



## AMERICAN ACTION—WHERE YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE

[www.AmericanAction.us](http://www.AmericanAction.us)

[info@americanaction.us](mailto:info@americanaction.us)

### What is an American?

J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, in his Letters from an American Farmer (1782) wrote these words in response to his own question, "What then is the American, this new man?" Crevecoeur writes that the American is one who "leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the government he obeys, and the new rank he holds. He becomes an American by being received in the broad lap of our great Alma Mater. Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labors and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world."<sup>(1)</sup>

The founders eloquently answered the question 'what is an American' when they adopted the motto "E Pluribus Unum" in 1782. This phrase describes an action: Many uniting into one, or "Out of many, one"

In President Calvin Coolidge State of the Union Address on Dec 6, 1923, he stated "America must be kept American." Some people have taken this to be a racist remark, but let's look at Coolidge's entire comment on the subject:

"American institutions rest solely on good citizenship. They were created by people who had a background of self-government. New arrivals should be limited to our capacity to absorb them into the ranks of good citizenship. America must be kept American. For this purpose, it is necessary to continue a policy of restricted immigration. It would be well to make such immigration of a selective nature with some inspection at the source, and based either on a prior census or upon the record of naturalization. Either method would insure the admission of those with the largest capacity and best intention of becoming citizens. I am convinced that our present economic and social conditions warrant a limitation of those to be admitted. We should find additional safety in a law requiring the immediate registration of all aliens. Those who do not want to be partakers of the American spirit ought not to settle in America."<sup>(2)</sup>

This is not racist at all. It is brilliant. And this policy produced a united and proud America. The government didn't cater to immigrants in their native language or lavish social welfare programs on them.

Throughout the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries, millions came from every corner of the earth. They left behind everything, forsaking the life they knew, for the hope and freedom that America offered. This, for a significant part of our history, was the real story of America, of how people from every nation and every tongue became one unified people. "Out of many, one." Being an American is not a matter of religion or ancestry, nor of legal documents, but of the spirit of America. This spirit unites with prior immigrants in protecting the principles of American self-government. That's what sets us apart.

Certainly people cherished many of their traditions, and passed them down to succeeding generations. Many of these customs have been blended into our American traditions. For many years, America has traditionally been referred to as a "melting pot," welcoming people from many different countries, races, and religions, all hoping to find freedom, new opportunities, and a better way of life.

With freedom, hard work, and sacrifice, America became the richest and most powerful nation on the face of the earth. Though not all immigration stories are a "fairytale come true," virtually all the descendants of these courageous individuals and families that came to this land, did indeed, find for them a better life.

#### Sources:

1. <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/CREV/letter03.html>
2. <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/5036/pg5036.html>



Coolidge became president on Aug 2, 1923 upon the death of Warren Harding. He restored public confidence in the White House after the scandals of the Harding Administration. He reduced taxes several times and by 1927, only the richest 2% of taxpayers paid any federal income tax. He supported civil rights for African Americans and left office in 1928 with considerable popularity, especially among the middle class.