

## America at 250: What This Milestone Teaches Us About Disagreement



**Zena Consulting**  
Founder / Owner

This month marks the USA's 250th birthday — a milestone that's prompted historians, writers, and citizens alike to take stock. *Politico* magazine recently asked 11 leading historians to reflect on what the country has learned and what it needs to last another 250 years. Read the full article [here](#).

While their answers ranged widely, one theme kept surfacing: how we handle disagreement determines whether a diverse democracy holds together or comes apart.

That's not just a civics lesson. It's the same dynamic I see inside organizations of all kinds, every day.

Institutions don't fracture because people disagree. Lasting damage occurs because they've lost the skill (or the will) to do so productively. Recent history makes clear that not every leader brings the same skill to navigating the conflict that's inevitable in large systems.



## Three Lessons From 250 Years of Practicing Democracy

- 1. Disagreement isn't the threat** — mismanaging it is. Historian Keisha Blain notes that healthy democracies don't require consensus; they require broad participation and a shared commitment to the process itself. Consensus isn't the goal, building systems that hold disagreement without breaking is.
- 2. Belonging is a live question, not a settled one.** Several historians point out that America was founded as a "creedal" nation — bound by shared principles rather than shared ancestry. That question of who truly belongs and gets heard remains unresolved, and every generation has to keep answering it.
- 3. Civic health is a daily practice, not an annual vote.** Historian Greg Jackson calls this "public virtue" — staying informed, engaging year-round, and holding the public good alongside personal interest. It's less about the ballot box and more about the thousand small choices in between.

## Learn from Past Mistakes

Whether you're a government agency, business, or nonprofit the same holds true: success comes from how a group handles friction, not from avoiding it. I help leaders do this work more effectively — by having hard but worthy conversations that help you reach goals. If your team or organization is struggling with unresolved conflict — clashing views, competing priorities, or low trust, schedule a free call with me today.

206.368.9608 | [LEE@ZENACONSULTING.COM](mailto:LEE@ZENACONSULTING.COM) | SEATTLE | BELLINGHAM | WASHINGTON | USA