my children in my image. But, if actions based on those beliefs cause damage to others, then I must take responsibility for rectifying that damage. If they cause my children to do damage to others, then others can step into the parental role to avoid further

- Flag Burning
- [When human life begins](#)
- and similar, important concerns

Only in extremely rare circumstances should moral decisions become the rule of law.

The moral nature of society emerges from the moral behavior of its citizens- not from regulation. The best way to influence others to adopt your moral views of the world as their own, is leading by example.

damage.

Only in this way only may balance be achieved.

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# The Golden Rule

The **Golden Rule** is such a hallowed touchstone of civilized behavior that every generation finds new ways to capture its power to inform.



*"Do unto others as you would have others do unto you"*  
*"What's good for the goose, is good for the gander"*  
*"What goes around comes around"*  
*"Do not pass judgment until you've walked a mile in another man's shoes"*  
*"There is not a man beneath the canopy of heaven who does not know slavery is wrong; for him" - Frederick Douglas*

Some people live by the Golden Rule, while others need to be reminded. It is amazing how frequently a person will cleave tightly to their opinion as both right, reasonable and applicable to all, only to suddenly realize if their opinion were in the minority, how much they might chafe under the moral certitude of others....

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## School Prayer

The argument for school prayer usually claims school prayer is so banal as to be a generic plea to a generic god. But, if the proponents of school prayer truly believe their particular version is fair, then (by the Golden Rule) they should not mind if the Pledge of Allegiance says "one nation, under Gods", or "one nation, under the watchful eye of the Earth Mother", or so on. Since presumably this alternative wording might be found offensive by the very people advocating prayer in school, and since there is ample opportunity for organized religion outside of school, and private thoughts throughout the day, prayer should be prohibited in school and in other governmental settings.

## Equal Rights

If a women earning 80 cents for every dollar a man earns in the same job is fair, then a man should be willing to toss a coin, and swap salaries with a women coworker. If a white man protests being searched every time they board a plane, because their name is Tim McVay, then they should fight against the racial profiling of Arabs simply because of 911's connection to the Middle East.

Equal rights for others, is nothing more than equal rights for yourself.

## Torture

Yes, there are circumstances (such as the overused "ticking bomb" scenario) where torture is reputed to be justified. But, do we really want other countries to achieve their moral goals by torturing American soldiers or civilians? If we cannot stomach the idea of an American being kidnapped and held in secret for years by a foreign government or organization- how can we do the same to other citizens of the world? Torture is almost never justified, and we reserve the most severe accountabilities for torturers and ethnic murders.

In those extremely rare circumstances where the "ticking bomb" upends all four Core Values of Democracy, torture can be justified. BUT, the barrier to that decision must be higher than our usual protection against search, seizure, self-incrimination, etc. Our most recent experience with torture lowered the barrier of proof and oversight- and thus violated our most hallowed core values.

## Teaching Religion in School

Absolutely! To deny the role of religion in history, or its role in the live of our citizens, is to deny reality. Of course, the Golden Rule and the Freedom to Be teaches us that a course on religion must be even handed- not preferring by word or by inference one religion over another. It must fairly describe the successes, as well as the failures of religious belief through the ages. If a school is incapable of fairly portraying religion, and avoiding coercion of its students, then our Responsibility to others may require independent third parties to teach or audit such courses.

	Since religion is usually first taught by family or ashram, religious courses in school might need to be delayed until High School, when students are more capable of dealing with opinions which may differ strongly with their upbringing.
<b>Future Discussions</b>	Gay civil unions or marriages, ...

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# Accountability For Actions



Accountability, at the end of the day, prevents any system of Core values from being misused. The **Freedom to Be** does not extend to harming others- whether by intent or by accident. Our **responsibility to others** cannot be used as an excuse to trample on the three other values- the system will seek restitution if this value is abused.

Both governments and individuals must be held accountable for their decisions. Individuals can be held accountable by their peers- who may choose to limit their cooperation and interactions to the bare minimum required by society's responsibility to others. Governments, in exchange for the power ceded them by the people, must be honest and clear in its dealings with the public. The core value of Accountability underlies the need for a court system, with proper laws and a neutral enforcement branch.

