FINDING OUR FOUNDING: WHAT AMERICA STANDS FOR

All Men Are Created Equal

This one proposition is the most remembered, and rightfully so, from America's Declaration of Independence, which was mainly written by Thomas Jefferson, but with various edits from the likes of Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Roger Sherman, and Robert R. Livingston. While this one phrase is a fact of life and has been America's guiding light ever since it was written, it has, also, been one of, if not, the most targeted phrases from America's founding documents.

When it was written, an overwhelming majority of Black Americans were slaves, and those that were free were not on equal standing as white people.

When it was written, women did not have the same rights (most notably being suffrage) nor opportunities as men.

To this day, groups of varying identities in the United States will proclaim they do not have the same rights as others, often formulating various other "rights" that are not exemplified in the Constitution, which serves as the framework for governing and highlights the rights that are protected under the law. While these various groups will identify the Ninth Amendment ("The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people") as part of their argument, large components of the interpretation and identification of other rights that are not explicit have resulted from the trials of cases brought to the Supreme Court and statesmen declaring outright the existence of a multitude of other rights. Arguably the most notable statesman being President Franklin Delano Roosevelt when he declared that "the task of statesmanship has always been the *redefinition* of these rights in terms of a growing and changing social order (emphasis added)." This culminated in FDR's "Second Bill of Rights," which included a right to a useful and remunerative job, the right to earn enough to pay for food, clothing, and recreation, the right to a good education, the right to a decent home, the right to adequate medical care, and more.

But what did the Founders mean, exactly? It is twofold: all men are equal under the law and under God. And it is rather explicitly mentioned. What is demonstrated in the declaration as a fact of life, even though many like to believe that rights are man-made (and should adjust over time as society becomes "more complicated") rather than of Providence, is the rights that are protected are "endowed" by our "Creator" – in other words, God, or in the Founder's words, "Nature's God," has given all of His children the same unalienable rights – and "among these

are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." As if this was not explicit enough, Thomas Jefferson had written that the rights of a "free people" are not "the gift of their chief magistrate."

Along with the "Laws of Nature," or our human capacity for moral reasoning and assessing right from wrong, the American government was founded to protect each individual's unalienable rights – our natural rights – equally rather than create new ones, with consent of the governed (i.e. public opinion or voting) being the moral compass.

The concepts of natural rights and the laws of nature deserve to be highlighted, as those concepts alone, and the rights involved, encompassed the rights that the Founders believed were equal amongst humanity. Between the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and individual constitutions of respective states during the 18th century, natural equality and equal natural rights went hand-in-hand. These various documents explained how "all men are by nature equally free and independent," with the word "nature" being interchanged with "born" and "created." With the words "equal" and "free" often accompanying one another, natural equality means human beings are naturally – as they are – sovereign over their own well-beings and are not subject to control or rule without consent.

As for specifically natural rights, with "natural" often having been interchanged with "inherent" or "inalienable," they were the facts of life that were "endowed" to mankind upon creation, and they took precedent over "human equality" as almost twice as many references to natural rights occurred in state constitutions or fundamental state documents as human equality (16 to 9, to be exact). What were these rights? Looking at the founding documents, state documents, as well as publications such as *The Federalist Papers*, the rights most often mentioned were life, liberty, property, religious liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, as well as safety. Others mentioned included reputation, keeping and bearing arms, and freedom of

speech, press, as well as assembly. All of which growing out of freedom and liberty, meaning people were free to think, free to pray, free to act, free to defend themselves, free to speak, free to assemble, free to acquire property, free to use their property, and free to pursue their own happiness so long as individuals were not injurious and did not impede on another's natural rights. In other words, as arguably the main influencer for many of the Founders' beliefs, John Locke, said in his *Two Treatises of Government*, the natural state that all of mankind is in is "a state of perfect freedom to order their actions, and dispose of their possessions and persons, as they think fit, within the bounds of the law of nature, without asking leave, or depending upon the will of any other man."

With the "design and end of government" being "freedom and security," and with natural rights deriving from freedom, security, as well as liberty, our natural rights are to be protected by a government that abides by the "principle in nature which no art can overturn," according to Thomas Paine's writings in *Common Sense*. This natural principle is "the more simple any thing is, the less liable it is to be disordered." In other words, a limited government that is strong enough to protect the lives of citizens and their natural rights is the natural way to govern, and said government would be less corruptible.

To add clarity as to specifically what rights were to be protected, the Founders made a distinction between all persons (i.e. all of humanity) and all citizens. For all persons, America was to provide the minimum legal protection for basic natural rights. Meanwhile, citizens had "privileges and immunities of citizenship" – which before some think this was cruel to noncitizens and immigrants, it was in actuality an influencer to the Founders for immigration; they wanted America's institutions to be the only inducement (with minimal exceptions) for drawing the industrious and moral immigrants to America's borders (to be expanded upon in

a later section). Amongst the civil rights of American citizens, which included natural rights, were the right of a citizen of one state to pass through, or to reside in any other state, for purposes of trade, agriculture, professional pursuits, or otherwise; to claim the benefit of the writ of habeas corpus; to institute and maintain actions of any kind in the courts of the state; to take, hold and dispose of property, either real or personal; the right to keep and bear arms; to freedom from unreasonable searches; and freedom of assembly for political purposes.

In terms of actuality protecting, or facilitating the protection of, these rights, according to author, historian, and professor, Thomas West, as well as Thomas Jefferson, the government's "principal purpose" was to "inflict due punishments" on violations and "criminal acts" against "life, liberty, and property." Furthermore, in cases where individuals were wronged, they could sue and be compensated for damages or property lost. On the matter of property, government was to establish the terms and contracts by which property could be acquired, exchanged, or used, as well as define the national currency by which property could be purchased. And, as to be discussed later, government was to provide a minimal "safety net" for the poor and destitute.

As the Founders prioritized and emphasized individual liberty to the utmost extent until it infringed upon another individual's liberty and rights, accompanying natural rights and natural law was a moral duty to human well-being. As our rights were endowed by our Creator and "engraved on our hearts," according to Thomas Jefferson, there is a "moral law to which man has been subjected by his Creator, and of which his feelings or conscience, as it is sometimes called, are the evidence with which his Creator has furnished him." To that extent, John Adams had written that mankind has "what Dr (Benjamin) Rush calls a *moral faculty*, Dr Hutchinson a *moral Sense*, and the Bible and the generality of the World, *a Conscience*. They

are all, therefore under moral Obligations, to do to others, as they would have others *Do to them*; to consider themselves, born authorised, empowered for the good of Society as well as their own good."

Beyond natural rights, were there any notions that individuals should be made equal in "all respects?" For starters, even though we are all equal under God, God did not make it so mankind would be equal in this manner. According to Jeremiah and Paul the Apostle, God knew us before we were in the womb and He set us apart to be the way we are; in doing so, He has a plan for all of us, a plan in which gives us hope and a future. Paul would go further to note in the Epistle to the Romans, "Do not think yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgement...Do not be conformed to this world...We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us," and each of us should use our respective gifts. If there are trials and tribulations, we should "glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope."

As for what John Adams thought regarding the aforementioned question, he did not think mankind should be equal in all respects, either. As he wrote in his *Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States*:

> Are the citizens to be all of the same age, sex, size, strength, stature, activity, courage, hardiness, industry, patience, ingenuity, wealth, knowledge, fame, wit, temperance, constancy, and wisdom? Was there, or will there ever be, a nation, whose individuals were all equal, in natural and acquired qualities, in virtues, talents, and riches? The answer of all mankind must be in the negative. It must then be acknowledged, that in

every state, in the Massachusetts, for example, there are inequalities which God and nature have planted there, and which no human legislator ever can eradicate.

... there is, it is true, a moral and political equality of rights and duties among all the individuals, and as yet no appearance of artificial inequalities of condition... There is an inequality of wealth; some individuals, whether by descent from their ancestors, or from greater skill, industry, and success in business, have estates both in lands and goods of great value; others have no property at all; and of all the rest of society, much the greater number are possessed of wealth, in all the variety of degrees between these extremes; it will easily be conceived that all the rich men will have many of the poor, in the various trades, manufactures, and other occupations in life, dependent upon them for their daily bread; many of smaller fortunes will be in their debt, and in many ways under obligations to them... The children of illustrious families have generally greater advantages of education, and earlier opportunities to be acquainted with public characters, and informed of public affairs, than those of meaner ones, or even than those in middle life; and what is more than all, an habitual national veneration for their names, and the characters of their ancestors described in history, or coming down by tradition, removes them farther from vulgar jealousy and popular envy, and secures them in some degree the favor, the affection, and respect of the public.

... While every office is equally open to every competitor, and the people must decide upon every pretension to a place in the legislature, that of governor and senator, as well as representative, no such airs will ever be endured. At the same time, it must be

acknowledged, that some men must take more pains to deserve and acquire an office than others, and must behave better in it, or they will not hold it.

We cannot presume that a man is good or bad, merely because his father was one or the other; and we should always inform ourselves first, whether the virtues and talents are inherited, before we yield our confidence. Wise men beget fools, and honest men knaves; but these instances, although they may be frequent, are not general. If there is often a likeness in feature and figure, there is generally more in mind and heart, because education contributes to the formation of these as well as nature. The influence of example is very great, and almost universal, especially that of parents over their children. In all countries it has been observed, that vices, as well as virtues, very often run down in families from age to age.

...These sources of inequality, which are common to every people, and can never be altered by any, because they are founded in the constitution of nature; this natural aristocracy among mankind, has been dilated on, because it is a fact essential to be considered in the institution of a government. It forms a body of men which contains the greatest collection of virtues and abilities in a free government, is the brightest ornament and glory of the nation, and may always be made the greatest blessing of society, if it be judiciously managed in the constitution. But if this be not done, it is always the most dangerous; nay, it may be added, it never fails to be the destruction of the commonwealth.

Several years later, in the midst of Washington's presidency – and Adams' vice presidency – Adams did not waver in these beliefs. As he wrote in a letter in 1794:

> The Equality of Nature is a moral Equality only: an Equality of Rights and Obligations; nothing more.
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> The Physical Inequalities among Men in a State of Nature are infinite.
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> ...The Physical Inequalities, in a State of Nature, are so obvious so determinate and so unalterable, that no Man is absurd enough to deny them. These Inequalities are rights. The healthy Infant has as clear a natural right to his healthy Constitution, as the Sickly one has to his infirm Constitution. The Strong Child has as Sound a natural Right to his Strength, as the Weak one to his frailty. The active Babe has the Same natural Right to his Activity, as the Sluggish one to his Sloth. The mental vigour of one is as undoubtedly his right as the imbeility of the other. The handsome Infant has the Same right to its beauty as the Ugly one to its deformity. A pleasant temper is as natural to one, as a sour disposition to the other.
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> These Physical Inequalities, lay the foundation for Inequalities of Wealth Power Influence and Importance, throughout human Life. Laws and Government have neither the Power nor the Right to change them.

> ...The natural Equality is moral only and not Physical: and in no Way affects the Question concerning forms of Government any farther than to determine that to be the best which but Secures the Equality of Rights, not that which attempts to destroy Physical Inequalities or any of their Consequences in society, upon Property Reputation or Power.

Though not a Founding Father, how might Abraham Lincoln, the man who helped America give more true and everlasting meaning to the phrase "all men are created equal," answer the previously proposed question? Well, he would agree with God and Adams. In the same light as Adams, Lincoln said, "I think the authors of that notable instrument [the Declaration of Independence] intended to include *all* men, but they did not intend to declare all men equal in all respects. They did not mean to say all were equal in color, size, intellect, moral developments, or social capacity." Even with these differences, each American citizen "may have through (our) free government...an open field and a fair chance for (our) industry, enterprise and intelligence" with "equal privileges in the race of life." Moreover, as Lincoln wrote, "*Government is not charged with the duty of redressing, or preventing, all the wrongs in the world* (emphasis added)." With the Declaration of Independence, followed by the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, and the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments in 1865, 1868, and 1870, respectively, our government was intended for individuals to all begin from the same starting line in the "race of life" with equal opportunities to flourish and better their own condition.

Many may believe that we do not all begin from the same starting line or on an equal playing field, though, whether that is having to do with inheritance, the environment we were

born into or are surrounded by, or a belief that institutionally some individuals already have a head start over others. If we were to say that this were indeed the case – as we should for the first two points, with an obvious caveat for the third point being familial relations and nepotism – we should still say, as Lincoln did, "the way (is) open to every(one), if honest, industrious, and persevering, to the attainment of a high and honorable position." Also, said Lincoln, "If God gave him but little, that little let him enjoy," and if "any continue through life in the condition of the hired laborer, it is not the fault of the system, but because of either a dependent nature which prefers it, or improvidence, folly, or singular misfortune." The way for an individual to better their condition, according to Lincoln, "is to improve (themselves) every way (they) can, *never suspecting that any body wishes to hinder (them)...suspicion and jealousy never did help any man in any situation.* There may *sometimes* be ungenerous attempts to keep a young man down; and *they will succeed* too, *if he allows his mind to be diverted from its true channel to brood over the attempted injury* (emphasis added)."

To this end, as economist Milton Friedman had noted, an equal playing field, or equal opportunity, should not be taken too literally and is "incapable of being fully realized." In part, this is ironically due to the prior points mentioned such as inheritance and environment, but these two factors are merely pieces of the whole, where better explanations pertain to individual characteristics such as genetics, intelligence, experience, culture, family upbringing, disabilities, and the like. No two people are exactly alike. Therefore, why should everyone have the same opportunities if one's capabilities and talents eclipse those of another? Sure, the opportunity should be presented to all of those who may be interested, but *only* those who qualify should truly be considered.

All of this is to say that we, indeed, were all created equal under God and the law with certain unalienable rights – not in talents, characteristics, appearances, capabilities, nor guaranteed outcomes.

But what about slavery? What about women? If the Founders believed that "all men were created equal," then why did slavery persist for almost a century in America? Why exclude women in the writing of the declaration? Why were women not allowed to vote until 1920?

First and foremost, America's history with these issues is not perfect and there will be no attempt to make it seem like she has always been perfect.

What will be attempted, though, is a demonstration for how America's history has strived to honor the phrase "all men are created equal," no matter how imperfect it was and has been, or how many setbacks there were.

As I had outlined in *Finding Reagan*:

> The Founding Fathers were against the institution of slavery despite being slaveowners themselves. The very man who wrote the previously mentioned noteworthy line, Thomas Jefferson, though a slave owner himself – and even had sexual relations and children with one of his slaves, Sally Hemings – had included in his first draft of the Declaration of Independence a denouncement of the slave trade and slavery in general as a "cruel war against human nature itself." Though this would be removed upon editing, Jefferson continued to call slavery a "hideous blot" in America and advocated for its abolition until he passed, including in Virginia law, in his "Notes on the State of Virginia" – calling the "commerce between master and slave" a "perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions," of "the most unremitting despotism," and "degrading

submission" – and in his autobiography where he stated, "Nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate than that these people (i.e. slaves) are to be free."

George Washington, who would later free all of his slaves upon his passing in 1799, had written in 1786, "I can only say that there is not a man living who wishes more sincerely than I do, to see a plan adopted for the abolition of it."

More to Washington's approach to slavery, his will – the very same will that provided for his slaves' freedom – provided for disabled slaves to be cared for by his estate. Washington, also, made it so the now-free children would be taught to read and write, as well as receive useful occupational training. Moreover, Washington would, as a biographer put it, "slyly" leave behind slaves in Northern regions to grant them their freedom rather than bring them back south. And lastly, Washington rarely bought a slave, and he never sold a single one to perpetuate their servitude – in Washington's mind, he was "principled against selling negroes as you would do cattle at a market."

As for John Adams, I unfortunately did not include anything about him on the matter in my book. And how unfortunate it was, because he, too, abhorred slavery. Calling it a "foul contagion in the human character," Adams had never owned a slave nor hired slaves to work on his farm. In Adams' words, "Negro slavery is an evil of colossal magnitude." He did not know, or in his words, he had "none of the genius of Franklin" to come up with a solution for the eradication of such a disgraceful system, "a rod to draw from the cloud its thunder and lightning." So, like his other contemporaries of the time, hope was bestowed on future generations to solve the hideous problem.

Continuing the aforementioned excerpt on the other Founders:

Benjamin Franklin in 1787 had become President of the Philadelphia Society for the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage, which was also often referred to as the Abolition Society. He would even sign public antislavery appeals and publish several essays and petitions for the abolition of slavery.

James Madison, the main contributing author of the Constitution and Bill of Rights, was outspokenly against slavery throughout his entire life, writing in the Federalist Papers that when the "barbarism of modern policy" in the form of slavery is "totally abolished" and "terminate(d) forever," it will be in "favor of humanity."

And one would be remised to not include the Founding Father whose popularity only increased thanks to an extremely popular 21st century play. Alexander Hamilton, while most known for his military experience alongside Washington in the Revolutionary War, as well as being Washington's Treasury Secretary and his successful efforts to begin a national bank, he was, also, involved with the Manumission Society to abolish slavery in New York.

Aside from the Founding Fathers and their views, legislation demonstrated much of the same sentiments. Though many have, rightfully so, abhorred the Three-Fifths Compromise on the surface for what it was – which stated, "Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this

Union, according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons" – many have, also, neglected to look deeper and realize that this compromise was to diminish the value of slavery, rather than the value of black people as human beings. Given the amount of representatives for a state in the House of Representatives is determined by state population, southern slave states wanted each and every slave to count toward the state's population, which would have given the states more representatives and power. Meanwhile, the Founding Fathers and northern states emphasized free persons – as written in the compromise. So, if slaves are both not free and do not count fully toward a state's population, would that not mean that slavery as an institution has even less value than it already did?

Moreover, the word slavery, any direct references to it (such as denoting "men to be property"), and any allusions to race were not included in the Constitution. In the midst of debates over the issue, James Madison had "thought it wrong to admit in the Constitution the idea that there could be property in men." In fact, excluding black people from equal natural rights is nowhere in the language of *any* of America's founding documents.

Why did the Founders not just abolish slavery from the outset? Because the nation was split between North and South on the matter, we had just fought a war against the strongest empire in the world, and our first form of government – the Articles of Confederation – had failed, meaning the future of America was already hanging in the

balance after just getting started. Compromises were made – some obviously more unfortunate than others – in order to come together and form a nation. Battles over some issues – and hope for said battles – were left to be fought another day. And that day came in 1861.

Until then, states had begun the process of abolition before the Constitution was even adopted – with Vermont abolishing slavery in 1777, Pennsylvania gradually abolishing slavery in 1780, and Massachusetts abolished slavery in 1783 – and the trend continued afterward. The Northwest Ordinance was adopted in 1787 (slightly before the Constitution was adopted) to prohibit slavery in new territories and states, and slave trade acts were adopted in 1800 and 1808 to make importing enslaved individuals illegal. By 1808 – 1804 to be more exact – every northern state had abolished slavery.

Though it took several more decades for slavery to be abolished in America entirely, the inroads had been established in hopes of every person being free, with the same inalienable rights, on equal ground. As espoused by Abraham Lincoln, "the adoption of the Constitution and its attendant history" was a "clear indication that the framers of the Constitution intended and expected the ultimate extinction" of slavery. Thus, the only thing "systemic" has been the desire to treat everyone equally.

To digress quickly on the institution of slavery, itself, too much onus has been placed on society to label slavery as purely about race or that it was purely an American institution. For starters, slavery has been around for thousands of years. The version of slavery most have come

to recognize largely began when Slavic people were enslaved in the Middle Ages in Europe and the Islamic world, to the point where the word "slave" is derived from Slav. Thus, before any black slaves were brought to the Western Hemisphere, Europeans were enslaving one another, Africans were enslaving one another, and Asians were enslaving one another.

In fact, throughout history and leading up to the African slave trade, as well as during and after, not only were Africans primarily responsible for enslaving, kidnapping, and selling individuals to the likes of the Europeans, the Americas, and the Arabs – from 1500 to 1800, at least a million Europeans were enslaved by North African pirates; within just ten years, between 1701 and 1710, more than 80,000 slaves were bought in the Gold Coast of Africa alone, which is an average of 8,000 per year, compared with annual departures of more than 13,000 per year from all of west-central Africa and almost 14,000 per year from neighboring ports on the Bight of Benin; slave trade from Africa to Islamic countries involved larger numbers of people over time compared to the Atlantic slave trade, and most of the slaves who traversed toward the Mediterranean died en route; and in the midst of the Atlantic slave trade, Africans retained and enslaved more slaves for themselves than they sent to the Western Hemisphere to maintain gold deposits, conduct agricultural work, and provide military protection for warlords and kings, amongst other duties – but the slave and the slaveholder were more likely than not of the same race. That was even the case in North America before the U.S. won independence, as white settlers were made indentured servants, and the indigenous peoples of the Western Hemisphere enslaved one another, as well.

What is unfortunate is how America would continue what Great Britain had normalized, which, not only was an already unfortunate institution that was utilized around the world to enslave perceived vulnerable people, but had become an issue of race – even

though many free blacks in America were slaveowners, themselves. That being said, what is fortunate is how quickly – compared to other countries – America got on the road to abolition. Whether it was the Ancient Greeks, Ancient Rome, Islamic states, Africa, medieval Russia, Great Britain, the Ottoman Empire, Spain, Portugal, or Korea, slavery in the U.S. lasted less than ninety years (with inroads against the institution immediately before and immediately after gaining independence) compared to the hundreds and thousands of years in the preceding nations and regions.

If one were to consider the context of the time, and how commonplace slavery was all around the world, then consider how the Founding Fathers deplored the institution and the very idea of it, demonstrating such with their words, some of their deeds – knowing they all did not practice what they preached, with the most notable being Thomas Jefferson – and their earliest legislation that was enacted, there is no reason to believe, let alone think, that the Founders and the United States of America were of systemically racist principles, nor content with the idea that one group of people should remain free and another should not.

This desire to treat everyone equally through American history can be attributed to women, as well. Just like how there were no references to race in the founding documents, there were no references to sex, either. Now, I am sure many just read that and immediately thought of how the phrase "all men are created equal" literally says "men." If that is the case, then consider the context of the time and other writings that were published. Regarding other writings, the word "men" was often interchanged with words like "mankind," "humanity," and "inhabitants" in other documents of the time. Regarding the context of the time, and expanding on the point just made, specifically pertaining to the phrase "all men are created equal," "men" should be interpreted as "persons" based on the way people spoke back in the 18th

century, as well as earlier. Deriving from Old English, the words "man(n)" and "men(n)" translated to "humankind." Thus, when John Adams' wife, Abigail, famously told him in 1776 as discussions were had around the Declaration to "remember the ladies" in the "new Code of Laws," the Founding Fathers did just that. To express pride in these equal natural rights for mankind, as well as what America was doing and representing, Thomas Jefferson wrote just months before his death, "All eyes are open, or opening, to the rights of *man* (emphasis added)," obviously referring to the natural rights of mankind as individual human beings – not based on sex, race, religion, or some other qualifier.

That is not to say, though, that women were on complete equal standing as men. The most notable difference, as mentioned, between the sexes was suffrage, which was governed at the state level rather than federal, where women did not gain the right to vote until 1920 in the form of the Nineteenth Amendment (even though women were voting in elections during the 1790s until 1807 in New Jersey, as well as in areas of Massachusetts and New York [albeit in smaller numbers compared to New Jersey], an often ignored fact when looking back at America's history). As many of America's laws were influenced by Great Britain, whether positively or negatively, it was a matter of coverture regarding women. Deriving from English common law, "coverture denied a married woman a separate legal status from her husband, thereby preventing her from voting." Women, also, endured the slow acquisition of property rights over time, including more agency, with states like New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Mississippi leading the way at the onset of America on through the 19th century. By the beginning of the 20th century, most women could legally own property. But, it was not until the 1970s when women could finance real estate purchases without a husband or male co-signer. Higher education, even, slowly admitted women over time – breakthroughs occurred between

1836 and 1875, but Ivy League schools would not permit women until the 1960s, and it was not until 1972 in the form of Title IX where "no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." The last major difference may be workforce barriers, where women, over time, have been able to partake in various other careers besides being servants (the predominant career for women until the 20th century), while simultaneously be paid more.

Worth noting, though, is how at the time of America's founding and long after, many women were indifferent, or outright against, voting rights. With family and marriage being critically important insitutions, and with males being deemed the heads of the household while females were taking care of the household, some of the Founders – as well as women – viewed the female vote as being in line with their male counterparts, thus their vote would resemble a double vote for that of their husband.

Worth considering, too, even though it is perhaps a stretch, perhaps I am reading too much into it, and it may ruffle a few feathers, is the Christianity behind these actions – and how the Word was perhaps taken too literally and out of context. How the Founders dealt with religion, and the Christian principles behind America's founding, will be explained more extensively later, but as noted in the Bible, a man and a woman "shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24) upon marriage, which may have been a contributor as to explain why, back in the day, households occupied by married couples had one voice in the public domain.

While we're on the topic of religion, even without marriage, "God created mankind in his own image" (Genesis 1:27), meaning "there is neither...male and female, for (we) are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28), and "we are (all) children of God" (1 John 3) where "God does not

show favoritism (Romans 2:11). With this, and with how we should "do to others as you would have them do to you" (Luke 6:31), this demonstrates equality under Him, and how each human life is valuable and deserving of respect.

Even so, the man and the woman have responsibilities *to each other* – most notably being that husband and wife must "submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." Women must "submit to their husbands in everything" like how "the church submits to Christ," "for the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church." One must not read "head" as some form of authority, nor read "submit" as women being men's slaves or inferior in any way. As a side note, nowhere in the Bible does God advocate or promote slavery (especially not in the context of how mankind views slavery in the 21st century). Wherever there are mentions of slavery (in the context of mankind as property) in the Bible that *seems* like He is in favor of it, due to the context of the times (i.e. a time period when slavery was legal and widely used), God was merely regulating it. As Christ would later say, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law" (Matthew 5:17), God was teaching about obedience and respect, even when you yourself are mistreated, both to the law and to God ("Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything...with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism" [Colossians 3: 22-25]; "Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ...serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free" [Ephesians 6: 5-8]).

