

The Decadence of American Democracy

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Abstract

The sad truth of American exceptionalism is that it is, largely, a lie. We have been telling myths of utopia since the puritan "city on a hill" of John Winthrop and have rarely, if ever, stopped to consider our trajectory. As a democracy it is ideal for the citizens to feel like they can make a change, like they have a say in society, and, most importantly, feel like they are a part of something bigger. Americans have been reduced to making decisions based upon the corrosive tripe mass produced by corporate owned news agencies and affiliate themselves not with the wellbeing of their nation, but with the wellbeing of themselves. The coalition of corporate interest with representative democracy is eroding the values and well-being of all Americans, the poor and unfortunate disproportionately so, in such a way that facilitates both the downfall of our democracy and the maintaining of a capitalist elite. This elite, for whatever reason, put their accumulation of wealth before the well-being, and even survival, of the average American. As the populace gets more desperate, they rely more upon capitalist systems for survival and put even more of their hope into elitist politics to save them. This paper seeks to determine whether the US is really a democracy in the sense that people have significant power to change society and whether or not the current political system will facilitate change enough for an average citizen to truly have a vested interest in which party gains power; determining whether Americans should believe what is heard so often, that America is a democracy, that the nation will die if [insert candidate here] wins/loses, and ultimately whether or not capitalism and democracy are truly codependent.

Capital and Democracy: The Truth About America

I hope we shall take warning from the example and crush in its birth the aristocracy of our monied corporations which dare already to challenge our government to a trial of strength, and to bid defiance to the laws of their country.

-Thomas Jefferson, 1816

Before I can say whether or not America is what it claims to be, a democracy, there has to be some criteria that it meets or fails to meet. Democracy is a government in which the people have the power, the government derives its authority by the consent of the people it governs over, the people are acknowledged to all be equal in some sense and an even distribution of power gives everyone a say in politics. Under this model the government is set up in such a way where the people's voices are being heard, the needs of the many come before the needs of the few, and people do not have to fight to keep it that way. In a democracy all you have to do is vote and keep yourself educated. If America was that way it would be hard to deny its status as a democracy.

The unfortunate truth is that America does not meet these criteria. The federal minimum wage is only \$7.25 an hour, a wage that would force millions of workers into poverty if the majority of states had not stepped in to make their own minimum wage (Khan & Khattar, 2022). There is not a person alive who would agree that a country as wealthy as America could not support a higher minimum wage. Clearly the wellbeing of the average person is not the government's primary concern, the government has no issue with people suffering unlivable wages. The fact that the government does not actually change the minimum wage (despite promises from the Biden administration) just goes to show the needs of citizens is not a primary concern. According to a study in 1994 raising the minimum wage does not lead to companies

hiring less like some would say (Card & Krueger, 1994), in practice none of the previous minimum wage increases have had an adverse effect on anything. This is not some new issue in America, it is old news that a raising of the minimum wage does not hurt the country. All that raising the minimum wage would do is to serve as a means to help the poorest of citizens.

The inaction of the government in a situation like this would not be seen in a true democracy; if the wellbeing of the people were a concern of the government, they would make sure their citizens were making livable wages. There is a certain group of people who could benefit from a lower minimum wage though, the wealthy. Even those corporations who pay higher than the minimum wage would benefit, a job seems more appealing when it pays above average. At the end of the day however, most companies could pay their workers higher while still making profit, and there is a good case to be made that it would strengthen the business as a whole. The problem with paying the workers higher is that the people at the top would get less wealth short term, hindering their investments which hinders capital generation. We all know it takes money to make money, what they do not want you to realize is that it takes suffering to make a lot of money. The elite are willing to doom others to crippling poverty to grow their treasure hoard.

If America does not derive its power from the people, it is not a democracy, but it has to get its power from somewhere. The truth about America is that it derives its power and authority from capital. The pharmaceutical and health product industry alone spent \$4.7 billion on lobbying state and federal governments between 1999 and 2018 (Wouters 2020). The government officials, whether or not we voted them into office, take an exorbitant amount of money from corporations. Our elected officials have sold their souls for that sweet, sweet, paycheck. Not only have they sold their souls, they have sold ours; they are currently stifling the

system by which we can peacefully obtain what we want. At the end of the day the bottom half of American citizens could not afford to spend a fraction of what pharma did on lobbying, not without keeping food out of their children's mouths. This is the wall of money that has been built between us and our government.