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## Law Suits

Being **held accountable** is meaningless unless someone is charged with doing the holding. Our court system provides a neutral forum to uncover facts and to assess penalties. The courts are not isolated arms of the government- they implement laws passed by citizens, and citizen juries interpret those laws. Despite some high profile cases where the legal system veered out of control, in general law suits protect individual rights and society from the lack of accountability of others. If the right to sue is reduced, we must be sure other mechanisms of equal capability are in place- and currently, law suits are among our most effective tools. Otherwise, this core value becomes valueless.

## Smoking and Drinking

Smoking and drinking are, to the greatest extent, a personal choice with mostly personal consequences. An alcoholic may lose their job; a smoker may lose their life. Clearly, a drunk driver must be held particularly accountable for any accidents they cause, and smokers should pay more for insurance- since both know the risk inherent in their lifestyle choice. Greater freedom is always tied to greater accountability- and once a person is shown to misuse that right, society is justified to impose reasonable restrictions.

Laws prohibiting minors from drinking or smoking should be unnecessary, as these are moral judgments as well as best left to parents- but our responsibility to others sometimes requires (when serious harm can be anticipated and its effects cannot be reversed), restricting minor's behaviors.

## Financial Transparency

If a legislature passes a law, they have a responsibility to accurately and honestly convey the cost of implementing that law. Hiding costs through subterfuge (e.g. turning a "tax" into a "license fee", or forcing states to take on federal responsibilities as a way to give the impression of cost reduction) means the government is shirking accountability- unacceptable in a democratic society.

Similarly, the tax system is now so complex, inconsistent and impenetrable to the average citizen, that it is nearly impossible to ascertain the effect of new tax levies on ourselves or on our children. You cannot be accountable for what you cannot understand- simplifying the tax system (which absorbs about a third of all economic activity), is a priority.

## Future discussions

Freedom Of Information Act, Just Wars,

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# Freedom To Be



We are a nation of individuals who choose to live together in a shared democracy. We believe "all men are created equally", and that the "enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people".

Nothing is more important, nor more frustrating, than tolerating the uniqueness of every individual. Other countries, with more homogeneous societies, tolerate less diversity in behavior- often to the detriment of its citizens, and with burdensome limits on individuality in the name of consensus. We find a way to make diversity work, and turn it into a source of enduring strength.

The Freedom to Be encompasses all aspects of thought and behavior that define us as unique individuals. It includes the Freedom to Believe in God; or not to. The Freedom to Believe in Astrology divining the course of our lives; or of lives moving to the beat of Newton's Laws. The Freedom to speak our mind in public, and to act according to our beliefs. The Freedom to Be wrong. The Freedom to Belong to groups of our choosing, and the Freedom to Be left alone. The freedom to keep our thoughts to ourselves; to be ourselves in that most private of all places, our mind.

Like all core values, the one's scope is constrained by the other three. We can advocate for war or peace, but if we destroy property or lives along the way, must be held accountable for our actions. We can teach ourselves and our children our own particular version of the truth- but if our children are beaten, or abused, or make dangerous decisions as a result- the community can act in the parent's stead.

We are free to be ourselves, but recognize we cannot survive and prosper without relying on others.

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## Suicide

We are not free to murder others; nor cause injury or harm through our direct actions or neglect. But, it is our right as individuals to harm ourselves - no matter how unwise. We can tattoo our arms, eat a dangerously fat diet, jump off tall buildings attached to huge rubber bands, and finally- to take our own lives in a manner and time of our choosing. Certainly, some religious groups have moral objections to suicide. Certainly, most insurance policies differentiate their benefit payouts based on the cause of death. Certainly, our responsibility to others might impel us to counsel a friend to reconsider, and we must be accountable if we assist in a death. But in the end, suicide is the ultimate Freedom and its harm to society does not outweigh the Freedom to no longer Be.

## Birth Control

Reproductive decisions are among the most important decisions a family, couple or individual can make. There are many forms of birth control- abstinence, condoms, the rhythm method, the "pill", and [abortion](#)- among others. Some form of birth control is REQUIRED by all adults- simply letting nature take its course abdicates our accountability to a potential new life, and a responsibility to be prepared to raise them in a healthy and loving environment. While there remains an ethical question over [abortion](#), most forms of birth control (in particular condoms and the pill) do not destroy a fetus. Those forms must be available with little or no restrictions for adult use. Moral issues, such as a presumption of birth control leads to promiscuity which leads to AIDs, or birth control encourages a society of single parents, has no statistical validity and more importantly, interferes with the Freedom to Be.

