

# THE PRICE OF FREEDOM

RAY DRIVER



BY BEVERLY BROWN

*"The price of freedom is eternal vigilance."  
—THOMAS JEFFERSON*

At the close of the 18th century, in the city of Philadelphia, a bold experiment was begun, and the rest of the world watched as the American concept of self-government was born. Just over 200 years later, this American dream of self-determination has become a nightmare of government control. Most of our representatives no longer represent us. Instead, they represent the interests of a powerful central government and the corporate influences which stand behind it.

How in the world did this happen to us? Who in the world is responsible for this bureaucratic mess? And when, in the course of human events, are we ever going to find ourselves living in a truly open society?

Thomas Jefferson is credited with being the father of American Libertarianism. An eloquent writer, he penned the Declaration of Independence. This is a document so radical that two centuries after it was written it still shocks many of its readers. Unfortunately, however, Mr. Jefferson's actions while in positions of political power were often inconsistent with his rhetoric. While in public office, Thomas Jefferson supported many repressive acts of government, among which were loyalty oaths, criminal prosecution for libeling the President in the press, and internment camps for people suspected of being dangerous to the security of the United States.

In Mr. Jefferson's defense, he was dealing with a brand new concept. In the 18th century, individual liberty and self-government were abstract concepts, as yet unsupported by experience. Thomas Jefferson and the rest of our founding fathers had no precedent to follow in establishing this country. Quite simply, they didn't know what they were doing. The American experiment was one of trial and error, and certain aspects of it were so frightening that they were never put into practice. Fear of the chaos that might have resulted from an uncontrolled society caused America's attempt at self-control to lose ground from the very beginning.

Less than a hundred years after the birth of the Union, several southern states attempted to leave it and form their own confederacy. This secession attempt began the Civil War, which was fought less over the issue of American slavery than over the issue of American states' rights. When the war was over the slaves had gained their freedom but all Americans of every color had lost more ground in their struggle for self-determination.

Had the South been allowed to secede we would most likely be living in several loosely aligned sovereign states today rather than a single nation. The Mormons, for example, might have retained their autonomy and never become a part of the United States, if they'd had a choice in the matter. The leaders of small independent states would have been better able to meet the demands of their citizens than has the sprawling inefficient bureaucracy that grew from a large central government.

In 1914, when war broke out in Europe, several powerful American businessmen saw the European conflict as a way to make enormous profits and greatly increase their powers by expanding their businesses beyond the borders of this country. In order for this to be possible, of course, America had to enter the war. By a combination of patriotic propaganda, scare tactics, and (in the case of the sinking of the *Lusitania*) outright misrepresentation, Americans were convinced that this country was vulnerable to attack. Our involvement in the European conflict escalated a continental war into a world war and the 'cold war' that followed it, and helped create the phenomenon of the multinational corporation.

The interests of huge multinational conglomerates which are, by no means, entirely American, lie in their own corporate powers and profits. It is not clear whether the heads of these corporations actually wish to control the world, as some people fear. It is clear, however, that they are nearly in a position to do so. It is impossible to calculate the number of freedoms we stand to lose at their hands should they desire to seize control.

There have been many abuses of power throughout America's history. No one of them is responsible for our loss of self-determination, however, because they all have one thing in common: the abusers could never have done it without us. We, the people of the United States of America, in order to avoid taking responsibility for our actions at any cost, have aided and abetted every attack on our freedoms. We cannot escape responsibility for the abuses of our government simply because we are our government. We hire our leaders, and we pay them to abuse us. If we do not have the sense to fire them when they have gone too far, we deserve them.

The American dream is broken and it needs to be fixed. We can fix it at the polls, or we can fix it in the streets; but the one thing we cannot do is expect anyone else to fix it for us. We will never find ourselves living in a truly open society: we will have to create that society by taking full responsibility for everything we do, and everything that happens to us. That is the price of freedom, and we will never be free until we are willing to pay that price every day of our lives, forever.

## THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

BY GERALD MAZZARELLA

Life, as it applies to a society, is defined as a mode or manner of existence. Liberty as freedom from arbitrary or destructive government control, interference, obligation, restriction, etc. — the power or right of acting according to choice. Happiness as a state or quality of pleasure of contentment.

My observation is that Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness are, one and all, subjective references and no matter how well intended, high sounding or defined by further subjective means, limited by vision and intent.

We may speculate as to intent, but I feel the final analysis must consider its design (beyond assumption of intent) and implementation. Is a society defined by its mission (declarations) or by a select few in power who coin the statement and redefine it infinitely by inheritance of that power?