Instead, God has always been on the side of freedom ("Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you – although if you can gain your freedom, do so" [1 Corinthians 7:21]; "If a slave has taken refuge with you, do not hand them over to their master. Let them live among you wherever they like and in whatever town they choose. Do not oppress them" [Deuteronomy 23: 15-16]; "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" [Galatians 3:28]; "Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts...So you are no longer a slave, but God's child" [Galatians 4: 6-7]; "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery" [Galatians 5:1]; "Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back forever – no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother" [Philemon 1: 15-16]; "If any of your fellow Israelites become poor and sell themselves to you, do not make them work as slaves...Because the Israelites are my servants, whom I brought out of Egypt, they must not be sold as slaves. Do not rule over them ruthlessly, but fear your God" [Leviicus 25: 39-43]; "The Spirit of the Lord is on me...to set the oppressed free" [Luke 4:18].

Knowing this, in the context of women must "submit to their husbands in everything," submission means putting your spouse before yourself. Much like how in Christianity it is God's will be done, meaning mankind should put Christ's desires, His plan, and His teachings before our own self-interest, in marriage it is the responsibility of the husband and wife to look out for each other's interests and what's best for them.

Returning to the dynamic of husband and wife, women were created from men to help rule over the Earth, as well as be *comporable* and suitable to men (Genesis 2:18). Thus, husband and wife are a team. Men are to "love their wives as their own bodies" (Ephesians 5: 21-33), praise

them (Proverbs 31: 28-31), as well as honor and "live with your wives in an understanding way" (1 Peter 3:7) without harshness (Colossians 3:19). When Paul writes that "the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church," with context, this is metaphorically referring to the husband loving his wife like how Christ loves the church. With the husband being the "head" and the wife being the "body," the husband must "feed and care for their body." In other words, provide, serve, and love in such a manner where the husband would give himself up for his wife (like Christ giving Himself up for the church and mankind).

To make a quick digression, one may read this and immediately assign permanent roles to sexes as if God did not create mankind with free will (i.e. liberty) – the Word of God says mankind was "called to be free" (Galatians 5:13) and it entails instructions for what one ought to do, knowing that what one ultimately does may not align (hence Christ dying, and forigiving mankind, for our sins so that we may have eternal life in heaven so long as we have genuine faith in Him) – or interpret the words of the Lord as degrading to one sex more than the other. If that were the case, the reader would have ignored "we are all one in Christ Jesus" and "God does not show favoritism." For starters, nowhere in the Ten Commandments, or the entirety of the Bible, does it say, "Women shall not have the same rights as men." Moreover, Jesus had included women amongst his disciples and showed equal care, or conern, for them, and other women, in His teachings and His miracles. Not only was He begotten from the Virgin Mother Mary, He had, also, revealed Himself upon his resurrection to women first (Mary Magdalene), so He entrusted women to tell of His return, which, along with the crucifixion, is the most important and foundational moment in Christianity.

Yet, one must, also, acknowledge the different biological capacities between the two sexes that innately make men more suitable for one thing and women for another. Aside from the

obvious differences such as different genitalia, different chromosomes (men have XY chromosomes, women have XX chromosomes), and different muscle mass or body size and composition – as well as the God given ability for women to give birth – studies have shown that the brains of men and women are more voluminous or dense in some areas compared to others of the opposite sex, and consequently we have different processing patterns. Moreover, the hormones testosterone and androgen, which are predominantly in men, and estrogen and progesterone, which are predominantly in women, and the exposure to such, as well as the presence of the SRY gene (which is only biologically present when attached to Y chromosomes), influence the development of biological and behavioral traits. And these differences are evident at birth or infancy, before culture or society plays much of a role. Though not exhaustive nor absolute – meaning not *all* men and women relate to their corresponding traits – the following are common, natural differences between sexes many studies have come to find: infant and young girls will draw flowers and butterflies, while utilizing various colors, and boys will draw cars and trains with minimal color, while emphasizing more of a central theme more often than girls; boys are more concentrated on surroundings and objects, while girls are more oriented toward faces and what is close; boys are more spatially aware, prefer specific calculations, as well as systems (which includes seeing groups of people as a system and interpreting the respective function each person provides), while girls prefer general categorical judgements; girls have more neurons in their language and hearing centers, so they are more adept at language comprehension and verbal expression; girls are more empathetic, socially competent, caring, and sensitive to the needs of others (which is evident with the way boys and girls play with toys and dolls), as well as more capable of recalling emotional memories quickly and ones that were vivid, rich or intense, while boys are more competitive and interested in fighting, especially with

or against groups (studies even show how boys no older than 20 months would choose a toy gun when given the choice between that, a doll, a bracelet or a hammer; other studies show boys' affinity for tanks, planes, and military figures such as Transformers, G.I. Joes, Power Rangers, and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, as well as how predominantly male leaning violent video games are); males are more dominant with an intent toward achieving power, status, and resources (studies show how boys as children will compete with each other to form a dominance hierarchy, often utilizing play fighting, games, and sports, or commands, directives, and insults; other studies have shown how this behavior is heightened when surrounded by other males, thus there being a preference amongst boys, as studies have shown, to spend more time and associate with other boys who help them either defeat a common enemy or reach a higher status, and this includes boys being more willing to leave home or going far away in order to make these achievements, while girls have shown an overwhelming preference to stay close to home); women will, also, compete, and against fellow women, especially while they are still able to reproduce, so that they can *gather* resources and appeal to men *with* resources, which often entails putting other women down in order to lift themselves up; males have more voluminous and more dense amygdalas, particularly left amygdalas, influencing men to have reduced perceived stress and to take action when facing threatening situations, as well as more capable of affective inferences, which gives humans the ability to assess situations based on friendliness or danger (studies have shown how preschool level boys, when faced with fear, will draw their attention to who the enemy is and how to combat it), whereas females have more voluminous pre-frontal cortexes, leading to more control over anger and a preference for resolving conflict verbally in order to maintain relationships; girls have shown at infancy and throughout childhood to be more shy, anxious, and wary of others, as well as show more fear, as defense

mechanisms to stay safe; and males are more rational and utilitarian with an aim toward overall welfare and a focus on the "ends" or consequences that can vary based on social context, while females are more deontological with a focus on the "means" or norm consistency.

God knows all of this, as well, given He is the Creator and has given everyone a purpose. As such, this is something we should embrace rather than admonish, for the differences between men and women are why we compliment each other so well, and why men and women are both so important.

Notice how none of the traits listed, nor anything within natural law, insinuate one sex as being superior to another. Importantly, and returning to the matter at hand, just like how it is not mentioned in the gospel, nowhere in the Founders' attitudes toward women was the perception of the sexes being unequal or men being superior to women, neither. While John Adams interpreted "that nature has made (women) fittest for domestic cares," which is not a demeaning point of view (Adams merely observed how women are innately better than men at being nurturing and caring – as shown by scientific studies – and they are better equipped to take care of children, as well as keep a house in order), an official statement from the state Adams was from (Massachusetts) clarified that despite women being "considered as not having a sufficient acquired discretion (to vote)," this is due to women's "natural tenderness and delicacy of their minds, their retired mode of life, and various domestic duties," and "not from a deficiency in their mental powers." Moreover, one often overlooked Founding Father, James Wilson, who was an associate justice of the Supreme Court and signatory of both the Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution, had said women are "neither less honest, nor less virtuous, nor less wise" than men.

Did the Founders, or America for that matter, always practice what they preached? As evidence would show, the answer is no. Yet, as the Constitution lays out, America has consistently tried to "form a more perfect Union" over time by stressing equal rights and putting all of mankind on equal ground – equal under the law and equal under God. Thus, America's morals have not changed, but rather the propriety has.

Attempting to Make Everyone Equal Would Destroy Liberty

This brings us to what another Founding Father said that may seem like a contradiction to Thomas Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence, but is in fact an extension, clarification, and supplementation. And it came from arguably Jefferson's closest acquaintance in politics – James Madison.

While Jefferson with "all men are created equal" was talking about unalienable human rights, or equality under God and the law, Madison referred to outcomes and results, or "equity" to use a term that has become both commonplace and a goal, to some, in 21st century America.

The precise phrasing that was attributed to him, which I had included in my publication, is "the attempt to make everyone equal would not only destroy liberty, it would also deprive people the possibility of failure, the best incentive to master their self-destructive impulses and cultivate their talents." Candidly, while there are no precise traceable sources that equate this phrase to Madison verbatim – other than what Dr. David Glesne says in a Virtues Campus article – *Federalist No. 10*, as written by Madison, does state that "theoretic

politicians...have erroneously supposed, that, by reducing mankind to a perfect equality in their political rights, they would, at the same time, be perfectly equalized and assimilated in their possessions, their opinions, and their passions." Moreover, "the first object of government" is to protect "the diversity in the faculties of men, from which the rights of property originate," which in-turn provides for the "possession of different degrees and kinds of property" and "ensues a division of the society into different interests and parties." The "principal task of modern legislation," therefore, "involves the spirit of party and faction," and statesmen are to regulate the "various and interfering interests," but "the most numerous party, or, in other words, the most powerful faction, must be expected to prevail." "Destroying the liberty which is essential" to the existence of faction would be "worse than the disease." Therefore, "reducing mankind to a perfect equality" is "worse than" protecting "the diversity in the faculties of men" and the "different degrees and kinds of property." Doing so would "destroy the liberty which is essential" to proper representation, legislation, as well as mankind.

So, what is faction? How should we define liberty?

As defined by Madison in *Federalist No. 10*, a faction is "a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or a minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adversed to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community." As Madison would write in *Federalist No. 51*, the "separate and distinct exercise of the different powers of government," or in other words "checks and balances," "is admitted on all hands to be essential to the preservation of liberty," as well as "oblige" and "control" government so as to prevent a "stronger faction" from "readily unit(ing) and oppress(ing) the weaker."

With this, the American government is split up into three branches: legislative, executive, and judiciary. The legislative branch, which is comprised of the House of Representatives (where a given state's quantity of representatives is determined by population) and the Senate (where each state has two senators), also known as Congress, is responsible for generating bills for raising revenue – which can come in the form of taxes, duties, imposts, and excises – to pay off debts, and provide for the common defense and general welfare of the country. Congress, also, has the power to borrow money, regulate commerce, establish a national currency, protect intellectual property, declare war, provide and maintain a Navy (as well as armies), calling forth militias to execute federal laws, suppress insurrections, and repel invasions, and establish any laws that may facilitate the execution of the foregoing powers. Note how the foregoing powers largely revolve around commerce and security.

The executive branch, home to the president, is where the "executive power" lies. Though the executive power is vague (which Alexander Hamilton had admitted was a "general proposition"), the explicit duties of the president are to be Commander in Chief of the military – and militias – make treaties with foreign nations (provided two thirds of Senators present concur), make appointments for positions (ambassadors, ministers, judges, and other officers of the U.S.), and recommend measures that are deemed necessary and expedient in states of the union.

The judiciary branch is home to the Supreme Court, as well as other inferior courts. Their authority extends to cases pertaining to ambassadors, public ministers and consuls; cases of admiralty and maritime jurisdiction; cases where the United States is a party; cases between two or more states; cases between a state and citizens of another state; cases between citizens of different states; and cases between a state, or the citizens thereof, and foreign states, citizens or

subjects. The Supreme Court has original jurisdiction over cases affecting ambassadors, public ministers and consuls, and those in which a state is a party, but for all of the other aforementioned cases, the Court has jurisdiction over appeals.

As for liberty, Thomas Paine, an English-born Founding Father whom wrote the famous pamphlet *Common Sense*, wrote that "liberty consists in the power of doing whatever does not injure another" and "the exercise of the natural rights of every man, has no other limits than those which are necessary to secure to every other man the free exercise of the same rights." Thomas Jefferson corroborated this definition when he wrote in a letter that liberty is "unobstructed action according to our will, within the limits drawn around us by the equal rights of others." Lincoln intimated the same sentiments when he demonstrated how different people have different definitions of liberty, when the true meaning is "for each man to do as he pleases with himself, and the product of his labor."

The universal understanding of liberty culminated in Noah Webster's "true principle" definition in his 1828 dictionary – where he prefaced the entire book by aggrandizing the likes of Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, John Adams, John Jay, James Madison, John Marshall, and Alexander Hamilton in that order – which stated that "natural liberty consists in the power of acting as one thinks fit, without any restraint or control, except from the laws of nature," and it can only be "abridged and restrained as is necessary and expedient for the safety and interest of the society, state or nation."

Before going further, it would be important to define equality, as well. Again, using Webster's dictionary, when equality regards the "equality of rights," it refers to "the same degree or *dignity* of claims; as the equality of men in the scale of *being* (emphasis added)." With "dignity" and "the scale of being" being included in the definition, that emphasizes the notion

that, as Jefferson and the Founders demonstrated, "equality" comes down to the laws of nature – or *moral* reasoning – and being equal under God. Mankind is equal in the sense that we are all God's children and we all have the same unalienable rights.

Not amongst these unalienable rights is a right to a guaranteed outcome. Life, itself, is not guaranteed as the chances for each individual human life existing and being the way they are is practically zero.

Yet, if one were to look at the political landscapes of 20th and 21st century America, particularly if one were to look on the left side of the political spectrum, thanks to America's 32nd and 36th presidents, Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Lyndon B. Johnson, equality is no longer looked at as merely equal rights, but rather as equal results. In other words, a prioritization on equal natural rights has been exchanged for a prioritization of equal unnatural outcomes.

Moreover, as acclaimed writer and scholar, C.S. Lewis, wrote in 1943 in his book *The Abolition of Man* – which to clarify, much like the Founding Fathers, by "man" Lewis was referring to all of mankind rather than just one sex – prevalent sentiments of present-day culture pertain to scoffing at and debunking traditional values. Where Lewis advocated for "a dogmatic belief in objective value," which is derived from being "rationally" and "spiritually obliged to forever obey the absolute values" of "Natural Law or Traditional Morality or the First Principles of Practical Reason or the First Platitudes," instead, there are desires to "cut out" humanity "into some fresh shape" through "benevolent impulses," and "minds emptied of all 'rational' or 'spiritual' motives," to form, as deemed by "some few lucky people" and "their own 'natural' impulses," new "ideologies at pleasure" that have a goal to "make other men what they please" and to "cut away the parasitic growth of emotion, religious sanction, and inherited

taboos." Since "it is false that we," the "we" being mankind, "all really like the same things," any humanity "conditioners" that "live laborious days in order that we, and posterity, may have what we like" – so that "Man's conquest of Nature" is complete and mankind can be molded "to some pattern they had chosen" where "human action" is controlled, human conscience is influenced, and artificial values and motives are created – are in a "void" that has led to the deterioration of morality and values, and would lead to the abolition of man.

Though Lewis wrote the aforementioned in England, and had even given lectures in England pertaining to what was written, what had occurred in America leading up to Lewis' publication? Programs and efforts to control human action in order to distribute to American citizens "the same things" and "what we like."

FDR implemented the "New Deal" in the 1930s to provide for a "more equitable distribution of income and earnings among the people." In doing so, marginal income tax rates on the highest income earners reached above 90%. Citizens that had gold had to surrender it and be compensated for it at face value (known as Executive Order 6102 in 1933), only for the government to subsequently raise the price and value of said gold by 69% within one year via the Gold Reserve Act of 1934. Other measures included price controls, controls over supply (such as with crops, food, and commodities) and distribution, regulated stock trading, and, arguably most notably, the social security programs that supplied income or insurance for those who were unemployed, had disabilities, or defied the odds and lived beyond the life expectancy of the time.

Fast forward a few more decades and we arrive at Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" and "War on Poverty." LBJ had desired "not just equality as a right and a theory but equality as a fact and *equality as a result* (emphasis added)," which culminated into the implementation of

Medicare (healthcare for the elderly, or for those with certain disabilities or conditions) and Medicaid (healthcare for those with limited income or resources), increased income taxes, and the beginning of affirmative action where employment and education became influenced by the color of someone's skin instead of their merit and character.

Fast forward several more decades and America had seen not only an increased prevalence of affirmative action – and a disguised version of such in the form of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (D.E.I.) – and increased spending for Social Security, Medicaid, Medicare, and other welfare, or entitlement, programs, but the rise of, or desire for, universal healthcare (in the form of the compulsory ObamaCare, which fined those who did *not* sign up), minimum wage laws, and "free" education (in the form of President Joe Biden seeking to pay off hundreds of millions of dollars in student loans despite the majority of Americans over 25 years old – i.e. the taxpayers that would have funded the loan forgiveness – not having a college degree themselves).

Aside from economics and welfare, the American value of the nuclear family has greatly deteriorated during the same time span. 78.8% of households in 1949 were comprised of married couples where the age of a given individual's first marriage was either 23 for men or 20 for women, roughly 9 in every 1,000 women experienced a divorce (which was more than twice the rate in 1900), and there were roughly 24 newborns for every 1,000 people. In 2024, only 47.1% of households were comprised of married couples (a 40% decrease), the age for an individual's first marriage was 30 for men (a 30% increase) and 29 for women (a 45% increase), roughly 15 in every 1,000 women experienced a divorce (a 67% increase), and there were roughly 12 newborns for every 1,000 people (a 50% decrease). Not to mention, the newborns are increasingly being born to unwed, single mothers as the share of births to unwed

mothers has increased from less than 10% in the 1960s to roughly 40-to-45% in the 2000s (and the percentage is even greater in the black community). Moreover, in the midst of this deterioration of the nuclear family, happiness amongst women has dropped since the 1970s, and it has been lower than that of men since 1990, despite the pay improving for women, the share of employed women between the ages of 25 and 54 doubling from what it was in 1955, and women outpacing men with bachelor's degrees from universities since 1960.

The reason for the trends pertaining to less people getting married, people waiting to get married until they are older, and less babies being born *cannot* be economical, even though many will say they prefer to wait to have children or get married until they advanced in their career and have obtained a more stable income. This is because, according to Federal Reserve and Pew Research data, those whom are married have a 20% *better* chance at feeling, at the very least, okay financially, given men, in particular, are more productive when married.

The trend of more babies being born to unwed women, however, *can* be seen as economical and policy driven. Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), which, since 1996, has been replaced by Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), was established by the Social Security Act of 1935, which was a federally funded grant program that permitted states to provide welfare payments to families that had a father or mother absent from the home. Moreover, "the purpose of legislation for aid to dependent children has been to prevent the disruption of families on the ground of poverty alone and to enable the mother to stay at home and devote herself to housekeeping and the care of her children," meaning families were compensated for being broken, and compensated in a manner so that the lone parent did not have to work. Later came the Child Tax Credit in 1997, which provides increased support the more kids you have and provides the same amount of support for qualifying unwed parents

making less than $75,000 annually as married couples making less than $150,000 (in other words, there is an incentive to have more children while not having – in most cases – a father present, as that scenario breeds the same, if not more, welfare benefits as having a stable household headed by a married couple). Often accompanying these welfare and tax credit policies have been more programs devoted to children in broken households, such as housing assistance, food stamps, and education.

Going hand-in-hand with the priority of the family deteriorating has been an increase in a lack of faith. According to polls and surveys done by Gallup, Pew, and NORC at the University of Chicago, roughly 81-to-83% of Americans believe in an Almighty Being, which, while still encompassing an overwhelming majority of the nation, has decreased more-or-less steadily since 1960, a period when 98% of citizens polled said they believed in God. Furthermore, close to 30% of those polled would classify themselves as "religiously unaffiliated" (a 480% increase since 1972), and only 42-to-45% would say religion is important (down from 58% in 1992). The starkest differences, and decreases, appear amongst age groups and political ideologies. Individuals between the ages of 18-and-29 years old have decreased their belief in God by roughly 10% between 2017 and 2022, leaving a total of 68% of those polled believing in a Creator. 94% of those polled with Conservative political views believed in God, but 62% of Liberals polled believed the same, which was an 11% drop between 2017 and 2022.

When all is said and done, the annual average for United States federal spending as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) jumped from two-to-three percent per year between 1791 and 1920, to 14.65% between 1921 and 1974, to more than 20% by 1975-2000. The increase in population was far greater prior to 1920, as well, as the U.S. population would experience time periods (such as from 1817 to 1865) where the population grew by more than

300%. Thus, the American population has increasingly looked to government for answers, rather than themselves, their spouses, and God.

All of this increased spending has led to the U.S. government having $37 trillion in federal debt, welfare program reserves are estimated to be depleted and unable to fund full benefits by 2034, and the unemployment rate is roughly no different than it was in the first roughly 143 years of America's history (this is in reference to the general unemployment rate, knowing that the employment of black people and women have increased over time), though there have been periods of peaks and dips.

With Thomas Jefferson believing "there does not exist an engine so corruptive of the government and so demoralizing of the nation as a public debt" and the "accumulation of debt" is a "most fearful evil" that is a "canker inevitably fatal," James Madison declaring "that a public debt is a public curse," and George Washington advising that there is "no pecuniary consideration" that "is more urgent than the regular redemption and discharge of the public debt" where the government should "avoid occasions of expense" and use credit "as sparingly as possible," it makes one wonder what they would say about America's debt, as well as the initiatives, programs, and mandates that "erroneously reduce mankind" to a perceived "perfect equality" where citizens are perceived to be "perfectly equalized and assimilated in their possessions" rather than every citizen being free to live with their respective faculties with the same natural rights under God and the law.

One, also, wonders what the most notable abolitionist in American history, Frederick Douglass, might think about initiatives and programs from the likes of FDR, LBJ, and others that involve handouts, redistribution of wealth, affirmative action, and the like to lift certain groups and demographics up. With the abolition of slavery, Douglass had wanted all black

people, as well as all women, to be equal in their rights with white men. Douglass did not, however, desire sympathy, nor assistance to help lift a black person up once free. As he said to a crowd in 1865:

> I understand the antislavery societies of this country to be based on two principles—first, the freedom of the blacks of this country; and, second, the levation (or elevation) of them. Let me not be misunderstood here. I am not asking for sympathy at the hands of abolitionists, sympathy at the hands of any...What I ask for the Negro is not benevolence, not pity, not sympathy, but simply justice.

> The American people have always been anxious to know what they shall do with us. General Banks was distressed with solicitude as to what he should do with the Negro. Everybody has asked the question, and they learned to ask it early of the abolitionists, "What shall we do with the Negro?" I have had but one answer from the beginning. Do nothing with us!...If the apples will not remain on the tree of their own strength, if they are worm eaten at the core, if they are early ripe and disposed to fall, let them fall! I am not for tying or fastening them on the tree in any way, except by nature's plan, and if they will not stay there, let them fall. And if the Negro cannot stand on his own legs, let him fall also. All I ask is, give him a chance to stand on his own legs!...your interference is doing him a positive injury...If you will only untie his hands, and give him a chance, I think he will live. He will work as readily for himself as the white man.

Following Douglass, possibly the most well-known name to lead the black community was Booker T. Washington, a former slave who became an author (*Up From Slavery* became a bestseller), orator, civil rights activist, and founder of the Tuskegee Institute. A graduate of Hampton Institute, according to a fellow graduate, Booker T. Washington viewed Negro advancement through the lens of self-help and practical and industrial training. As he would say, "It is important and right that all privileges of the law be ours, but it is vastly more important that we be prepared for the exercises of these privileges."

Another voice for black people who became prominent during the same time period as Booker T. Washington was W.E.B. Du Bois. Though the two men would differ, Du Bois saw many of the same solutions to black livelihood as Washington. In one of Du Bois' writings, he wrote that if white racism disappeared overnight, it probably "would not make very much difference in the positions occupied by Negroes. Some few would be promoted, some few would get new places [but] the mass would remain as they are" until a younger generation began to "try harder" and shed "the omnipresent *excuse* for failure: prejudice (emphasis added)." Rather than prejudice, Du Bois believed much of the black livelihood was due to individual choices. More explicitly, Du Bois said, "Probably few poor nations waste more money by thoughtless and unreasonable expenditure than the American Negro, and especially those living in large cities. Thousands of dollars are annually wasted ... in amusements of various kinds, and in miscellaneous ornaments and gewgaws.... The Negro has much to learn of the Jew and the Italian, as to living within his means and saving every penny from excessive and wasteful expenditures."

The only so called "help" that Du Bois welcomed was when Northerners post-Civil War came to the South as part of "missionaries" to replace Southern culture with Northern culture.

As economist Thomas Sowell has written, "When black colleges were founded, New Englanders were disproportionately represented among their teachers and college presidents, and much of these colleges' philosophy was that of New England. These institutions introduced strict behavioral standards, as well as high academic standards, imposing stern discipline and developing self-discipline in a region where such was not the norm for either blacks or whites." Du Bois deemed this movement and effort as "the salvation of the South and the Negro," and referred to any other "indiscriminate charity" as bad for the black community.

Martin Luther King Jr., perhaps the most recognizable name when it comes to civil rights in 20th and 21st century America, followed Washington and Du Bois with, again, similar sentiments regarding highlighting themselves, looking inward instead of outward, as well as individuality and personal responsibility. He once told a congregation:

> We know that there are many things wrong in the white world. But there are many things wrong in the black world, too. We can't keep on blaming the white man. There are many things we must do for ourselves. I know none of you make enough money—but save some of it. And there are some things we've got to face. I know the [segregation] situation is responsible for a lot of it, but do you know that Negroes are 10 per cent of the population of St. Louis and are responsible for 58 per cent of its crimes? We've got to face that. And we have to do something about our moral standards.

Again, a reference to the importance of morality. More extensively, King had written the following:

> Whenever we are objects of criticism from white men, even though the criticisms are maliciously directed and mixed with half-truths, we must pick out the elements of truth and make them the basis of creative reconstruction. We must not let the fact that we are the victims of injustice lull us into abrogating responsibility for our own lives. Our crime rate is far too high. Our level of cleanliness is frequently far too low. Too often those of us who are in the middle class live above our means, spend money on nonessentials and frivolities, and fail to give to serious causes, organizations, and educational institutions that so desperately need funds. We are too often loud and boisterous, and spend far too much on drink. Even the most poverty-stricken among us can purchase a ten-cent bar of soap; even the most uneducated among us can have high morals. Through community agencies and religious institutions Negro leaders must develop a positive program through which Negro youth can become adjusted to urban living and improve their general level of behavior.

