

Kanchan Thomas

Period 7 Geography

Mrs. Brown's Class, Monte Cassino

Law Day Research Essay 2026

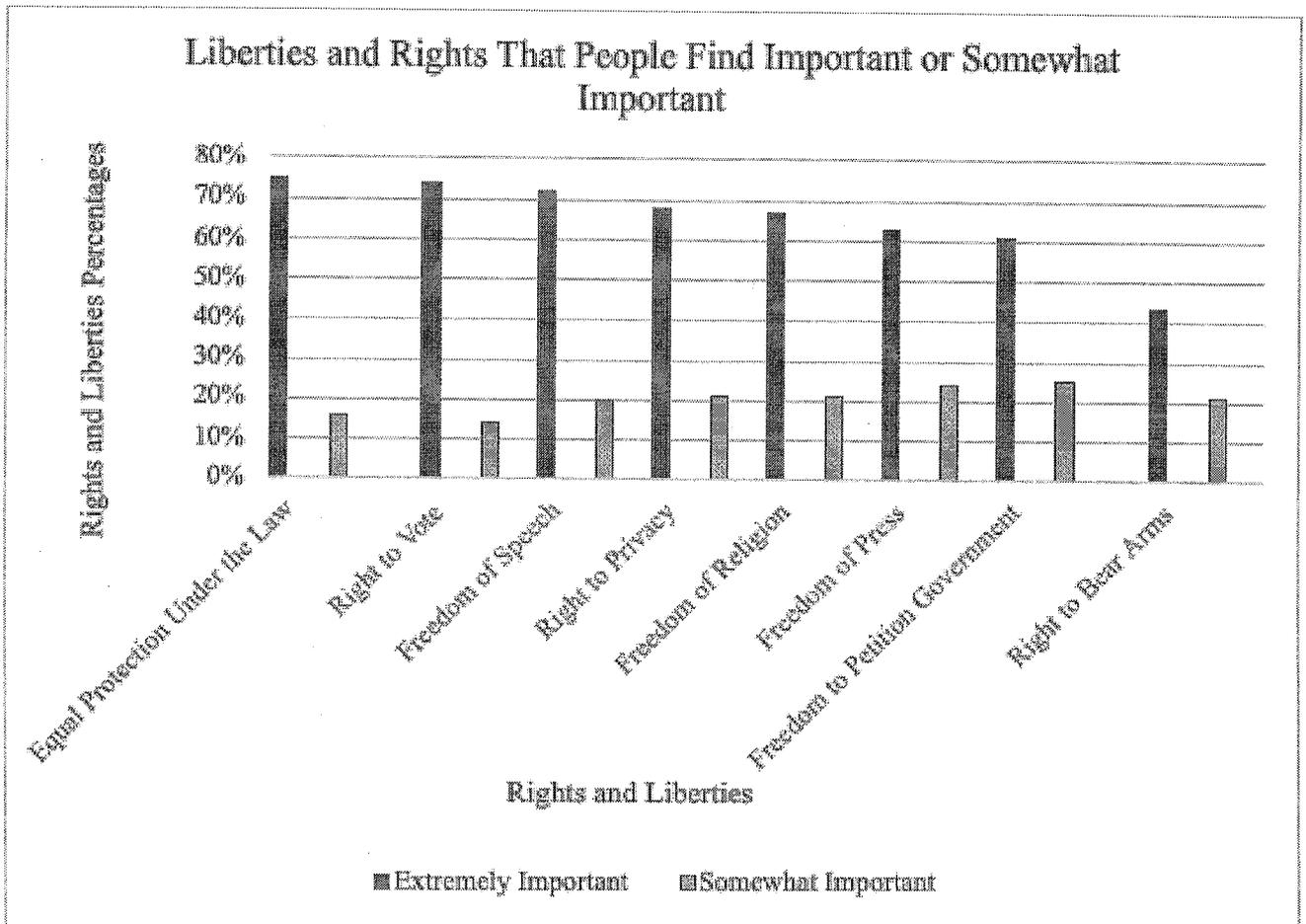
### A New View of the American Dream in Regimes

The Statue of Liberty has historically been a beacon of light for many people coming to America for a new life, dreams, hopes, and freedom. Inscribed on the pedestal of this monument are the famous words, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free" (National Park Service, 2016) [5]. This quote from Emma Lazarus implies that some countries, like Venezuela, live under an authoritarian government. The poor, the tired, the huddled masses yearning to breathe free are like citizens under the shackles of an autocracy. This quote also demonstrates how in the United States, the rule of law upholds essential freedoms like equality, justice, and security in the American Dream, but in autocracies like Venezuela, these rights are abandoned.

