



LIBERTY DEFINED

50 Essential Issues That Affect Our Freedom

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General Overview:

The Declaration of Independence states that life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are inalienable rights of the American people. Liberty is what America is known for around the world but how is liberty defined?

“Liberty means to exercise human rights in any manner a person chooses so long as it does not interfere with the exercise of the rights of others. This means, above all else, keeping government out of our lives. To believe in liberty is not to believe in any particular social and economic outcome. It is to trust in the spontaneous order that emerges when the state does not intervene in human volition and human cooperation. It permits people to work out their problems for themselves, build lives for themselves, take risks and accept responsibility for the results, and make their own decisions.”

Neither the Democrats nor the Republicans are genuinely and truly dedicated to the classical, fundamental ideal of liberty which gave rise to the American Revolution. It is time for all Americans to embrace an agenda which is designed to free this nation’s citizens from creeping socialism and to reinstate liberty to its rightful position of preeminence in everything America does. The threat of excessive government the nation faces today presents a greater danger than anything which arose during the twentieth century. It’s time to stand up and demand an end to Washington’s hegemony over this nation. We must recognize the government cannot provide all the things we love, only a free people exercising their liberty can do that.

*** Please Note:** This political book summary does *not* offer judgment or opinion on the book’s contents. The ideas, viewpoints and arguments are presented just as the book’s *author* had intended.

Theme #1 – The Individual and the State

Ever since the founding of the Republic, the federal government has been acting in ways which systematically impose slavery and bondage on the nation's citizens. These atrocities, which go directly against both the spirit and the letter of the Constitution, are now reaching a tipping point where, if left unchecked, we may find in the near future our fate will be determined more by the politicians in Washington than by the decisions Americans make for themselves. Some examples of this worrying trend are:

- *Capital punishment* – if we accept the government can legally kill its citizens (even those who commit horrible crimes), then we are also saying it can do just about anything else as well. “I no longer believe the government should be trusted with this power. Government always uses its power to punish its own enemies, but its enemies are not necessarily our enemies.” There have been too many cases where later evidence has proven a mistaken conviction was made in the first place. The government is too inept and prone to mistakes to be trusted with this power.
- *Civil disobedience* – if peaceful is the one meaningful way the power of the state can be kept in check. “Patriotism is the act of standing up to the government when the government is wrong, and at great risk stand firmly on principles that protect the freedoms of all people. Those who resist the state, nonviolently, based on their own principles, deserve our support.” Civil disobedience is the ultimate and legitimate form of personal nullification of unfair and unconstitutional laws. It is a means to advance the cause of liberty and we should laud those who promulgate liberty in this manner rather than suggest every act of civil disobedience should be met with a show of force.
- *Public land* – which is now so widespread more than one third of the land mass of the fifty states is currently under federal ownership. This is a major issue because the federal government uses an iron fist to override all state and local laws when it comes to land ownership. “Our biggest current battle is to restrain the eminent domain enthusiasts at all levels of government. The Fifth Amendment was written more to assure that land taken by the government was adequately paid for than it was to give the right to government to confiscate property at will. If anything, we should be moving in the opposite direction which makes it more difficult to impose eminent domain for the purpose of ‘public’ use. We should not be allowing it for the benefit of some special interest.” To maintain a free society, there has to be a clear understanding and application of the right to own property.
- *Surveillance* – the government's use of surveillance cameras and other technology is out of control. “Nothing good can come out of permitting government to film our every move. We need to protect citizens against government intrusions even as we curb the ability of the government to operate in total secrecy.” Instead of government operated cameras spying on citizens, there should be a live camera in every government office which can be seen by all citizens. That way bureaucrats could be monitored by every person who pays their wages. This would be a great way for citizens to take back their rightful control.
- *Slavery* – which still exists today not in the form of individual human slavery but in a compulsory draft, confiscatory taxation and various laws, regulations and mandates which control social and business associations. “It was tragic that the abolishment of slavery was not achieved as it had been in all other Western nations, peacefully.” The end of slavery in the United States came about primarily through the efforts of Wendell Phillips and William Lloyd Garrison. Phillips delivered the message and inspired the masses and served as a great role model of the agitator. The purpose of the agitator is to change people's opinions so that great and significant social changes can be brought about. The agitator proselytizes but does not write the laws. The current climate where lower living standards have been brought on by government regimentation of the social and economic order has created fertile grounds for new agitators to emerge today. We all need to become agitators for liberty or else we will end up in permanent slavery.

