

The United States of Europe

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Once upon a time, the United States was an insignificant speck on the political horizon. They were criminals, outcasts, pioneers. Dirty natives. *Uncivilized*. Well, we've come a long way since *that* fairytale. The United States of America is a high-and-mighty superpower of democratic power. It's a haven of freedom and justice, a sanctuary for refugees fleeing turmoil.

But where do the borders stop? Geographically, the United States is isolated from Europe, Africa, and Asia by the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. But metaphysically—disregarding physical barriers—the US of A has transcended these bodies of water to paint their international friends star-spangled red, white, and blue. It's a Western world we live in. The most well-known word globally is Coca-Cola. You've got a Starbucks on every street corner, McDonalds flashing at you with mouth-watering golden arches—three restaurants in a single drive!—skyscrapers raising their hackles and con-stant-*ADVERTISEMENTS*.

Sure, it's good for the economy. Make some money, raise your GDP, sink into modernism. Put on your blue jeans and drink your Pepsi and it'll all be alright. But there's a downside. Westernization is an all-consuming monster of capitalist greed, destroying every shred of cultural identity in its path. As globalization rises to unite countries world-wide, integrating and implementing institutions, individual culture's institutions are turned into marketable goods. The French baguette, Japanese sushi and feng shui, Greek architecture: all are set on a platter and served up hot to service economic growth. Why go to the country when you can experience their culture right at home? These are the connotations of globalization; these institutions shared amongst countries are not European, not Asian-African, but emulate that of the Ultimate Advanced Democracy: the USA.

This globalization process has a detrimental effect on the identities of everyone. People start to wonder, what *is* Ethiopian? What *is* Chinese? If my country is so similar to Canada, Australia, how can I create a cultural identity? The answer is, you roll with the punches. There's no stopping the Western movement now. You might lose your country as borders begin to blur, but you will never lose yourself. Establish your own institutions, your own identity, based on the enormous databases of information available. Find YOU in YouTube. Google your Identity. Become your own country in yourself! This is an opportunity to form opinions separate from that of your culture, unmarred by history and society. If everyone's the same, then everyone has an equal propensity to be *different*.

It's hard going to transfer into an information era, especially for those who grew up with industrialization and strong cultural identities. But we must adjust, evolve, and change as the global norms change. It's a small McWorld, after all.