Though two of MLK's prominent strategists and confidants, Stanley Levison and Bayard Rustin, were advocates of, and involved with, communism, which may help explain why MLK, after a visit to India where the prime minister demonstrated how their policies "may be" discrimination in order to "atone for centuries of injustices" and MLK had even praised a land-reform program (known as the Bhoodan, or Bloodless Revolution, movement) that called for property owners to turn over a percentage of their property to those without land, proposed a "broad-based and gigantic bill" that would have compensated black people for the "unpaid wages" that accumulated from "being enslaved for two centuries," King nonetheless admitted, as shown above, that "there is much (the Negro) can do about his plight." Summing up his

position and the points already mentioned, King asserted one "must not use inferior methods." Instead, one "must act now to lift himself up by his own bootstraps" by "develop(ing) habits of thrift and techniques of wise investment," while simultaneously "rise to the point of self-criticism" to raise one's standards.

These notions of individual liberty and individual responsibility, as well as equal natural rights, both under the laws and under God, and morality were, as exemplified, diminished in favor of mandates that "erroneously reduce mankind" to a perceived "perfect equality," as well as a change in tone from emphasizing the individual to emphasizing the group and critiquing society. In Woodrow Wilson's mind, as well as many others, "men as communities are supreme over men as individuals." A century later, even though Barack Obama became America's first black president, he would scold the opinions of a Booker T. Washington (an individual) and "messages that let the larger society off the hook."

Speaking of society and culture, as recently as 2020, the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture published a chart on "Aspects and Assumptions of Whiteness and White Culture in the United States." The following is the introduction to said chart:

> White dominant culture, or whiteness, refers to the ways white people and their traditions, attitudes, and ways of life have been normalized over time and are now considered standard practices in the United States. And since white people still hold most of the institutional power in America, we have all internalized some aspects of white culture— including people of color.

Yet, many of the so-called "cultural traits" many want to protect against "white dominant culture" can be seen as heavily influenced and inherited – though not completely linear – from not Africa, but rather from white migrants from Scotland, Ireland, and the northern borderlands and highlands of England. This is where the common white people of the South migrated from before America declared independence, and given the vast majority of America's black population before 1865 were born in America and living in the South (beginning in the 1740s, the slave population saw bigger increases in North America due to births compared to the slave trade, and this trend continued until the slave trade was made illegal in the U.S. in 1808), they saw, and learned, firsthand this very culture. And these white immigrants largely migrated before social transformations, such as the political and cultural unification of the British Isles or the standardization of the English language, reached those Great Britain regions. Therefore, amongst the cultural values and societal norms for the white American South that blacks of the South experienced were: an aversion to work (which French diplomat and philosopher, Alexis de Tocqueville, recognized, as well); proneness to violence; neglect of education; sexual promiscuity; improvidence; drunkenness; lack of entrepreneurship; lively music and dance; flamboyant and unbridled approaches to religion; vanity; a dialect that altered the spelling and sounds of words; and lacking self-restraint yet having touchy pride.

Though, again, these traits cannot be linearly attributed to any given race, prominent voices amongst the black community continue to denounce behaviors that resemble the behaviors previously listed. Martin Luther King Jr. ridiculed tendencies of violence, uncleanliness, boisterousness, and living above ones means; much like King, Du Bois derided spending imprudently, as well as excuses and a lack of effort; actor Anthony Mackie has denounced immature and disrespectful behavior such as wearing baggy pants; political

commentator Don Lemon has done the same thing, even listing other behaviors in the black community that should be changed, such as littering, dropping out of school, promoting the use of the N-word, and sexual promiscuity; and economist Thomas Sowell has expanded on Lemon's latter point by highlighting the decreased importance of the family, where "official Census data show that blacks had slightly higher marriage rates than whites for every census from 1890 to 1940," but by 1960, marriage rates amongst black people was less than that of white people, and since then it has only continued to decrease (with minor improvements) as presently a black child is roughly 2.5 times likelier than a white child to live with just one parent (with anywhere from 50-to-64% of black children living in a single-parent household, compared to 18-to-24% of white children living with only one parent), which has shown to correlate with higher levels of poverty, as well as a greater likelihood of crime.

Having said all of this, while citizens of specific *regions* can exhibit similar behaviors and characteristics, given that humans are largely products of our environment, obviously, these traits cannot be attributed to an entire culture for a given *race*. Not all white people have these characteristics, not all black people have these characteristics (as Northern blacks during the 19th century exhibited more similarities with Northern white people than Southern white people, not to mention black immigrants showed different traits), not all Hispanic people have these characteristics, not all Asian people have these characteristics. The list goes on and on, and it is important to not fall into the trap of, as Abraham Lincoln called it, "the boundless field of absolutism." And yet, contributing certain characteristics to a given race, thus simultaneously denoting different – or opposite – ones to other races, is exactly what the Smithsonian did.

The Smithsonian claimed on their website that "people of color must always consider their racial identity, whatever the situation, due to the systemic and interpersonal racism that still exists." So, what are some traits that the Smithsonian designated as differentiators between racial identities, and which people of color should be mindful of? Keeping in mind the prior list of colonial white migrant southerner traits that blacks were predominantly exposed to for decades, the following were among those deemed to be part of white culture: rugged individualism and self-reliance; independence and autonomy; a household with a father, mother and children as the ideal social unit; objective and rational thinking; hard work being the key to success; respect for authority; and politeness.

They completely disregarded "other" white cultural traits as if each culture is black and white (no pun intended) – as if each race has its own concrete traits – and simultaneously left it to people's imaginations as to what the cultural traits are for their respective race. Moreover, the Smithsonian, as well as representatives and citizens for that matter, have seemed to ignore the lone dissenting opinion in the infamous *Plessy v. Ferguson* case, which stated, "In view of the Constitution, in the eye of the law, there is in this country no superior, dominant, ruling class of citizens. There is no caste here. Our Constitution is color-blind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens. In respect of civil rights, all citizens are equal before the law." Needless to say, the Smithsonian chart was eventually taken down.

Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Martin Luther King Jr. would arguably be proud – of the chart being taken down, not of the Smithsonian, nor of affirmative action policies, D.E.I. initiatives, or any program that seeks to be more-or-less a reparation for past actions or a surface-level initiative based on the color of someone's skin rather than the content of their character. They, like the Founders and Lincoln, would likely

prefer equal opportunities and equal natural rights, individual liberty, letting everyone better themselves how they see fit as long as it does not interfere with someone else and their rights, and meaningful charitable or community initiatives that seek to help change an individual's way of life for the better. Being human and offering life's necessities – like how the Founders and Lincoln proposed – such as food and shelter should be provided if necessary. But to use the words of Douglass, King, as well as Lincoln and Madison, government should get out of the way and give people a chance to stand by themselves and work for themselves, able to maintain themselves by their works, all the while convincing peers that the past is forgiven and willing to be forgotten in favor of justice, loving thy neighbor, and promoting and protecting a diversity of faculties and interests.

Each Individual is Naturally Entitled to Do as He Pleases with Himself and the Fruit of His Labor

While the man who said this line is most known for saving the Union and abolishing slavery, Abraham Lincoln was just as, if not more, interested in individual liberty (hence his immense distaste for slavery) and political economy. And though he is not considered a Founding Father, Lincoln could certainly be deemed as an honorary Founder with how he honored and protected the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, how he was determined to keep the Union together – and how he did just that – how he was passionate

about the rule of law, how he took seriously that "all men are created equal" under said laws, and how he believed that individual liberty should be maximized as long as ones actions do not impede upon another's rights.

In fact, Lincoln espoused this belief whenever the topic of economy or labor came up. With "free labor" being a component of the Republican Party's platform, Lincoln – a self-made man with no formal education, who grew up in an unstable family and endured numerous bouts of depression and abuse, yet still rose out of poverty by moving out of cities and states that either had little opportunity or toxic cultures/environments (or both) and taking any job he could while spending his free time reading and learning – was a living example for how free market capitalism works.

Lincoln understood, as mentioned, that American citizens – or any human beings for that matter – are not "equal in color, size, intellect, moral developments, or social capacity." Rather, again as mentioned, with a "free government," "the way (is) open to every(one), if honest, industrious, and persevering, to the attainment of a high and honorable position" where all citizens "have equal privileges in the race of life," "an open field and a fair chance for your industry, enterprise and intelligence."

As such, Honest Abe thrived – but his life did not change overnight. Nowadays, many want to see results almost instantaneously, whether that be a promotion, an increased salary, paying off debt, or what have you. But in actuality, for most people the pathway to prosperity is "very simple," but it is, also, "laborious and tedious." With that being the case, "work, work, work is the main thing," according to Lincoln. In the midst of such, it is important "to improve (oneself) every way (they) can, never suspecting that any body wishes to hinder (them)" because "suspicion and jealousy never did help any man in any situation." "There may sometimes be

ungenerous attempts to keep a young man down," continued Lincoln, "and they will succeed too, if he allows his mind to be diverted from its true channel to brood over the attempted injury." Moreover, as Lincoln stated, "There is no permanent class of hired laborers amongst us." As in his case, he "was a hired laborer," and "the hired laborer of yesterday, labors on his own account to-day; and will hire others to labor for him to-morrow. Advancement — improvement in condition — is the order of things in a society of equals."

Believing that life and the marketplace was unfair, or that individual decisions and feelings were in fact systemic and part of institutional infrastructure to keep him down, were not part of Lincoln's belief system. Though he admitted to the existence of wrongdoers, as one should, whether or not one prospers is up to the individual, not the wrongdoer or even the system.

Rather, the "true system" is free labor. Lincoln demonstrated such with the following excerpt:

> I take it that it is best for all to leave each man free to acquire property as fast as he can. Some will get wealthy. I don't believe in a law to prevent a man from getting rich; it would do more harm than good. So, while we do not propose any war upon capital, we do wish to allow the humblest man an equal chance to get rich with everybody else. When one starts poor, as most do in the race of life, free society is such that he knows he can better his condition; he knows that there is no fixed condition of labor, for his whole life.

...I want every man to have the chance -- and I believe a black man is entitled to it -- in which he can better his condition -- when he may look forward and hope to be a hired laborer this year and the next, work for himself afterward, and finally to hire men to work for him!

The prudent, penniless beginner in the world, labors for wages awhile, saves a surplus with which to buy tools or land, for himself; then labors on his own account another while, and at length hires another new beginner to help him. This, say its advocates, is free labor -- the just and generous, and prosperous system, which opens the way for all -- gives hope to all, and energy, and progress, and improvement of condition to all. If any continue through life in the condition of the hired laborer, it is not the fault of the system, but because of either a dependent nature which prefers it, or improvidence, folly, or singular misfortune.

...Some of you will be successful, and such will need but little philosophy to take them home in cheerful spirits; others will be disappointed, and will be in a less happy mood. To such, let it be said, "Lay it not too much to heart." Let them adopt the maxim, "Better luck next time;" and then, by renewed exertion, make that better luck for themselves.

It is curious to wonder what the reception would be like for a politician in 21st century America to exclaim "better luck next time" to those who are disappointed and unsuccessful. It has become customary for some of the more popular politicians to broadcast how much relief they could offer, whether in the form of a new program or the expansion of a preexisting one.

Where Lincoln said, "If God gave him but little, that little let him enjoy," those today would say "take from those who have plenty and give to those who need more." Where Lincoln would advise those looking for money to work harder or find a better job – as he did for his stepbrother, John Johnston, when Johnston requested $80, but Lincoln had observed "at the various times when I have helped you a little, you have said to me 'We can get along very well now' but in a very short time I find you in the same difficulty again," so Lincoln deplored the "idle" approach and "habit of uselessly wasting time," and, rather than providing aid, Lincoln proposed that Johnston "go to work, 'tooth and nails' for some body who will give you money" – many of those today would develop a program to hand out money to individuals who have shown no evidence of consistent effort or frugality.

In Lincoln's eyes, what is "wrong and should not continue" is when others who have "without labour, enjoyed a large proportion of the fruits." When some "declare for liberty," but subsequently believe that warrants "some men to do as they please with other men, and the product of other men's labor," that is in reality "incompatible" with liberty and more closely resembles that of "tyranny." Destroying the true meaning of liberty and the spirit that "prizes liberty as the heritage of all men, in all lands, every where" plants "the seeds of despotism around your own doors." When one becomes "accustomed to trampl(ing) on the rights" of others, they "have lost the genius of (their) own independence, and become the fit subjects of the first cunning tyrant who rises."

With an emphasis on liberty, that allows for all citizens to pursue greater ends with greater possibilities and opportunities. "When there is a will there is a way," and to develop a "hearty will," that must spring from "moral sense and self-interest." Because, to Lincoln, according to his former law partner William Herndon, "the great, leading law of human nature

was motives, and that at the bottom was pure selfishness; that all human actions reflectively speaking, were moved by motives." Motives and self-interest "moved the man to every voluntary act of his life."

One such motive that people have is to accumulate wealth, whether to provide for one's family, donate to charity, raise money for a business venture, whatever the case may be. And Lincoln never thought this milestone was off-limits to the general population. "That some should be rich," wrote Lincoln, "shows that others may become rich, and hence is just encouragement to industry and enterprise. Let not him who is houseless pull down the house of another; but let him labor diligently and build one for himself, thus by example assuring that his own shall be safe from violence when built." Exceptions in Lincoln's mind were made in terms of "common humanity," where, in the case of runaway slaves, some "must not be permitted to suffer for want of food, shelter or other necessaries of life; that to this end, they should be provided for." In so doing, though, "those who are capable of labor should be set to work and paid reasonable wages," so that they can obtain good habits, can start saving, and can start down the road toward self-improvement and self-reliance exemplified with free labor.

Lincoln's principles of self-improvement, self-reliance, and individual responsibility were even demonstrated in the courtroom. The captain and owners of a steamboat, *Effie Afton*, sued the Rock Island Bridge Company due to the boat struggling to pass beneath a railway bridge, resulting in the boat colliding with a bridge pier and catching fire. The captain and boat owners declared the bridge was a hazard to river navigations and demanded reparations for the damage that ensued. Lincoln, whom represented the Rock Island bridge company on the matter, took the case seriously – he had gone to the site where the scene occurred and he measured distances between different areas, he measured the volume of water beneath the

bridge, and he talked to witnesses that saw what happened. A civil engineer had denied that the bridge posed any difficulty for river navigation, as well. Thus, with the information he gathered, Lincoln concluded by putting the responsibility for the mishap not on the bridge company, but rather on the negligence of the boat's captain and pilot for not getting "acquainted with the place" and continuing under the bridge despite the starboard engine malfunctioning. The special interests of river transportation would not reign supreme over others in Lincoln's mind, especially when if the pilot had "discarded passion" then "the chances are that he would have had no disaster at all." Lincoln sided with personal responsibility in the case, and the court sided with Lincoln.

More to Lincoln's understanding of liberty and labor is the relationship of labor to capital. While many on the left in 20th and 21st century America prioritize an emphasis on capital (for example, LBJ's "War on Poverty"), Lincoln – as if one could not already tell – emphasized labor. In fact, Lincoln deemed "the effort to place capital on an equal footing with, if not above, labor" as an "approach of returning despotism." He declared to Congress, "Labor is prior to and independent of capital. Capital is only the fruit of labor, and could never have existed if labor had not first existed. Labor is the superior of capital, and deserves much the higher consideration...No men living are more worthy to be trusted than those who toil up from poverty; none less inclined to take or touch aught which they have not honestly earned."

Since Lincoln discussed the need for a moral sense, let's quickly digress on the matters of material possession and perceived fairness. As told in the Gospel of Luke, someone in a crowd had asked Jesus to tell his brother to "divide the inheritance." Jesus responded with, "Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions." But, Jesus did not do as the stranger asked; Jesus did not take from the stranger's brother who had

more and give it to the stranger who had less. Rather, Jesus warned this stranger about the dangers for "whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God."

In Jesus' sermon on the mount, as recorded by Matthew, He tells those listening, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." "Therefore," Jesus said, "Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?" The lesson here is worrying about the future and what you presently have will consume you for the worst, especially if comparisons to others are made; yet controlling what you can control, living in the present, working and improving yourself day-by-day, and seeking "first His kingdom and His righteousness," then all one needs will be secured. As Lincoln had addressed to a crowd of ex-slaves, "Obey God's commandments and thank Him for giving you liberty, for to Him you owe all things."

With this, the liberty that Lincoln believed to be God given, and should be honored by government, was the kind where "each individual is naturally entitled to do as he pleases with himself and the fruit of his labor, so far as it in no wise interferes with any other man's rights—that each community, as a State, has a right to do exactly as it pleases with all the concerns within that State that interfere with the rights of no other State, and that the general government, upon principle, has no right to interfere with anything other than that general class of things that does concern the whole." "Government ought not to interfere," said Lincoln, "in all that the people can individually do as well for themselves." Therefore, "the best sort of principle" to Lincoln was "the principle of allowing the people to do as they please with their own business."

While Lincoln had suspended the writ of Habeas Corpus (a legal doctrine allowing any person accused of a crime the right to appear before court to ensure they have not been falsely accused; it is included in the Constitution under Article I Section IX [where Congress' powers are detailed] and can only be suspended in cases of rebellion or invasion), demanded blockades of Southern ports, delivered an Emancipation Proclamation that freed slaves in the rebellious states in order to join the Union's military, deployed military to interfere with state elections so as to not lead a state toward secession, had shutdown newspapers and imprisoned editors who spread false information, had created a network of officers to spy on civilians, had been a proponent of land taxes that tax property in proportion to its value, and would later sign off on the nation's first progressive income tax (which was only temporary, its purpose was for funding the government and the military during the Civil War, and was extremely modest by today's standards [the highest rate was 10%]), he was above all opposed to doing anything outside of Constitutional limits – even though if you asked The New York Times they would say "Lincoln effectively broke the Constitution of 1787" – and he was against a big centralized government that believed the representatives knew what to do with people's lives better than the people themselves. Moreover, all but one of the examples listed above – with land taxes being the outlier – were done during wartime or, especially in the case of the Emancipation Proclamation, were specifically done under the guise of the broad and permissible war powers granted to the president. Otherwise, Lincoln did not consistently enforce nor plan to elongate emergency measures "unless the necessity" was "manifest and urgent." It would be safe to say that a country at war with itself would fit that qualification.

Moreover, war is a period where government routinely expands (whether that be by large or small amounts) rather than contracts and the president can, in Lincoln's words, use

"the law of war in time of war." Lincoln "never understood that the Presidency conferred upon (him) an unrestricted right to act officially upon (a given) judgement and feeling." He did feel, however, that special circumstances may arise where "measures, otherwise unconstitutional, might become lawful, by becoming indispensable to the preservation of the constitution, through the preservation of the nation." In emergencies, as he had written, Lincoln could "no more be persuaded that the government can constitutionally take no strong measure in time of rebellion, because it can be shown that the same could not be lawfully taken in time of peace than" he "can be persuaded that a particular drug is not good medicine for a sick man, because it can be shown to not be good food for a well one."

As far as spending goes, the peak of government spending under Lincoln's administration was in 1865 when expenditures reached roughly $2 billion, with war and Navy departments comprising roughly 60% of the budget. Factoring in inflation, the 1865 federal budget was closer to $26 billion, yet still only 1.8% of real GDP. To further demonstrate how Lincoln did not want a big government, the post-war federal government spending kept decreasing in the years that followed – from $2 billion in 1865 to $424 million in 1871; from $424 million in 1871 to roughly $320 million by 1880 – thus re-emphasizing Lincoln's emergency measures were during times of emergency. As a Lincoln biographer and historian, Allen Guelzo, wrote, "If Lincoln had plans to create a 'big government,' none of his successors seem to have known what they were."

In terms of the literal size of Lincoln's government, many would be inclined to point to how the paid federal civilian employment during Lincoln's administration ballooned from estimations of 40,651 in 1861 to 194,997 in 1865 (a 380% increase in just four years). However, this employment represented only 0.9% of the Northern wartime population. Moreover,

employment in the War Department (i.e. the Civil War) was the reason for the stark increase, as that department alone accounted for 70% of the federal civilian workforce at the time. Worth mentioning, as well, is how those in our federal civilian workforce whom resided in D.C. only amounted to an estimated 14,826 – or 0.07% of the Northern wartime population. As for the entire federal bureaucracy under Lincoln, it composed of just 22 agencies, Lincoln's White House staff consisted of just six persons, and the entire legislative staff was roughly 170 people.

Big government, though, truly gained popularity in the 20th century. Comparing Lincoln to America in 2025, the number of agencies currently varies anywhere from 400 to more than 500 (roughly a 2,172% increase); though the federal civilian workforce compared to the entire United States population remains 0.9% (despite the country not being at war with itself – or involved in any war for that matter), the overwhelming bulk of the workforce under Lincoln was in the War Department, meanwhile the combined employment in the Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security does not even encompass half of federal employment; with that, during peak government spending in 1865, 58% of federal expenditures were on defense and security – meanwhile, presently 13% is spent on national defense, and roughly half is spent on welfare programs (Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, income security, and more); federal civilian employment in our nation's capitol stood at 162,144 in March 2024 (a 993% increase); congressional staffers in the legislative branch stand at roughly 31,000 (an 18,135% increase); and the White House staff consists of more than 500 persons (a 8,233% increase).

Lincoln had even opposed big, centralized government outright. When Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts had denounced the results of a committee report that "fairly represented a majority of the loyal voters of" Louisiana, and instead proclaimed he would employ "all the instruments...in the arsenal of parliamentary warfare" to block the will of the

majority, Lincoln told Representative James Ashley of Ohio that Sumner "hopes to succeed in beating the President so as to change this government from its original form, and making it a strong centralized power."

More to his opposition of a centralized and convoluted government, Lincoln was a president who, according to secretaries, would "break through every regulation as fast as it was made" and "loathed rules and red tape." Lincoln despised voluminous and "obscure" government acts that were "drawn in haste and without sufficient caution," which "render it very difficult for even the best-informed persons to ascertain precisely what the statute law really is." Instead, "the statute laws should be made as plain and intelligible as possible, and be reduced to as small a compass as may consist with the fullness and precision of the will of the Legislature and the perspicuity of its language. This well done would greatly facilitate the labors of those whose duty it is to assist in the administration of the laws, and would be a lasting benefit to the people, by placing before them in a more accessible and intelligible form the laws which so deeply concern their interests."

Written entities were not the only target of Lincoln's to simplify or shrink the federal government, either. When he took office, Lincoln believed "that all the departments (were) so penetrated with corruption, that a clean sweep (would) become necessary," so he broke up a gigantic Department of the West, he canceled fraudulent government contracts, he formed committees to fire government staffers (of 1,520 executive branch positions immediately under Lincoln's oversight, Lincoln dismissed 1,195 [over the course of his presidency, according to estimates, Lincoln removed 1,457 out of a possible 1,639 officials], amounting to "the most sweeping removal of federal officeholders in the country's history up to that time"), and suspended needless construction.

With these principles and ideals, with all having a chance in this American free enterprise system to exercise their liberty in their best interests without interfering with someone else's rights, we can expect "the weak to grow stronger, the ignorant, wiser; and all better, and happier together." This is what arguably America's greatest president believed and exemplified. He did not believe in stagnant statuses or complacency, nor telling others how to conduct their lives in some shape or form.

Much of Lincoln's economy and labor acumen echoes the principles portrayed in the Father of Modern Economics', Adam Smith, book, *Wealth of Nations*, which so happened to be a book the Founders treasured, as well. Jefferson routinely endorsed said book, writing to others that "Smith's wealth of nations is the best book to be read." It was, also, one that was part of Washington's library and he "actively engaged with Smith's facts and arguments by underlining passages."

Highlighting just a few of Smith's quotes from *Wealth of Nations* can show the impact his words had on men like Washington and Jefferson, as well as Lincoln and more. "To prohibit a great people from making all that they can of every part of their own produce," wrote Smith, "or from employing their stock and industry in the way that they judge most advantageous to themselves, is a manifest violation of the most sacred rights of mankind." "The property which every man has in his own labour," Smith said, "as it is the original foundation of all other property, so it is the most sacred and inviolable. The patrimony of a poor man lies in the strength and dexterity of his hands; and to hinder him from employing this strength and dexterity in what manner he thinks proper, without injury to his neighbour, is a plain violation of this most sacred property. It is a manifest encroachment upon the just liberty, both of the workman, and of those who might be disposed to employ him."

One of Smith's more noteworthy insights into the natural behavior of economic activity is:

> Every individual necessarily labours to render the annual revenue of the society as great as he can. He generally, indeed, neither intends to promote the public interest, nor knows how much he is promoting it. By preferring the support of domestic to that of foreign industry, he intends only his own security; and by directing that industry in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he intends only his own gain; and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention. Nor is it always the worse for the society that it was no part of it. By pursuing his own interest, he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it. I have never known much good done by those who affected to trade for the public good.

> ... every individual, it is evident, can in his local situation judge much better than any statesman or lawgiver can do for him. The statesman, who should attempt to direct private people in what manner they ought to employ their capitals, would not only load himself with a most unnecessary attention, but assume an authority which could safely be trusted, not only to no single person, but to no council or senate whatever, and which would nowhere be so dangerous as in the hands of a man who had folly and presumption enough to fancy himself fit to exercise it.

> ...It is thus that the private interests and passions of individuals naturally dispose them to turn their stock towards the employments which in ordinary cases, are most advantageous to the society...Without any intervention of law, therefore, the private interests and passions of men naturally lead them to divide and distribute the stock of every society among all the different employments carried on in it; as nearly as possible in the proportion which is most agreeable to the interest of the whole society. All the different regulations of the mercantile system necessarily derange more or less this natural and most advantageous distribution of stock.

