



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on July 4, 2021

Birthing Greatness: Why We Celebrate America

Many millions of people hate what they think America is, but very few hate what she actually is.

“Hard times create strong men, strong men create good times, good times create weak men, and weak men create hard times,” famously wrote author G. Michael Hopf in *Those Who Remain*. It’s fashionable today to slam the United States, as people kneel during our Anthem but bow to China, as they call our system oppressive while enriching overseas tyrants (and themselves). Yet while America’s detractors call her many things and by her defenders are called many things, among them hateful and ungrateful, they are certainly also something else: weak.



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In fact, if America is guilty of anything, it’s creating the best of times that have created the weakest of men.

When King George III, George Washington’s former enemy, heard that the latter would relinquish power to a powerless Congress, he stated to painter Benjamin West, “If he does that, he will be the greatest man in the world.” Yet Washington did do that and, in the process, helped forge history’s greatest civilization.

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The United States is exactly that, too. While our nation was born into a very dark world, it wasn’t “built on slavery” as today’s progressives claim. Rather, America’s construction commenced in a time in which slavery was status quo, as it had always been; it was an age in which “human rights” were virtually unheard of, where cannibalism and human sacrifice were still practiced.

Yet early in its history, the United States would follow the British in outlawing slavery and would fight its bloodiest war, in part, over it. Do note that other civilizations, such as North Africa’s Barbary lands, still happily kept people in bondage — and slavery exists in the Third World to this day.

But bondage of any kind was anathema to America’s spirit from the beginning. When Washington declined to become king, what is today the [world’s oldest](#) constitutional republic was born, and human rights were recognized in its founding documents. Though much was borrowed from the British (you don’t “throw out the baby with the bathwater”), a strict class system was rejected; instead, political and economic freedom, and opportunity that would ultimately allow all to pursue their dreams, was embraced.

This made America a true anomaly in a world where tyranny had been the default. Moreover, revolutions have often not ended well, being “cures” as bad as, if not worse than, the disease. Yet the American Revolution was exceptional. Unlike France’s 13 years later, ours would not include a bloody



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Reign of Terror, be an anti-Christian affair, or be followed by a series of unstable governments and then dictatorship (under Napoleon Bonaparte in France) a decade afterwards.

Oh, the French had their rallying cry “Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité,” and Napoleon did usher in greater opportunity. But we did that and also managed the liberty and a far greater measure of brotherhood. Why, a [study last year](#) found that the United States is one of the world’s *least* racist nations, though open minds coupled with un-poisoned hearts don’t need research to grasp this obvious reality.

(This brings to mind why C.S. Lewis warned in *The Screwtape Letters* about how evil urges us to exaggerate our faults; how it may, as he put it, tell the militarist he’s too pacifistic. In our case, it tells an egalitarian land that it’s too exclusionary and oppressive.)

Of course, these triumphs of humaneness were made possible by faith, which was [strong in colonial America](#). Moreover, these spiritual riches *and their attendant virtues* helped pave the way for material riches, for prosperity theretofore unknown.

Nobel Prize-winning economist Milton Friedman once pointed out that grinding poverty had been man’s historical norm. Therefore, he emphasized, “Why is there poverty?” is the wrong question. We rather should ask, “Why is there now great wealth?”

The answer is that economic freedom — bestowed by our ancestors — catalyzes the creative capacities of the common person. And, boy, have those capacities delivered. In the late 19th century, immigrants would write letters home to Europe and shock their relatives by relating that they, people of average means in the United States, could eat meat daily. This was unprecedented.

And today, our supermarkets stock an average of 15,000 items, at affordable prices, from the world over. We swim in luxury, and those complaining about our nation may use voice-recognition software to print out their screeds on computers or use electronic wonders to video their protests. Professional agitators, such as BLM cofounder Patrisse Cullors, make millions of dollars off their “oppression.” Why comedian-cum-commentator Bill Maher, though so often wrong and never in doubt, did put our [life-of-Riley status](#) nicely in perspective many years ago. “We’re the only country that has fat poor people,” he quipped.

Flowing from economic power is military power, and while our riches have given us history’s most formidable war machine, we’ve so often used it as a peace machine. For example, after defeating the Nazis, Italian fascists, and Imperial Japanese during WWII and in sole possession of atomic weapons, we could have conquered the world.

But we didn’t.

Instead, we got our former foes back on their feet, helped them establish republican government, and then let them spread their wings. We set them free — even though some would use that freedom to be anti-American.

America is also a beautiful place, blessed with vast land and natural resources, which have undoubtedly contributed to our success (though places with few resources but economic freedom, such as Hong Kong, often prosper greatly). We’ve been good stewards of these gifts, too: The United States has more forested area today than a century ago, and our air and water are cleaner than in the 1960s.

The truth is that there are many millions of people who hate what they think America is, but very few who hate what she actually is. Why, Team USA hammer thrower Gwen Berry uses her freedom to turn her back on our flag as the Anthem is played. But does she know, as North Korean defector Yeonmi



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Park [pointed out](#), that if she'd done likewise in the "Democratic People's Republic of Korea," she'd be executed and generations of her family could be sent to prison camps?

Really, the behavior of the world's Berrys, fueled by ignorance and lack of virtue, is cowardly. For so many of the people who regularly impugn America over the speck in her eye say nothing about the beam in China's, whose wrath they fear and riches they crave. So they beat up on a gentle giant who'll take the abuse while kowtowing to the dragon that, over legitimate criticism, would actually hurt them.

Absent from this article is the now obligatory but nauseating disclaimer, "We know America isn't perfect..." But perfection, not being a thing of this world, is not a prerequisite for being the best in the world. Our mothers aren't/weren't perfect, but we wouldn't think of opening comments about them by saying, "Now, I know my mother isn't perfect."

Besides, people have to be light years from perfection to live in history's greatest land, condemn it as the worst, and not have a clue that they are the weak men who create hard times.



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