Chapter One
Democracy and American Politics


- The value of democracy is plagued by its most glaring failures
- The strength of democratic rule is evident by how it deals with these injustices
- The plight of the African American shows both the weakness and the strength of democratic rule
- America is a great nation that has had some glaring failures.
- The treatment of the Native American, and the treatment of the African American, the sometimes casual acceptance of poverty, just to name some of the more prominent injustices.
- How America resolved, or began to address those inequities, is a testimony to the strengths of the democratic system.
- It was through the democratic process that what progress has been made has been accomplished.

The Founders and Grass Roots

- The Founders did not anticipate grass roots movements
- The American Revolution only involved a grass roots component
- It was the involvement of the landed elite and intellectuals which gave the revolution legitimacy.
- The American Revolution was a not totally a grass roots movement, it was grass roots in only some parts of the original thirteen colonies.
- It was grass roots in New England.
- In New England, despite the presence of many Loyalists, the Revolution had wide support across the region and among the various classes.
- In the Middle colonies the support for the Revolution was more equally divided.
- In Pennsylvania German immigrants were neutral with regards to the conflict.
- At Valley Forge General Washington and his troops were not supported by the neighbors to the encampment because most of the local farmers were German.
- The South was more divided in its support of the Revolution. In some colonies, like Virginia, it was the upper classes which offered the strongest support to the revolt.
- In North and South Carolina there were active regiments of Loyalist volunteers that fought along side of the British.
One ethnic group which vigorously supported the Revolution was a largely poor immigrant group known as the Scots-Irish.

These immigrants occupied the region that spanned several colonies now known as Appalachia.

Most Bluegrass and many country songs are Scots-Irish in origin.

The term Scots-Irish refers to Scottish lowlanders who had been enticed to immigrate to Ireland by the English and lived there for one or two generations there before moving on to America.

A Grass Roots Movement

- The vote was and is the source of what is called Black Power
- Actions geared to influencing electoral policy, voting patterns and voters
- Using the media to influence voters
- Voters in turn influence national policy
- National policy influences state and local policy

  - The Civil Rights movement was one of those “confluence of events” which are so prominent in history.
  - African Americans fought honorably during World War II.
  - Post-war economics and the legacy of the G.I. Bill produce a class realignment which excluded African Americans.
  - President Eisenhower appointed a Supreme Court Chief Justice whom he thought would be a cautious conservative but instead proved to be progressive in his views on racial justice.
  - An important component of this convergence was the advent of television which offered average Americans a first-hand view of the injustices and legally-sanctioned violence faced by African Americans in the South.

The Cinema and History

- *Malcolm X* by Spike Lee isn’t history
- *Biography of Malcolm X* develops reputation *posthumously*
- His charisma and insight into racism only known after his death
- A minor player in the Civil Rights movement while alive.
- Hollywood rarely gets history right. The need to simplify the story or to make it appealing to mass audiences to be profitable result in the alteration and sometimes outright falsification of historical events.
The movie Malcolm X was Spike Lee’s subjective view of history. It reflected the impact of Malcolm X within the African American community of the North.

Malcolm X was not the major player in the Civil Rights movement as portrayed in the movie.

Outside the African American community of the North Malcolm X’s impact will be posthumous, when his assassination by followers of Elijah Mohammed draws attention to his writings and his progressive view of race relations.

**The Real Heroes of Civil Rights**

- Southern Christian Leadership Conference was most influential
- Freedom Riders place their lives on the line; some were murdered.
- Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)
- Marchers who defied racist law enforcement; most police were racist.
- The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) was an organization of Southern Black ministers created to deal with segregation and other manifestations of Southern prejudice against African Americans.
- Freedom Riders--**Definition:** In 1961, the Freedom Riders, a dedicated group of men and women, black and white, young and old (many from university and college campuses) across the country boarded buses, trains and planes bound for the deep South to challenge that region’s outdated Jim Crow laws and the non-compliance with a US Supreme Court decision already three years old that prohibited segregation in all interstate public transportation facilities. (© David Lasker, 2001)
- Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee was, in contrast to its official name, a more militant organization of African American college students who believed that the policies of SCLC and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. were too moderate to accomplish racial justice.