Theme #2 – Foreign Policy

America's foreign policy today is shaped almost entirely by the misperception the American people need to accept domestic privacy invasions in order to fight the undeclared "war on terror." This is a political sleight-of-hand whereby fear has been used to usurp the American citizen's right to privacy. America's foreign policy has led to some major problems for our nation:

- *Assassinations* – we are now moving towards an amoral situation where we accept that the assassination of American citizens by the government is sometimes necessary in order to provide national security. This signifies instead of being a nation of laws (with inbuilt checks and counterbalances) we have become a nation of people who act outside the law without restraint. Surely this is unhealthy for those who believe the greatest danger comes more from a runaway government than it ever does from foreign sources.
- *Central Intelligence Agency* – which has a unblemished record of failure. For all intents and purposes, the CIA has gone astray and has morphed into an all-powerful, all-secret intelligence agency which has not only become a government unto itself but has also shown it is able to self-fund through illegal drug trafficking. "If the truth be known, we would all be safer if the CIA in its current form were to be abolished."
- *Conscription* – which cannot and never will be part of a free society. The Constitution does not provide the authority to force someone into involuntary service to fight the nation's wars. In fact, slavery is expressly forbidden, even when the slave owner is the government. "Much more important than having a military of massive standing armies, navies, air forces, marines, military contractors, and the CIA to make us 'safe' would be to have a foreign policy that makes sense. It would be a lot cheaper, and we would never have to resort to the draft to defend the country and keep us safe."
- *Empire* – most Americans don't acknowledge it but the facts are the United States is undeniably a military-client run global empire. Today we have troops in 135 countries with more than 900 bases. We wage preventative wars, allow assassination of our own citizens and endorse torture. "Truly, the United States is an empire by any definition, and quite possibly the most aggressive, extended, and expansionist in the history of the world. Do we really find it shocking that some people in the world don't like us? Would we, as American citizens, like it if some superpower were doing this to us?" To preserve the American Republic as it was always intended, we can and must give up the militarism of the American Empire.
- *Foreign Aid* – an area where we waste billions of dollars each year implementing a foreign policy which invariably ends up having unintended consequences which come back to haunt us. "Foreign aid never works to achieve the stated goal of helping the poor of other nations. Our politicians make decisions on where the money is to go and the politicians in other countries are in charge of how it will be spent." Special interests always soak up whatever money flows into a country before any of the benefits can trickle down to the general population. Someone has described foreign aid as being the process of taking money from the poor in a rich country and giving it to the rich and powerful in a poor country. It has never worked and it always leaves both the donor and the recipients poorer in the end.
- *Patriotism* – which simply means someone who loves liberty. Unfortunately, too many leaders tell lies to the U.S. people and then justify their actions by wrapping themselves in the flag and invoking patriotism. They don't understand true patriotism demands obedience to the principles of liberty. "Patriotism to me is to always support the cause of liberty, and it turns out that governments over the ages have notoriously been the chief abusers of liberty. The original American patriots declared independence from an abusive government." If we want strong leaders, then we need political leaders who have enough self-confidence and strength of character they are willing to defy conventional wisdom and the usual chants of false patriotism and pride.

