



CONSTITUTION OF SELF

Advanced Intercultural Communication

What is your legal relationship with the world around you? How do you navigate these systems of law?

How do you wish to be governed? What rules, norms, or expectations will you accept or reject?

Who are you? Which of your identities require recognition to interact with you properly?

How would you describe your moral obligations to others? How can you communicate these obligations, and hold yourself accountable? How will you hold others accountable to their obligations to you?

What guidance have you taken from other constitutions, founding documents, scripture, or other media to create this document?

Me, as Me

This essay serves not only as a constitution of myself, for myself but as a guide for how I believe everyone ought to live their lives. Constituting by the principles of setting intentions and staying mindful while one navigates their identity and others, allows one to obtain a more connected way of being.

The seemingly unsolvable and uncomfortable questions of morality, identity, and beliefs are dwindling because of how we communicate and understand one another. And how the answers to these questions differ from and influence the other.

Our social identities (gender, race, sexuality...), the choices we make, and the systems of power in place, are working together and against each other when we communicate with out another.

Known as intersectionality, it would be wrong of me to say that this isn't being coined a term in our society because of how well it is benefiting the differing identities.

But rather because in the nation we live in, with the variety of ideologies and beings, there is clear oppression on not just beliefs but **lives** that are not that of those in power, resulting in this large population of the 'marginalized'.

Knowing that no matter how opposed I am to this unfortunate reality, I am benefiting from it. Due to the current systems in place and the laws once passed, I have been given more comfort than the ones cast marginalized in our country ever will.

It is because of this, not on its fairness but that it is already predetermined and backed by our founding documents, that I feel little connection to this identity to this country. With the goal of the U.S. Constitution to maintain the balance of individual liberty with civil order, it seems that that is no longer a reality today.

It matters less about the actions you take when trying to maintain an equal balance of individuality and the liberties of citizens, when there seems to be no mutual agreement on what that means today.

A constitution that is meant to hold up one of the most diverse, and inclusive countries in the world should be reaffirming that power of individuality and calling us to claim and utilize it instead of suppressing it.

This is my constitution, with an emphasis on the observance of the self, that of my own and others, and how we navigate through the world by communicating these observations with others.

I rarely am consciously aware of my legal relationship and how it is affecting me in the moment. Knowing that there are clear benefits from mine to others, I find it at times hard to hold on and utilize my own. I feel lost more than anything when I try to navigate and familiarize myself with it.

Being born in the United States, "...a nation bound not by race or religion, but by the shared values of freedom, liberty, and equality.", it seems there should be no reason for doubting this, right?

And written in our founding document under the Fifth Amendment, "No person shall... be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law...", makes it awfully certain that no discrimination would be acceptable, right?

It would be ignorant of me to not acknowledge that this isn't how our nation is running.

We have countless systems of oppression that are built on these false truths. It is a tragedy that even the most important institutions (government, education, law enforcement, and our culture) are the ones behind keeping the marginalized oppressed.

As cognizant as I may be on the clear power struggle plaguing our country, I rarely am utilizing my voice and exploring the ways it could help. Feeling too comfortable at times, and the world feeling a bit too small, my rights and freedoms could seem to come from that of ‘The Doctrine of Discovery’.

Our nations view on things from the outside is this promise of diversity and inclusion and the acceptance of that, but our actions and words are attempts to dwindle that viewpoint. Molding each of us into one law abiding citizen, the ideal **patriot**.

Which is easier said than done.

A patriot, whom according to Oxford Languages, is someone “...who vigorously supports their country and is prepared to defend it against enemies or detractors.”. And I cannot but have trouble feeling empowered by that and feel that a new definition is needed.

We have lost sight, from both the power that each voice holds and the evidence of when our voices come together.

QUESTIONS 3 & 4 “Have You Been Good to Yourself?” – Johnnie Frierson

As I was trying to answer the questions from the prompt, and while evaluating and challenging myself, the question of “who are you?” seemed unsolvable. I can’t share ‘the who’ that I think I am, without sharing ‘the who’ that I believe or try to believe I am to others.

Feeling more importance as the person I am to others than the person I am to myself, I am constantly finding myself more present for others.

I find that I am subconsciously and consciously making things easier in the benefit of others. Out of the genuine anxiety I have of being a burden and wanting to do good, it is something that is constantly being abused. Both by my doing and others, my problems rarely make it to the topic of discussion. Or if they do, they aren't taken nearly as seriously or checked in on.

I see this play out in the other obligation I have, keeping those around me in check with themselves and the world around them.

Probing further into this examination, I asked myself and others, and the internet, “who gets the benefit of the doubt?” and was surprised by the controversy. Merriam-Webster defines it as, “the state of accepting something/someone as honest or deserving of trust, **even though there are doubts**”. And the bolded being the deciding factor for a lot of people, and unfortunately and fortunately sometimes the only thing holding a court case together.

Most the time when there is doubt, it is already out of the accused's control and is decided by the one or the institution with the ‘better social perception’. How are we able to define and then compare perceptions and experiences to one another? Is it possible for one perception to be ‘better’ than another?

There is not one ‘perfect’ social perception.

But rather there are changes that can be made in creating a cultural, unified perception that is inclusive and not ridiculing of the choices in actions of others. Working at mine a little every day, I remind myself to keep in mind that the individual behind the action is too just figuring it all out and just exactly what their own perception is.

“People who view the behaviors of others in a positive light are happier.”