**Real History**

- The Rubicon: Montgomery Bus Boycott
- Rosa Parks was not an accident; she was selected for her personal character and her charisma. She was selected and trained.
- It was not a fluke; the product of strategy
- Even supporters of Civil Rights did not comprehend how much strategy (planning) was involved; the strategists were smart
“Crossing the Rubicon” refers to a river in northern Italy that Julius Caesar crossed which indicated his intent to challenge the authority of the Roman Senate. The term now means any action that indicates a challenge from which the challenger cannot retreat.

- What looked to America as a spontaneous uprising was in fact planned by the leaders of the SCLC.
- It was not understood at the time that Rosa Parks was selected and trained to play the significant role she played.
- The leaders of the SCLC knew that they needed to persuade the average American about their plight and that they needed someone who would have appeal beyond their race and beyond their region.
- Martin Luther King, Jr. was not one of the real leaders of the SCLC initially, but rather a young, charismatic, and eloquent minister in Montgomery who was selected by the elders of the SCLC to be their spokesman.
- Dr. King would rapidly assume the role of spokesman and eventual leader of the SCLC.

The Supreme Court takes the Initiative in Civil Rights

- Brown v. Board of Education (1954)
- Earl Warren former California Attorney General and Governor of California
- Warren had advocated internment of Japanese-Americans; a work in progress.
- Considered a safe political appointment
- Rises above his mediocre credentials
- President Eisenhower appointed California Governor Warren thinking that he is a cautious conservative based on his treatment of Japanese Americans during World War II.
- Near the end of his term President Eisenhower expressed his regret at having appointed Earl Warren to be the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.
- Kansas, like many border states, did not have a legacy of intense racism as in those states that had once made up the Confederacy. But because Kansas had a large minority that had emigrated from the Old South and because some New Englanders who opposed slavery but did not support integration moved there, Kansas did have laws and traditions still in practice which were racist.
- Kansas had been initially created by New Englanders who had sought to slow the spread of slavery to the western territories.
- Kansas had been a battleground between Southerners who advocated slavery and New Englanders who had opposed it, both groups had emigrated to Kansas.
- For additional information on this landmark case: http://brownvboard.org/
The Legacy of Judicial Activism

• The practice of judicial activism essential to the success of the American Civil Rights Movement will set the precedent for the decision in *Bush v. Gore*.

• Though it will be conservative to oppose judicial activism, Scalia, et al., will use it to facilitate Bush victory.

• “Judicial Activist” has been a pejorative term used by conservatives against judges who supported civil rights and other “Liberal” agendas.

• The term refers to judges who write judicial decisions which break new ground, that is, that take issues to a new level.

• Judicial Activism—Definition: [noun] An interpretation of the U.S. Constitution holding the spirit of the times and the needs of the nation can legitimately influence judicial decisions (particularly decisions of the Supreme Court). Source, *Hyperdictionary*.

• Check this web-site for a more expansive definition:

Congress Responds

• The Democratic Party was still a collaboration between Southern Conservatives and urban Liberals.

• Republicans knew that African Americans would vote with Democrats

• The Civil Rights Acts of 1957 and 1960

• The Civil Rights Act of 1965

  • Southern conservative Democrats had blocked challenges to their segregationist policies throughout the administration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

  • Until the 1970s committee chairmen in both houses of Congress were selected by seniority. There were few challenges to Southern congressmen in the region’s then one-party system. Therefore Southerners who made up 20% of the Congress (both House and Senate) held 66% of the chairmanships.

  • Though President Harry Truman would integrate the U.S. armed forces, he too did not challenge openly the powerful Southerners of his party.

