

Making America's 250th Epic for Gen Z

Join the Freedom Challenge

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nitiatives like PragerU's educational videos, viewed over 1 billion times, can reframe America's history as a story of overcoming challenges (e.g., abolishing slavery, expanding civil rights) rather than a litany of grievances. By emphasizing America's role as a beacon of freedom—evidenced by its global influence in innovation and democracy—youth can rediscover pride in their nation.

This reframing is not just theoretical; it can be amplified through strategic, large-scale events that immerse young people in the nation's triumphs and resilience. A prime opportunity lies in President Trump's "Salute to America 250" initiative, a yearlong celebration of the United States' semiquincentennial—the 250th anniversary of American independence on July 4, 2026. Launched via executive order in early 2025, this nonpartisan effort (coordinated by the White House Task Force on Celebrating America's 250th Birthday and the U.S. Semiguincentennial Commission) transforms the milestone into a nationwide movement to foster civic pride, particularly among disillusioned Gen Z and millennials.

Trump's vision, first pitched during his 2024 campaign, envisions a "grand celebration worthy of the momentous occasion," evoking the grandeur of past world's fairs while honoring the Declaration of Independence's legacy. Kicked off with a patriotic event at the Iowa State Fair on July 3, 2025, the program runs from Memorial Day 2025 through July 4, 2026, engaging federal, state, local governments, nonprofits, businesses, and citizens. Key elements include:

The Great American State Fair: A traveling festival that integrates America 250 programming into state and county fairs nationwide, culminating in a massive National Mall event on July 4, 2026, featuring exhibits from all 50 states. States are encouraged to create "patriotic centers" at their fairs, showcasing agricultural heritage, historical reenactments, and tributes to the founding spirit—directly countering narratives of systemic failure by highlighting America's innovative bounty and community strength.

International Fleet Review and Nautical Parades: Hosted by the U.S. Navy in New York Harbor on July 4, 2026, with up to 60 ships from 30 countries participating in OpSail 2026. This spectacle underscores America's maritime legacy and global leadership in freedom, inspiring youth with visuals of democratic alliances and naval prowess—much like the tall ship parades of the 1976 bicentennial.



National Garden of American Heroes:

Expanding to include 250 figures (from founders to modern innovators), this sculpture garden serves as a tangible monument to heroism, emphasizing stories of perseverance (e.g., civil rights leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. alongside abolitionists). It directly addresses historical grievances by celebrating diverse contributors to liberty.

Time Capsule and Community Storytelling:

All 50 states are collecting artifacts for a time capsule to be buried in Philadelphia on July 4, 2026, alongside a "Freedom Train" exhibit touring the country. Local events, such as battle reenactments in Charleston, SC, and a \$25 million overhaul of Boston's Dorchester Heights Monument for Evacuation Day (March 17, 2026), invite youth participation in curating and sharing personal and collective narratives of American resilience.

Tech Expo and Innovation Showcases: A traveling exhibit highlighting U.S. advancements in technology, science, and culture—tied to anniversaries like the 250th of the U.S. Navy and Air Force—positions America as an enduring engine of progress, appealing to tech-savvy young voters frustrated by economic barriers.

These elements provide a platform to invoke civic pride by blending education, spectacle, and participation. For instance, integrating PragerU-style content into fair programming or app-based challenges could reach millions, reframing challenges like slavery's abolition (via the 13th Amendment) and civil rights expansions (e.g., the Voting Rights Act) as triumphs of American exceptionalism. Trump's emphasis on volunteer service—aiming for a "record-setting year" in 2026—further engages youth, fostering ownership in the nation's story. Early momentum, including state-level commissions in places like Colorado (tying into its 150th statehood anniversary) and Pittsburgh's "Freedom Train" parade, shows broad buy-in.

By leveraging the 250th as a "Salute to America," the initiative counters low patriotism (only 24% of Gen Z proud to be American) with immersive experiences that evoke unity and aspiration. Unlike the 1976 bicentennial's decentralized focus, Trump's coordinated approach ensures a unified message: America is not defined by flaws but by its capacity to overcome them,

inspiring the next generation to build on this legacy rather than reject it. If executed with youth input—through social media tie-ins and school partnerships—this could spark a surge in national pride, turning historical reflection into forward-looking optimism.

The Liberty Bell Challenge to Montana's **Patriotic Groups**: To make Montana's contribution to the 250th celebration truly exceptional, we propose the "Liberty Bell Challenge"—a statewide call to action for all patriotic groups, organizations, and communities in Montana to collaborate on creating a memorable, youth-focused commemoration that unites the Big Sky Country as a microcosm of the nation. Inspired by national Liberty Bell replica projects (e.g., Pennsylvania's fiberglass bells and Wyoming's restored Liberty Bell rung on Statehood Day), this challenge would rally groups like the Montana 250th Commission, Daughters of the American Revolution, Sons of the American Revolution, Turning Point USA chapters, local VFW posts, historical societies, and youth organizations (e.g., 4-H, Boy Scouts/ Girl Scouts) to co-design and fund a Montanaspecific Liberty Bell installation or tour. The centerpiece could be a custom fiberglass Liberty Bell, engraved with Montana motifs—such as the grizzly bear for resilience, the Copper King symbols for innovation, and Indigenous tribal patterns honoring the state's vibrant Native heritage—placed at a central site like the Montana Heritage Center in Helena or toured via the "Freedom Train" exhibit.

The challenge invites these groups to work together on youth-centric activities: hosting "Ring the Liberty Bell" events where young Montanans share stories of American resilience (e.g., Lewis and Clark's expedition or the state's role in WWII), organizing cross-community workshops on civics and history tied to Indian Education for All (IEFA), and launching a statewide contest for youth-designed artwork or videos submitted to the national time capsule. This collaborative effort would culminate in a grand unveiling at the 2026 Montana State Fair or a dedicated "Montana Freedom Fest," blending rodeo traditions with historical reenactments, veteran tributes, and tech demos of Montana-born innovations (e.g., in aerospace or renewable energy). By fostering partnerships—leveraging the Montana 250th Commission's mandate to build public awareness and highlight veterans' sacrifices—this initiative would bring Montana's diverse communities closer, instilling a sense of shared national identity among youth. It transforms the 250th from a distant federal event into a local legacy, ensuring Montana creates "a celebration to remember" that strengthens bonds as one nation, undivided by geography or grievance. Through heartfelt participation, young people can make an authentic and meaningful difference, connecting personally with America's story and forging genuine bonds that transcend generations.