



Faith. Liberty. Community. Life.

## Why Liberty Is Important

Just a couple of decades ago, the famous rights of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” described in the Declaration of Independence were almost universally understood to be good things, the bedrock principles upon which our entire country was founded.

In recent years, however, many people in politics, academia, and the media have questioned the values of the American founding. They have focused on the faults of certain Founding Fathers— along with the undeniable fact that the rights they championed were not originally enjoyed by all Americans—and cast doubt upon whether any of their fancy words are important today.

Most importantly, some folks question whether conservatives talk about “liberty” as an excuse to avoid helping the poor or the sick or to turn a blind eye to persistent injustice and inequality. Fortunately, nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, our society could use a good deal more liberty today.

Liberty, as the Founders understood it, is not a license to do anything and everything you feel like. You can have liberty and still be bound by both just laws and moral principles. Instead, liberty is a state of self-determination, where one can work towards a good life (the pursuit of happiness), speak one’s mind, worship freely, and make choices without hindrance from either your neighbor or ruler.

In the millennia past, untold generations didn’t have such liberty. Through caste, rank, or accident of birth, you had one life to live and not much opportunity to improve your situation. The idea that a shoemaker or ditch-digger could work hard to improve his station in society was revolutionary.

Today, when we see many families struggling to get by, or workers trapped in low-paying jobs, the problem is not that others have too much liberty, but that the vulnerable people in our country have too little. Our challenge is to find ways to increase their share in the American Dream, to multiply the choices available to them, and allow every man and woman to pursue happiness with as few roadblocks as possible.

But liberty is not merely about economic opportunity. It also entails the freedom to think and speak according to one’s conscience, without fear of persecution.

Today, some of the biggest threats to our liberty don’t come from the government, but from massive corporations which control platforms for public discourse and the economic activity of millions. In the last several years, they have silenced voices of

dissent, fired people with traditional views and values, and threatened entire states to enact certain laws and eliminate others.

Of course, big companies are private organizations, and our Constitutional rights apply mainly to the federal government. But that's exactly the problem: when wealthy multinationals are able to bully Americans into thinking, saying, buying, working, and legislating the way they want, our liberty is diminished.

We must be vigilant against any threats to our precious liberty, wherever they arise, so that all Americans may truly pursue happiness.

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