And as if it was not already clear the impact Smith had on Lincoln, Smith, also, wrote, "At all times and places, that is dear which it is difficult to come at, or which it costs much labour to acquire; and that cheap which is to be had easily, or with very little labour. Labour alone, therefore, never varying in its own value, is alone the ultimate and real standard by which the value of all commodities can at all times and places be estimated and compared."

Moreover, in regard to modest taxes, Smith explained how "high taxes, sometimes by diminishing consumption...and sometimes by encouraging smuggling, frequently afford a smaller revenue to government than what might be drawn from more moderate taxes."

These teachings were implemented throughout the Founder's policies and throughout America largely until the 20th century. Washington believed in "self-reliance and individual initiative," as well as a "freedom of inquiry" and "liberality of conduct," where the individual was "the lynchpin of the system, and his or her creativity, restlessness, and tolerance for risk." He streamlined processes at the state level for corporate charters to start businesses, made credit

readily available, and removed any "exclusivity, high cost, and inordinate delays" of "bureaucratic obstacles" and regulations that "stifled the innate drive to foster growth and prosperity." In his farewell address, Washington mentioned how "our commercial policy should hold an equal and impartial hand; neither seeking nor granting exclusive favors or preferences; consulting the natural course of things; diffusing and diversifying by gentle means the streams of commerce, but forcing nothing."

As for the architect of many of Washington's economic policies, Alexander Hamilton, with his writings in the *Federalist*, he depicted "an unrestrained intercourse" between citizens that would advance respective productions, and would receive "additional motion and vigor" via "a free circulation of commodities." With this system, Hamilton stated, "There are strong minds in every walk of life that will rise superior to the disadvantages of situation and will command the tribute due to their merit, not only from the classes to which they particularly belong, but from the society in general. The door ought to be equally open to all." Hamilton would even discuss his own "command" for his merit and ability to "rise superior to the disadvantages of situation" by claiming, "Men give me credit for some genius. All the genius I have is this: when I have a subject in mind, I study it profoundly. Day and night it is before me. My mind becomes pervaded with it... the effort which I have made is what people are pleased to call the fruit of genius. *It is the fruit of labor and thought* (emphasis added)." As for revenue and taxation, Hamilton wrote, "It is evident from the state of the country, from the habits of the people, from the experience we have had on the point itself, that it is impracticable to raise any very considerable sums by direct taxation. Tax laws have in vain been multiplied; new methods to enforce the collection have in vain been tried; the public expectation has been uniformly disappointed."

In general, as noted by author and historian Ron Chernow, Hamilton was a "chief agent of a market economy" and acknowledged "self-interest as the mainspring of economic action," where "in a nation of self-made people, Hamilton believed that government ought to promote self-fulfillment, self-improvement, and self-reliance," and "as a rule," government should "not interfere with markets." Rather, "wherever possible, Hamilton preferred financial incentives to government directives" and any directives, taxation, or tariffs were "to be moderate in scale, temporary in nature, and repealed as soon as possible." As Hamilton would write, "In matters of industry, human enterprise ought doubtless to be left free in the main, not fettered by too much regulation." Hamilton, even, desired the Bank of the United States he spearheaded to remain predominantly in private hands as "to attach full confidence to an institution of this nature, it appears to be an essential ingredient in its structure that it shall be under a *private* not a *public* direction, under the guidance of *individual interest*, not of *public policy*."

Jefferson, though a stark opponent to Hamilton and Hamilton's policies – and likely would have opposed Lincoln's, as well, given Jefferson was wholeheartedly agrarian in his belief that individuals should seek to be independent farmers with their own land and produce, rather than promoting manufacturing and an urban society where one labors for a wage (what would become deemed as "wage slavery" to Democrats) – he believed economy was "among the first and most important virtues" where "a wise and frugal" Republican government would "not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned" and "true popular sovereignty depended on the people's independence, their freedom to act in their own best interests." He once said, "A rigid economy of the public contributions and absolute interdiction of all useless expenses will go far towards keeping the government honest and unoppressive."

With this, Jefferson abolished federal taxes, cut government spending, and decreased the nation's debt. Post presidency, Jefferson stood firm on his political economy beliefs by writing, "To take from one, because it is thought that his own industry and that of his fathers has acquired too much, in order to spare to others, who, or whose fathers have not exercised equal industry and skill, is to violate arbitrarily the first principle of association, the guarantee to every one of a free exercise of his industry, and the fruits acquired by it."

James Madison wrote that "where an excess of power prevails, property of no sort is duly respected. No man is safe in his opinions, his person, his faculties, or his possessions." Property is not secure, nor is it a just government, "where arbitrary restrictions, exemptions, and monopolies deny to part of its citizens that free use of their faculties, and free choice of their occupations, which not only constitute their property in the general sense of the word; but are the means of acquiring property strictly so called." Nor is a just government one where "unequal taxes oppress one species of property and reward another species: where arbitrary taxes invade the domestic sanctuaries of the rich, and excessive taxes grind the faces of the poor; where the keenness and competitions of want are deemed an insufficient spur to labor." Separately, Madison once said, "Unjust laws are those that are too numerous and mutable for the people to understand," and "since the general civilization of mankind, I believe there are more instances of the abridgment of the freedom of the people by gradual and silent encroachment[s] of those in power, than by violent and sudden usurpations." In summation, Madison had mentioned that "if industry and labor are left to take their own course, they will generally be directed to those objects which are the most productive, and this in a more certain and direct manner than the wisdom of the most enlightened legislature could point out."

Benjamin Franklin referred to America as the "Land of Labour," and had written in regard to Great Britain:

> I am for doing good to the poor, but I differ in opinion of the means. I think the best way of doing good to the poor, is not making them easy in poverty, but leading or driving them out of it. In my youth I travelled much, and I observed in different countries, that the more public provisions were made for the poor, the less they provided for themselves, and of course became poorer. And, on the contrary, the less was done for them, the more they did for themselves, and became richer. There is no country in the world where so many provisions are established for them [as in England] ... with a solemn general law made by the rich to subject their estates to a heavy tax for the support of the poor... [Yet] there is no country in the world in which the poor are more idle, dissolute, drunken, and insolent. The day you [Englishmen] passed that act, you took away from before their eyes the greatest of all inducements to industry, frugality, and sobriety, by giving them a dependence on somewhat else than a careful accumulation during youth and health, for support in age and sickness. In short, you offered a premium for the encouragement of idleness, and you should not now wonder that it has had its effect in the increase of poverty.

With a similar tone, John Adams, wrote the following:

> Suppose a nation, rich and poor, high and low, ten millions in number, all assembled together; not more than one or two millions will have lands, houses, or any personal

property; if we take into the account the women and children, or even if we leave them out of the question, a great majority of every nation is wholly destitute of property, except a small quantity of clothes, and a few trifles of other movables...if all were to be decided by a vote of the majority, the eight or nine millions who have no property, would not think of usurping over the rights of the one or two millions who have? Property is surely a right of mankind as really as liberty. Perhaps, at first, prejudice, habit, shame or fear, principle or religion, would restrain the poor from attacking the rich, and the idle from usurping on the industrious; but the time would not be long before courage and enterprise would come, and pretexts be invented by degrees, to countenance the majority in dividing all the property among them, or at least, in sharing it equally with its present possessors. Debts would be abolished first; taxes laid heavy on the rich, and not at all on the others; and at last a downright equal division of every thing be demanded, and voted. What would be the consequence of this? The idle, the vicious, the intemperate, would rush into the utmost extravagance of debauchery, sell and spend all their share, and then demand a new division of those who purchased from them. The moment the idea is admitted into society, that property is not as sacred as the laws of God, and that there is not a force of law and public justice to protect it, anarchy and tyranny commence.

Beyond Adam Smith and his works, as Lincoln biographer Dr. Guelzo has pointed out, it was one of the most influential English philosophers of the 19th century, John Stuart Mill, "whose hand reached into Lincoln's thinking. It was Mill whom Lincoln singled out" to journalists "as one of the two most influential authors he had read." Lincoln's statements and

beliefs routinely echoed those of Mill, who had stated he was "in favour of restricting to the narrowest compass the intervention of a public authority in the business of a community," and "to begin as hired laborers, then after a few years to work on their own account, and finally employ others, is the normal condition of laborers in a new country, rapidly increasing in wealth and population." More extensively, Mill had written:

> The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant...The only freedom which deserves the name, is that of pursuing our own good in our own way.
>
> ...The reason for not interfering, unless for the sake of others, with a person's voluntary acts, is consideration for his liberty. His voluntary choice is evidence that what he so chooses is desirable, or at the least endurable, to him, and his good is on the whole best provided for by allowing him to take his own means of pursuing it.
>
> ...There is no one so fit to conduct any business, or to determine how or by whom it shall be conducted, as those who are personally interested in it.

Nowhere in Lincoln's, or the Founder's, thinking were the European socialist and communist doctrines espoused by the likes of Karl Marx, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Francois-Noel Babeuf, and the like, whom were all contemporaries by mid-to-late 19th century. To help emphasize, Lincoln had participated in an Illinois legislature debate over internal

improvements. One member had opposed a bill with arguments pertaining to how State property "should not be given without conditions, to one section of the country more than another." Lincoln "shewed in substance that the State property would all be lost and go to ruin, if the principle be adopted that no one shall have any, for fear all shall not have some."

"Suppose, after all, there should be some degree of inequality," Lincoln would later say in the House of Representatives, "inequality is certainly never to be embraced for its own sake; but is every good thing to be discarded which may be inseparably connected with some degree of it? If so, we must discard all government."

All of this being said, this is not to say that an emphasis on self-reliance and individual liberty meant the Founders and Lincoln disregarded the poor. For Lincoln, while work is the main thing, labor is superior to capital, and individual liberty should persist where an individual's faculties, capacities, and opportunities should be encouraged to the utmost extent without infringing on another's rights, Lincoln, also, believed a government's role is "to do for a community of people, whatever they need to have done, but can not do, at all, or can not, so well do, for themselves—in their separate, and individual capacities." With this, Lincoln signed the Homestead Act, which encouraged property acquisition by selling federal land for a low fee as long as the inhabitants developed the land. To this end, the Freedmen's Bureau (launched in March 1865) was tasked to claim land that was abandoned by plantation owners, disperse it amongst ex-slaves whom had once labored there, and to encourage "persons, formerly held as slaves, to labor as freedmen in insurrectionary states" and "become self-supporting." To help facilitate, Lincoln ordered his generals to "suspend" any attempts to "interfere with the transportation of supplies to, or products from, any plantation worked by free labor." With these measures on top of the eradication of slavery, Lincoln encouraged freedmen to "use this

great boon to improve (themselves), both morally and intellectually," be paid reasonably for their labor (and to seek labor), while being on equal standing with their fellow American citizens. And as mentioned, citizens "must not be permitted to suffer for want of food, shelter or other necessaries of life; that to this end, they should be provided for."

Furthermore, Lincoln was a believer in internal improvements to connect citizens with various other areas, various markets, and various suppliers, with the most notable being the transcontinental railroad and the Pacific Railway Act of 1862. As a disclaimer, though, this project, and others orchestrated by Lincoln, was not flooded with red tape or even government money. It was a partnership with private corporators. Funding came in the form of bonds backed by federally owned public lands that the federal government came into possession following the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 and the Mexican War in 1848. As for regulations, the Union Pacific and Central Pacific Railroads had "right of way through the public lands," other land titles were "extinguish(ed) as rapidly" as possible, and the only rule for construction was "said right of way is granted to said railroad to the extent of two hundred feet in width on each side of said railroad where it may pass over the public lands." As noted by Dr. Guelzo, "There was no operating funding, no management oversight, and no regulatory bureaucracy."

Digressing quickly to another railroad example pertaining to Lincoln, he defended Mason Brayman and the Illinois Central Railroad Company against McLean County in a lawsuit over the railroad's right-of-way and whether local communities could tax railroad property that had otherwise been deemed exempt. After the State's supreme court unanimously sided with Lincoln and the railroad, a couple years later the state auditor attempted to levy a business tax on the railroad's property value. They valued the railroad's property at a value that was roughly 63% greater than what it was actually worth, not to mention the charter for the

railroad had limited the tax rate to 7%, so Lincoln, again, defended the railroad and was successful. Lincoln saw no need for government to intervene, not only to not intervene more than it already had, but to not intervene where individuals, or in this case a company, knew how to build the railroad and where to build it. Plus, Lincoln being the man that he was, being a stark advocate for an individual enjoying the fruits of their labor, he would not let the state government manipulate values just so they could take more than what was owed. Moreover, the railroad's development opened up accessibility to markets and decreased reliability on others, thus providing a mode of transportation to various other areas, while inspiring more competition amongst farmers and manufacturers.

While one may see this as Lincoln backing big business and big business only, in actuality he was standing up for everyone by not letting government change the terms, take advantage, and be overbearing. Furthermore, the railroad, much like the transcontinental railroad but at a smaller scale, opened up the state of Illinois to other areas of the Midwest, which benefited migration and commerce.

Another form of an internal improvement, or public works, project that Lincoln was in favor of came in the form of the Morrill Act of 1862. This college land grant legislation granted individual states acres of federally owned land to develop colleges devoted to "such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts, in such manner as the legislatures of the States may respectively prescribe." As Lincoln believed "free labor insists on universal education," he would desire the "benefit of public schools" to be available to everyone. However, this is not to be confused with present day notions of federally funded universal education. Rather, Lincoln wanted every young citizen to have the ability to be admitted into public schools, and much like how he allowed for individual states to administer how they saw fit the

development of colleges via land grants, Lincoln doubled down on leaving education up to the states by proclaiming in 1863, "I do further proclaim, declare, and make known that any provision which may be adopted by such *State government* in relation to the freed people of such State which shall...provide for their education...will not be objected to by the National Executive (emphasis added)." Therefore, as someone who had no formal education himself, while Lincoln desired every child and citizen to have the opportunity to pursue said formal education, Lincoln overarchingly sought an environment where anyone could succeed through self-improvement if they put in the time and effort, whether that meant through school or voraciously reading books.

As for the Founders as a whole, they shared Franklin's aforementioned sentiments and those of Lincoln. Jefferson had, even, noted in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* a structure for how best to address the poor:

> The poor who have neither property, friends, nor strength to labor (or the poor, lame, impotent, blind and other inhabitants as are not able to maintain themselves), are boarded in the houses of good farmers, to whom a stipulated sum is annually paid. To those who are able to help themselves a little, or have friends from whom they derive some succors, inadequate however to their full maintenance, supplementary aids are given, which enable them to live comfortably in their own houses, or in the houses of their friends. Vagabonds (able-bodied persons not having wherewithal to maintain themselves, who shall waste their time in idle and dissolute courses, refusing to work for reasonable wages), without visible property or vocation, are placed in workhouses, where they are well clothed, fed, lodged, and made to labor.

Thus, the foundation for helping the poor in our American ancestor's earliest days revolved around family, friends, or neighborly assistance, as well as low benefit levels supplied by local entities and housing in workhouses, all while providing apprenticeships so as to train able bodied citizens in a manner that promotes a desire for self-reliance and independence. This was accompanied by private philanthropy and the formation of organizations such as YMCAs and Salvation Army. To expand on the latter, as noted by authors Thomas West and Walter Trattner, "Private philanthropy complemented public aid; both were part of the American response to poverty. While, from the outset, the public was responsible for providing aid to the needy ... as soon as they could afford to, private citizens and a host of voluntary associations also gave generously to those in distress." Public workhouses and private charities, alike, "tried to build the character of their recipients through education, moral suasion, religious instruction, and work," in conjunction with low benefits, so as to "not make them easy in poverty, but lead or drive them out of it."

What all of this adds up to is this – America is a land of promise and potential, not promises and guarantees. America is a land of the individual, not the group. If one were to work, work, work and improve themselves in any way possible, focusing only on what they can control instead of what someone else says or on a perceived barrier, maximizing their faculties and individual liberty without impeding on someone else and their rights – and if government allowed individuals to do such without interfering and regulating as much, if government did not intervene with individual's finances and how they go about conducting themselves, especially in circumstances where an individual knows themselves and their situations better – then anyone can climb the economic ladder toward prosperity.

Let the Poor, the Needy, and Oppressed of the Earth Resort to the Fertile Plains of Our Western Country

Prior to the start of America's government under the Constitution, George Washington said in 1785, "Let the poor, the needy, & oppressed of the Earth; and those who want Land, resort to the fertile plains of our Western Country, to the second Land of promise, & there dwell in peace, fulfilling the first & great Commandment." Then, three years later and just one year prior to assuming what would become the most powerful office in the world, Washington stated, "I had always hoped that this land might become a safe and agreeable Asylum to the virtuous and persecuted part of mankind, to whatever nation they might belong." In short, our Founding Fathers favored immigration. So much so, that there were very few parameters implemented for citizenship – but there were parameters and ideal immigrants, nonetheless.

I had written extensively about immigration in *Finding Reagan*, including what the Founders said and adopted. The below is the portion specifically pertaining to our ancestors who started our nation:

> Policies initially began with a concern towards naturalization in the form of the Naturalization Acts of 1790 and 1795. While both only included "any Alien being a free white person," they did not have any requirement for admittance to the United States. Rather, they set forth durations of residence within the country before an immigrant could become a U.S. citizen, which ranged from two years with the 1790 version to five

years with the 1795 version, asked for an oath of allegiance to the United States Constitution and a renounce of any allegiance or "fidelity" to any other foreign entity where they were once a citizen, and the court that admits the immigrant applicant must approve that they have behaved with "good moral character." The immigrant, as part of the 1795 act, must have declared before a court their intent of naturalization, along with their oath of allegiance, at least three years prior to naturalization. Any children of naturalized immigrants would subsequently become U.S. citizens upon naturalization, provided that the father was himself was once a resident. What brought about the 1795 Naturalization Act was a fear with the prior version that "a large foreign-born population with voting rights could undermine national security."

These were followed by the Alien and Sedition Acts in 1798, which increased the naturalization wait time (i.e. residency) from five years to 14 years, increased the time to declare an intent for naturalization from three years to five years, and "authorized the president to deport 'aliens,' and permitted their arrest, imprisonment, and deportation during wartime."

These acts by John Adams were a stark contrast to what other Founding Fathers believed. George Washington had said in 1783, "The bosom of America is open to receive not only the opulent & respectable Stranger, but the oppressed & persecuted of all Nations & Religions; whom we shall wellcome to a participation of all our rights & previleges, if by *decency & propriety of conduct* they appear to merit the enjoyment." ... He would subsequently sign into law the Naturalization Acts of 1790 and 1795.

Thomas Jefferson in response to the Alien and Sedition Acts said, "Shall we refuse to the unhappy fugitives from distress that hospitality which the savages of the wilderness extended to our fathers arriving in this land? Shall oppressed humanity find no asylum on this globe?" Prior to these acts, he had written in a letter that America "is now the only country of tranquility and should be the asylum of all those who wish to avoid the scenes which have crushed our friends" in other lands. These thoughts culminated in the reversal and repeal of three of the four Alien and Sedition Acts once Jefferson became president, along with the enactment of the Naturalization Law of 1802. With such, Jefferson completely reverted back to the 1795 Naturalization Act, with a few additions pertaining to courts that qualify for permitting naturalization.

James Madison, the predominant author of the Constitution and our fourth president, said in a, what is known as the Report of 1800, response to the Alien Acts, "It can never be admitted, that the removal of aliens, authorised by the act, is to be considered, not as punishment for an offence; but as a measure of precaution and prevention." Madison went further in the report to denounce the unconstitutionality of the federal government to deport aliens as it was not written in the Constitution, and therefore was left to the states, and he questioned the power it would give the president when he stated, "To be dangerous to the public safety; to be suspected of secret machinations against the government: these can never be mistaken for legal rules or certain definitions. They leave every thing to the President. His will is the law. His suspicion is the only evidence which is to convict: his order the only judgment which is to be

executed. Thus it is the President whose will is to designate the offensive conduct; it is his will that is to ascertain the individuals on whom it is charged; and it is his will, that is to cause the sentence to be executed. It is rightly affirmed therefore, that the act unites legislative and judicial powers to those of the executive. It is affirmed that this union of powers subverts the general principles of free government." Madison, also, designated differences between "alien enemies" and "alien friends," along with how the treatment of the respective designations should differ.

While this all may seem like the Founding Fathers wanted to welcome anyone and everyone, they, too, had reservations. Madison noted in 1790 amongst other representatives when establishing a bill on naturalization, "When we are considering the advantages that may result from an easy mode of naturalization, we ought also to consider the cautions necessary to guard against abuses. It is no doubt very desirable that we should hold out as many inducements as possible for the worthy part of mankind to come and settle amongst us, and throw their fortunes into a common lot with ours. But why is this desirable? Not merely to swell the catalogue of people. No, sir, it is to increase the wealth and strength of the community; and those who acquire the rights of citizenship, without adding to the strength or wealth of the community are not the people we are in want of." With a system that is too easy or simple, "aliens might acquire the right of citizenship, and return to the country from which they came, and evade the laws intended to encourage the commerce and industry of the real citizens and inhabitants of America, enjoying at the same time all the advantages."

Washington throughout multiple letters to the likes of John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and Marquis de Lafayette similarly proclaimed the desire for productive immigrants that could add to the strength of America when he wrote, "My opinion with respect to emigration is, that except of useful mechanic's—and some particular descriptions of men—or professions—there is no need of extra encouragement." The only inducements should be "the spirit of the Religions and the genius of the political Institutions of this Country." And like Madison, Washington desired to "draw the wealth, and wealthy men of other Nations by giving security to property, and liberty to its holders," individuals that could "get assimilated to our customs, manners and laws" who "are determined to be sober, industrious & virtuous members of Society."

To this end, Benjamin Franklin was worried about assimilation with mass immigration from individual nations. Though Franklin was not against the admission of Germans in particular, he did note in a letter from 1753, "In short unless the stream of their importation could be turned from this to other colonies, they will soon so out number us, that all the advantages we have will not in My Opinion be able to preserve our language, and even our Government will become precarious." Washington in the aforementioned letter to Adams even said, "While the (immigration) policy, or advantage of its taking place in a body (I mean the settling of them in a body) may be much questioned; for by so doing they retain the language, habits & principles (good or bad) which they bring with them."

Thus, despite worries of assimilation and mass immigration, along with desires to attract the most productive of citizens, the Founding Fathers implemented no restrictions on immigration itself, but rather on naturalization, which itself only required five years of residency (unless you asked John Adams for his preference) and an oath of allegiance or loyalty to the Constitution. As noted by Kevin Portteus, a professor of politics and the Director of American Studies at Hillsdale College, "The near-total lack of restrictions on immigration, coupled with the lack of affirmative incentive to immigrate, meant that actual immigration was largely driven by events and policies beyond America's shores...They had to adopt American virtues and political principles, so that they truly became part of the American regime. By becoming one with America in principles, differences of national origin and ethnicity would be overcome."

Whom I importunely excluded, and who can expand on these and more ideals, was a Founding Father who was an immigrant himself: Alexander Hamilton. Not so ironically, though, the following excerpt from Ron Chernow's biography on Hamilton depicts what the other Founders had sought when it came to immigration – a repudiation of prior fealties, assimilation to the new country, and striving to use the opportunities available to add to the strength of the new country:

He took his unhappy boyhood, tucked it away in a mental closet, and never opened the door again. Beside the horrid memories, this young dynamo simply was not cut out for the drowsy, slow-paced life of slave owners on a tropical island, and he never evinced the least nostalgia for his West Indian boyhood or voiced any desire to return. He wrote two

years later, "Men are generally too much attached to their native countries to leave it and dissolve all their connexions, unless they are driven to it by necessity." He chose a psychological strategy adopted by many orphans and immigrants: he decided to cut himself off from his past and forge a new identity. He would find a home where he would be accepted for what he did, not for who he was, and where he would no longer labor in the shadow of illegitimacy. His relentless drive, his wretched feelings of shame and degradation, and his precocious self-sufficiency combined to produce a young man with an insatiable craving for success.

...Hamilton had immigrated to North America to gratify his ambition and successfully seized the opportunity to distinguish himself.

... Few immigrants have renounced their past more unequivocally or adopted their new country more wholeheartedly.

When it came to refining the Constitution during convention debates, Hamilton was on an island by himself when it came to other immigrants and their capacities to potentially govern one day in America. As Chernow wrote, Hamilton "opposed any attempt to restrict membership in Congress to native-born Americans or to stipulate a residency period before immigrants could qualify for it."

Even so, like Franklin, Hamilton was pessimistic about a massive influx of immigrants. He had said that an "influx of foreigners" would "change and corrupt the national spirit." Moreover, if a massive influx were to occur, he proclaimed, "My opinion is that the mass [of

aliens] ought to be obliged to leave the country," but not in a "cruel or violent" manner so as to avoid "establish(ing) a tyranny." In an examination paper, Hamilton articulated "the consequences that must result from a too unqualified admission of foreigners," and declared that "the safety of a republic depends essentially on the energy of a common National sentiment; on a uniformity of principles and habits; on the exemption of the citizens from foreign bias, and prejudice; and on that love of country which will almost invariably be found to be closely connected with birth, education and family." He expanded on this further:

> The opinion advanced in the *Notes on Virginia* is undoubtedly correct, that foreigners will generally be apt to bring with them attachments to the persons they have left behind; to the country of their nativity, and to its particular customs and manners. They will also entertain opinions on government congenial with those under which they have lived, or if they should be led hither from a preference to ours, how extremely unlikely is it that they will bring with them that *temperate love of liberty*, so essential to real republicanism? There may as to particular individuals, and at particular times, be occasional exceptions to these remarks, yet such is the general rule. The influx of foreigners must, therefore, tend to produce a heterogeneous compound; to change and corrupt the national spirit; to complicate and confound public opinion; to introduce foreign propensities.
>
> ...In times of great public danger there is always a numerous body of men, of whom there may be just grounds of distrust; the suspicion alone weakens the strength of the nation, but their force may be actually employed in assisting an invader.