- *Security* – which has been used as a cover story for the steady growth and expanded reach of government in everyone’s lives. Take for example the Patriot Act which was passed thirty-four days after the 9/11 attacks. “The Patriot Act represented a radical departure from the protections of the Fourth Amendment. It authorized self-written search warrants (FBI and other agents) and national security letters and essentially undermined the privacy of all Americans protected by our Constitution. No records are now safe from the government. All Americans are potential terrorists and subject to unrestrained searches by our government ‘protectors.’ We are witnessing the destruction of the liberties that took centuries to establish in order to rein in the kings of old.”
- *Terrorism* – non-state violence perpetuated for political reasons – has been a problem since the 1970s. To end the violence, we need to look in more detail at what gives rise to it in the first place. “Whenever government wages war on anything (poverty, drugs, illiteracy, etc.) it is likely to make the problem worse. If we really wanted to put a huge dent in the problem of terrorism, there is a way to do it. We should start withdrawing troops from foreign countries. We should not go to war without a declaration. We should not go to war when it’s an aggressive war. We should take an honest look at all the ways in which U.S. policy incites desperate people to take extreme measures as retaliation for U.S.-sponsored political violence.”
- *Trade Policies* – the United States should avoid protectionism at all costs and have an open door on international trade. For one thing, trade and friendship diminish the likelihood of war, but more importantly protectionism always allows the less efficient to become complacent. “I believe everyone has a right to spend his or her own money any way they see fit, whether it be on foreign or domestic goods. If tennis shoes from China cost \$20 but \$100 if manufactured in the United States, why punish the poor for the sake of protecting domestic industries?” In a similar vein, free trade agreements don’t work. All they ever end up achieving is creating some international trade association (like the World Trade Organization) which then becomes a conduit for government entities to regulate trade quietly away from the spotlight and without the explicit consent of Congress. All too frequently the rules these trade organizations come up with are beneficial to large corporations and harm or ignore the small players in the marketplace. “Protectionist measures don’t solve the problems; they only protect the status quo that keeps us from being competitive in many industries.”
- *Zionsim* – the worldwide movement to reinvigorate Jewish identity, culture and faith is a great example of what happens when government tries to do something. Until the 1940s, Jewish immigration to Palestine was voluntary, gradual and accomplished with respect to the existing land owners. Then, in 1948, the United Nations partitioned Palestine (right after the U.N. had got involved in partitioning Korea which led to the Korean conflict which the United States got involved in.) All of a sudden, this escalated the establishment of Israel from a local issue into an international and highly politicized one and the United States has been involved in attempting to mandate what happens next in the Middle East ever since. “My position on Israel is the same as my position with regard to any other country. I favor a noninterventionist position, consistent with what the American Founders favored and what the Constitution enshrines. I would like a policy of peace, friendship and trade – and no intervention in any country’s internal affairs.” If the United States would forebear from favoring one Middle East nation over another and stay completely out of the region, then in all likelihood a “neighborhood” solution will arise which would be far better than anything the politicians could ever dream up. This would almost certainly mean less Americans would be killed in the wars which will surely come in the future because of our active involvement in shaping the Middle East.

Theme #3 – The Welfare State and State Socialism

There has been a systematic and widespread undermining of individuals and states by the politicians in Washington DC over the years. This has resulted in bureaucrats trying to concentrate wealth and power in their own hands rather than leaving them vested in the American people where they rightfully belong. At present, government is working night and day to replace initiative, effort and philanthropy with suffocating bondage under the bureaucrat's control. This cannot and must not be allowed to continue. Some key examples:

- *Gun Control* – the right to bear arms is a guardian principle of every other right a free people enjoy. Even those who don't bear arms benefit from those who do because people are more polite when it's possible the other person is bearing arms. This is a right we should guard zealously because only armed citizens are in a position to resist tyrannical government.
- *Immigration* – a hot-button issue for most Americans. Two extreme positions get promoted most of the time: totally open borders and completely closed borders. A better idea is to come up with a viable solution where everyone works through all the relevant issues. Clearly, if we rid ourselves of welfare state tendencies, we will have a more vibrant economy and the United States should have a legal and generous visitor work program. We should then permit the states to actually enforce immigration law. Any workers or immigrants who break the law should lose their right to stay in the country and automatic citizenship should not be granted to the children of illegal workers. America should apply the principles of freedom and justice to address the immigration challenge once and for all.
- *Insurance* – a growing number of people believe the government can “insure” citizens against economic, personal and foreign risks. “Government insurance” is an oxymoron. The only way the government can pay for anything for one group of citizens is by taking money from a different group of citizens and then redistributing it inefficiently. What we need is a generous dose of reality injected into the debate. Government redistribution of wealth, even when made with good intent, is immoral. The United States needs to reinstate and reemphasize the standard of liberty once and for all.
- *Medical care* – one of the defining issues of the current generation of American politics. “The prevailing attitude of the American people is that everyone has a right to medical care. This is an intellectual error that will lead us down the path to destroying what is good in the current system and replacing it with a system that will be terrible for everyone.” It's true that everyone has a right to pursue medical care without being hindered by government policies and that's what should be allowed to happen. Government intrusion in health care, even when motivated by good intent, is not going to work. Economic laws cannot be repealed at the stroke of a bureaucrat's pen. It's time to let the markets do what they do best. If the government were to help the people by doing less in terms of trying to provide health care for all, sustainable free market solutions will emerge.
- *Morality in government* – which is a key issue because the U.S. government has for all intents and purposes been operating without a moral compass for some decades now. “Without a moral foundation to government policies, the purpose of government no longer has any resemblance to the intent of those who settled our country and rebelled against the tyranny of King George. The transition away from the original notion upon which we were founded, that government was to be strictly limited to the protection of individuals from out-of-control government authoritarians, has been going on for a long time. The majority of Americans today expect to be taken care of by the government. If governments would merely follow the moral law that all religions recognize, we would live in a world of peace, prosperity, and freedom. The system is called classic liberalism. Liberty is not complicated.”