This sick perversion of democracy has been taking place in America since the beginning. As early as the 1830's, only around 40 years after the constitution was ratified, there was already a wealthy aristocracy which held vast amounts of influence over the nation. Within population centers like New York the top 10 percent of people owned 80 percent of the wealth while poor children toiled away, risking their lives. Throughout our history the government sided with the elite to label unions as conspiracies and convict their members. When strikers started threatening their business, they were dealt with using force, sometimes even directly by the hands of the government. To the railroad companies that paid their workers only a measly fraction of what they produced, the government gave out \$51 million in bonds and 21 million acres in land. Injured workers were denied compensation for their injuries, and people suffered throughout the country. While the government was proactive on the side of the elite, they were okay with millions of people suffering in poverty and squalor (Parenti 1996).

This action of the government on the side of corporations is evidence of the power capital has on our country. Time and time again those with wealth are pandered towards while the common man sits on the sideline. Take for example the great recession, the biggest economic threat our nation has faced post-WWII. A massive housing bubble was formed due to the idiotic practices of big banks. Nobody was ready when the bubble popped, the government ended up giving out \$7.7 trillion in emergency loans to the big banks which went bankrupt. At the same time the banks were bailed out by the government the common man lost out. US households lost

around \$19 trillion dollars overall at this time (Investopedia, 2023). Assuming that Americans lost this money proportionately that would equate to the average American losing around \$57 thousand of wealth. The government may have given out emergency loans to the banks, but they did not expect the people to get paid back the money the banks lost.

The US government helping out the rich is nothing new, it has been going on from the beginning. This begs the question, do capitalism and democracy truly need each other? At the end of the day the two systems are opposed to each other ideologically; one advocates for society before the individual while the other is the opposite. At the end of the day when you live in a system where everyone is supposedly equal politically, and in that same system there is a massive divide of power economically, there are going to be problems. Since everyone has an equal say but not equal capital, those with the uneven advantage rise the ranks, secretly or not, and end up eroding democracy into oligarchy. Without regulations to the economy and wealth generation there will always be some sort of disparity, using that disparity bad actors rise the ranks to wreak havoc on our system.

A common retort to the idea of the government regulating the economy is that it has not worked in the past; this is wrong. Contrary to the idea of deregulation being synonymous with prosperity it is the deregulation of capitalism that has led to many of the woes of our country. The great recession and the great depression for example happened during periods of heightened deregulation (*laissez-faire* and neoliberalism respectively). Most people think of the failed command economies of the past like the USSR when they think of regulation. What they fail to realize is that a command economy is not what's being advocated for. What most Americans want is the people regulating the corporations, not the corporations regulating the government. Democrat or Republican, conservative or liberal, average Americans all want as little influence

of corporations as they can get within our democracy. The black and white fallacy is a favorite of the capitalist; to them it is either laissez-faire or command economy, the mere notion of the government caring about its citizens over the whims of capital is enough to make them vomit. They expect the government to sit on the sidelines keeping them safe from the droves of workers who want equality. At the same time, they expect the government to tax them less than the common man, that is what they are paying them off for anyways.

Speaking of corporations, they are probably one of the biggest threats to the wellbeing of our nation and of our world. Only 100 companies worldwide produce 71 percent of the world's green greenhouse gas emissions (CDP, 2017). While this issue is not particular to America, most of those 100 companies are not American to my knowledge, this just goes to show the havoc corporations are capable of wreaking. This is contrary to mankind, the types of things we can do on our own are quite pathetic when compared to what companies can do. It would only make sense that a corporation be more tightly regulated than a man, right? Well, according to the supreme court corporations are entitled to the same freedoms as us humans. In two cases the first amendment has been interpreted to apply to corporations (Benac, 2014). At the end of the day a corporation deserves no rights more than the government not being able to take over or take money by means other than taxation. Other than that, corporations should receive no rights at all, and especially not the rights granted to us by the constitution. To say that a corporation is a person is an absolutely absurd notion. The elite are willing to disingenuously play with semantics when it serves to benefit them.

