

**Op-Ed Submission to the San Francisco Chronicle
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The language of “patriotism” has always been prominent in our national discourse, and never more so than in the past week. But what exactly is patriotism? The rhetoric suggests it is something more reverent, prideful, insular, and exclusive than simply having respect and affection for American institutions.

I care deeply about the health of American political traditions and the prosperity of American society. But only parochialism and self-interest propel these concerns above my compassion for those who live elsewhere. I find no moral basis for preferring that my countrymen be graced with fortune beyond the rest of the world’s people. And yet, patriotism is usually presented as a moral imperative.

When our natural chauvinisms rise to the surface – be they religious, sexist, racist, or “patriotic” – we should remember that many of our affiliations, and therefore many of our beliefs, are merely accidents of birth, geography, and history. There are no “chosen people.”

Mark B. Jacobs, San Francisco