



Timely Lessons About Tyranny From the Father of the Constitution

Take alarm at the first experiment on our liberties. — James Madison

James Madison, often referred to as the “Father of the Constitution,” once predicted that the Bill of Rights would become a mere “parchment barrier,” words on paper ignored by successive generations of Americans.

How right he was.

Although Madison initially felt that the inclusion of a bill of rights in the originally ratified Constitution was unnecessary to its success, Thomas Jefferson persuaded him that “a bill of rights is what the people are entitled to against every government on earth, general or particular, & what no just government should refuse, or rest on inferences.”

The Bill of Rights drafted by Madison—the first ten amendments to the Constitution—was a document so revolutionary at the time that it would come to be viewed as the epitome of American liberty. The rights of the people reflected in those ten amendments encapsulated much of Madison’s views about government, the corrupting influence of power, and the need for safeguards against tyranny.

Madison’s writings speak volumes to the present constitutional crisis in the country.

Read them and weep:

The accumulation of all powers, Legislative, Executive, and Judiciary, in the same hands, whether of one, a few, or many, and whether hereditary, self-appointed, or elective, may justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny. — James Madison

The people are the only legitimate fountain of power, and it is from them that the constitutional charter, under which the several branches of government hold their power, is derived. — James Madison

If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it



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to control itself. — James Madison

A standing military force, with an overgrown Executive will not long be safe companions to liberty. The means of defence against foreign danger have been always the instruments of tyranny at home. — James Madison

Wherever the real power in a Government lies, there is the danger of oppression. — James Madison

Knowledge will forever govern ignorance: And a people who mean to be their own Governors, must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives. — James Madison

I believe there are more instances of the abridgement of the freedom of the people by gradual and silent encroachments of those in power than by violent and sudden usurpations.
— James Madison

In the years since the Founders laid their lives on the line to pursue the dream of individual freedom and self-government, big government has grown bigger and the rights of the citizenry have grown smaller.

However, there are certain principles—principles that every American should know—which undergird the American system of government and form the basis of our freedoms.

The following seven principles are a good starting point for understanding what free government is really all about.

First, the maxim that power corrupts is an absolute truth. Realizing this, those who drafted the Constitution and the Bill of Rights held one principle sacrosanct: a distrust of all who hold governmental power. As such, those who drafted our founding documents would see today's government as an out-of-control, unmanageable beast.

The second principle is that governments primarily exist to secure rights, an idea that is central to constitutionalism. The purpose of constitutionalism is to limit governmental power and ensure that the government performs its basic function: to preserve and protect our rights, especially our unalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, and our civil liberties. Unfortunately, the government today has discarded this principle and now sees itself as our master, not our servant.

The third principle revolves around the belief that no one is above the law, not even those who make the law. This is termed rule of law. Richard Nixon's statement, "When the President does it, that means it is not illegal," would have been anathema to the Framers of the Constitution.

Fourth, separation of powers ensures that no single authority is entrusted with all the powers of government. The fact that the president today has dictatorial powers would have been considered an offense to every principle for which the Framers took their revolutionary stand.

Fifth, a system of checks and balances, essential if a constitutional government is to succeed, strengthens the separation of powers and prevents legislative despotism. The Framers did not anticipate the emergence of presidential powers or the inordinate influence of corporate powers on governmental decision-making. Indeed, as recent academic studies now indicate, we are now ruled by a



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monied oligarchy that serves itself and not “we the people.”

Sixth, representation allows the people to have a voice in government by sending elected representatives to do their bidding while avoiding the need of each and every citizen to vote on every issue considered by government.

Finally, federalism is yet another constitutional device to limit the power of government by dividing power and, thus, preventing tyranny. In America, the levels of government generally break down into federal, state and local branches (which further divide into counties and towns or cities). Because local and particular interests differ from place to place, such interests are better handled at a more intimate level by local governments, not a bureaucratic national government.

These seven vital principles have been largely forgotten in recent years, obscured by the haze of a centralized government, a citizenry that no longer thinks analytically, and schools that don’t adequately teach our young people about their history and their rights.

Yet here’s the rub: while Americans wander about in their brainwashed states, their “government of the people, by the people and for the people” has largely been taken away from them.

The answer, as I make clear in my book [Battlefield America: The War on the American People](#) and in its fictional counterpart [The Erik Blair Diaries](#): get un-brainwashed.

Learn your rights.

Stand up for the founding principles.

Make your voice and your vote count for more than just political posturing.

Never cease to vociferously protest the erosion of your freedoms at the local and national level.

Most of all, do these things today.

If we wait until the votes have all been counted or hang our hopes on our particular candidate to win and fix what’s wrong with the country, “we the people” will continue to lose.

ABOUT JOHN & NISHA WHITEHEAD:

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