In order for the government to effectively regulate corporations and stop the wrecking of our planet the idea of corporate personhood needs to come to an end. There is nobody who genuinely believes that the constitution was meant to apply to corporations as well as people,

instead there are bad actors who use their influence over our government to get what they want. At the end of the day these people only care for the money they accumulate, not for the environment, not for their fellow man; and for some of them, not even themselves. The more rights that the government applies to corporations the less of an ability they have to actually stop them if they threaten our people, like they currently are with pollution. The officials bend to the will of their sponsors and give rights to corporations against the wills of the people, democracy is an afterthought.

To try and analyze the structures of American democracy is foolish without first analyzing the relationship between it and capitalism, the elite are clearly advantaged in a way that no citizen can boast. We are forced to live within a system that concentrates capital under a government that awards the wealthy. Under this order it is only inevitable that America becomes an oligarchy. We do not have the means to redistribute wealth or regulate corporations when they are treated as people. We cannot repeal these decisions by vote nor can we make new laws. We are at the whims of the elite, hoping they choose benevolence over greed. It is hard to expect that coming from a system where profit is the only incentive. We are lied to and divided into squabbling groups. And during all this we are led to believe that our measly vote matters. What value is it to vote for an official when your only choices are corporate lackeys? In a true democracy we would not be standing by while decisions are made for us.

With only these two parties it is impossible to move forward on any meaningful issues. The electoral college ensures that the two parties keep their duopoly over the presidency. A majority of Americans, 65% percent, agree that the electoral college should be replaced with a popular vote deciding the presidency (Kiley, 2023). Change is impossible when people are convinced America is a perfect nation, perfection is nonexistent and America needs to

acknowledge that. When we let our system spoil, especially as blatantly as it has been, we are serving only to give up the equal power we deserve within a democracy.

The Presidency of Degeneracy: Which Corporate Lackey is Better?

“Evil is evil. Lesser, greater, middling... makes no difference. The degree is arbitrary, the definition is blurred; if I am to choose between one evil and another, I’d rather not choose at all” - Geralt of Rivia

In the system of corruption Americans currently reside within there are few exercises of political power seen as more important than voting for a president. Recently though an increasing number of Americans have become discontent with the lack of change that takes place every four years; there always are promises, seldom they are kept. America has entered a phase of politics often referred to as the "culture war" where different groups have started fighting over social issues. Politicians are quick to pick a side and profit off the mentality that "you need to side with us or your culture will be destroyed". What people fail to realize is that neither party, democrat or republican, truly has the influence, power, or care to make change at the scale they expect. All the culture war is, politically speaking, is another way to polarize average Americans and to prolong the American status quo; a perverted democracy run by a degenerate elite. In reality both political parties pander to the elite to gain the resources necessary to rise the ranks of American Bureaucracy.

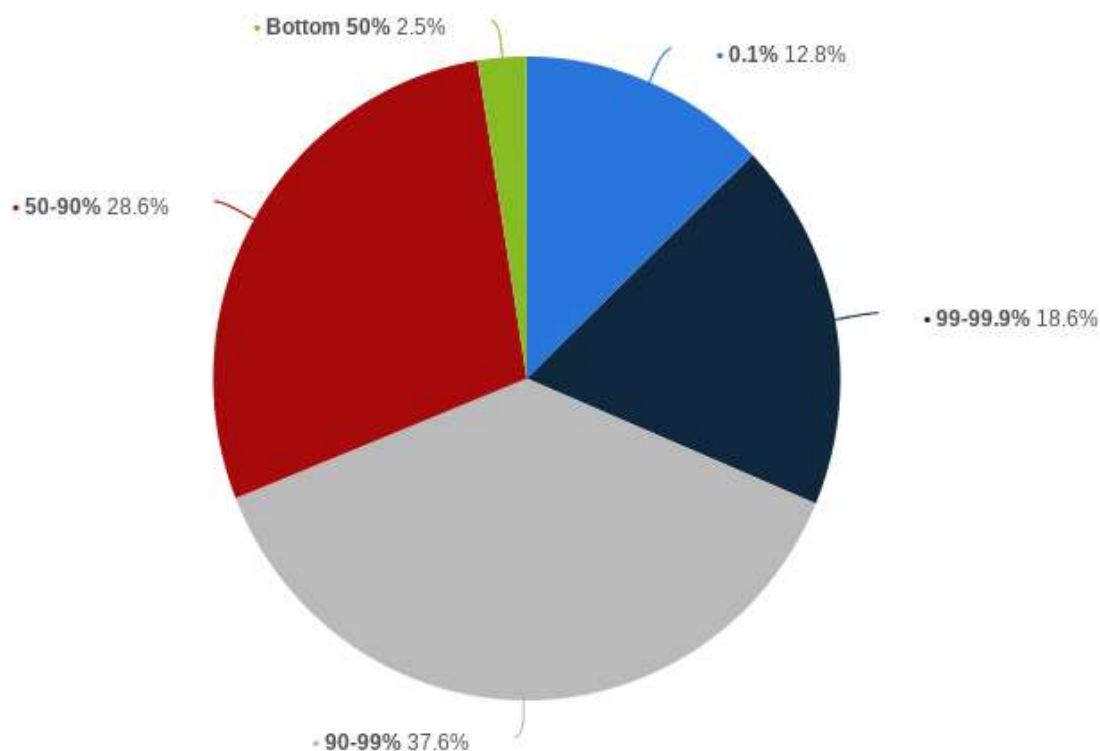
Neither party truly has the poor in mind when they make decisions, only the rich. At the end of the day they would not rise the ranks at all if they did, the corporations would just pay money to the other guy who is willing; there is always someone willing to sell their morals for a quick buck, especially in America. The elite have entrenched themselves at the top of our society by buying the bureaucrats that have the final say in the creation of laws, owning the media and