In particular, government foreign aid restricting the use of non-abortive birth control cannot be prohibited. Otherwise, we must be accountable for the deaths and despair caused by the spread of AIDs, or the birth of children almost certain to die in horrible conditions, because we let one moral concern lead to an immoral outcome.

Religious and political symbols are powerful reminders of who we are and what we stand

<b>Head scarves, crosses and peace signs</b>	for. In general, we have a freedom to "Be" ourselves, and to share our beliefs with others through public displays. However, in some circumstances wearing those symbols can be used to exclude or harass others. As long as coercion and favoritism is avoided or punished, then displaying these privates symbols in public are welcomed.
<b>Snowmobiles</b>	A loud snowmobile coursing through a pristine valley is a travesty for some, or an exhilarating dash to freedom for others. While many see this expression of individuality as an insult to nature, many others view a street filled with antiwar protester as a blight on America. As long as the damage done to the environment is small and recoverable, reasonable snowmobile access to national parks is consistent with democratic core values.
<b>Future Discussions</b>	Self-incrimination, Freedom of religion, euthanasia, ..

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# RESPONSIBILITY FOR OTHERS



In a perfect world, where every decision can be undone and people fully embrace the other three core values, **Responsibility for Others** is simply a moral imperative, rather than a key democratic ideal. In that perfect world, people accept accountability for their own actions, but not responsibility for another's mistakes. They might choose to help a stranger in distress, and in doing so (by the Golden Rule), encourage that stranger to be helpful in return; but neither are forced to cooperate.

Yet the world is imperfect. The facts required to make a sound decision are often hidden. Harm often emerges from the the actions (or inactions) of groups, making it difficult to assign culpability. Leaders may be accountable for their actions, but if the remedy is unrealizable (such as bringing a child poisoned by unsanitary food back to life), the government must step in.

Our long democratic history supports the concept of a "greater good". Religious and civil organizations take it upon themselves to build libraries, run soup kitchens, and volunteer at nonprofit hospitals. Individuals sacrifice their free time to tutor an immigrant in English. And governments take on responsibilities, such as defense or environmental regulation or social security, where no individual can hope to be as effective.

Our responsibility for others is a heavy burden- we may act too soon, or with a leaden hand, or without good cause. And we may choose poorly. But a society that does not recognize a responsibility to others loses the right to be called civilized.

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<p><b>Charitable Deductions</b></p>	<p>Government and individuals share a responsibility to help others. The government can and should encourage individuals to exercise this responsibility, providing those actions are not in violent conflict with other democratic core values. Charitable deductions can be one such incentive. If a charity uses their assets to promote their own moral agenda as well as helping others, they are well within their rights. However, if the government has abdicated its public responsibility by delegating the public good to charities with strong moral biases as a subterfuge to advance that moral agenda, such charitable deductions would be inappropriate.</p>
<p><b>Teaching Evolution in School</b></p>	<p>Absolutely! To deny the truth of Evolution and its role in shaping life on Earth, is to deny reality. Evolution is among the most well confirmed of scientific discoveries, and it would be irresponsible to raise children ignorant of reality, and unprepared to participate as adults in a world that depends more and more on integrating complex scientific decisions into society.</p> <p>We have a responsibility to teach children to think for themselves. Thus, it is very important to teach the scientific method, and (for older children) that science itself evolves and changes as new facts emerge. In that context, Intelligent Design can be taught as an example of a flawed, nonscientific theory (somewhere between Alchemy and Astrology in validity), to help students develop their critical thinking skills.</p>
<p><b>Gay Adoption</b></p>	<p>There are millions of <a href="#">abortions</a> which might not occur if more couples were open to adoption. There are millions of orphans or abandoned children who need to be raised by loving parents with appropriate nurturing skills. Studies show committed gay couples are at least as successful as traditional couples in raising healthy children. Our responsibility to children requires us to employ every resource at our disposal- and gay couples (and in some cases individuals) are one such resource that is under used and maligned.</p>
	<p>We should be free to use our own property, and to use it unwisely. So we can plant cotton, even though it is a profligate consumer of water and energy- and let the</p>