A 2020 study, *Happiness, and hostile attributions in a cross-cultural context: The importance of interdependence*, examined both positive and hostile social situations and how one's happiness is influenced and that it can be determined by their attributional style.

One's attributional style is the way they generate a variety of explanations, the choice between having a more reasonable approach to that of assigning blame or guilt on others, each of ours is different. Each being unique to the individual and the series of events and choices that has shaped them, it is the one thing we have in our total control.

And when it comes down to it, the only thing that grants us our individual freedom, "Everything can be taken from man but one thing. The last of human freedoms – to choose one's attitudes in any given set of circumstances."

Not one is better than the next but one's style can most certainly effect their ability to communicate and listen to others.

Mine being more of an ambiguous style, feeling at times not confident on my interpretation or lack thereof of the social world, I believe this explains who I am.

Trying to maintain an optimistic outlook on life and the everyday, I try and avoid controversy in situations when I know I should speak up. Feeling like a pushover or ignored at times, I remind myself that there are some people who just won't listen. And at times it feels like it's too much, that hope is lost if this one instance isn't resolved.

But I am aware that not everyone is going to agree with me or give me the time of day, I have been able to come to this point of familiarity and a sense of being with my actions. And as I interpret the world and it does the same to me, I remind myself to stay mindful of myself and those around me.

QUESTION 5

While I was researching and more so asking myself the deeper, uncomfortable, and looming questions of self-interpretation and the world's influence, I realized I am my biggest guidance in this process. Trying to be as aware as I can of who I am to my family, peers, and strangers, it is necessary to reexamine past situations that influence this awareness.

And especially in situations that were misinterpreted or had miscommunication, and had these problems arise because of the inability to slow down and analyze.

Looking back at occurrences that seemed out of my control or that didn't go the way planned, I found that most times I am mindlessly jumping to conclusions. Or not even giving myself the time to form one and let my mind get the best of itself.

One concept that has changed the way I better understand my actions and the influence of those actions that then go out into the world is "The 5 Chairs". Aimed at changing the way we determine and utilize our behaviors, and how mastering them leads to a more conscious and deeper communication.

The 5 Chairs, differing in color and animal association, it gives us a framework on how to be as aware of your thoughts and how you can consciously turn them into positive outcomes on yourself and the world.

The following are notes and indicators on how the chairs and the ways we can identify where along this scale you can fall:

Red (attack):

- Jackal – clever and opportunistic
- Misbehave most – they blame, complain, and punish
- To judge

Yellow (self-doubt):

- Hedgehog – vulnerable
- When we turn red chair on ourselves
- Fears of rejection, failing, etc.

Green (wait / rational):

- Meercat – vigilant, mindful, observant
- ‘We are conscious’
- “You have your way, I have my way... as for the right way and the only way, it does not exist”

Blue (detect):

- Dolphins - intelligent, communicate beautifully (humans at their very best)
- Self- aware – know what we want, not afraid to speak truth, or create boundaries
- We look after ourselves, we come into full power (assertive not aggressive)

Purple (connect):

- Giraffe- empathy, compassion
- Hold people in our presence
- “I don’t like that man. I must get to know him better.”
- Invitation to look at other perspectives, **embrace other realities.**

This way to examine and reflect on our actions and what they really are saying about us isn’t some break through finding. We are constantly jumping to conclusions and assuming the worst, forgetting that that is only happening because of our inability to be fully aware of ourselves in the moment.

By taking in each interaction, and really wanting to understand and properly communicate my behaviors and reactions, I have seen changes in myself. With the bit,

“...embracing other realities”, we cannot feel truly aware without the acknowledgment and appreciation of others. Similar realities or not, we must be able to leave our own perspective’s bias out and simply be present.

CONCLUSION

The way in which I interpret and maneuver through this world with only my own perspective will continue to be a learning experience. Always learning more and more about my actions and reactions, the way I communicate these findings with others will continue to deepen my connections and experience.

Not everyone holds themselves to the same moral obligations as me. Mine being with the intentions I set and how mindful I am in the moment; it is necessary for the acknowledgment of them all when communicating and processing the world.

CITATIONS

Harp, Randall. “Christine Korsgaard's Self Constitution.” *Academic Website of Randall Harp*, 11

Feb. 2014, <http://www.uvm.edu/~rharp/publication/korsgaards-self-constitution/>.

Hopper, Elizabeth. “What Happens When You Give People the Benefit of the Doubt.” *Greater*

Good, 28 Apr. 2020

,https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/what_happens_when_you_give_people_the_benefit_of_the_doubt.

“Interpretation in the 21st Century.” *National Parks Service*, U.S. Department of the Interior, <https://mylearning.nps.gov/library-resources/purpose-philosophy-interpretation/>.

Jasielska, D., Rogoza, R., Russa, M. B., Park, J., & Zajenkowska, A. (2020). Happiness and hostile attributions in a cross-cultural context: The importance of interdependence. *Journal of Happiness Studies: An Interdisciplinary Forum on Subjective Well-Being*. Advance online publication.

“Kant's Moral Theory.” *Kant's Moral Theory*, <https://www2.bellevuecollege.edu/artshum/materials/phil/Payne/winter2005/265/Kantmoraltheory.htm>.

Korsgaard, Christine M. *Self-Constitution Agency, Identity, and Integrity*. Oxford University Press, 2013.

Notes on Interpellation, <http://www.longwood.edu/staff/mcgeecw/notesoninterpellation.htm>.

5 Chairs, 5 Choices in 5 Days. https://www.the5chairs.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/001_5_chairs_5_days-def.pdf.