controlling what we hear, and creating a system where the end goal is to reach their position; success is considered reaching a position where you are the one buying politicians, not by succeeding in making a meaningful change in your community.

The politics of America have mostly been reduced to stating a problem the other side has and implying that your side will fix it. This would not even be an issue if the promises of change were actually realized; civil rights and the way we treat people as a society are really important, which is the reason average Americans got so caught up in the culture war. The issue is that parties are campaigning on ideas that they are not addressing with actual change, it is one thing to say you are supporting someone and actually supporting them. Politicians are experts at making promises they do not plan on keeping, working to polarize Americans and stagnate politics. This is what is desired by the elite, as wealth disparity rises their pockets grow ever fatter.

The current status quo of America is creating wealth disparity that is hard to even imagine as seen in figure 1 (on next page), with the top 0.1 percent of society having around 5 times the wealth of the bottom 50 percent. In a world where everyone had the same amount of wealth 50 percent of the population would have 500 times 0.1 percent, just to put it in perspective. This disparity of wealth can be seen in reality through many pathetic shows of wealth by the rich, a good example of this was Jeff Bezos commissioning a yacht so large the city of Rotterdam was considering actually rebuilding a bridge to give it a route to sea (Burack, 2022). All this while many Americans struggle to even afford basic amenities and housing. The government has constantly failed to stop rising disparities, siding with the rich, throughout America's history. Money is everything in our society and politicians always seem to cave in to the interest of the elite when it serves to fill their pockets, a manifestation of capitalism within

American democracy. Time and time again this relationship between politicians and "lobbying" (or bribes in disguise) has blatantly stripped away the citizen's political power.



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Figure 1. Wealth distribution in the United States in the second quarter of 2023 (Statista, 2023)

Neither side actually addresses the issue of wealth disparity and instead decide to focus on more polarizing issues, things like racism or immigration that they cannot solve but can scare people with. This leads to the feeling of hopelessness in American politics where many people feel their vote is practically meaningless, the candidates do not usually even face the problems they speak about in office; typically they are making decisions that have more to do with wealth and spending than with transgender rights or the replacement of white people (issues which people use to justify their mindless voting for the democrats and republicans respectively. What many people do not realize is just how close the two parties are when it comes to accepting

corporate influence and perpetuating the economic status quo. To be fair to Joe Biden he has said before that he is against corporation's role in American politics, let's assume he is not lying or being disingenuous.

The fact of the matter is, regardless of Biden's beliefs, what matters the most in these things is the general attitudes and decisions of the party. If Biden wants to make a change in society, he is going to need the backing of many different people, a majority of congress would be needed if he actually wanted to pass a law for example. This means that who you vote for is going to probably have less sway than you might think. Take for example Biden's stance on the federal minimum wage. On January 28, 2022 Biden was quoted saying "I continue to urge Congress to raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour, so that American workers can have a job that delivers dignity," a statement which just goes to show the futility of voting a president into office on the basis of changing the economic status quo (Biden, 2022). Biden failed, and at the end of the day congress has the ultimate power in making laws, and can even override a veto if a two-thirds majority can be achieved.