<b>Environmental Protection</b>	<p>capitalistic system decide our fate. We should be free to cut down trees, shoot deer, and dam rivers on our property. But only to a point.</p> <p>Like it or not, we all live together on one planet, with one atmosphere, one supply of water and one connected ecosystem. Volcanoes in the Pacific cause atmospheric haze which cause crop failures in Europe. Burning coal in the American West drops pollutants on the East which lead to numerous childhood diseases. While lawsuits and accountability can sometimes resolve these interacting conflicts, in many cases the damage is unrepairable. A dead species is lost forever. The 50,000 lives lost a year to air pollution in America are gone forever. Florida flooded by global warming is lost for millennia. In these cases, there is a strong responsibility to defer narrow, temporal human property rights in favor of the greater long term good. Sensible regulation, informed by unbiased science and balancing social needs, are the result.</p>
<b>Child Welfare</b>	<p>In general, the individual Freedom to Be extends from parents to their children. Government and neighbors may suggest, but not dictate, how other people's children are raised. This is true even if the parents raise their children to accept blatantly erroneous facts- such as the inferiority of blacks, or that women have one fewer rib than men. As long as such guidance is reversible when the child becomes an adult and assumes independent decision making power, the family is king.</p> <p>However, some parental decisions are not reversible. These include physical dangers (child abuse, not wearing a motorcycle helmet, ..) and medical decisions (denying critical blood transfusions, avoiding inoculations, ...). In these cases, the government must intervene to avoid permanent damage to the child or to society.</p>
<b>Gun Control</b>	<p>There is no doubt the Constitution protects gun ownership. And, for many in society, gun collecting and hunting is a way of life for themselves and their community. So gun ownership should never be outlawed in the US. However, guns are dangerous weapons and are often misused with disastrous consequences. The need for accountability, and responsibility for others requires gun ownership to exist in balance with sensible regulation. This regulation (as in a "well regulated militia") should be consistent with the regulation of other balanced rights -such as the freedom to travel balanced by the licensing of drivers. So gun ownership should be permitted; all guns must be registered; all users must pass a licensing test, and mandatory insurance must be purchased to pay for those times when people use guns unwisely.</p> <p>Gun regulations are not a "conspiracy" to violate the Constitution- instead, they reinforce and strengthen this democratic right by assuring gun misuse will not someday result in their banning.</p>
<b>Future Discussions</b>	<p>Stem cell research, intervening in foreign lands, immigration, zoning laws..</p>

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## The Challenge of Abortion

There are few issues confronting our nation today more divisive than abortion. Core Democratic Values cannot "solve" the abortion issue, but they can help focus the debate on a civil solution -- a solution that turns out to raise even larger questions than our society is ready to face.



The abortion landscape is usually divided into two camps- ProLife and ProChoice. The ProLifers maintain all life is sacred and that human life begins at conception. Abortion, therefore, is the same as murder. The ProChoicers maintain that women have a right to privacy, a right to control their own bodies, and a right to choose the time and place to start a family- at least until the end of the first trimester, as codified by Roe v. Wade.

The **Freedom to Be** colliding with the **Responsibility for Others**.

Clearly, these two philosophically opposing viewpoints address each other from two completely unrelated premises. It is hard to even acknowledge both camps are debating the same subject- we hear two monologues instead of one dialogue.

Yet neither of these positions epitomize strong, consistent and defensible points of view.

For ProChoicers, using the word "choice" implies abortions are no more important than deciding between red or white wine for dinner. ProChoicers appear to demean life, and take "murder" as casually as a fashion statement. Often, they point out 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of all pregnancies are naturally aborted- so why not one more? Presumably, this implies we can kill a child if both of his parents have already starved to death... And, they seem to ignore the messy fact that perhaps two human lives are now intertwined, so privacy rights are less clear cut.

ProLifers, on the other hand, are often against effective birth control and seem to ignore the harsh reality faced by many mothers who will either raise children under dreadful conditions, or may seek out unsafe abortions no matter what the law mandates. The quality of life matters less than the quantity. ProLifers claim to support a "culture of life" from conception, but then neglect to effectively support that child with adequate social programs, respect for the parent(s), and an equal fervent concern for the quality of that life after birth.

In other words, the debate is larger than the initial act of abortion. It is about the relative value of human life, from conception to completion. Which is why determining the exact moment of human inception may be besides the point.

For many Buddhists, who do not condone the killing of a worm let alone a fetus, abortion is clearly murder. While the Old and New Testaments never directly mention abortion, most Judeo-Christian religious leaders believe the commandment against murder extends to the fetus at some early date- perhaps at conception, perhaps 40 days later, but certainly sooner than the first trimester- an arbitrary date set to roughly extend below any chance of fetal birth viability. Other people believe an embryo is not human until it develops from a mass of undifferentiated cells to a fetus, with well defined organs and nerves. [Other religions and groups](#) lay somewhere in between.