These statements came after John Adams adopted the Alien and Sedition Acts, which Hamilton had supported. Hamilton would, even, critique the works of Jefferson's Swiss-born Treasury Secretary by asking and then replying, "Who rules the councils of our own ill-fated, unhappy country? A foreigner!"

The attack on a fellow immigrant and the support for the Alien and Sedition Acts may appear to be outliers where Hamilton was upset about attacks against him, as well as upset, or jealous, about the accomplishments and popularity of a Thomas Jefferson presidency and Republican government. Even so, and if we were to treat these immediately preceding sentiments as outliers, Hamilton largely had similar views as his fellow statesmen.

To continue the above examination paper excerpt, Hamilton said:

> By what has been said, it is not meant to contend for a total prohibition of the right of citizenship to strangers, nor even for the very long residence which is now a prerequisite to naturalization, and which of itself, goes far towards a denial of that privilege. The present law (the Alien Acts) was merely a temporary measure adopted under peculiar circumstances and perhaps demands revision. But there is a wide difference between closing the door altogether and throwing it entirely open; between a postponement of fourteen years and an immediate admission to all the rights of citizenship. Some reasonable term ought to be allowed to enable aliens to get rid of foreign and acquire American attachments; to learn the principles and imbibe the spirit of our government; and to admit of at least a probability of their feeling a real interest in our affairs. A residence of at least five years ought to be required.

> If the rights of Naturalization may be communicated by parts, and it is not perceived why they may not, those peculiar to the conducting of business and the acquisition of property, might with propriety be at once conferred, upon receiving proof, by certain prescribed solemnities, of their intention to become citizens; postponing all political privileges to the ultimate term. To admit foreigners indiscriminately to the rights of citizens, the moment they put foot in our country...would be nothing less, than to admit the Grecian Horse into the Citadel of our Liberty and Sovereignty.

Thus, one can deduce – if personal feelings were put aside, much like how Hamilton praised the opinions Jefferson provided in the *Notes on Virginia* (which Hamilton may have had less of an issue doing than he otherwise would have since he wrote the paper using an alias) – Hamilton would have been in favor of Jefferson's Naturalization Law in 1802, which, as stated, completely reverted back to the 1795 Naturalization Act (which was enacted during Washington's presidency, while Hamilton was treasury secretary), with a few additions pertaining to courts that qualify for permitting naturalization.

As for our honorary Founding Father, Abraham Lincoln opposed the popular sentiments that emanated from the Know-Nothings, or what was formally known as the American Party, a party that was rooted in nativism, anti-immigration, and anti-Catholicism. Lincoln had written in a letter in 1855, "I am not a Know-Nothing. That is certain. How could I be? How can any one who abhors the oppression of negroes, be in favor of degrading classes of white people?" As proof, almost a decade later he would sign an immigration encouragement act in 1864.

Many may look on the surface and already deem that Lincoln went against the founders because he encouraged immigration beyond the natural appeal of the American system, and the lack of appeal for respective foreign systems. However, in actuality, Lincoln kept in line with their thinking. Remember, Washington said, "My opinion with respect to emigration is, that *except of useful mechanic's—and some particular descriptions of men—or professions*— there is no need of extra encouragement (emphasis added)." So, as Lincoln had told Congress in 1863 prior to the immigration encouragement act, in America there was "a great deficiency of laborers in every field of industry, *especially in agriculture and in our mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals* (emphasis added)." Thus, Lincoln encouraged immigration for labor and industry purposes, as "our immigrants (are) one of the principal replenishing streams which are appointed by Providence to repair the ravages of internal war and its wastes of national strength and health."

The Act to Encourage Immigration, with the help of a commissioner of immigration subject to the direction of the State Department, did just that. Contracts between employers and migrants could be agreed upon where an immigrant's wages for labor would be advanced and pay for the expenses of their emigration – though the advancement of wages for their labor could not exceed twelve months. If stipulated in the contracts, the advanced wages could serve as a loan for property acquirement, as well, given the Homestead laws were active at the time. Moreover, as Lincoln would tell Congress in 1864, more efforts were desired to "secure the flow of that stream" of immigrants by "prevent(ing) the practice of frauds against the immigrants while on their way and on their arrival in the ports." In essence, Lincoln saw areas that could be enhanced domestically, sought laborers internationally, and wanted to protect them as they came from abroad to our shores with "essential, but very cheap, assistance."

In summation, Lincoln was like the founders: let America and what America has to offer do the encouraging, whether it is our institutions, our land, our commerce, our ability to move up in life, or our freedom. Exceptions for encouraging specific migrants may be necessary, but no encouragement beyond professions and employment – and the wages from such – as well as the opportunity to obtain property, should be offered. All other privileges that come with being an American should be offered once naturalized (such as voting). There were no explicit migrant exclusions, either. However, no matter who the migrant was, allegiance and assimilation to America, her values, and her customs was – and should remain – essential.

To Be Prepared for War is One of the Most Effectual Means of Preserving Peace

What might one of America's greatest presidents and arguably one of mankind's greatest generals, whom also provided this quote in his farewell address, think of a country that spends 12.5% of their budget on defense when the current number of active duty service members is the lowest since 2008, which is also 41% smaller than Russia's military, the U.S. Army itself has roughly 452,000 active-duty soldiers, its smallest enlistment since 1940 and World War II, and according to the Heritage Foundation, between six different branches of the military (Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, Nuclear, and Space), only one is considered "strong" on a scale displaying very weak, weak, marginal, strong, and very strong? In other words, what might George Washington think of America's national security when, on the world stage, we are outnumbered and our supplies are outdated, knowing that, according to the

United States Constitution, one of the government's duties is to "provide for the common defense" and "insure domestic tranquility?"

The following is an excerpt that sheds more light on present day American defense:

> Regarding the Air Force, we had 1,511 fighters (down 66% from 1987), 132 bombers (down 60% from 1987), and total aircrafts for fiscal year 2025 were intended to shrink to 4,903, leaving the Air Force less than one-fifth of its size during its fiscal 1956 peak. After pilots were flying on average over 200 hours a year during the Cold War, often exceeding 300 hours, today that number is closer to 130 hours. Meanwhile, China is at our Cold War numbers and surpassing 200 hours. And as put plainly by Dakota Wood, a U.S. Marine Corps veteran, "The average age of an Air Force fighter is 30 years, older than the pilots flying them. The average age of the majority of refueling aircraft is 60 years...as old (or older) than the parents of the pilots flying them."
>
> As for the Navy, U.S. Navy battle force ships are also estimated to decrease, dropping from 296 in 2020 to 286 in 2025, and ultimately to 280 ships by 2037. Meanwhile, China surpassed our quantity in 2020 with their ships totaling 360, with estimations of them continuing to increase to 400 in 2025.

It is rather very evident what Washington would think of being ill-prepared to defend oneself. After having defied the odds and defeated a British empire, overcame treason, and overcame his own forces that were inexperienced and lacked supplies, Washington said in his first address to Congress as President, "A free people ought not only to be armed, but

disciplined; to which end a uniform and well-digested plan is requisite; and their safety and interest require that they should promote such manufactories as tend to render them independent of others for essential, particularly military, supplies." Several years later, in Washington's fifth address to Congress, he reiterated much of the same points, "pressing the necessity of placing ourselves in a condition of complete defense." As he would say in another address to Congress, "leave nothing to the uncertainty of procuring a warlike apparatus at the moment of public danger." In other words, do not wait to prepare until the last minute. Therefore, "if we desire to avoid insult" and "the reputation of weakness," "we must be able to repel it; if we desire to secure peace, one of the most powerful instruments of our rising prosperity, it must be known that we are at all times ready for war."

How Hamilton would have thought about this is just as clear as Washington. While Washington said America should always take care "to keep ourselves by suitable establishments on a respectable defensive posture," Hamilton supported "an annual purchase of military weapons" to aid "the formation of arsenals." As tension boiled with France in the late 1790s while Adams was president, including the involvement of French privateers capturing American vessels, Hamilton encouraged the development of an army that was 50,000 men strong (a roughly 1,567% increase in manpower compared to when Washington had left office), as well as "an academy for naval and military instruction" (said military school, which came to be known as West Point, was established during Jefferson's presidency). Following the French seizure of American ships and amidst growing fears, Congress approved a smaller version of Hamilton's desire consisting of a Navy Department, 12 new frigates, a "Provisional Army" of 10,000 men, and an "Additional Army" of twelve infantry regiments and six cavalry companies.

John Adams, whom as mentioned was president at the time of increased tension with France and an increased military buildup, was a man who, as biographer David McCullough has noted, resembled the American eagle: "an olive branch in one talon, and in the other the 'emblems of defense.'" McCullough further explained how "John Adams was no warmonger. In self-defense the country might become involved in a war, and for that the country should be prepared, which was the President's intent." Though Adams had "deplored the idea of a standing army," the "rebirth of the navy," which he had referred to as the "wooden walls," and a new Department of the Navy "were his pride and joy." Following the implementation of such, this "pride and joy" was clear in his interactions, writings, and speeches. Adams would tell his Secretary of the Navy, "I am for pursuing all the measure of defense which the laws authorize us to adopt, especially at sea," then later announced in a speech, "We cannot, without committing a dangerous imprudence, abandon those measures of self-protection." As Adams would later admit in 1811, "In all my Public writings and private conversations, a Navy has been my constant theme. The wooden walls—the floating castles the swiming Batteries the floating Citadels of the United States have been my Constant toast."

Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, meanwhile, were less enthusiastic about a grand military – though they would both eventually become so through experience. As soon as Jefferson took office, massive cuts were made to the War and Navy departments, with the army and navy both being downsized, even amidst continued conflict with Barbary states in the Mediterranean where Barbary nations would attack American ships and take American sailors captive. What ensued became the Tripolitan War, "best described as a naval war of intimidation and harassment," and Jefferson, as well as Madison, was determined to prove that the U.S. was "prepared, like the Great Powers, to repel every injury by the sword." As such, after a sea and

land offensive brought Tripoli's leader to terms, the war ended in 1805, four years after it had started.

Though that war ended, what began was a change of heart and a realization for the need of a strong defense. Following the Tripolitan War, yet still in 1805, Jefferson reversed course on the military spending that he cut in his first term in favor of increased spending in his second term (yet still lower compared to defense spending under Adams), where he pushed for weaponry and supplies such as gunboats and larger warships. As Jefferson would tell Congress, "The protection of our citizens, the spirit and honor of our country require that force should be interposed to a certain degree" and "it will probably contribute to advance the object of peace." Years later, Jefferson would "sincerely congratulate" John Adams for the Naval's success as Adams had "been the early and constant advocate of wooden walls." This congratulations came during the War of 1812 with Great Britain, where, with Madison as president, Madison and Congress approved of an enhanced military in December of 1811 consisting of an increased regular army, 50,000 volunteers, an outfitted navy, and armed merchant ships. The unfortunate part of the buildup on Madison's part was not only that it was only six months before he declared war, but that it was *two years* after inclinations of war with Britain arose, including warnings delivered directly from Jefferson to Madison where he considered "war with England inevitable."

A Founding Father whom often does not get enough light of day is America's fifth president, as well as Madison's Secretary of State and Secretary of War during the War of 1812: James Monroe. Monroe had more-than-doubled the nation's peacetime defense spending by the time he left office (1825) compared to Madison's first full year in office (1810). When he was inaugurated, he proclaimed, "To secure us against dangers our coast and inland frontiers

should be fortified, our Army and Navy, regulated upon just principles as to the force of each, be kept in perfect order, and our militia be placed on the best practicable footing. To put our extensive coast in such a state of defense as to secure our cities and interior from invasion will be attended with expense" and "duly fostered in time of peace." Another arrangement during time of peace would be the training and organization of men "as to be prepared for any emergency." Though the forces would be moderate, they would still be "adequate to the necessary purposes" and to "contribute essentially, both as an auxiliary of defense and as a powerful engine of annoyance, to diminish the calamities of war and to bring (any) war to a speedy and honorable" close.

Years later, Monroe delivered a message to Congress that would become known as the "Monroe Doctrine." In essence, and in Monroe's words:

> As a principle in which the rights and interests of the United States are involved, that the American continents, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers.
>
> ...In the wars of the European powers in matters relating to themselves we have never taken any part, nor does it comport with our policy to do so. It is only when our rights are invaded or seriously menaced that we resent injuries or make preparation for our defense. With the movements in this hemisphere we are of necessity more immediately connected, and by causes which must be obvious to all enlightened and impartial observers...We owe it, therefore, to candor and to the amicable relations existing between

the United States and those powers to declare that we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety. With the existing colonies or dependencies of any European power we have not interfered and shall not interfere. But with the Governments who have declared their independence and maintain it, and whose independence we have, on great consideration and on just principles, acknowledged, we could not view any interposition for the purpose of oppressing them, or controlling in any other manner their destiny, by any European power in any other light than as the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States.

...It is impossible that the allied powers should extend their political system to any portion of either continent without endangering our peace and happiness; nor can anyone believe that our southern brethren, if left to themselves, would adopt it of their own accord. It is equally impossible, therefore, that we should behold such interposition in any form with indifference.

What the Founders believed and showed is just how important national security is and how important it is to be prepared. While Monroe implemented America's first "if you attack them, you attack us" foreign policy, they all either knew beforehand or after the fact that being well equipped and well trained is crucial for those at home. It is an essential federal government duty to "provide for the common defense" of our country and "insure domestic tranquility."

As for the honorary Founding Father, Lincoln was an adamant supporter for military strength. While he wanted more enlistment and more supplies for the Civil War itself, Lincoln

had stated, "The events of the war give an increased interest and importance to the Navy *which will probably extend beyond the war itself* (emphasis added)." In the same message to Congress, Lincoln added, "The armored vessels in our Navy completed and in service, or which are under contract and approaching completion, are believed to exceed in number those of any other power; but while these may be relied upon for harbor defense and coast service, *others of greater strength and capacity* will be necessary for cruising purposes and to *maintain our rightful position on the ocean* (emphasis added)."

Staying on matters regarding the Navy, in 2025, if one were to look at total naval ships by country – and not just the total number of battle force ships as previously mentioned – they might conclude that Lincoln, Monroe, and Adams would be disappointed and worried, along with Hamilton and Washington (and likely Jefferson and Madison, too, as they had come to learn in their respective presidencies). Looking at the numbers, China has 762 total naval ships, North Korea has 723, and Russia has 652. The U.S.A. has 466.

While America is the home of the brave, we should also provide the brave with "greater strength and capacity" so that we have "our rightful position on the ocean" in order to repel any "insult" and any "reputation of weakness," but most importantly "secure peace" and "provide for the common defense," as well as "insure domestic tranquility," while showing the rest of the world "that we are at all times ready for war" if provoked, yet in doing so we prefer peace.

Peace, Commerce and Honest Friendship with All Nations, Entangling Alliances with None

The foreign policy for America at her founding can be more-or-less summed up using George Washington's farewell address, which is what so many people often look to for doing just that. Yet this quote, coming from one of Washington's bigger political adversaries in terms of tension and disagreements on how to govern, whom would resign his position as Washington's Secretary of State during Washington's presidency, ironically does the foreign policy of the Founding Fathers justice. As Thomas Jefferson stated in his first inaugural address, America's foreign policy in her earliest days revolved around respecting each other's sovereignty and opening up the ports for fair trade with everyone, without forming permanent alliances.

What makes this more ironic is Jefferson notoriously opposed Washington's neutrality in the French Revolutionary Wars against Britain and other European nations. Since the French helped America in America's Revolutionary War, Jefferson desired diplomatic and military reciprocation. But if we set that aside for a moment and consider the quote that headlines this section from Jefferson's inauguration, he understood, as he had helped write in the Declaration of Independence, that America is "among the powers of the Earth" with a "separate and equal station" with the said powers. Meaning, America respects each respective nation's claim to sovereignty, no matter how big or small the nation is, as long as they respect America's.

Common assumptions many have when they think about the Founding Fathers is they think about them as isolationists, and they point to Washington's farewell address as evidence. Within such, Washington stated, "It is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world...Taking care always to keep ourselves, by suitable establishments, on a respectably defensive posture, we may safely trust to temporary alliances for extraordinary emergencies."

Yet, what Washington was alluding to was *flexibility*, so as to not limit America's commercial partnerships and jeopardize America's safety. He in no way favored isolationism. Isolationism is a foreign policy that advocates both non-intervention in foreign affairs and non-entanglement – essentially closed off to the outside world. Washington, instead, believed "harmony, liberal intercourse with all nations, are recommended by policy, humanity, and interest" with a commercial policy that held "an equal and impartial hand, neither seeking nor granting exclusive favors or preferences." Nowhere did he say to isolate from the rest of the world. As for Washington's motive for his sense of "duty of holding a neutral conduct" – which is very often overlooked – he said it was "to *gain time* to our country to settle and mature its yet recent institutions and to progress without interruption to that degree of strength and consistency which is necessary to give it, humanly speaking, the command of its own fortunes (emphasis added)." Washington desired, at America's birth, time and self-sufficiency, with exceptions in the case of emergency, in order to build and become stronger.

What makes America especially unique, as Washington demonstrated in his farewell address, is her geographical location. As Washington had mentioned, "Our detached and distant situation invites and enables us to pursue a different course," rather than being engaged in frequent controversies, such as the reality of being a nation in Europe. "If we remain

one people under an efficient government," Washington added, "the period is not far off when we may choose peace or war, as our interest, guided by justice, shall counsel. Why forgo the advantages of so peculiar a situation?" It is the "as our interest, guided by justice, shall counsel" portion that deserves to be highlighted, as that was a major component of all of the Founders' thinking.

Jefferson thought it was in America's interest to aid France in their wars, not only – though likely his predominant opinion – as an obligation due to France having aided America, but also so as to not tarnish relations with another European power after having just embarrassed the arguably most powerful nation in the world at the time, Great Britain. Though Washington disagreed, Jefferson, as already explained, demonstrated a more direct action regarding foreign affairs relating to America's interest when he was in office with how he went to war to protect American ships and commerce with the Barbary pirates.

Jefferson, also, acted in America's security interest when he, as he would admit, unconstitutionally executed the Louisiana Purchase with France in 1803. Ports along the Mississippi River were being closed off to American vessels by the Spanish, especially in New Orleans, which jeopardized American safety and trade. Moreover, Spain had returned Louisiana to France, which was under the rule of a young, aggressive, and unpredictable general by the name of Napoleon Bonaparte. With Bonaparte making costly failures and lacking funds to focus entirely on conflicts and conquest in Europe, as well as lacking interest in controlling land in North America, Jefferson, James Madison, Robert Livingston, and James Monroe capitalized. While the Jefferson administration had initially offered $2 million for the port of New Orleans and land to the east along the Gulf of Mexico, Napoleon and the parties

involved agreed, instead, for America to acquire the entire Louisiana territory for a price tag of $15 million.

Jefferson, as he had written in a letter to a fellow citizen, said the acquisition served three purposes: it would "ensure to our Western brethren the means of exporting their produce;" it would "exclude those bickerings with foreign powers;" and "it secures to us the course of a peaceable nation." Security, commerce, and America's best interests, yet again, remain the triumphant foreign policy.

Jefferson knew "the interests of commerce place the principal object within the constitutional powers and care of Congress," but he put the country's best interests above the law. In fact, he was so adamant about the deal at hand that he did not want to wait for the legislative process to run its course and make the Louisiana Purchase a constitutional act. Rather, Jefferson was in favor of "ratify(ing) and pay(ing) our money" *while* the legislative process ran its course in order to solidify as soon as possible "an act done for (the nation's) great good." Thus, while admitting to the unconstitutionality, Jefferson still deemed that "an amendment of the constitution seems necessary," nonetheless. He did not want to be above the law, but instead only doing so when absolutely necessary for security purposes, then subsequently seeking an amendment to grant power for future similar actions – which if the reader remembers, was exactly Lincoln's rationale for some of his wartime actions.

Going back to the disagreements over whether to aid France in their wars with Great Britain and other surrounding European nations or not, this resulted in public written debates between Alexander Hamilton and James Madison over foreign policy; Hamilton sided with Washington, Madison sided with Jefferson – which added more fuel to the fire as that became evidence that there was immense division within Washington's administration.

Hamilton viewed "self preservation (as) the first duty of a nation," which led him to view neutrality, "where a nation is at liberty to keep out of a war in which other nations are engaged and means so to do, (as) a usual and proper measure." "As in the *present instance* (emphasis added)," Hamilton added, "good faith does not require that the United States should put in jeopardy their essential interests, perhaps their very existence." Even so, "had the United States a powerful marine or could they command one in time," then the situation could be different, thus demonstrating a precursor to what Washington would later say in his farewell address about "gain(ing) time to our country to settle and mature its yet recent institutions and to progress without interruption to that degree of strength and consistency which is necessary to give it, humanly speaking, the command of its own fortunes."

Hamilton had, also, provided further characteristics to qualify America remaining neutral. In doing so, in providing reasons for staying neutral, in providing reasons for "why not," he provided reasons for providing aid; for "why yes." He had detailed that "no country is bound to partake in hazards of the most critical kind, which may have been produced or promoted, by the Indiscretion and intemperance of another." In essence, the United States are not obligated to join forces with another country that started the conflict in question. Hamilton further clarified by saying "good faith requires that the ordinary hazards of war should be fairly encountered." Good faith is "irrelative to the contests which grow out of revolutions of government," unless "stipulations in national treaties...have express reference" to the otherwise.

Long story short, to Hamilton, "the United States have valid and honorable pleas to offer against" aiding another country that is the aggressor. He implicitly left the door open for "good faith" to qualify America's actions in the circumstances of defense and if treaties have expressed such.

To Hamilton, much like Washington, America was not equipped for war in that present time. Circumstances could be different when America's military prospects improved, but even so, rather than being aggressors and on the offensive, again like Washington, Hamilton saw good faith in a "respectably defensive posture," leaving "temporary alliances" only for "extraordinary emergencies." Altogether, though, as Hamilton wrote, respecting independent sovereign nations should be the name of the game, and "a nation has a right to manage its own concerns as it thinks fit," leaving each nation the "right to provide for its own happiness."

Madison's writings on the matter pertained more so to the constitutionality of the president making a proclamation of neutrality. Ironically, he would help Jefferson close an unconstitutional Louisiana Purchase roughly a decade later as Jefferson's Secretary of State.

That being said, Madison was a contributor to drafting Washington's farewell address, along with Hamilton. With this, and with Madison calling the address one of "the best guides to the distinctive principles" of America, one can infer that Madison's foreign policy thoughts were along the same lines as the words that ultimately came together by Washington.

As for John Adams, he wanted to continue the neutrality that Washington espoused. But France would not make that easy. As the French raided U.S. merchant ships (killing and wounding American sailors in the process), Adams built up the Navy. Adams sought diplomatic solutions, as well, but France wanted bribes, which culminated into the XYZ Affair, and the entire ordeal became known as the Quasi War.

It would be James Monroe, though, who would explicitly espouse that America's best interests exist in the best interests of other nations. The Declaration of Independence details how it is "self-evident" that "all men are created equal" with "certain unalienable rights." Therefore, along with the respect for individual sovereign nations, the Founders encouraged the

honoring of equal natural rights around the world, and "we should consider any attempt" on the part of imperialists "to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety," and dangerous to the "separate but equal station" countries have with one another.

To add credence to the notion of America's founding caring for the liberty of humans away from America's shores, John Quincy Adams – though he was not a Founding Father, he was John Adams' son, he helped write the Monroe Doctrine and was Monroe's Secretary of State, and he would become the first president elected in America's history (the sixth overall) who was not one of the Founding Fathers – said, "Wherever the standard of freedom and Independence has been or shall be unfurled, there will her heart, her benedictions and her prayers be." He continued:

> But she goes not abroad, in search of monsters to destroy.
>
> She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all.
>
> She is the champion and vindicator only of her own.
>
> She will commend the general cause by the countenance of her voice, and the benignant sympathy of her example.
>
> She well knows that by once enlisting under other banners than her own, were they even the banners of foreign independence, she would involve herself beyond the power of extrication, in all the wars of interest and intrigue, of individual avarice, envy, and ambition, which assume the colors and usurp the standard of freedom.
>
> The fundamental maxims of her policy would insensibly change from liberty to force.

America is not, according to the Founders, isolated from the rest of the world. She may be geographically, which helps with safety. But she is a beacon of freedom that acknowledges a universal sense of natural rights that every human being has. She wants to set an example for others to follow, and if others do indeed follow, then she will respect and pray for their well-being. If she is in a state where resources would permit adequate aid, and imperialist nations seeking to regain or obtain dominion over sovereign nations move on the offensive, then that is not only an attack on the sovereign nations, but that is an attack against liberty, and therefore an attack against her. America will always be a defensive nation; she should never be on the offensive or an aggressor. Therefore, she maintains "harmony, liberal intercourse with all nations," yet at all times, if safety, America's best interests, and justice deem it justifiable, prepared for war.

Switching over to the commerce side of things, even though the Founders desired a general policy that dealt "an equal and impartial hand, neither seeking nor granting exclusive favors or preferences," they could still be called protectionists due to their rejection of direct taxation and their affinity for tariffs to protect the infant nation's industries. To the Founders – as well as Lincoln decades later – if there could exist a tax that not only provided revenue for the federal government, but simultaneously limited foreign goods from entering the country in order to improve the domestic economy, then there could be nothing better. However, despite their words resembling what many today would label as protectionism, their practices were far less protectionist than what meets the eye.

Included in the Declaration of Independence as an indictment against King George III, and was thus a "fact" that was part of a "direct object" on the part of Great Britain to "the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States," was "cutting off our Trade with all

parts of the world." Hence, this led to Washington's "equal and impartial hand" when dealing with others, and Jefferson's "peace, commerce and honest friendship with all nations." Another Founding Father who has yet to really be mentioned is John Jay, the first Chief Justice of the United States and contributor to *The Federalist Papers*, who practically flawlessly wrote in 1780:

> With Respect to the Protection of national Industry I take it for granted, that it will always flourish where it is lucrative and not discouraged...Every Man being then at Liberty by the Law to cultivate the Earth as he pleased, to raise what he pleased, to manufacture as he pleased, and to sell the Produce of his Labor to whom he pleased, and for the best Prices without any Duties or Impositions whatsoever. I have indeed no apprehension whatever on this Subject, I believe there are no People more industrious than those of America.