The fact that the president's will is severely limited by congress only further serves to erode the average American's interest in the presidential election; if you vote someone in on the basis of economic change, they are not going to get their way unless they have congressional support. If you vote on the basis of culture war changes like a candidate's views on transgender rights nothing is going to happen anyways since, legally speaking, people are mostly equal; there has not been a civil rights bill that truly would change anyone's life like some would make it out to be. This further serves to deadlock politics, especially at times like these where the parties have almost equal representation in congress. Congress really is the driving force of politics seconded only by the supreme court; the president mostly plays into these systems, being able to

veto and being able to appoint supreme court judges, which still can be powerful tools. These exercises of the president's political power only seem to further stagnate politics though, especially the veto.

With no change in the growing wealth disparity and with further focus being put into polarizing nonsense the system seems bound to stagnate and stay how it is. Whether or not this decadent version of democracy was planned to be this way one thing is clear, this system serves to increasingly separate Americans economically and politically. Electing a different president does not seem to have very much effect on the status quo and therefore that should not be focused on when choosing between the two political parties. In other words, picking between candidates in America is not voting for a change of the status quo, instead you are voting for changes within the status quo, things like being more open to transgenders or taking away artificial advantages put in place to equalize races (affirmative action). Voters should keep in mind when taking their vote that they are not going to truly make changes in how America runs in a fundamental way.

Since it has been established that the presidential election will not change the economic status quo and what should be focused on is changes within it, it is more useful to examine the difference of opinions on matters like immigration, gay rights and the vast assortment of other issues that are not necessarily tied to economics. Despite the polarizing and often inefficient nature of such politics they are the only differences actually of any substantial value.

When it comes to gay rights it is profusely clear who you would want to vote for, the Democrats. Unlike the Republicans who openly call out the LGBTQ community as degenerate filth the democrats are fairly open to the idea of their existence; advocating for letting them live their lives in the way almost all scientists agree is the most beneficial to their wellbeing. A

collection of all peer reviewed papers released in English between 1991 and 2017 on the effects of gender transitions on transgender people was found to overwhelmingly support the idea of allowing people to transition (What We Know Project, 2018). With science showing that these people lead happier lives when accepted by society it seems foolish to take an “anti-trans” stance. Republicans typically will use the bible as the source for their hatred which is extremely asinine as the bible does not mention trans people. If they are trying to say that God made everyone how they should be then we should not give medical attention to people with severe deformities, and it should also be criminal to get plastic surgery. Any way you look at it, the hatred of transgenders is quite overblown and stupid.

Gays and crossdressers are quite similar in this regard, they receive unjust hatred and get pointed to as a sign of cultural degeneracy; in reality it is the exact opposite. The people trying to stop drag queens are uncannily similar to a Nazi looking at a Jew, both saying something along the lines of, “look at this degenerate filth before us, our culture is declining right before our eyes.” In reality the fact that a Jew does not have to worry about being killed for their way of life shows just how far Germany has advanced since WWII. The same goes with America, we see more LGBTQ in our society because they are becoming socially acceptable, showing progress in American culture towards being less xenophobic. Just like the Nazis saw themselves as righteous in their slaughter of Jews, the housewife feels justified crying about transgenders and critical race theory in the PTA meeting; a similar situation to a much lesser degree.

When it comes to immigration it may seem at first glance that the democrats are obviously better as it is with the LGBTQ community; they are better but the difference is not as great. The republicans seem to be against the idea of letting in anyone who enters the US illegally, specifically economic immigrants. The democrats seem to be against the idea of letting

in anyone into the US illegally, specifically economic immigrants. The main difference between the two is that the Republicans see immigration as a threat and push anti-immigrant rhetoric whereas Democrats are trying to keep immigration how it is and mostly was, regulated and enforced. Neither Democrats or Republicans are really advocating for too radical of changes in the immigration protocol, Republicans however are actively dehumanizing immigrants and certain members are advocating for more rampant enforcement. Democrats on the other hand still believe in border enforcement; they are definitely laxer however, specifically in their rhetoric, and they would be much more likely to be pressured by the people into making positive changes in this regard.