But the real question is not the point in time when an embryo "becomes" human (which is a philosophical, and not a scientific issue), but are all humans entitled to the same rights, at all stages in their life? In other words, is it acceptable to kill some humans and not others, simply because of their age or circumstances? Is ending a life, always murdering a life?

Our society chooses to ignore the unpleasant fact that we make this distinction every day, on adults who unambiguously qualify as human. The **Golden Rule** is broken when:

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*In war, we chose to bomb and kill tens of thousand of Iraqi civilians before launching a ground attack, in order to save a few American lives. Clearly, American lives are more valuable than Iraqi lives.*

*In charity, we deny effective birth control to Africans because of moral concerns over promiscuous sex and AIDs, though statistically it is absolutely clear 3/4<sup>th</sup>s of all those children conceived without birth control will die quite horrible deaths. Would we condemn American children to the same fate?*

*In pregnancy, we allow pollutants, cigarette smoke, poor nutrition and other environmental hazards to affect the health of a fetus. Tens of thousands are spontaneously aborted each year, and perhaps a million more go through life with reduced mental capacity, or physical infirmities. All without triggering a legal case, or a sermon from the pulpit.*

*We honor those people who bravely give their lives to save others (whether by choice or by circumstance), yet we undervalue the lives that might be saved by embryonic stem-cell research.*

In other words, why single out abortion as a unique case where human life is ended by choice or inaction- since every day both ProLifers and ProChoicers terminate lives with few consequences?

Each side understands abortion is part of a greater social agenda extending beyond the question of when human life begins. Both sides are wary of compromising on the issue of abortion, in fear that other related rights will be undermined, or undervalued.

In this context, abortion is just one more example where our **Responsibility for Others** is being applied in too narrow a regime to earn credibility. As a country, we will never come to a satisfactory solution to the abortion debate if we ignore the greater context over the relative value of human life. This context includes the death penalty, "just" wars, death by inaction, abortion, euthanasia, embryonic stem-cell research, and a host of related issues which must be understood as aspects of one single subject.

Today we are creating a patchwork of laws and regulations with no coherence. We need an open debate on the entire issue of life first, and then legislate second. These four core values are the first step to framing that debate.

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## How To Help



We welcome your comments and constructive ideas. If you want to help improve the quality of our shared democracy, here's how:

1. Change starts first within ourselves. Apply these four core values in your everyday conversations. Rely on them as you make decisions for yourself, with your family, and with your community.
2. Gently help others adopt these core values through your example and interactions.
3. Start a blog to encourage an open dialog. While this site will not offer a message board, please send us your ideas or links to other Core Value sites (a link page will be posted in a few weeks). We may also sponsor a few online debates.

As new ideas or better thinking emerges, we will update this site. Remember, as Thomas Jefferson remarked in his first inaugural address - *Error of opinion may be tolerated where reason is left free to combat it.* Help us do better.

4. Show your support. We hope to make available buttons, balls and bumper stickers with the Four Shared Core Values logo - until then, a pdf of the logo can be downloaded by [clicking here](#).

Send us your thoughts: "**corevalues**" at **sharingdemocracy.org**.

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## Political

[The Charters of Freedom](#)  
[The Republican National Committee](#)  
[The Democratic National Committee](#)  
[The White House](#)  
[Annenberg Political Fact Check](#)  
[The Heritage Foundation](#)  
[Common Cause](#)

## Religious

[The National Council of Churches](#)  
[Center for Inquiry- Secularism, Humanism and Skepticism in Action](#)  
[Evangelical Questions and Answers](#)  
[Fordham Center on Religion and Culture](#)  
[Catholic Questions and Answers](#)  
[Islam and the Koran and Quran Links](#)  
[The Sojourner's Value system](#)

## Other Core Values Sites

[Center for Civic Education and their Core Values](#)  
[The Institute for the Study of Civil Society](#)  
[The First Amendment Center](#)  
[The Dali Lama's Nobel Prize acceptance speech](#)

## Single Issues

[BBC on Religion and Ethics in abortion](#)  
[Creationism-Intelligent Design](#)  
[AAAS Resources on Evolution and the National Academy of Sciences](#)  
[Global Warming](#)  
[WNYC Brian Lehrer roundtable on the Establishment Clause and Religion](#)  
[Protecting the First Ammendment at the Freedom Forum](#)

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