Coming off a revolutionary war where a battle cry was, "No taxation without representation," it is no surprise that not only were the Founders opposed to direct taxation, but also that another form of taxation (tariffs, or import duties) would become a contentious issue. So much so, that state nullification over a tariff law under Andrew Jackson's administration could have resulted in Civil War before the issue of slavery abolition even gained traction.

But going back to the Founders being called protectionists – that can be a stretch. Their words, especially those from Alexander Hamilton, can definitely seem like they desired high tariff rates to discourage the purchase of foreign goods and encourage the growth of American manufacturing. In practice, though, if one were to look at the actual rates, they would

understand the second reason behind the implementation of tariffs: generate revenue. The tariff rates were kept at a moderate level so as to not deter trade entirely – that is until Henry Clay gained prominence in the 1820s.

The very first tariff bill that became law, the Tariff Act of 1789, was introduced by Madison and enacted by Washington. A legislation that was "necessary for the support of government, for the discharge of the debts of the United States, and the encouragement and protection of manufactures," it called for a 5% tariff on the value of most imported goods, but also called for varying rates on specific goods – goods that could be produced in America, thus encouraging citizens to purchase from American producers – such as wine having a specific tax of ten cents per gallon and boots being taxed at 50 cents per pair. If *all* of the goods were taxed based on their value, though, the average tariff rate would have turned out to be 8.5%.

This modest and even hand the Founders adopted faced challenges very early on. Not only amongst themselves, but between themselves and the French, as well as the British.

Great Britain and France were by far the predominant trading partners for America at the time; 90% of American imports of manufactured goods were from Great Britain, and America exported seven times as many goods to France as what America would import from them. And yet, relations with Britain were continuously tense. They were not allowing American vessels to trade with the British West Indies, they were not abandoning British forts that they had previously agreed to abandon in the Treaty of Paris that ended the Revolutionary War, and they were stopping American supplies from going to French dominions, going as far as seizing naval and military ships and impressing American sailors. John Jay was dispatched to deal with these issues diplomatically, resulting in the Jay Treaty of 1795, but the treaty was immensely unpopular. Simply, America traded an avoidance of war for Britain to more-or-less continue

their distasteful actions – Britain could still restrict trading access with the West Indies, and they could continue to seize neutral ships bound for France (they just had to compensate America for doing so). These appeasements would actually further ignite the tempers in France with their opinions of America, leading to the aforementioned Quasi War, and America's first "trade war."

Fast forward a few more years, and the spotlight was back on the British. Impressment of Americans into the Royal Navy continued. The British wanted to regain deserters, but ultimately would seize far more Americans than British deserters – of roughly 10,000 men taken from American ships, only about 1,000 had British citizenship. To alleviate the issue, Congress passed the Non-Importation Act of 1806, which outlawed any goods that could be made in America from being imported from Great Britain. Unfortunately, this did not alleviate the issue.

Not long after, an American ship known as the U.S.S. *Chesapeake* had barely a chance to sail in open waters before a British ship, the *Leopard*, shot at the *Chesapeake* for refusing to let them search for deserters. After blowing holes in the *Chesapeake*, the British boarded, took one single deserter, and impressed three American sailors into the Royal Navy. Jefferson, now as president with the year being 1807, wasted no time in responding.

In a proclamation, Jefferson called the "belligerent party" that is the British "habitual" abusers of "the laws of hospitality" due to their "constant recurrence of acts of insubordination to the laws, of violence to the persons, and of trespasses on the property of our citizens." Within the proclamation, Jefferson ordered all armed vessels under commission of Great Britain to leave the harbors and waters of the United States. If British ships were to return, Jefferson forbade any aid or supplies from being provided. Any American citizens caught doing such

would "suffer all the pains and penalties by the laws provided for such Offences." Jefferson would even have the Virginia militia capture the *Leopard*. Once successful, Jefferson allowed the British sailors to return to Britain as a sign of good will. But the good will stopped there.

Rather than banning specific goods from being imported from just Great Britain, Congress and Jefferson opted for banning *all* goods from being imported from *all* nations, as well as forbade the exportation of goods of any sort by land as well as by sea, with the Embargo Act of 1807. America's trading was completely cut off – legally at least. Smuggling was a major repercussion of the Embargo, as well as an overall suffering of the American economy. Moreover, what was meant to punish the British, the act had little effect as Great Britain looked to Latin and South America, as well as other nations, for their trading needs.

This resulted in the Non-Intercourse Act of 1809, which Jefferson signed just three days before leaving office. With the new legislation, the Embargo Act was repealed and trade was opened up to all nations around the world – just not Great Britain nor France, also known as America's main trading partners for imports and exports, respectively.

Again not long after, once Madison took office, the Non-Intercourse Act was replaced by Macon's Bill No 2 in 1810. As part of the new legislation, "no British or French armed vessels shall be permitted to enter the harbors or waters under the jurisdiction of the United States," and intercourse while on open water with British or French vessels was forbidden. However, included in the bill was a section denoting how if either Great Britain or France revoke or modify their edicts so as to "cease to violate the neutral commerce of the United States," then the "restrictions imposed by this act shall...cease and be discontinued in relation to the nation revoking or modifying her decrees." If the other nation does not subsequently revoke or modify their actions, then they will face "full force and effect" of American trade prohibition "so far as

related to the dominions, colonies and dependencies, and to the articles the growth, produce or manufacture of the dominions, colonies, and dependencies of the nation thus refusing or neglecting."

Long story short, the British kept seizing American ships and impressing American sailors; Madison would issue another embargo against Great Britain in 1812; and the War of 1812 between America and Great Britain commenced.

The point of explaining this was to demonstrate how trade wars and sanctions may hurt the sanction-ees – unless they find new trading partners – but they primarily hurt the sanction-ers. Moreover, conceding some favorable terms to one nation can stir animosity in others. Hence Washington's advice of dealing with an even hand.

But another point of explaining this was to show the growing favoritism, or perhaps obligation due to embargoes, toward protectionist policies. With another war on America's shores, the federal government needed to generate revenue while simultaneously stir the American public into manufacturing supplies. Thus, Congress doubled the preexisting low tariff rates. Following the war, with debt rising and fear over the possibility of American manufacturing suffering from renewed trade with Great Britain, Madison and Congress passed the Tariff Act of 1816, which rewrote the tariff code and assigned various goods different tariff rates (which included some goods having no import duties whatsoever). With levies being an average of 42% higher than they were before the War of 1812, the highest tariff rate became 30% on goods such as leather, saddles, umbrellas, parasols, and more, while the average tariff rate stood at roughly 25%. Though this was a step toward a protectionist policy, revenue was just as, if not more, important than encouraging domestic manufacturing. Not to mention, the tariff rates were, still, not yet extreme.

Following the Panic of 1819, though, America experienced her first true protectionist tariff policy in the form of the Tariff Act of 1824, as the main justification for raising the duties was for protecting American manufacturers and farmers from foreign competition. Tariff rates not only went above 30%, but reached 35, 40, and 50%, with 35% being the new average.

With Monroe being president at the time of its enactment, this would be the last tariff bill attributable to the Founders, but even with that being the case, other Founders (Madison and Jefferson to be more specific) denounced this bill. Jefferson called the bill "very revolting to a great portion of the people of the states," and wrote to Madison a declaration depicting violations against the principles of the Constitution. Within the declaration, Jefferson said:

> This assembly does further disavow, and declare to be most false and unfounded, the doctrine, that the compact, in authorising it's federal branch to lay and collect taxes duties, imposts and excises to pay the debts and provide for the common defence and general welfare of the US. has given them thereby a power to do whatever *they* may think, or pretend, would promote the general welfare, which construction would make that, of itself, a complete government, without limitation of powers; but that the plain sense and obvious meaning was that they might levy the taxes necessary to provide for the general welfare by the various acts of power therein specified and delegated to them, and by no others.

> ...We owe every other sacrifice to ourselves, to our federal brethren, and to the world at large, to pursue with temper and perseverance the great experiment which shall prove that man is capable of living in society, governing itself by laws self-imposed, and

> securing to it's members the enjoyment of life, liberty, property and peace; and further to shew that even when the government of it's choice shall shew a tendency to degeneracy, we are not at once to despair but that the will & the watchfulness of it's sounder parts will reform it's aberrations, recall it to it's original and legitimate principles, and restrain it within the rightful limits of self-government. And these are the objects of this Declaration and Protest.

The ironic thing about what Jefferson said is he said this in 1825, but what he said is just as applicable in 2025.

Meanwhile, Madison wrote directly to Henry Clay that he "can not concur in the extent to which the pending Bill carries the tariff, nor in some of the reasoning by which it is advocated." Madison continued with the following:

> The Bill, I think, loses sight too much of the general principle which leaves to the judgment of individuals the choice of profitable employments for their labour and capital...I am a friend to the general principle of "free industry" as the basis of a sound System of political Economy...With respect to the operation of the projected Tariff, I am led to believe that it will disappoint the calculations both of its friends and of its adversaries...The Tariff, I apprehend will disappoint also those who expect it to *put an end* to unfavorable balances of trade.

Even though the Founders expressed these beliefs both directly and indirectly, as well as showed by example how a low and modest tariff can be both revenue generating and industry encouraging, tariffs would continue to be taken to new levels while fluctuating along the way.

What became known as the Tariff of Abominations in 1828, another new tariff legislation increased the average import duty to roughly 50%, which absolutely frustrated the Southern states to the point where state nullification became a near reality, and fears of disunion boiled. Insert Andrew Jackson. Jackson deplored any notions of Southern states nullifying over tariff measures – or any federal government measure for that matter – so while he was organizing military forces in the form of the Force Bill, he was compromising with Clay to lower import duties in order to appease the South. As author Jon Meacham had written, Jackson operated on two levels: he "projected an image of strength while looking for a way out." Both the Force Bill and the Compromise of 1833 passed, which lowered over ten years the tariff rates to a new standard rate of 20%, making anything above 20% a protectionist rate, and a number of goods would have no import duty on them whatsoever.

Again, though, this low and modest rate did not last long. Rates spiked back up shortly after the import duties reached the standard rate of 20% in 1842, but would – again – be lowered. Since this is trending vastly away from both the practices and beliefs of the Founders, as well as the time period of the Founders, only one more administration and its respective tariff actions will be mentioned. And that was, in this case, our honorary Founding Father, Abraham Lincoln, who drastically increased the rates during the Civil War.

Lincoln stood steadfastly by Henry Clay and Whig, as well as the soon to be Republican, beliefs. This meant an enthusiasm for anti-slavery sentiments, for free labor, for internal improvements, and for tariffs. As Lincoln had once said, "A tariff is to the government what

meat is to the family. If there be any article of necessity which can be produced at home, with as little or nearly the same labor as abroad, it would be better to protect that article." And protect it is just what the "Henry Clay-tariff man" did.

Though Lincoln had believed that a "moderate, carefully adjusted, protective tariff" would be best, he would sign a series of tariff bills, known as the Morrill Tariff and its subsequent revisions, where the average import duty went from 15-to-19% in 1860, to 37.2% by 1863, then to 47% by 1864. How could such a vehement admirer of the Founders not only drastically increase import duties, but implement the nation's first income tax at the same time (as well as some excise taxes to top it all off)?

The deadliest war in human history was why. He had the Hamiltonian philosophy of protecting industries in order to spur domestic manufacturing, but he, also, had a war to win – and war is expensive. Moreover, Lincoln dealt with the threat of Great Britain and other nations recognizing the Confederacy as a sovereign nation through their respective declarations of neutrality. Between blockades at Southern ports, capturing (but then returning) two Confederate ministers (one to England and the other to France) on board the *Trent* (a British mail ship), English shipbuilders constructing lightweight blockade runners and warships for the Confederacy, and France unofficially supporting the Confederacy, Lincoln's prospects for trade amidst rising tension with foreign nations, and foreign nations, themselves, relatively reluctant (although at the same time tempted) to get involved, were less than ideal.

Even so, throughout the period of the Civil War, federal government revenue consistently almost equaled federal expenditures. And it was because of the increased tariff rates – but it was indirectly rather than directly correlated. As Lincoln's Treasury Secretary, Salmon Chase, reported, "The increase of duties on imports has had the effect to decrease

importations to a considerable extent," but this was "counterbalanced by the stimulus afforded to domestic industry and the consequent increased revenue from internal taxes."

Even though the tariff rates were indeed high, and would stay at elevated levels for decades to come (the average tariff rate on dutiable goods hovered between 40-and-50 percent until the early 20th century), the internal taxes would be drastically reduced or eliminated altogether as the war came to a close and shortly thereafter. Moreover, though many will want to paint Lincoln as a big government glorified tax collector, Commissioner of the Revenue at the time, David A. Wells, calculated that by 1864, virtually everything in America was being taxed at a rate of 8-to-15 percent – an extremely modest level by today's standards. Lincoln, even, denounced the practice of direct taxation as it is a process that involves government officials "covering the land" like "swarms of Egyptian locusts, devouring every blade of grass and other green thing." In Lincoln's mind, "So long as direct taxation for the support of government is not resorted to, a tariff is necessary." Furthermore, not only were the all-encompassing tax rates drastically lower than what tax rates became in the 20th century, but it can still be considered drastically lower than what tax rates currently are in the 21st century. Moral of the story, Lincoln compromised during a national emergency to raise revenue for the war, not to impede on the lives and wallets of citizens for a prolonged period of time, nor to raise revenue for an overreaching centralized government and make emergency measures the new norm.

Thus, Lincoln was Hamiltonian with his belief in the utility of tariffs and Madisonian with the implementation of such – desiring tariffs that are modest in rate but adjustable based on necessity and emergency, such as during war. He, in fact, abided by the Founders more than we give him credit for, even though his administration ultimately prolonged protectionist policies for subsequent decades, far above what the Founders had preferred.

Intelligence, Patriotism, Christianity, and a Firm Reliance on Him, Who Has Never Yet Forsaken this Favored Land, Are Still Competent to Adjust, in the Best Way, All Our Present Difficulty

As America's Constitution states, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof," which puts, as Thomas Jefferson said, "a wall of separation between Church & State." In essence, the Founders believed you should not govern religion. However, they most certainly believed you cannot govern *without* religion, either. And though he was not a devout Christian, or anything close to it, growing up, Abraham Lincoln – who said the line that begins this section – would become such as "all things most desirable for man's welfare are to be found portrayed in (the Bible)," so as one goes through life, as well as in government, "He, from Whom all blessings flow, must not be forgotten."

Before we get to the Declaration of Independence, God was by the colonists' side up until its writing, as well as during and after. Many will remember notable flags of the colonies during the Revolution, most notably the ones denoting "Join or Die," "Don't Tread on Me," and "Liberty or Death," as well as the first iteration of what would become the American flag, thanks to Betsy Ross. But Washington himself commanded and outfitted ships in 1775 to intercept British vessels at sea, and the flag that outfitted them said, "An Appeal to Heaven." The very same flag became the maritime flag of Massachusetts in 1776 and remained so until 1971. With such,

Washington and the colonists appealed to God for help in their war to conquer tyranny in hopes of freedom.

Then came the Declaration of Independence in 1776, which both opens *and* closes with mentions of God. As already mentioned, mankind's universal natural rights come from Nature's God. But the authors of the declaration, as well as the colonists, knew they could not secure these rights, individual liberty, and sovereignty without the help of a Divine Being. Prior to Jefferson's first draft of the declaration being completed, John Adams had written that "it is religion and morality alone, which can establish the principles upon which freedom can securely stand." Upon completion of the final declaration, as they wrote in the final portion of the declaration, America's ancestors "appealed to the Supreme Judge of the world" for "the protection of divine Providence" in winning, establishing, and protecting their freedom.

Then, the Revolutionary War was in full swing, and Washington knew, with inadequate supplies, food, and fighting power, God was needed to prevail. Washington would repeatedly tell his men to turn to God in times of need. Shortly after the declaration was made, Washington told his soldiers, "Let us therefore rely upon the goodness of the cause, and the aid of the Supreme Being, in whose hands victory is, to animate and encourage us to great and noble actions." In letters, Washington would exclaim the "dependence we ought to place in that all-wise and powerful Being, on whom alone our success depends," and he would often "look upon every dispensation of Providence as designed to answer some valuable purpose."

Throughout the war, Washington would encourage fasting, days of prayer, and church attendance, and he would appoint military chaplains, because "while we are duly performing the duty of good soldiers, we certainly ought not to be inattentive to the higher duties of religion."

While the war was waging, Congress was doing their best to provide Bibles for citizens. In 1777, English language Bibles could not be printed in America, and with Great Britain blockading any materials from getting to the United States, there was a demand to import Bibles from elsewhere because "unless timely care be used to prevent it, we shall not have Bibles for our schools and families for the public worship of God in our churches." Congress would approve, and more specifically "desire," the Committee of Commerce "to have a Bible printed" and imported, totaling 20,000, "from Holland, Scotland, or elsewhere." Five years later, in 1782, Congress would "highly approve the pious and laudable undertaking of Mr. (Robert) Aitken," and "recommend," as well as "authorize," the publishing of Aitken's English-language Bible "in the manner (Aitken) shall think proper." With Founding Fathers such as James Duane, Thomas McKean, and John Witherspoon having comprised a Congress-appointed committee that "from time to time (attended) to (Aitken's) progress in the work" and "(recommended) it to the two Chaplains of Congress to examine and give their opinion of the execution," the Aitken Bible became the first English-language Bible printed in the United States of America.

This was no small matter, either. Even George Washington recognized its importance and usefulness. When Reverend John Rodgers, a pastor and military chaplain during the Revolutionary War, wrote to Washington in 1783 suggesting that Congress present each soldier with an Aitken Bible, Washington replied that "it would have pleased" him "if Congress had been pleased to make such an important present to the brave fellows; who have done so much for the Security of their Country's Rights & Establishment." However, Congress had already discharged two-thirds of the Continental Army, so it was then "too late to make the attempt." That being said, if timing had aligned more, Rodgers' "proposition respecting Mr. Aitken's Bible would have been particularly noticed" by Washington, as our Revolutionary General

hoped that "we shall not forget that to Divine Providence is to be ascribed the Glory & the Praise" for "the happy Event of Peace" and "with the Establishment of our Liberties & Independence."

Aside from Congress and the national level, individual states included in their state constitutions oaths and tests of faith in order for individuals to be elected or appointed to an office. From 1776 until 1784, Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Georgia, Vermont, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire required statements of belief in the Christian religion, including specific mentions of the Protestant denomination, like the following: "I, do profess faith in God the Father, and in Jesus Christ His only Son, and in the Holy Ghost, one God, blessed for evermore" (Delaware); "I do believe in one God...and I do acknowledge the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by Divine inspiration" (Pennsylvania and Vermont); "I do declare that I believe the Christian religion, and have a firm persuasion of its truth" (Massachusetts); "the representatives shall be...of the Protestant religion" (Georgia and New Hampshire). These states would eventually disestablish religion from their constitutions as a result of the First Amendment, but they were initially established, nonetheless, and the foundation principles were laid.

Returning to the national level, with the Revolutionary War now being over, and with the Articles of Confederation being a flawed first attempt at a unifying document for a national government and a new country, the Founders reconvened for the Constitutional Convention to formulate what would become our present-day government. Much like how each session of Congress at the time had opened with prayer, Benjamin Franklin – the man who had written a "doctrine to be preached," which said, "That there is one God Father of the Universe. That he is initinitely good, Powerful and wise. That he is omnipresent. That he ought to be worshipped, by

Adoration Prayer and Thanksgiving both in publick and private" – proposed that they do the same for the convention. He had motioned:

> I have lived, Sir, a long time and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth -- that *God governs in the affairs of men.* And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without [H]is notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without [H]is aid?...I also believe that without [H]is concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better than the Builders of Babel: We shall be divided by our little partial local interests; our projects will be confounded, and we ourselves shall be become a reproach and a bye word down to future age. And what is worse, mankind may hereafter from this unfortunate instance, despair of establishing Governments by Human Wisdom, and leave it to chance, war, and conquest.
>
> I therefore beg leave to move -- that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven, and its blessings on our deliberations, be held in this Assembly every morning before we proceed to business, and that one or more of the Clergy of this City be requested to officiate in that service."

Though this was seconded, no motion to vote was undertaken, and they instead opted for a 4th of July sermon.

With the Constitution now ratified, a Constitution, as Adams had said, that "was made only for a moral and religious people," Washington was to be sworn in as the first President of the United States. Inaugural activity, according to papers, involved people going "up to the

house of God" and "commit the new government to the holy protection and blessing of the Most High." And after Washington knelt to kiss a Bible – which, according to legend and the words of a 19th century publication, may or may not have included Washington saying, "So help me God" – after finishing the oath of office, he began his inaugural speech with appeals to God, saying:

> It would be peculiarly improper to omit in this first official act my fervent supplications to that Almighty Being who rules over the universe, who presides in the councils of nations, and whose providential aids can supply every human defect, that His benediction may consecrate to the liberties and happiness of the people of the United States a Government instituted by themselves for these essential purposes, and may enable every instrument employed in its administration to execute with success the functions allotted to his charge...No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the Invisible Hand which conducts the affairs of men more than those of the United States. Every step by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency.

Before closing his speech, Washington could not leave "without resorting once more to the benign Parent of the Human Race in humble supplication that, since He has been pleased to favor the American people with opportunities for deliberating in perfect tranquility, and dispositions for deciding with unparalleled unanimity on a form of government for the security of their union and the advancement of their happiness, so His divine blessing may be equally conspicuous in the enlarged views, the temperate consultations, and the wise measures on

which the success of this Government must depend." Upon conclusion, Washington, Vice President Adams, the Senate and the House proceeded to St. Paul's Chapel where a chaplain of Congress led a service.

Washington closed his presidency with one last reference to God's role in America. Within his notable farewell address, Washington said, "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports." Without a higher being or a greater purpose, if one were to "desert" religious obligations, Washington believed property would be insecure, and one's reputation and life would, also, be in jeopardy. Moreover, as Washington continued, "And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle."

Following Washington in the Oval Office was another Godly man in the form of John Adams. In Adams' inauguration, he, too, opened and closed his speech with how "an overruling Providence" had "protected this country from (Great Britain)," and subsequently prayed to "that Being who is supreme over all, the Patron of Order, the Fountain of Justice, and the Protector in all ages of the world of virtuous liberty," that He may "continue His blessing upon this nation and its Government and give it all possible success and duration consistent with the ends of His providence." Adams would even write to Jefferson post both of their presidencies the impact and role He has had on America, saying, "The general Principles, on which the Fathers Atchieved Independence, were the only Principles in which, that beautiful Assembly of young Gentlemen could Unite, and these Principles only could be intended by them in their Address, or by me in my Answer. And what were these general Principles? I answer, the general

Principles of Christianity." "Now I will avow," continued Adams, "that I then believed, and now believe, that those general Principles of Christianity, are as eternal and immutable, as the Existence and Attributes of God: and that those Principles of Liberty, are as unalterable as human Nature and our terrestrial, mundane System."

And yet, what were Jefferson's beliefs on the matter? As the main author of the Declaration of Independence, which John Quincy Adams said "laid the cornerstone of human government upon the first precepts of Christianity," he was, in fact, a very complicated and nuanced individual on the matter. He was deeply devoted to science and the laws of nature, and was arguably the staunchest supporter of separation of church and state, yet he never closed his mind to an Almighty Being, especially not as he was on his death bed. Long before he contemplated death to John Adams and describing how he would "ascend in essence to an ecstatic meeting with the friends we have loved and lost and whom we shall still love and never lose again;" long before he would have a passage from the Gospel of Luke read to him, and he would murmur it, himself, near the time of his death; long before a reverend whom Jefferson knew and liked read a prayer as Jefferson was laid to rest; and even before the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson acknowledged the role of God. In Jefferson's *Summary View of the Rights of British America*, Jefferson mentioned the "many unwarrantable encroachments and usurpations...upon those rights which God and the laws have given equally and independently to all." And it is this very same God, as Jefferson wrote in closing, "who gave us life," Whom had, also, "gave us liberty at the same time."

Following the declaration, Jefferson would deliver his *Notes on the State of Virginia* in 1781, and within which he would continue his delineation that God and mankind's liberties are inseparable. As Jefferson wrote on the matter of slavery, he "tremble(s) for (his) country when

(he) reflect(s) that God is just: that His justice cannot sleep forever," and that an "exchange of situation is among possible events: that it may become probable by supernatural interference!" "Can the liberties of a nation be thought secure," Jefferson asked, "when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with his wrath?" With this fear of God, Jefferson hoped the way was being prepared, "under the auspices of heaven, for a total emancipation," and he knew it would not be done without Him.

As for the man who would give Jefferson a run for his money regarding who was the larger advocate for a separate of church and state, Madison, too – as he had written – believed a "belief in a God Allpowerful wise and good is so essential to the moral order of the world and to the happiness of man." Madison had, even, written in *The Federalist Papers* how the "Almighty hand" was "so frequently and signally extended" to America's relief in the Revolution, so much so that "it is impossible for the man of pious reflection not to perceive in it (the drafting of the Constitution)."

Alexander Hamilton, meanwhile, though not remembered for his religious zeal, had "a tender reliance on the mercy of the Almighty, through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ," even if the largest demonstrations of such were in his final years where he would say the aforementioned on his death bed, and he would pray daily. Hamilton had even written to "despise thyself, and adore thy God," whose "perfections have I adored." With time, after he had "examined carefully the evidence of the Christian religion," if Hamilton were "sitting as a juror upon its authenticity," he would give his "verdict in its favor" with the belief he "can prove its truth as clearly as any proposition ever submitted to the mind of man." Moreover, following the Revolution, Hamilton had advocated for Congress to hire chaplains for each brigade in the

army. To Hamilton, much like the previously mentioned Founders, as noted by Hamilton biographer Ron Chernow, "religion formed the basis of all law and morality, and he thought the world would be a hellish place without it."