What is presented to the American people as a battle between the left and the right is really a battle between the right and the radical right. There definitely will be a difference based on which faction holds political power in America which is a no-brainer statement, what is not as obvious however is that who has the presidential seat is not really as important as it is made out to be. Both sides treat the presidential election as a life-or-death scenario which has the potential to destroy our nation, in reality the presidential election is just one of many different vies for political power between two right wing factions. The Democrats are objectively better than the Republicans on social issues and are fairly close when it comes to economic ones leading to a stagnated political climate where people are incentivized to completely give up on the prospect of economic change, a matter which is far more important and impactful. What our country needs is not this president or that president, we need a system which does not allow money to rule and awards the proponents of democracy with meaningful changes. Instead of focusing on the degree of evil in a political party we should be focused on rooting out the evil at the source, dehumanization and inequality

Conclusion

Americans think so highly of ourselves and for good reason, we are the most powerful nation on the planet, we have created a massive empire, the likes of which has never been seen in all of human history. We were able to mobilize our massive potential as a nation to defeat the scum that was Nazi Germany, to turn the once mighty Soviet Union into an even more pathetic version of itself and to create an economic system that has piled up inconceivable amounts of capital and cemented ourselves at the top. Despite the grandiosity of our history there have been major shortcomings which we need to acknowledge. The outsourcing of our industries to places like China is both weakening our stranglehold over the world's economy and creating powerful industrialized capitalist enemies who are waiting for their time in the limelight. On top of that, despite these major achievements being achieved by the average American workers and American scientists, the rewards have been gained by the most degenerate portion of our society.

Democracy is a system where everyone has an equal say in society which is typically achieved through having a singular vote. We do not vote on issues; however, we vote on representatives. These representatives then vote on issues and choose which things even are issues. This system would not necessarily be corrupt if the politicians were accountable to the wills of the people, and they are. The issue is that while the rich are putting money into the pockets of politicians and are also putting thoughts into our mind by owning the media we consume. If the politicians need money to campaign their ideas to us, the rich are the biggest donors to those campaigns and if the rich own the outlets which typical Americans use to stay informed then it is not a democracy. The rich have power over the political system to a degree which makes calling America a democracy harder by the day. A privileged group having an overwhelming amount of political power is by definition an oligarchy.

If power over the political regime comes from having money and using the singular vote, we are given then the rich are clearly advantaged. The rich continue using the working class to create wealth and do not even give them a livable wage, causing way too much friction between the classes. America's biggest problem going into the future is how to peacefully change the status quo in such a way to enfranchise the American worker and to rebuild the idea of the American dream without leading to a violent conflict. In order to do that there needs to be a democratization of the means of production, not a dictatorship of the workers like Marxists espouse but a democracy of the workers. It seems like the most apt candidate to be the catalyst of these changes is the work union, the coming together of workers for the express purpose of being able to have a say in the workplace. The same way the rebellious lords forced king John to sign the Magna Carta the workers will force the rich man to slowly sign away the means of production, leading to a much fairer version of today's society.

Unlike the government who is predetermined to side with the rich, unions are going to be extremely biased toward the worker. The rich cannot use the means of production by themselves almost at all, at the same time however the rich own the major stores of almost every good possible to think of making us codependent; it is clear which side needs the other more, however. There is no justification for the rich to continue ruling over us and to continue creating wealth while we struggle to maintain our communities, in spite of their overbearing destruction mind you. Unlike the rule of the rich, the rule of the worker is extremely justified; someone has to rule after all, better to rule yourself than to rot in a corporate prison for someone else's well-being.

I say, if the government is not going to do anything to help us protect ourselves from corporate interest then down with the government and down with the corporation. It is not up to a clown like Trump or a has-been like Biden to be that change, it is up to us. It is time for the

people of America, the builders of a nation, the builders of an empire, the thinkers who created the atom bomb and who landed a man on the moon, not the slave masters who forced us towards goals but the feet who did the walking to start walking toward democracy. For too long we have been content with the shell of democracy that rid us from the tyranny of a king, now is the time for us to stand up for ourselves and cast off the half-shed skin of authority, an authority which has characterized far too much of our history. Now is the time for the peasant to be his own king; time for a brotherhood not of race, not of nation, but a brotherhood of humanity which will stand the test of time. Now is that time, America, it is finally time to be that city on the hill we have for so long strived to be.

With a bittersweet love and hope for my home,

An American Anarchist



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