The rule of law is an important principle of America and one of the building blocks of democracy. This principle is important because it ensures that no one is above the law, even people that are high in the government, like the president of the United States. If a robber stole an expensive watch from someone, with the rule of law, they would be able to settle this dispute fairly in court with an impartial or independent judge. However, if this person were in a country like Venezuela, then trials would not be fair if they even had one. In addition, this fundamental system has an equally major impact on citizens' dreams and goals for the future. In America, people do not have to worry about their race or their family's background to get a job, but in other countries with an autocracy, citizens need to worry about their safety and how they are

going to provide for their family. This means that their leader is corrupt and will not hear the other side of the story. Even though it may seem fair in other countries, the truth is that this right protector is a privilege to have in America and in other countries that have it.

The rule of law is crucial in the process of making regulations because it ensures that all people have a say and that everybody is treated equally. This principle is why the democracy of America has a longer and more rigorous process for making laws than other countries [1]. First, an idea for a law is introduced; this is called a bill. After the bill is discussed among a committee, it is placed in Congress's hands to be voted on. If the bill is accepted in that body of Congress, then it goes on to an additional body and undergoes a similar process. When both bodies have concluded their voting, they need to work out any differences in both versions. The two chambers then vote on a final version of the bill. If it is accepted, Congress gives it to the president. The president can approve the bill and make it a law, or he can veto it. If the president vetoes the law, he does not approve it, and usually Congress can overrule the veto. However, if the president does not sign the bill while Congress is adjourned, the bill will become vetoed by default [11]. Even though America has a detailed process for making laws, this ensures that all people have a say in their country, and that participation is high.



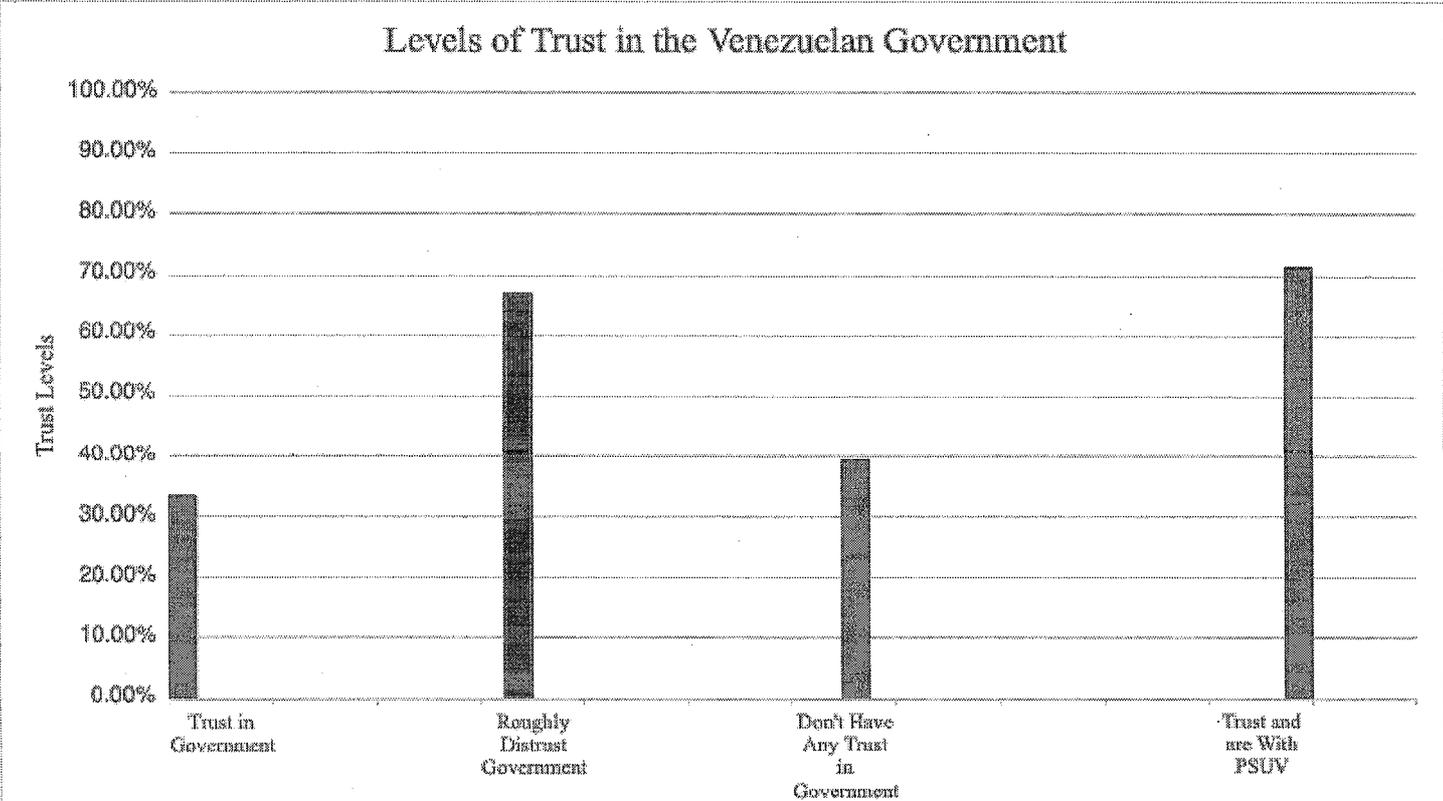
According to the data collected by the UT/Civitas Institute (2023), Americans believe that rights and liberties are vital in a healthy government. Each category had more than 50 percent of Americans say that the certain liberty was extremely or somewhat important [2]. This fact highlights that equality and freedom are necessary rights in the American Dream. The data also indicates that transparency and accountability are necessary for citizen participation in the government.