Our disappointment and sense of betrayal lies in a lack of awareness of — or distinction between — that which we aspire to in its truly idealistic state, and that which is attainable given the prevailing and consequently less than idealistic circumstances.

In this light, freedom can be said to be limited to the vision of its progenitors and their specific agenda, having little or no intrinsic value.

Does this justify those who deliberately move to limit the greatest of possibilities or suggest we should settle for the lesser of evils rather than aspire to the grander potential? In fact, what I intend is to generate a clear understanding of the two so that no one accepts one believing it to be another.

If the law of the land states that all its citizens are free and equal under its protection and subsequently allows slavery and rampant unfair privilege, it contradicts itself, having no integrity by design or implementation. As to history, when government conspires with any faction of its constituency to undermine or prevent any or all of its remaining constituents from their rights to equitable treatment as specified in its declaration of intent, or acts in such ways, as Thomas Jefferson put it, "becomes destructive to these ends" (regarding life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness), such government and those in collusion with it are, in my view, guilty of treason in as much as treason is defined as the betrayal of a trust. Unaffected citizens having knowledge of these tribulations, refusing aid and support to the afflicted and ultimately the condemnation of such practices, are guilty of treason by omission.

The evils of a society are equal to the betrayal of its governing body towards the least of its citizens.

Regarding our rights, Jefferson went on to say that *"Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its power in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness."*

It seems evident that Jefferson was aware of the possibilities of all experiments in government to "become destructive" and what the rights of the people are when faced with these circumstances.

Capitalism without concern or caution has resulted in a resource devouring menace wherein the wanting of bigger and more (the existing production/consumption at all cost paradigm) outweighs all other considerations and reduces we the people to an unevolved species unaware of our potential, aspiring to the least of our possibilities.

Any system that by design creates an adversarial relationship among its citizens — only pretending at a level

playing field while ultimately betraying its masses — defines irresponsibility, taking its place in a critically evaluated perspective as a social failure.

Those who by virtue of wealth and privilege speak of the poor and homeless as persons who choose to be in the predicament, implying laziness or predisposition to drugs and other illegal activities, would be advised that large numbers of people choose to reject the inherent evils of these systems and wish to live marginally sustainable lifestyles for the sake of integrity and knowledge of a greater good.

Those who claim the backlash of such systems are the result of victimization at the hands of so-called criminal elements, might do well to understand the natural instinct to strike back at oppression, which is generally admired during revolutions against oppressive governments when heads roll and palaces are stormed in response to the same kinds of insensitivity.

Many marginalized people without benefit of privilege or good council, believing they have little or no options, fall through the cracks to the waiting arms of subversive groups spawned by their own dissatisfaction with the status quo. Escaping into the delusions of drugs and condemned for those addictions by those addicted to wealth, power, pleasure and the general greed of the day, they strike out in what I see as legitimate recoil and are policed into submission and further victimized and stigmatized when the real responsibility for their actions is to be found in a government that cares so little as to ignore these obvious cracks (except in lieu of a profitable ever-growing penal system where the "offenders" are forced into labor at nominal wages).

Reductions in aid to needy families and the general poor, as well as denial of unemployment claims, forces large numbers of people into temporary, on call, part time, low paying jobs without medical or retirement benefits, and while this looks good on paper, it creates an ever larger number of desperate working poor who, when their shaky bottoms fall out, turn to whatever means available for their survival.

A few charity meals during the holidays and toys for the tots in concert with the \$70 billion in contributions to religions (in a single year alone) might assure some good nights sleep and a slice of heavenly pie in the sky for the charitable, but are of no value to the less fortunate when the winds of deprivation blow the remaining eleven months of the year.

I fail to see this America having any similarity to the one Jefferson hoped and intended would become a beacon to mankind, saying in a letter to Hunter in 1790: "It is indeed an animating thought, that while we are securing the rights of ourselves and our posterity, we are pointing the way to struggling nations, who wish like us to emerge from their tyrannies also."

It is incomprehensible that a society can become so immersed in its greed that it would fail to recognize and sustain its humanity — but I am guilty of assuming there is an implied humane characteristic to yet another subjective rationalization, not unlike the elusive pursuit of happiness.

Yet, as William Grieder writes, "Who will tell the People (a) language of Democracy?"

Perhaps this language is subjective in nature and that is as it should be. As the noble hearts of humanity speak of their aspirations, rising to the cause of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness (these greater goods), this "Language of Democracy" remains our hope. With faith and renewed courage and ingenuity toward the possibility that all of the people regardless of class can define their experience, these ideals and the promises of democracy can survive.

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