Theme #4 – Monetary / Economic Policy Subversion

For all too long now, the United States has been subject to a form of compulsory “Keynesianism” wherein wealth is by stealth drained from the poor, the middle class and the justly rich in order to supposedly be redistributed to others. This is the most massive con in history. These hidden monetary actions have become more powerful than the Presidency even as they are responsible for all American misfortunes. More specifically:

- *Taxes* – why should the government have a claim on the productive efforts of every worker? “The early American patriots understood the destructive nature of taxation. If we as a nation continue to believe that paying for civilization through taxation is a wise purchase and the only way to achieve civilization, we are doomed. It’s a bad deal for the cause of liberty.” The fact taxation can only be realized through the threat of force should be a pretty good indicator this is a bad deal and will not advance the cause of personal liberty. It’s time for taxes to fall dramatically and permanently.
- *Monetary policy* – the creation of an unchecked central bank – the Federal Reserve – has been an unmitigated disaster due to the fact it meant money could be manufactured at whim rather than backed by scarce commodities like gold or silver. It’s time to stop the madness and acknowledge the end result of this approach has been brutal and persistent levels of inflation which have lowered rather than raised the nation’s living standards. “I would like to see a dollar as good as gold. I would like to see the banking system operating as it would under free enterprise, meaning no central bank. I would like to see competitive currencies emerge on the market and be permitted to thrive. Washington should get out of the way and let another system built on human choice emerge spontaneously.”
- *Keynesianism* – is the train of thought which suggests massive government spending keeps an economy strong. It is based on the book *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* which was published by J.M. Keynes in 1936. Interventionists claim moral authority for their actions from Keynes but with the recent economic recession, all the shortcomings and errors of a centrally planned economy are now obvious for all to see. Government borrowing and spending is never the solution it claims to be; only saving and producing on the part of citizens can move the nation forward economically. To genuinely move onwards and upwards from the current economic crisis, it’s time we acknowledge Keynesianism as a failed economic policy and instead do everything in our power to build more free markets, to safeguard private property rights and to promote more individual responsibility.
- *Austrian economics* – a school of thought so named for the country of origin of its founder Carl Menger (1840-1921) who was an economist at the University of Vienna. In essence, Austrian economics champions private property, free markets, sound monetary policy and the liberal society as the engines of growth for any nation. The Austrian School suggests free markets work best whereas John Maynard Keynes suggests “wise” central planners can do better than chaotic free market forces.
- *Business cycle* – whenever an economic crisis arrives, everyone wants to talk about solutions but nobody wants to figure out what caused the recession in the first place and attack that. Ludwig von Mises, an Austrian School economist, wrote in 1923 that the central bank causes boom and busts in the business cycle due to its ability to manipulate the interest rate. He wrote: “The first condition of any monetary reform is to halt the printing press.” Yet despite that, Washington has not shown any inclination to do the right thing. The current economic recession is the result of the mistakes of the past decade coming to their ultimate and inevitable conclusions. “If we want to cure the bust, don’t create the boom. Economic growth must be based on real factors, not phony stimulus provided by the central bank.”

Theme #5 – Moral Order and Cultural Decline

Irrespective of the best intention of our nation's Founders, American politics has become corrupt. Freedom seems to be reserved for certain organized special interest groups who demand special treatment at the expense of all others. The ultimate goal of state socialism is to transform Americans into subservient citizens who are dependant on State controlled institutions for survival. This is the diametric opposite outcome of what the Founders had in mind when they talked about liberty as a God given right. Examples of this include:

- *Abortion* – which really comes down to the difference between the fetus one minute (or more) before birth and a newborn one minute after birth. There is no difference and no law can ever hope to make it so. If we allow abortions, society sends the signal a lower value is placed on the small and the weak which is clearly and obviously wrong. A moral and just society won't do that. If you believe in the Constitution, however, it is clear abortion shouldn't be in the federal jurisdiction. It is a state-level responsibility to restrain violence against any human being. It's time to allow for the states to prohibit abortion on demand.
- *Demagogues* – politicians who seek influence and political power by appealing to the prejudices, the fears and the negative expectations of the public in a destructive manner. Demagogues don't add to the political debate; they browbeat and play rhetorical games and thereby act as the enemies of liberty. Pure and simple, America needs more politicians who are willing to engage in open and if necessary spirited debate about our freedoms and less religious, intellectual and political demagogues. Americans should be willing to stand up for the rights of all, even when that course is inconvenient or uncomfortable.
- *Discrimination* – a key area where any government action has unintended consequences. Left to their own devices, most people are happy to form authentic and voluntary associations with those who think or act differently. When the iron fist of government is used to try and force things along, the loss of freedom rankles and invariably the end result is worse not better. "Outlawing discrimination has made for a less free and less prosperous society without bringing the various groups closer together. Government force, illegally and illogically used to stop all discrimination, results in a multiplicity of unintended consequences, altered behavior, and fraud."
- *Education* – which again is an area the federal government has no place to be. "It's quite clear that there's no constitutional authority for the federal government to be involved in education, regardless of what the Supreme Court has claimed." The best way forward would be to be to give everyone a tax credit for all educational expenses and leave the choice about education up to parents, local communities and any local community groups who want to get involved in offering education. Competition will work wonders here.
- *Envy* – which is defined as the painful awareness of another's good fortune. Envy is the driving force behind redistributionist politics in the United States. It is manifested in progressive income taxes, inheritance taxes and elsewhere. "Policies that harm people solely because they are winners in life appeal to the lowest impulses in our nature. We should try to emulate success, not punish it. This is the American way and a major reason for the wealth and success of Americans. We can all win together, provided we keep the green-eyed monster at bay."
- *Evolution versus creation* – which is a debate that has nothing whatsoever to do with politics. As Thomas Jefferson once said: "It does me no injury for my neighbor to say there are twenty gods, or no God. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg." The reality is no person, even a politician, has perfect knowledge as to man's emergence on earth. Everyone is entitled to their own opinion and the state cannot and should not be used to enforce one person's views on another. A civil society requires that we be tolerant of other people's opinions and that seems to apply here. Besides, if man is progressing so steadily, why is it that society's involvement in mass killings has become worse in the twentieth century when an estimated 262 million people were killed by their own governments? That doesn't say much for evolution.

- *Global warming* – another issue about which politicians are expected to have a position. “You can count me among the global warming skeptics.” Worrying about this and issues like “peak oil” are completely unnecessary. “Energy independence” shouldn’t be the goal of the United States with the government in charge. Free markets will allow alternate fuels to develop and ramp up scale far more efficiently. There was no government-approved cell phone plan and the industry came up with its own solutions guided by the markets. The same will happen with energy and fuel if the government will get out of the way.
- *Marriage* – which again is an area where government approval is expected but is not required. Instead of insisting people need a license to get married (and then having vigorous debates about who is entitled to such a license), why not let everyone have their own definition of what marriage means? If an agreement is reached or a marriage contract entered into, then it will qualify as a civil contract on which the courts may rule if the need arises in the future. If the government is removed from the marriage definition business, people can choose for themselves what they want to do in this regard. Government intervention in social issues is not only unconstitutional it is also entirely counterproductive so let’s stop the madness.
- *Political correctness* – an obsession for many politicians. “The worst part is that definitions of PC violations are constantly changing. The original intent to stop outright racist, sexist, or homophobic language does nothing to change people’s attitudes and language.” Political correctness only happens when one group tries to use the thought police to prove they are superior in some way to another group. The goal of any totalitarian system is to maintain order and safety and under those conditions, liberty becomes the enemy. Political correctness is a completely frivolous issue which diverts attention from more substantial issues.
- *Racism* – is at heart a denial of individualism. It seeks to lump people into groups and apply labels. Many governments harness racism to turn existing prejudices into hate which then mobilizes the masses. In the Second World War, all Americans of Japanese descent were rounded up and put into concentration camps. If we honestly hate racism, we must also hate war as this has been the breeding ground of most malignant forms of racism. “Government-backed racism is designed to shore up government power. All these actions are contrary to the individualism that a free society should uphold without compromise.”
- *Religion* – the longtime whipping horse of atheists. Throughout history, too many wars have been fought with both sides claiming God’s blessings. Yet all the most populous religions of the world agree on common principles like the importance of love, the Golden Rule and some form of the Ten Commandments. “The basic moral principle of individualism emphasizes not only an absolute right to one’s life but the opposite as well: that no one has a right to another person’s life or liberty or property. There can be no individual aggression and no national aggression either. This is what the Golden Rule should mean.”

So what does liberty mean in the end? *“We must recapture what it means to be free. We need to form a new approach to thinking about society and government, one that imagines that we can get along without such central management. We need to become more tolerant of the imperfections that come with freedom, and we need to give up the illusion that somehow putting government in charge of anything is going to improve its workings, much less bring on utopia. Let us give up our longing for welfare, our love of war, and our desire to see the government control and shape our fellow citizens. Liberty built civilization. It can rebuild civilization. And when the tide turns and the culture again celebrates what it means to be free, our battle will be won. It could happen in our time. It might happen after we are gone from the earth. Our job in this generation is to prepare the way.”*

– Ron Paul