America operates its democracy with the rule of law, which makes sure that society can rely on a set of laws that will be enforced. The United States has police, sheriffs, and the FBI to

make sure this happens. Also, in America, equal enforcement of laws can help people achieve their dreams by creating an environment where everybody is equally nurtured and can thrive. In the United States, this system is key to having a balanced government where the community is a part of the government too. As both a presidential democracy and a federal republic, one of the ways the people of America participate is by voting for leaders like representatives, mayors, senators, and presidents. This voting process proves that America has multiple levels of government to get a different perspective from everyone. Even though this process has many pieces, it creates a unified community with people as its foundation. It is important that citizens are informed about these candidates for a fair and free election. However, in a democracy of misinformed people, citizens may vote without getting the facts. If this were to happen, the elected leader may not act upon what the citizens wanted.

The autocracy of Venezuela, however, is inconsiderate of its citizens' voices and it does not consider its citizens' needs. According to the website *World Report 2025*, over 20 million Venezuelans live in poverty with little to no access to rights like food and medicine [3]. This underlines that its autocracy hinders its citizens through its actions. Under president Maduro's dictatorship, Venezuela has an autocratic government, which means that the president plays a key role in making laws, and the tiny part that people have will barely influence the result. To make a law, the Assembly takes a vote and permits the law after a minimum of two debates. Next, the president has ten days to allow the bill and make it a law, send it back to be worked on, or ask to reconsider any of the law's provisions. The president could ask the National Assembly to replace any part of the bill, but the Assembly can simply override his objections. However, the only exception happens when the president's objection is based solely on unconstitutionality. If

this happens, the Supreme Court has fifteen days to make a choice. In the situation that it does not make a choice, or does not allow the president's charge, a new law will have been made [7]. Lately, most of these laws were not beneficial towards the people of Venezuela. For example, Venezuela's dictator, Maduro, recently issued a law against hate towards the government, which detains people for up to 20 years. "While the stated purpose of the law was to 'promote peace and tolerance,' NGOs (non-governmental organizations) observed the vaguely written law was used to silence activists and journalists and limit freedom of expression" (2024 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Venezuela). When it comes to enforcing laws like this and preventing crime, the government of Venezuela has the Bolivarian National Guard and multiple levels of police, but they do not perform the actions they need to for society [8]. There have been multiple reports of physical abuse and killings by the Venezuelan police, all to stay in power. This indicates that countries with dictators follow the rule of law and will do anything to remain in control.



In the graph, PSUV stands for the United Socialist Party of Venezuela, and it is the political party of Nicolas Maduro. Around 33.3% of Venezuelans say they trust in the government, but 66.6% of Venezuelans roughly distrust in the government. Next, 39% of citizens say they do not have any trust in the government and 71% of all the individuals who are with PSUV trust in the government [9]. Overall, the data collected from 2018 shows that more Venezuelans do not trust in government and in the future, with Maduro in power, it is likely to be higher.

As portrayed in the graph, most of the people in Venezuela do not trust in the government and faith in the rule of law is decreasing. This is leading to a more authoritarian government. Citizens are not involved much in the process of voting, and participation is low because, as a dictatorship, Venezuela's government does not allow protesting or revolting. For instance, in 2024 Maduro got re-elected as president of Venezuela. Even though he got elected as president, the election was rigged. Despite 70 percent of the citizens voting against Maduro, he still claimed victory [6]. Therefore, citizens have no voice or power in government, and elections are not fair. One of the reasons why this occurs is because the current leader of Venezuela censors the media, so citizens cannot know what is happening in their government. Another major problem in Venezuela is that judges in court can be biased [10]. As head of the executive branch, Maduro controls most of the judicial branch. This means that there will not be a varied perspective in any trials. This also does not obey the rule of law because the judicial system is corrupt and does not listen to the people. The rule of law does not do much for people's freedoms in Venezuela because U.S. citizens are detained in prisons unjustly. According to ABC News, the people who were thrown in this prison did not do anything wrong [4]. This underlines

that Maduro and his colleagues are treated better than the remaining citizens of Venezuela. In addition, the rule of law can hinder people's dreams in Venezuela because there have been reports of forced labor and human trafficking [12]. This could hinder people's dreams because they may be forced to do what the dictator wants for their entire lives, so there is no hope for the future.