Other Founding Fathers would either help found or lead Bible societies, including national Bible societies, to promote distribution and reading of the gospel. By roughly 1817, 121 local and state Bible societies had been started, not including America's first national Bible society, the American Bible Society, which was started in 1816. Founding Fathers Elias Boudinot – who was President of Congress during the Revolutionary War from 1782 to 1783, and was appointed by President George Washington to serve as Director of the United States Mint – and John Jay were the first two presidents of the national Bible society. United States Supreme Court Justice John Marshall and sixth president of the United States, John Quincy Adams, would become other officers.

As for our honorary Founding Father, who became closer to our Creator over time, though would still never become a member of a church nor proclaim a belief in a specific denomination (and his secretaries would admit that Lincoln had not "changed his religious opinions towards the close of his life"), Abraham Lincoln had said "to Him (we) owe all things." Like many individuals, not just America's Founding Fathers, Lincoln became more religious as he got older, or at least more open to invoking religion as a resource to look to and abide by, and as people he loved died – especially his children. He had stated in 1846, as well as immediately prior to moving into the Oval Office, that he was "not a member of any Christian Church," yet he referred to the Bible as "the richest source of pertinent quotations" and "the best gift God has given to man," since "all the good the Saviour gave to the world was communicated through this book." And once Lincoln was in office, Lincoln had "wish(ed) to

find a church," and asked friends and acquaintances for recommendations, which resulted in Lincoln often attending services at a Presbyterian church.

If Lincoln's devotion to a higher power was a work in progress, he certainly never showed it, especially later in life, and he even more certainly would not diminish those who had a greater devotion than he did. As he had stated, to ex-slaves no less, that "to Him you owe all things," he had in the past mentioned on the issue of slavery "that God will settle it, and settle it right," since "our reliance is in the *love of liberty* which God has planted in our bosoms." Further to God settling the issue and doing what is right, Lincoln, following the candidate he supported for Illinois' gubernatorial position winning the election, proclaimed, "Let us reinaugurate the good old 'central ideas' of the Republic. We *can* do it. The human heart *is* with us – God is with us." In essence, Lincoln believed we must look to God to do what is right, what is morally right, "never doubting that a just God, in his own good time, will give us the rightful result." As, in Lincoln's mind, "right makes might," and any leader should aim to do such, Lincoln looked to God for help before embarking on his presidency. As he remarked after learning he would become the 16th president, "I feel a great responsibility. God help me, God help me."

While Lincoln was in office, he would assure callers, "Whatever shall appear to be God's will, I will do." Even in his Emancipation Proclamation and his Gettysburg Address, Lincoln invoked the "gracious favor of Almighty God" and "under God, (America) shall have a new birth of freedom." Lincoln often used God to explain the Civil War, depicting how both sides appealed to Him, yet He must decide one side is right and one side is wrong. Moreover, as Lincoln explained in his second inaugural address, He could have prevented a Civil War altogether, but instead His will gave "to both North and South, this terrible war, as the woe due

to those by whom the offence came." In what Frederick Douglass thought "sounded more like a sermon than like a state paper," Lincoln said it was "a truth which needed to be told." Demonstrating how both the North and South had sinned and they were both complicit in the lead up to the war, yet one side with God's help would prevail, Lincoln explained, "Men are not flattered by being shown that there has been a difference of purpose between the Almighty and them. To deny it, however, in this case, is to deny that there is a God governing the world." And Lincoln would not deny it.

To ignore or reject God's place in America, in America's founding, and in our lives should be up to the individual – not thrusted upon society – though it would be severely misguided if done so, particularly for the former two points. From the flags, to the anthems – whether it is America's national anthem, which rings out toward the end, "And this be our motto: 'In God is our trust,'" or the pledge of allegiance, which mentions we are one nation "under God" – to the Declaration of Independence, to the Founders, our greatest leaders, and to their speeches, God is everywhere.

America was established with Christian principles, as Lincoln had alluded to on several occasions. He told a Quaker leader that the Civil War was a battle where the North was contending for "the great *Christian principles.*" He gave a speech at Lewistown, Illinois in 1858 where he proclaimed "[the Founder's] posterity might look up again to the Declaration of Independence and take courage to renew the battle which their fathers began – so that truth, and justice, and mercy, and all the humans and *Christian virtues* might not be extinguished from the land." Lincoln stated in his inaugural address, "Intelligence, patriotism, *Christianity*, and a firm reliance on Him, who has never yet forsaken this favored land, are still competent to adjust, in the best way, all our present difficulty." And in Lincoln's annual address to Congress

in 1863, he mentioned that "above all," even more than the "material well-being" and "progress in the arts of civilization," "sound policy and our imperative duty" demands "our anxious and constant attention" to "that moral training, which under the blessing of Divine Providence, will confer upon them the elevated and sanctifying influences, the hopes and consolation of the *Christian faith.*"

This was, even, evident to foreign visitors such as Alexis de Tocqueville when he took a tour of America and documented his findings in *Democracy in America.* Tocqueville described how "the sovereign authority (in the United States) is religious...there is no country in the whole world in which *the Christian religion* retains a greater influence over the souls of men than in America (emphasis added)."

That being said, our foremost leaders were careful to not *enforce* Christianity so as to abide by the First Amendment. As Madison wrote, "The Constitution of the U.S. forbids everything like an establishment of a national religion." Present and future leaders would be wise to do the same. However, they accepted the reality, which is what we must do, as well. All are welcome to exercise their religious liberty in America; simultaneously, all should come to terms with the American principles, all of mankind's equal and unalienable rights, and where they are derived from.

If this section was not enough evidence, readers should consider how the Bible, more than any other source, influenced the writings of the Founders both before the American government was formed, as well as shortly after. Using a study and research from the *American Political Science Review* journal, political scientist Donald Lutz looked at 3,154 quotations from the 1760s through 1805, encompassing quotes from the Bible, as well as writers and ideologies associated with Enlightenment, Whig, Common Law, Classical, their peers, and other sources.

Lutz found that more than one third of the Founders' quotations were from the Bible, more than any other source. The book of Deuteronomy was the most cited work, as well, more than writings authored by Montesquieu and John Locke. And it is no wonder, because within the words of Moses were the principles of republicanism ("Choose some wise, understanding and respected men from each of your tribes, and I will set them over you" [Deuteronomy 1: 12-13]), fair trials and due process ("Hear the disputes between your people and judge fairly, whether the case is between two Israelites or between an Israelite and a foreigner residing among you. Do not show partiality in judging; hear both small and great alike...When people have a dispute, they are to take it to court and the judges will decide the case, acquitting the innocent and condemning the guilty" [Deuteronomy 1: 16-17; Deuteronomy 25: 1]), justice ("Do not pervert justice or show partiality...follow justice and justice alone...acquitting the innocent and condemning the guilty" [Deuteronomy 16: 18-20; Deuteronomy 25: 1]), sovereignty ("Do not harass the Moabites or provoke them to war, for I will not give you any part of their land" [Deuteronomy 2: 9]), morality and civil obedience (listed within the Ten Commandments [Deuteronomy 5: 6-21]), and charity ("There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your fellow Israelites who are poor and needy in your land" [Deuteronomy 15: 11]).

Washington and Adams noted how for political prosperity, "religion and morality are indispensable supports," which "establish the principles upon which freedom can securely stand." As such, freedom continues to stand tall and sturdy. But attempts to revise history and contort reality put cracks, ever so slightly, in our religious and moral base. If God has planted in us our love of liberty, as Lincoln and Jefferson believed, then we owe it to Him – and our fellow citizens – to not only keep our freedom upright, but cement our base in the principles from He

who governs the world. Then, not only will we have a statue of liberty, but also a statue of morality upon which America can stand on; a rock, rather than sand, upon which we can build our future on.

A Law is a Rule Which Those to Whom it is Prescribed Are Bound to Observe

There are three words that this phrase from Alexander Hamilton can be dwindled down to that in 21st century America has become both commonplace and ridiculed: law and order. Contemporary statesmen such as Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Richard Nixon, Gerald R. Ford, Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and Donald Trump have all invoked the phrase – or another variation of it in their efforts against crime – for one purpose or another. Despite writing in agreement with St. Augustine that "an unjust law is no law at all," Martin Luther King Jr. had, even, exclaimed "we ('we' being black people) believe in law and order," which he said immediately following his front porch being damaged by a homemade bomb or a half stick of dynamite. The overarching purpose, though, of law and order – or in other words, the enforcement of laws and the rule of law – as it was at the time of America's founding and into the first half of the 19th century, is to prevent crime and mob rule, while simultaneously promote and ensure domestic tranquility.

First and foremost, as written in the Constitution, "This Constitution, *and the Laws of the United States* which shall be made in Pursuance thereof; and all Treaties made, or which shall be made, under the Authority of the United States, *shall be the supreme Law of the Land* (emphasis added)." What should be self-explanatory is any actions done against a law is, in

fact, illegal. It does not matter whether one likes the law or not, whether the law is unfortunate or not, but laws cannot be misconstrued in a manner where one can pick and choose which ones to follow and which to ignore.

George Washington, being America's first president, led by example with this matter, both in actions and words. As for words, in his farewell address, he stated that "true liberty" comes with "respect for its (the Constitution's) authority, compliance with its laws, (and) acquiescence in its measures." The laws of the land are "sacredly obligatory upon all" and it is "the duty of every individual to obey the established government." Moreover, "all obstructions to the execution of the laws...under whatever plausible character, with the real design to direct, control, counteract, or awe the regular deliberation and action of the constituted authorities, are destructive...and of fatal tendency."

As for actions, Washington did not tolerate lawbreakers. In 1791, Washington and Congress implemented the Excise Whiskey Tax – a tax on domestic and foreign-made alcohol. With larger producers being given tax breaks and smaller producers carrying an unequal burden, a tax collector was assaulted, tarred, and feathered by protestors. An officer who tried to arrest two of the protestors would experience the same pain. Fast forward a few years, and mobs had broken out, battles had ensued, and a Whiskey Rebellion flag would be formed. And Washington had enough.

With the rebels and protestors forming a force of some six-to-seven thousand men in Pennsylvania, Washington formed his own militia of 12,950 soldiers to confront them – with himself at the helm and Hamilton by his side. In the end, Washington would only accompany the army so far with Hamilton leading them the rest of the way, and the rest of the way was met with no force as the rebels dispersed at the sight of a formidable militia. In Washington's eyes,

though he postponed the summoning of a militia for years due to the "citizen against citizen" appearance, the "crimes" of the rebel force, "which reached the very existence of social order, were perpetrated without controul, the friends of government were insulted, abused, and overawed into silence, or an apparent acquiescence; and the yield to the treasonable fury of so small a portion of the United States, would be to violate the fundamental principle of our constitution, which enjoins that the will of the majority shall prevail."

Not only that, but the rule of law, and the respect for such, must prevail, as well. To help emphasize this, Washington would pardon all of those involved "upon no other condition, than a satisfactory assurance of obedience to the laws."

These words from Washington are in direct alignment with those of Alexander Hamilton. Hamilton had written in *Federalist No. 33*, "It is said that the laws of the Union are to be the SUPREME LAW of the land. But what inference can be drawn from this, or what would they amount to, if they were not to be supreme? It is evident they would amount to nothing. A LAW, by the very meaning of the term, includes supremacy. It is a rule which those to whom it is prescribed are bound to observe. This results from every political association. If individuals enter into a state of society, the laws of that society must be the supreme regulator of their conduct."

It is no surprise, then, that Hamilton would be on – and literally by – Washington's side for the Whiskey Rebellion. In the midst of the conflict, and before Washington and Hamilton rode off with the militia, Hamilton wrote in a letter that was intended for the American Daily Advertiser, but arguably more importantly "to the people of the United States," that "if it were to be asked, 'What is the most sacred duty and the greatest source of security in a Republic?' The answer would be, 'An inviolable respect for the Constitution and Laws—the

first growing out of the last.' ...A sacred respect for the constitutional law is the vital principle, the sustaining energy of a free government." As Washington would say in his farewell address, Hamilton proclaimed in this very same letter that a "government of laws" provides and protects liberty. If individuals "undermine or subvert the authority of the laws," then they would "lead us from freedom to slavery." "Such a resistance," Hamilton continued, "is treason against society, against liberty, against every thing that ought to be dear to a free, enlightened, and prudent people. To tolerate were to abandon your most precious interests. Not to subdue it, were to tolerate it."

Thomas Jefferson, though, was of a somewhat different mindset. In a letter to James Madison, Jefferson was explaining various matters regarding how politicians today should not subdue the citizens of tomorrow with their decisions (especially as it pertains to debt). Yet, within said letter, Jefferson noted, "It may be proved that no society can make a perpetual constitution, or even a perpetual law. The earth belongs always to the living generation. They may manage it then, & what proceeds from it, as they please, during their usufruct. They are masters too of their own persons, & consequently may govern them as they please." The change in tone from laws being the "supreme law of the land" and requires "every individual to obey the established government," to one where citizens can "manage" and "govern" the laws "as they please" is a bit extreme. Jefferson continued in his letter to state, "Every constitution then, & every law, naturally expires at the end of 19 years. If it be enforced longer, it is an act of force, & not of right." The principle Jefferson was arguing: "the earth belongs to the living, & not to the dead." What saves these notions from being outlandish is how Jefferson would close the letter: "Turn this subject in your mind, my dear Sir, & *particularly as to the power of contracting debts* (emphasis added)."

That being said, though Jefferson was primarily discussing the issue of debt, he continued to believe that government, and the laws, should change with the times, and "laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind." Though, any changes should not be "frequent and untried."

Even so, Jefferson wrote these words in a letter regarding the constitution of Virginia, not the United States. Moreover, Jefferson concluded said letter (which was addressed to Samuel Kercheval in 1816) by saying that his sentiments were "confided" in Samuel's "honor, so to use them as to preserve me from the gridiron of the public papers...keep them to yourself as the effusions of withered age and useless time." Jefferson did not want these feelings or thoughts to be public. Was that because he thought citizens would attribute his sentiments to the United States Constitution? Did he think people would consider him as more-or-less lawless and that the interpretation of laws depends on who is interpreting them?

Regarding the latter, he included a saving grace in his letter to Kercheval – since the letter is in fact public. When it comes to laws, "only lay down true principles, and adhere to them *inflexibly* (emphasis added)." The only exception, as Jefferson had written to John B. Colvin, is when "officers of high trust," or "those only who accept of great charges" who would subsequently face "the justice of his country and the rectitude of his motives," must "risk themselves on great occasions when the safety of the nation, or some of its very high interests are at stake." As Jefferson wrote, "A strict observance of the written laws is doubtless *one* of the high duties of a good citizen," but in scenarios of national security, "it is not *the highest*. The laws of necessity, of self-preservation, of saving our country when in danger, are of higher obligation. To lose our country by a scrupulous adherence to written law, would be to lose the law itself, with life, liberty, property and all those who are enjoying them with us." "Overleaping

the law is of greater evil than a strict adherence to its imperfect provisions," said Jefferson, in circumstances "of persons charged with petty duties, where consequences are trifling, and time allowed for a legal course." In other words, in the overwhelming majority of cases, "overleaping the law" is a great evil.

Long story short, Jefferson was a very nuanced statesman. Yet, what Jefferson said is in fact not crazy at all.

The Constitution of the United States and the corresponding Amendments detail the (supreme) laws of the land. Even so, as just mentioned, it allows for amendments – or in other words, changes – which are themselves, thanks to the amendment process, infrequent and tried, saved for only momentous and necessary occasions. Moreover, each congressional session drafts bills to become laws that are either new, expand on previous laws, or they revoke previous laws. In essence, Jefferson was not saying anything too outlandish – he was merely describing the government of the United States.

But, if one were to face Jefferson head on with his arguments, it would be his closest political ally: James Madison. And Madison did just that.

In a direct response to Jefferson regarding the Earth, and the laws, belonging to the living and not the dead, Madison replied, "If the earth be the gift of nature to the living their title can extend to the earth in its natural State only. The *improvements* made by the dead form a charge against the living who take the benefit of them. This charge can no otherwise be satisfied than by executing the will of the dead accompanying the improvements." After detailing how 19 years is not enough time for "discharging debts," adding further credence to the notion that Jefferson was referring to debt rather than laws in general, Madison continued to demonstrate how there is a "foundation in the nature of things," and thus there is a "descent

of obligations" from one generation to another. This is coming from the man who is regarded as the "Father of the Constitution" and the author of the Bill of Rights.

The finality and responsibility Madison portrayed has reason behind it, as well – and he explained the reason in his *Federalist* writings. As aforementioned, a concrete set of principles and laws, while allowing for amendments and smaller changes, along with three separate branches of government, preserves liberty, as well as obliges and controls government, so as to prevent a "stronger faction" from "readily unit(ing) and oppress(ing) the weaker." In other words, our Constitution, our laws, and the finality and enforcement of both, prevents a tyranny of the majority. As Madison stated in *Federalist No. 51*, "If a majority be united by a common interest, the rights of the minority will be insecure." "In a society under the forms of which the stronger faction can readily unite and oppress the weaker," continued Madison, "anarchy may as truly be said to reign as in a state of nature, where the weaker individual is not secured against the violence of the stronger." As government is the "greatest of all reflections on human nature," there are never angels that govern (for if there were, "neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary), since mankind, itself, does not consist of angels, either. Meaning, one future faction may not in actuality be more right or righteous than prior ones. Therefore, "the interest of the man must be connected with the constitutional rights of the place."

John Adams certainly agreed. In Adams' mind, "there is no good government but what is Republican," since "the very definition of a Republic, is 'an Empire of Laws, and not of Men.'"

The Supreme Court's fourth Chief Justice, whom Adams appointed, John Marshall, reiterated the same words verbatim in one of America's most notable case opinions. In *Marbury v. Madison*, a case pertaining to an appointed and confirmed justice (William Marbury) not

receiving his commission from the newly elected president (Jefferson) and his newly appointed secretary of state (Madison), Marshall and the Court – although they found that the new administration's actions were illegal – dismissed the case due to it not fitting any of the jurisdictions the Constitution permitted the Court to rule over (those being "cases affecting ambassadors, other public ministers and consults, and those in which a state shall be party"). As such, rather than accommodating and ruling over illegal actions outside of their jurisdiction, Marshall declared "it is emphatically the province and duty of the Judicial Department to say what the law is." Using words that echoed Adams, Marshall opined:

> The very essence of civil liberty consists in the right of every individual to claim the protection of the laws, whenever he receives an injury. One of the first duties of government is to afford that protection....
>
> The government of the United States has been emphatically termed a government of laws, and not of men. It will certainly cease to deserve this high appellation, if the laws furnish no remedy for the violation of a vested legal right.

And Abraham Lincoln, one of America's staunchest supporters for equal rights under God and the law, as well as one of America's staunchest supporters for free labor, self-reliance, self-improvement, and maximizing individual liberty as long as one's actions do not interfere with another's – and government does not interfere whenever an individual is better off deciding for themselves – was, also, one of America's staunchest supporters for the rule of law. Lincoln displayed such in his Lyceum Address in 1838:

> Let every American, every lover of liberty, every well wisher to his posterity, swear by the blood of the Revolution, never to violate in the least particular, the laws of the country; and never to tolerate their violation by others. As the patriots of seventy-six did to the support of the Declaration of Independence, so to the support of the Constitution and Laws, let every American pledge his life, his property, and his sacred honor;—let every man remember that to violate the law, is to trample on the blood of his father, and to tear the character of his own, and his children's liberty. Let reverence for the laws, be breathed by every American mother, to the lisping babe, that prattles on her lap—let it be taught in schools, in seminaries, and in colleges; let it be written in Primers, spelling books, and in Almanacs;—let it be preached from the pulpit, proclaimed in legislative halls, and enforced in courts of justice. And, in short, let it become the *political religion* of the nation; and let the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the grave and the gay, of all sexes and tongues, and colors and conditions, sacrifice unceasingly upon its altars.

Lincoln still understood the fact that unfortunate and ineffective laws may be implemented – case in point, the allowance for slavery. Even so, the answer is not an uprising or mob rule. The answer: follow the law until it is changed. In the very same Lyceum Address, Lincoln continued:

> When I so pressingly urge a strict observance of all the laws, let me not be understood as saying there are no bad laws, nor that grievances may not arise, for the redress of which,

no legal provisions have been made.—I mean to say no such thing. But I do mean to say, that, although bad laws, if they exist, should be repealed as soon as possible, still while they continue in force, for the sake of example, they should be religiously observed.

...There is no grievance that is a fit object of redress by mob law.

Care and restraint must be practiced in order to not only govern and operate with reason, but live with liberty. "Let us do nothing through passion and ill temper," said Lincoln. There can be no "respectable magnitude" in disagreement, discourse or actions that "which implies violation of law."

With this respect for the law, and an understanding where – as written outside the Supreme Court – there is equal justice under the law, we protect us from ourselves and others in order to maximize our respective liberties. Lawlessness, therefore, should not be tolerated in any capacity.

It is a Rising, and Not a Setting, Sun

At the end of the Constitutional Convention, Benjamin Franklin said these words after observing a sun on the chair that Washington sat in. After deliberations were made and the Constitution was being signed by the delegates present, Franklin said, "I have often and often, in the course of the session, and the vicissitudes of my hopes and fears as to its issue, looked at that behind the President, without being able to tell whether it was rising or setting: but now at

length, I have the happiness to know, that it is a rising and not a setting sun." It was the dawn of a new era, a new government, in a new nation. And though America is now almost 250 years in the future since declaring independence, the sun is still rising.

Many may feel otherwise. In fact, I have been told America's sun appears like it may be setting. I refuse to believe that even for one second.

America has endured a revolution, a civil war, slavery, two world wars, a great depression, fights for equal rights, and everything in between. And yet, we have not abandoned our unique self-government principles – not entirely, at least. In the words of Lincoln, which I believe still holds true, "We have the best government the world ever knew."

Homes may be more expensive. There may be more division than in recent memory, whether that be across the aisle, on our televisions, or at our dinner tables. Whatever the issue is, America has surpassed much worse.

Arguably the biggest challenges for America to overcome in the 21st century are: whether we still believe in our individual capacity to better ourselves or if we would prefer those in a distant capitol to direct our lives for us; whether we want to be safe at home from ourselves as well as from foreign adversaries; whether reason, morals, majority rule and law will trump emotion, equity, minority rule, and reparations; and whether we will understand the context of respective times and appreciate accomplishments for what they were, instead of lambasting, feeling sorry, and revising history to fit a certain narrative.

As one may from paying attention to present day politics, there are growing desires for a more planned approach to governing and society as a whole. Regulations were minimal, and the Federal Register – which tracks the number of pages, presidential documents, rules and notices within America's regulations – was nonexistent, until 1936 when the number of pages

in the Federal Register was 2,620. In 2024, the number grew to 107,262. Much of these regulations have dealt with manufacturing and production, which have mandated corporations to operate in a specific manner, sell certain goods, hire specific people, pay a certain salary, and more. Not only does this indicate a lack of trust in the people to decide how best to operate their lives and their business – as well as complicates starting a business – but it indicates a lack of trust in the people on the consumer side to purchase quality goods, as well as a foregone lack of consideration for consumers in terms of not letting them purchase goods and services that fit their individual means and desires.

Previously outlined in comparison to Lincoln, federal civilian employment in our nation's capitol stood at 162,144 in March 2024 (a 993% increase compared to the 14,826 working in D.C. under Lincoln), the entire federal bureaucracy under Lincoln composed of just 22 agencies, and Lincoln's White House staff consisted of six persons. Meanwhile, in 2025, the number of agencies currently varies anywhere from 400 to more than 500 (roughly a 2,172% increase) and the White House staff consists of more than 500 persons (a 8,233% increase).

Federal income taxes were nonexistent in America until the 1860s, and even then they were limited to a top tax rate of 10% to primarily fund the war efforts before being ruled unconstitutional in the 1870s. After being reinstituted in the form of the Sixteenth Amendment in 1913, income taxes skyrocketed in just four years from a top rate of 7% to a top rate of 67%. In another roughly two decades, the top income tax rate reached 94% in 1944. While the big spikes have occurred during wartime, the top rates in the 20th century were 6.7-to-9.4 times the rate of Lincoln's, which were also implemented during wartime. Moreover, the majority, or close to the majority, of tax dollars in present day America do not go toward security – they go toward welfare.

Equal rights under God and the law with everyone having "an open field and a fair chance for (their) industry, enterprise and intelligence" has become equity, reparations, and special treatment in order to best match opportunities, employment, and education to the proportion of a given group's population in America. With affirmative action and departments devoted to diversity, equity, and inclusion, the goal – whether it is admitted to be one or not – has been to remedy past discrimination with present discrimination.

Instead of an individual "improv(ing) (themselves) every way (they) can," and "never suspecting that any body wishes to hinder (them)," many have "allowed (their) mind to be diverted" to pointing fingers and claiming the reason they cannot succeed or move up in the world is because of someone else or something systemic.

These changes in the atmosphere of America, and others, coincide with the following bullet points, which were derived from a website denoting an organization's platform. Included from the website are the following:

- Abolish the Electoral College
- Extension of voting rights to non-citizens
- Defund the police
- A four-day work week with no reduction in wages or benefits
- Raise the federal minimum wage
- Nationalize institutions of monetary policy, insurance, and finance with strict regulation
- Fully fund public education, including ensuring free public college, as well as free private college

- Cancel all student loan and medical debt
- Increase tax rates on upper income earners, institute wealth taxes, increase estate taxes, and tax financial transactions. Redistribute wealth from the billionaires to the workers
- Repeal of the Hyde Amendment and all legal restrictions on abortion access
- Allow trans minors to access gender affirming care without parental consent
- Nationalize fossil fuel producers to phase them out as quickly as necessary – no new fossil fuel projects can be authorized or built
- Medicare for all where everyone will be covered by one health insurance program, administered by the federal government. All healthcare costs will be financed through taxes, predominantly on the wealthy and corporations

These points were taken from the website and party platform for the Democratic Socialists of America, the largest socialist organization in the United States. Though, these points and changing sentiments for America can largely be attributed to the direction that the Democratic Party is heading.

