The American experiment, presenting ideals abounding with potential, has never been fully realized. Great Society stands devout in its belief that the unfulfilled promise of America is possible through meaningful reform, reliant on founding principles of justice, liberty, and dissent. Crucial to Great Society’s philosophy is a reverence of the opportunities government provides coupled with unwavering surveillance of the rote power it wields. We understand that in a truly inclusive democracy, one cannot exist without the other. Maintaining this balance, we believe it possible to perpetually move closer to the values the United States has long professed to stand for.

The founding fathers inaugurated a framework of government which elucidated great, self-evident truths. Their sagacious grasp of humanity’s innate propensity for power incited the declaration of inalienable rights. Prosperity breeds tyranny, thus, the inalienable rights instituted in the Constitution of the United States inspire the construction of a society familiar to all. In Abraham Lincoln’s formidable words, the founding fathers constructed a temple of liberty, upon which the established inalienable rights of citizens may rest upon. The juxtaposition of the temple of liberty as it existed at the founding is stark; today, the temple of liberty reaches greater heights than ever before. But any structure may crumble under the stewardship of a generation that fails to maintain the pillars set atop the foundation.

We, the members of Great Society, believe in the opportunity to reify such expanding freedoms through thoughtful, institutional reform. Our namesake, President Lyndon B. Johnson’s 1964 social reform package, remains emblematic of such a mission. Improving access to healthcare, educational opportunities, and job prospects, structure of the Great Society refused to rely on traditions of zero-sum thinking— acknowledging that expansions of civil rights and economic opportunities can be implemented to the benefit of all and detriment to none. More broadly, we seek inspiration from Johnson’s utopic community because it acknowledges the inextricable link between social and economic policy. It’s no coincidence that supporting policies were implemented at the height of the civil rights movement. Combatting stark

inequalities observed in civil society today does not require need-blind equality, but intentional creation of opportunity coupled with eradication of institutional boundaries.

We commit ourselves in Johnson’s vision to eliminate unjust inequalities ingrained in our society, fighting tirelessly to provide each civil participant with the equal opportunity they were promised. Stated best by President Johnson, “the Great Society is not a safe harbor, a resting place, a final objective, a finished work. It is a challenge constantly renewed, beckoning us toward a destiny where the meaning of our lives matches the marvelous products of our labor.” A great society is within our grasp — one in which every individual is given a fair chance to flourish, regardless of social or legal standing.

Evolving interpretations of who the state permits to enjoy pursuits of life, liberty, and happiness are not an automatic. They are the result of activism. They are the result of dissent. They are the result of choruses of ordinary Americans committed to moving our nation closer to its sacred ideals extending justice for all. We remain resolute in our belief that Reverend Martin Luther King Jr’s envisioned arc of liberty does not wane alone. Crucial to this social progress is a reverence of dissent and support of constitutional protections enabling it. It is the people who serve as the best check against the government.

As such, Great Society understands First Amendment protections for what they are: a tool endowing even the most marginalized among us to share a voice. Freedom of speech allowed a small handful of undergraduates at the University of California to fundamentally alter directions of US foreign policy, Black Panthers to force the majority to see how powerful they were, queer Americans to unapologeticaly express their truest selves. It allows us to assemble and zealously fight for the America we one day hope to live in— changing the hearts and minds of our colleagues along the way.

Out of all these beliefs, the one that most tightly binds us together is the belief that such change is possible. We need not look back very far to find reason for this hope, as the same

events that allow American and world history to have a positive narrative do so because they speak to humanity’s ability to change for the better. And yet, crucially, we recognize that this is not a passive ability, guaranteed by the passage of time to occur. Instead, we see clearly that this ability is one which requires committed action to be realized. We look back and acknowledge the effort that took place to make this world better for the generations that followed it— whether undertaken on a battlefield in Gettysburg or on a ship in the South Pacific, at a lunch counter in the segregated south or a square in the center of Beijing, in a secret annex in Amsterdam or at a refugee shelter in modern-day Berlin, at a bar in Greenwich Village or a courtroom in India. We look back and say that in the same vein as those generations that have come before us, it is time for us to put our own hands on the arc of moral justice, and bend it with our own exertion, for ourselves and our posterity, to ordain and establish these self-evident truths as the inalienable rights that they should be, for the entirety of humanity.