In conclusion, most people think that the American Dream is just upward socioeconomic mobility and enough prosperity for a good life, but that is not all. As in the quote from Emma Lazarus, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free" (National Park Service, 2016), the oppressed and the poor all deserve collective well-being [5]. The rule of law plays a major part in this because all citizens need to be seen as equal, and no one should be above the law. In Venezuela, some citizens believe that a strong sovereign is needed to maintain control and peace, but in situations like this, lack of rule of law can lead to a shattered government with citizens blindly following a self-centered leader. This situation demonstrates that regimes with dictators focus on control, power, and finance. However, having the rule of law is important to ensure that leaders do not overlook the other equally important virtues of the American Dream, like being fair, working together, and allowing justice to create a community with the best interests of its people in mind.

Works Cited

1. "Britannica School." *Eb.com*, 2020, [school.eb.com/levels/middle/article/democracy/273962](https://school.eb.com/levels/middle/article/democracy/273962).
2. Burkhart, Ross. "UT/Civitas Institute Poll: Respondents Concerned about the State of U.S. Democracy." *UT Austin News - the University of Texas at Austin*, 13 June 2023, [news.utexas.edu/2023/06/13/ut-civitas-institute-poll-less-than-half-of-respondents-regard-u-s-democracy-positively/](https://news.utexas.edu/2023/06/13/ut-civitas-institute-poll-less-than-half-of-respondents-regard-u-s-democracy-positively/). Accessed 4 Jan. 2026.
3. Human Rights Watch. "World Report 2025: Rights Trends in Venezuela." *Human Rights Watch*, 20 Dec. 2024, [www.hrw.org/world-report/2025/country-chapters/venezuela](https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2025/country-chapters/venezuela).
4. Kingston, Shannon K. "Venezuela Unjustly Holds More US Citizens in Jail than Any Foreign Country: State Department." *ABC News*, 27 May 2025, [abcnews.go.com/Politics/venezuela-holds-us-citizens-jail-foreign-country-state/story?id=122244212](https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/venezuela-holds-us-citizens-jail-foreign-country-state/story?id=122244212).
5. National Park Service. "The New Colossus - Statue of Liberty National Monument (U.S. National Park Service)." *Nps.gov*, 2016, [www.nps.gov/stli/learn/historyculture/colossus.htm](https://www.nps.gov/stli/learn/historyculture/colossus.htm).
6. Otis, John. "Maduro and Opposition Both Claim Victory in Venezuela's Presidential Election." *NPR*, 29 July 2024, [www.npr.org/2024/07/29/nx-s1-5055582/maduro-declared-winner-venezuela-presidential-election](https://www.npr.org/2024/07/29/nx-s1-5055582/maduro-declared-winner-venezuela-presidential-election).
7. Ramirez, Antonio. "An Introduction to Venezuelan Governmental Institutions and Primary Legal Sources." *GlobaLex | Foreign and International Law Research*, 2025,

[www.nyulawglobal.org/globalex/venezuela.html#a.-legislative-process](http://www.nyulawglobal.org/globalex/venezuela.html#a.-legislative-process). Accessed 27 Dec. 2025.

8. Salas, Luis. "World Factbook of Criminal Justice Systems: Venezuela | Office of Justice Programs." *Www.ojp.gov*, [www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/world-factbook-criminal-justice-systems-venezuela](http://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/world-factbook-criminal-justice-systems-venezuela).
9. Silver, Laura, et al. "Venezuelans Have Little Trust in National Government, Say Economy Is in Poor Shape." *Pew Research Center*, 2019, [www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2019/01/25/venezuelans-have-little-trust-in-national-government-say-economy-is-in-poor-shape/](http://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2019/01/25/venezuelans-have-little-trust-in-national-government-say-economy-is-in-poor-shape/).
10. Tepper, Lauren. "The Legal System of Venezuela – the Justice Journal." *The Justice Journal*, 10 Aug. 2022, [gwjusticejournal.com/2022/08/10/the-legal-system-of-venezuela/](http://gwjusticejournal.com/2022/08/10/the-legal-system-of-venezuela/).
11. USA.gov. "How Laws Are Made." *USA.gov*, 14 Feb. 2024, [www.usa.gov/how-laws-are-made](http://www.usa.gov/how-laws-are-made).
12. "Venezuela - United States Department of State." *United States Department of State*, 12 Aug. 2025, [www.state.gov/reports/2024-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/venezuela](http://www.state.gov/reports/2024-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/venezuela).