Don't think so? Which U.S. Senator was narrowly defeated in the Democratic Party primary of 2016 and subsequently came in second, again, in 2020? This was the registered independent yet self-proclaimed democratic socialist Senator from Vermont, Bernie Sanders.

Since 2019, there have been six elected representatives that coincided with these views and socialism at large, including New York representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Michigan representative Rashida Tlaib, both of whom had been endorsed by the DSA. In the 2025 New York City mayoral race, NY Assemblyman Zohran Mamdani is running as a Democrat, and is

considered a serious competitor (at the time of writing this) against the incumbent, Eric Adams – and Mamdani is a self-proclaimed democratic socialist. Mamdani's platform that he is running on includes: rent freezes; nationalize grocery stores; nationalize public grade schools; free/universal childcare; hire more tax auditors and increase taxes on the wealthy, as well as corporations; expand gender-affirming care and create an Office of LGBTQIA+ Affairs; raise the minimum wage from $16.50 to $30; expand licensure requirements, and more.

The treasury secretary for a beloved American president in the 20th century had even written in their diary, as admitted directly to him by the president, that "what we were doing in this country were some of the things that were being done in Russia (under Joseph Stalin) and even some of the things that were being done under Hitler in Germany. But we were doing them in an orderly way." In other words, the administration was doing things similar to fascist and socialist governments. Said secretary was Harold Ickes, and his Commander in Chief was Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

These policies and this direction are not what the Founders or Abraham Lincoln intended for America to implement or represent, and I hope that is evident from what has been demonstrated. Though these preceding initiatives may be well intended, they do not work – or at least nowhere near as well as what the Founders and Lincoln adopted. In other words, society and government improve faster and at larger capacities *without* well intended federal programs than *with* them.

At the beginning of America, with Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison and Monroe as presidents – and with minimal regulations, no income taxes, low federal government spending, and easier access to contracts, charters, and credit in order to form businesses (i.e. limited-to-no requirements for licenses) – nominal, or unadjusted for inflation, gross domestic

product (GDP), which measures the value of all goods and services produced in a country's economy, grew by an average of almost 10% per year during the last decade of the 18th century, our national debt decreased, and the American economy caught up with Great Britain by 1820.

During Lincoln's presidency, as well as for much of the time period following Lincoln and up until the early 20th century, income taxes were minimal then abolished altogether, government spending continued to remain limited (with an emphasis on defense and national security), government staffers and agencies were either let go or kept at a minimal level, regulations were streamlined, limited, and promoted a maximized individual liberty in the marketplace, and individual charity was exorbitant. With the obvious exceptions of Jim Crow laws, which enforced racial segregation (predominantly in southern states), laws either completely restricting access to resources and institutions based on race or at least making it more difficult (for example: literacy tests and poll taxes – which impacted poor white people just as much as blacks), reintegrating the Southern half of America and its citizens – primarily with the efforts to civilize black citizens – and women slowly gaining more access to various occupations, individuals were increasingly, though obviously not entirely, on an equal playing field. With such, from the latter half of the 19th century until the beginning of the 20th century, real GDP rates, adjusted for inflation, per year would reach 19.73% (the largest on record) with a total of 11 years between 1870 and 1916 when the rate was 10% or higher (or 11 out of 46 years; 24% chance of likelihood). Since 1916, real GDP growth rates have hit double digits only seven times (or 7 out of 109 years; 6.4% chance of likelihood).

Moreover, the total national wealth of America increased by 64% in the 1870s, by 50% in the 1880s, by 36% in the 1890s, then by another 110% by 1912. America's inflation-adjusted gross national product – which measures the value of goods and services produced by

American citizens both domestically and internationally – expanded by 233%, real wages of nonfarmers grew by 53%, and the average work week for those in manufacturing fell from 63 hours per week in 1870 to 54 hours per week in 1900. Food prices plummeted by 63%, with the costs of home goods and energy decreasing by 65-to-70%, as well. By 1900, Andrew Carnegie and Carnegie Steel helped reduce the price of steel from $56 per ton to $11.50 per ton, and, with the help of James J. Hill and the formation of the transcontinental railroad, transportation costs were drastically lowered. The illiteracy rate fell by 46% and life expectancy rose by 12.5%.

If we were to look specifically at the black population, the number of black owned homes increased by 4900% – from 12,000 in 1866 to 600,000 in 1919 – their accumulation of wealth increased by 5400% – from 20 million dollars in 1866 to 1.1 billion dollars in 1919 – and the percentage being literate increased by 700% – from 10% in 1866 to 80% in 1919. All without affirmative action or special federal programs.

As for women, though the majority were employed as servants, from 1850 to 1899 their daily wage increased in the cotton, wool and shoes industries by 93%, 94%, and 222%, respectively, and their employment as a whole increased 200% by 1910.

As for putting a spotlight on race, how do the time periods before and since policies such as affirmative action, DEI, and welfare compare? The poverty rate amongst blacks was 87% in 1940 – it dropped to 47% over the next two decades and prior to the civil rights legislation of the 1960s, welfare policies, or affirmative action measures. It did drop another 17% in 1970, but only another 1% by 1980. Thus, there were larger improvements when individuals and companies made decisions for themselves rather than imposing a well-intentioned legislation, whether that meant moving out of southern states or applying for different jobs, or placing children in different schools. In fact, the rate at which black people

rose into professions more than doubled from 1954 to 1964 with the "employment of nonwhite professional workers increase(ing) from 217,000 to 499,000" immediately prior to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The unemployment rate amongst black people dropped from 9.6% in 1964 to 6.4% in 1969 – but with the enforcement of quotas, the rate more than doubled to 13.8% during 1975, and reached a new high of 17.8% in 1983 before dropping to 10% in 1989. At the time of writing this, the percentage stands at 7.2%. As for income, the annual median income for black men in 1939 was $360 – in 21 years, it increased by 568%, and amongst females the rate of increase was 418%, eclipsing the growth rate for white men and women by 206% and 143%, respectively. Following civil rights and affirmative action policies, from 1970 to 1995, black male earnings as a percentage of white earnings grew by just eight percentage points, compared to an 18-point jump from 1940 to 1970. As for black women, their median earnings spiked in the same time period from 36% of white women earnings to 73% (a 37-point jump). From 1970 to 1995, pay for black women compared to white women increased by just 16 more points. And as of 2018, the black-white disparity in family income was approximately in line with what it was in 1968. According to economist and historian Richard Vedder, the multitude of welfare policies and affirmative action initiatives, including various eligibility expansions and reduced work requirements, have "likely stalled the move toward racial income equality."

On the education front, Jason Riley has noted the following:

> Black advancement in education predates the end of slavery and government assistance. While the overwhelming majority of blacks living in the antebellum period were enslaved, a small percentage were legally free. From 1800 to 1860 these "free persons of color" averaged between 10 percent and 14 percent of the nation's total black population.

According to census data, there were 434,000 free blacks in 1850, and an estimated 59 percent of them were able to read and write, even though they were barred from attending public schools in most Northern cities as well as in the South. To educate their children, blacks set up private schools, some of which were operated in secret, and private instruction would play an essential role in black schooling well into the twentieth century.

"In 15 out of 16 cities with large free Negro populations in 1850, all but one had more literate than illiterate 'free persons of color,'" one study of the period noted.

...Data collected by the Freedmen's Bureau, the federal government agency that was tasked with assisting former slaves, offers insight into the priorities of the newly freed black population. Prior to the war, every Southern state except Tennessee prohibited teaching slaves to read, and as of 1860 more than 90 percent of black adults in the South were illiterate. By 1870, however, about 20 percent of blacks over the age of nine could read and write. "Perhaps the most striking illustration of the freedmen's quest for self-improvement was their seemingly unquenchable thirst for education," wrote historian Eric Foner. "Northern benevolent societies, the Freedmen's Bureau, and, after 1868, state governments, provided most of the funding for black education during Reconstruction. But the initiative often lay with blacks themselves, a pattern established in the early days of the war."

...the 1910 census reported a black literacy rate of 70 percent. It's conceivable that some respondents may have exaggerated their reading and writing capabilities to census takers, according to economic historian Robert Higgs. "But even if the true literacy figure a half century after emancipation reached only 50 percent, the magnitude of the accomplishment is still striking, especially when one recalls the overwhelming obstacles blocking black educational efforts," he observed. "For a large population to transform itself from virtually unlettered to more than half literate in 50 years ranks as an accomplishment seldom witnessed in human history."

...A 1978 Rand Corporation study reported that in 1920, black children attended school only about two-thirds as many days as white children, yet by 1954 this black-white disparity had all but disappeared. Similarly, it noted that "in 1920 teachers of black students had one and three-fourths as many pupils as the average teacher in the country. By 1954, this difference had been substantially reduced." In 1940, whites between the ages of twenty-five and twenty-nine had 3.6 years more schooling than their black counterparts. By 1960, both groups had advanced but blacks outpaced whites, and the gap narrowed by more than half to 1.7 years.

...Beginning in the late 1960s, more white colleges would open their campuses to blacks, and black college attendance would continue to rise. "In 1950, 50,000 blacks had graduated from college, most at historically black institutions," wrote journalist Bob Zelnick. "By 1960, the number had reached 200,000; by 1970, 470,000, more than half from integrated colleges and universities." Also in the late 1960s, however, more white

colleges began compromising their admission standards to admit black students with weaker academic credentials who otherwise would not have made the cut. The negative consequences of doing so became evident almost immediately. According to scholars, education gaps that had been narrowing started to widen. Greater numbers of blacks had been graduating from high school and entering college, but now fewer were completing college relative to their white peers. The "fastest and most dramatic progress toward parity between blacks and whites finishing high school was achieved before 1970," the authors wrote in 2020. "But after 1970, the relative rate at which blacks were completing college dropped, then flatlined, and never recovered its previous upward trajectory. In fact, today black Americans are completing college at a lower rate compared to whites than they were in 1970."

Furthermore, between 1870 and 1930, general enrollment in higher education institutions increased by more than 1600%. Between 1930 and 1980, enrollment increased by less than 1000%. Between 1980 and 2024, enrollment increased by 60%. Per year, these amount to annual increases of 27%, 20%, and 1.36%, respectively. For black students, though, from 1966 to 1980, their enrollment in college increased by almost 300%. Ever since 1980, enrollment has increased by 133%, almost half the rate of increase as before. Enrollment for black people has actually declined ever since 2011 – there were more than 3.5 million Black students enrolled in higher education then, compared to 2.9 million Black students in 2021.

In case that is not enough, how about number of higher education institutions? Without a "national university" or a department of education, and with the economic prosperity that provided for limited barriers or regulations as well as large charitable donations, the number of

higher education institutions during the late 19th century and early 20th century (before the local spending for education began to dip) increased by 150% - an increase of 2.5% each year. Meanwhile, ever since the funding for education shifted in the 1930s, and with the introduction of an abundance of different regulations, the number of institutions between then and 1990, also, increased by 150%, or 2.5% each year. Though, ever since the Department of Education began, the number of degree granting college institutions has increased by 26%, or an average of 0.6% each year.

As for degrees, Bachelor's degrees conferred increased by 1200% from 1870 to 1930, compared to a 660% increase between 1930 and 1980. The rate of increase is even lower since the establishment of the Department of Education. Between 1980 and 2024, there was a 128% increase. Per year for each time period, Bachelor's degree recipients increased by 20%, 13.2%, and 2.9%, respectively.

The examples could go on and on. Listing all of these may in actuality make one wonder if America's sun is indeed setting. But the sun is rising *because* these developments are happening.

Picture this: whomever is reading this is hearing rumors about an ever-encroaching government that seems to get bigger each year – if not each decade – with complicated rules and regulations, taxes that rarely if ever decrease and stay at a decreased level, and increased government employees and agencies. In consequence, there is increased compulsory compliance, with those in the capitol – or some of those seeking to go to the capitol – desiring to make decisions for citizens rather than citizens making decisions for themselves, as the government seeks control over production and consequently consumption. Class warfare is

used, amongst more. Some may think this is the state of America in 2025. Rather, the year is 1776 and this government is what the Founding Fathers sought independence from.

I am not saying whatsoever that America needs another revolution or civil war. And if anyone gets from reading this that we need to go back to segregation or slavery, then you should consider reading this again. What I am saying, however, is there remains a world where America can get over this centralized hump and regain the principles that the Founding Fathers and Abraham Lincoln embodied. The principles that some 700,000 individuals have lost their lives for (in the Revolutionary War) and to protect (in the Civil War). We owe it to all of them to find our founding. As the Great Emancipator said, "It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us -- that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion."

For those who say our society is more complicated today with complicated issues, and thus requires more centralization, more nationalization, and in essence, complicated solutions, I ask you – how can today be more complicated than when slavery existed and the country was at war with itself? How can today be more complicated than when we were reintegrating an entire half of our nation, while bringing the vast majority of an entire race's population to, or at least closer to, the same starting line as others? Once these rhetorical questions are answered, consider the size of government Lincoln had with what America presently has.

There may be some that would argue if the government Lincoln had, and the subsequent governments following his assassination, were stronger and bigger then

Reconstruction would have gone smoother, and blacks – as well as women for that matter – would have had the rights they have today much sooner. This argument, though, would fall flat.

How Reconstruction was meant to transpire was for military occupation and political, for a lack of a better word, "restriction" to keep the former Confederate states compliant while keeping Southern statesmen from reoccupying positions in Congress. This sounds like the federal government was pretty strong, or at least attempted to be. However, between public opinion and Democrats slowly regaining political power (Democrats regained a majority in the House in 1874, regained a majority in the Senate in 1878, and regained the presidency in 1884), the military forces decreased by roughly 91% within one year of the Civil War ending (under the Democratic presidency of Andrew Johnson) – and it would decrease another 67% by 1871 – there was paranoia over the idea of "military rule," and there was, to state the obvious, still racism.

What one may get from this is the Republicans should not have given in and they should have kept the military forces strong while keeping Democrats out of government. While arguable, there were, even, factions within the Republican party, including corruption. Not to mention, public opinion matters and is the driver of American government. Southern citizens and Democrats rejected the idea of free labor (labor was "beneath the dignity of a gentleman"), so much so that citizens from the North who went South to help instill these free labor habits and principles were harassed – sometimes violently – and they eventually gave up their efforts.

When enslaved blacks were free to move wherever they could, which was in increasing numbers to Northern areas (migrations of blacks from the South to the North hit record-breaking numbers in the first decade of the 20th century, the numbers nearly tripled in the second decade, and almost doubled during the 1920s), while many saw increased opportunity

and increased advancement in life, constituents of the areas were opposed to "fugitives in the rough" (using the words of black historian Carter G. Woodson and black economist Thomas Sowell) bringing a "largely unacculturated population" to their neighborhoods. And this opposition was from the already free black citizens of the North, as well. The culture that was brought over, according to blacks and black press already living in, or reporting in, the desired areas, was "foreign" in nature – the new arrivals had "little education" and they were "vulgar, rowdy, unwashed, and criminal." Moreover, blacks had been able to live cohesively and safely in cities and neighborhoods that were mostly occupied by white people, as well as within integrated schools; but after massive migrations of a different culture, segregation and violence ensued. Cities where this was the case included Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington D.C.

Even within the South, there were racial hierarchies and prejudice amongst the black population. A black abolitionist and novelist, William Wells Brown, had stated in 1867, "There is in the Southern States a great amount of prejudice in regard to color, even among the negroes themselves. The nearer the negro or mulatto approaches to the white, the more he seems to feel his superiority over those of a darker hue." Blacks that ran for Congressional seats would smear fellow blacks, again of different hues, as being "hybrids" and undeserving of black support. Frederick Douglass would denounce these behaviors and any that appeared to be "going about the same length in favor of blacks, as the whites have done in favor of the doctrine of white superiority."

State sponsored education was no walk in the park success story, either. Not only did black people resist paying monthly payments for education to "sit in the shade," but the

investments had astronomical costs and left states in loads of debt, with Louisiana and South Carolina being the largest sufferers.

With forced busing in the 20th century as further evidence, and the disfavor for such amongst white people and black people, any large, forced integration beyond the enforcement of the 14th and 15th Amendments, honoring equal natural rights under God and the law, and putting all on an equal playing field would have likely been met with even further decreased race relations and increased government turmoil. Rather, if the military and political strategy at the onset of Reconstruction had kept its status quo; if the Southern citizens (including freed blacks – a Freedmen's Bureau agent had discovered "their long experience of slavery has made them so distrustful of all whites;" the first black U.S. Senator, Hiram Revels, was elected in 1870 only to denounce white Republicans as "notoriously corrupt and dishonest") were more welcoming of Northern educational missionaries, free labor efforts, and the like; if integration had been more purposeful and gone at a reasonable pace; and if the Supreme Court did not make things more difficult with their decisions (particularly with the *Slaughterhouse Cases* and *Cruikshank*, both of which diminished the federal government's ability to enforce the Enforcement Acts and the Fourteenth Amendment [especially the "privileges or immunities" clause], which in turn made it difficult to protect individuals from other individuals, as well as states), then perhaps Reconstruction could have gone differently. But with the amount of division, both within and amongst different races, it was so tense that it is impossible to know.

But what is possible, is to "adhere to the old and tried, against the new and untried" in order to solve present problems. That is how Lincoln defined conservatism, as well as his – and Republicans' – approach to solving issues. In what could easily be transferable to present day politics, Lincoln compared the Republicans to those in the South in his Cooper Union address

from 1860, specifically as it pertained to which side was more "conservative" in terms of "adhering to the old and tried." As Lincoln had said, "We (Republicans) stick to, contend for, the identical old policy on the point in controversy which was adopted by 'our fathers who framed the Government under which we live;' while you (Southerners) with one accord reject, and scout, and spit upon that old policy, and insist upon substituting something new." "You are unanimous in rejecting and denouncing the old policy of the fathers," Lincoln continued, yet deem Republicans to be the ones who "are revolutionary, destructive, or something of the sort." Meanwhile, to Lincoln, Southerners desired to "be allowed to construe and enforce the Constitution as you please."

Presently, the road forward may not be smooth. Being as it may, America on the world stage has taken the road less traveled by, and that has made the world different. The world is more free because of America, but America has become more like the rest of the world with many of her policies of late. America's sun is rising because America can rise above it, and she has done it before.

I will conclude with this. Remember how George Washington had said that "reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle," or how James Madison had said "belief in a God Allpowerful wise and good is so essential to the moral order of the world and to the happiness of man?" And remember from earlier I had stated that morals have not changed over time, but rather propriety has? Well, with the increased prevalence of secularism and relativism, coinciding with a decrease in mankind's belief in a Supreme Being and an increase in the persecution of Christians, perhaps *both* morals and propriety have changed.

Why do I say this? Not only do polls show less Americans believing in the existence of God; not only have there been less babies being born, and the babies being born are increasingly born to unwed mothers; not only are households increasingly becoming divided with increased divorce rates; not only are more people saying they are unhappy; but more and more people are operating under the guise of "live and let live," or in other words, what one person thinks is right is relative and may not translate over to what another person thinks is right, instead of humanity understanding a universal moral code (this is not to be confused with how what one does in their personal life should not change how we treat them); what one child's parents teaches as right vs wrong may differ from another family. Rather than genuinely helping out the poor or those in need, we are implementing policies and programs that compulsively take money from people who have it and giving to those who do not, while simultaneously promoting selfish charitable giving in a manner where the one who gives would, also, receive a tax credit (and the more you give, the less you pay in taxes than you otherwise would have). We are basing human value based on how much stuff we have, our status in the world, our intellect, or our appearance, rather than the fact that all human life is valuable as we are all children of God made in His image with His likeness. Yet, we are, also, saying God's image is not enough, and it is natural or normal for children to think they are a different sex or gender than how they were born, and providing methods or care to help facilitate a change. We are "cancelling" those who have made transgressions in the past, censoring those who have different opinions, pointing the finger at others when something happened to us, or riding a self-righteous high horse, rather than forgiving and acknowledging that no one is perfect. We are quick to judge and slow to listen. We are glad or indifferent when an individual is murdered

in front of their spouse and children because we did not like what they had said in the past; we are increasingly justifying violence, and sympathizing with criminals.

Those who think the decline in religion and a rejection of America's Christian founding are not drivers for a decrease in morality and an increase in division should look to Great Britain in the 18th century. As written in *Amazing Grace*, by Eric Metaxas:

> When eighteenth-century British society had retreated from the historical Christianity it had earlier embraced, the Christian character of the nation – which had given Britain, among other things, a proud tradition of almshouses to help the poor, dating all the way back to the tenth-century – had all but disappeared. The almshouses remained, and the outward trappings of religion remained, but robust Christianity, with its noble impulses to care for the suffering and less fortunate, was gone...all of the social problems that would plague eighteenth-century Britain had come to full flower, having been unchecked by the social conscience of genuine Christian faith for nearly a hundred years. The unfortunate effects of religion's retreat were everywhere and in many ways evident and, of course, the poor suffered greatly.

Resulting from the lack of genuine faith, the British aristocracy was selfish; sexual promiscuity was popular, along with prostitution (no less than 25% of unmarried women in London were prostitutes, with the average age of girls in prostitution being 16); child labor was allowed; alcoholism was an epidemic, yet fashionable; public hangings were legal and encouraged, as well as burning human beings (particularly women) alive; animals were abused for entertainment (such as "bull-baiting"); and even the smallest crimes were not prosecuted.

Not to mention, slavery was enforced, yet widely hidden from the masses ("Black faces were very rare in Britain in the late eighteenth century, especially before the 1770s").

Again, one may look at the decline in morality as proof behind the sun setting for America rather than rising. However, as mentioned before, America's sun is still rising because America can rise above it, and she has done it before.

What drove out slavery from Great Britain, as well as America, was a "reformation of manners," as William Wilberforce, a British politician, abolitionist, and devout Christian, had put it, using Christian principles to change the habits and attitudes of the time toward civility and self-respect. Wilberforce, along with Granville Sharp, James Ramsay, Thomas Clarkson, Quakers, and others, hinged their beliefs of slavery not on policy, but on "a principle above everything that is political." As Wilberforce would continue to state:

> When I reflect on the command that says, "Thou shalt do no murder," believing the authority to be divine, how can I dare set up any reasonings of my own against it? And, Sir, when we think of eternity, and of the future consequences of all human conduct, what is here in this life which should make any man contradict the principles of his own conscience, the principles of justice, the laws of religion, and of God?

Along with Wilberforce's proclamation societies that sought prominent members, including those in high places of honor or authority and law enforcement, to "set a good example" for "those who were leading 'dissolute and debauched lives,'" which included behaviors of "excessive drinking, blasphemy, profane swearing and cursing, lewdness, or other immoral and dissolute practices," Wilberforce set out, as "God almighty had set before" him, to

make Great Britain a genuine Christian nation, not just in name. After decades of proposing slave trade abolition bills, Wilberforce, abolitionists, and Christians were successful in 1807. And the year Wilberforce would pass away (1833), slavery was abolished in Great Britain.

Though America abolished the slave trade one year later than Great Britain, and abolished slavery entirely a few decades later than Britain, Christianity stood at the forefront of the movement. When it seemed like slavery would remain in America for a foreseeable future following the Compromise of 1850, which permitted state popular sovereignty to determine whether slavery would be allowed in new states (which directly opposed previous federal acts that had outlawed slavery completely in states, such as the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 and the Missouri Compromise of 1820), Frederick Douglass, the leading abolitionist in America, and Christian principles had gained, or regained, prominence. Douglass would say, "Slavery must be abolished....nothing but God's truth and love can cleanse the land" because "the religion of Christianity – which cometh from above – is pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of good fruits, and without hypocrisy." To Douglass, slavery, and the hearts and minds of its advocates, "strip(s) the love of God of its beauty," and rather than being the "'pure and undefiled religion' which is from above," America turned religion into the antithesis of Christianity; one that:

> ...favors the rich against the poor; which exalts the proud above the humble; which divides mankind into two classes, tyrants and slaves; which says to the man in chains, stay there; and to the oppressor, oppress on; it is a religion which may be professed and enjoyed by all the robbers and enslavers of mankind; it makes God a

respecter of persons, denies his fatherhood of the race, and tramples in the dust the great truth of the brotherhood of man.

With this in mind, Douglass did not advocate for violence. He had said, "I have become a friend of that religion which teaches us to pray for our enemies...I would not hurt a hair of a slaveholder's head." Thus, what Douglass would advocate for was humanity and Christianity. As he had stated in an address in London, which had abolished slavery by the time of his address, referring to those enslaved in America, "These are men; I hope you will consider them as such. These are beings redeemed by the blood of Christ; I hope you will consider them as such. They are your brethren; I hope you will consider them as such."

William Lloyd Garrison, another leading abolitionist and devout Christian, was on the frontlines against slavery, as well. He would use his newspaper, *The Liberator* (the logo for such included quotes from the Bible, such as "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" and "I come to break the bonds of the oppressed"), and other writings to espouse Christian principles in favor of "God-given rights" that are "inherent in (every human) being, whatever may be the sex or complexion."

And to reiterate what Abraham Lincoln had said, "our reliance is in the love of liberty which God has planted in our bosoms." Thus, as mankind should "never doubt that a just God, in his own good time, will give us the rightful result," we must contend for "the great Christian principles" that our nation, and mankind, was created upon. With Christianity, as well as a "firm reliance on Him," then "Christian virtues might not be extinguished from the land" and we can "adjust...our present difficulty."

God willed, and the difficulty was overcome. God willing, America can presently do the same.

All of this is to say, as Lincoln had said, it is time to "reinaugurate the good old 'central ideas' of the Republic. We *can* do it. The human heart *is* with us – God is with us."

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