  • When the Democrats placed a pro civil rights plank (provision) in their party’s platform in 1948 Southern Democrats, led by then South Carolina Governor Strom Thurmond, left the Democratic party and ran their own presidential candidate in a party known as the Dixiecrats.
Chapter 1

Democracy vs. Monarchy

- **Monarchy**: An elite are chosen by God to rule; some believe descended from Jesus
- **Democracy**: The people decide who rules
- **Monarchy**: The elite decide what are the rules
- **Democracy**: The people (masses) make rules.
  - It was an innovative notion that human beings should be trusted to make political decisions about themselves.
  - Though the Greeks experimented with the concept in the democracy of Athens around 500 BCE, it would occur only once again, briefly in Iceland, until the American experiment.
  - The whole notion of monarchy is that God offers some sign as to who are worthy to be leaders and they are delegated the authority from God to rule people and nations.
  - Often the so-called sign from God was a victory in battle by a leader, but in reality most individuals and families acquired power through various forms of coup d'états, that is, power grabs.
  - The laws which emanated from these autocratic monarch were supposed direct from God, but most of the time these laws were self-serving to increasing either the wealth or the power of the elite affiliated with the monarch.

Why is democracy superior?

- The people shall rule themselves because they are worthy and they have that right.
- Why did the American colonies embrace democracy?
- If their politics were not democratic, the Dissenter’s religions were.
  - The culture of cynicism which exists in American politics today is based a false premise.
  - The false premise, or assumption, is that democratic politics is efficient, tidy, and easy.
  - The truth is that democratic politics is none of that. Democracy is not easy, hence the title of the book should be “The Struggle that is Democracy.”
- The belief that God picks the leaders, a basic premise of autocratic monarchies, is one that is contrary to democratic principles.
- Any effort to restrict who votes is an effort to turn back the advances of democratic politics.

Origins of democracy in England

- Since most colonial leaders were not democrats how did democracy start?
- Founders believed in what was the ideal in England; not what was happening.
- An educated elite rule with the approval of land-owning males
- The American system is a democratic republic; **not a pure democracy**.
Chapter 1

Most colonists had fled some sort of oppression in England, either religious, political or economic.

In comparison to the remainder of Europe (and the world for that matter) England offered some degree of freedom.

It was this relative degree of freedom which gave people a taste of what could be, what was the idealized notion of freedom which was speculated about by political philosophers.

Despite this relative freedom there was much intolerance along with political and religious oppression.

**Pillars of democracy in England**

- Religion would provide the basis for democratic rule
- Church of England would be as autocratic as the Church of Rome
- Protestant sects evolve protesting how autocratic the Church of England is.
  - Freedom of conscience in religious matters is closely tied to political freedom.
  - The belief that one can interpret the Bible and hence define their own relationship with God is connected to the belief that humans are capable of making political decisions for themselves.
  - King Henry VIII broke with the Roman Catholic Church over the issue of his divorce of his wife.
  - The Church of England created by Henry VIII’s actions was as autocratic as the Roman Catholic Church.

- Scottish dissenters create a ecclesiastical structure that is based on Celtic notions of collaborative authority and coincidentally more closely reflects the democratic structures of the early Christian Church. These are the beginnings of the Presbyterian Church.
- Other Christian Protestant sects evolve, many starting out within the Church of England, which have more democratic practices in religious matters than practiced by the Anglican Church.

**Dissenters & Democracy**

- Those who challenge the Church of England are called Dissenters.
- Belief that the individual soul was paramount would spawn democratic practices in religion which fuel democratic practices in theocratic colonies.
- Belief that the individual could relate to God and interpret Scripture.
  - The King of England was also the head of the Church of England.
  - To challenge the authority of the Church in religious matters was to challenge the authority of the monarch.
- It was not a great leap to question the monarch in both religious and political matters.
The colonies in North America were created largely to offer these religious dissenters a haven where they could practice religious independence but still remain loyal to the English monarch.

It was this sense of religious dissent from the monarch which laid the groundwork for political independence in the colonies.

Ironically, the religious dissenters would not tolerate dissent in their own religion.

The colonies of Connecticut and Rhode Island were created by individuals who dissented from the orthodoxy of the Dissenters and either fled or were banished from the religious community established by the Dissenters.

In the political vacuum created by England’s wars on the European continent and the vast distance that separated England from the colonies the abstract, but largely unpracticed ideals of liberty and equality which evolved in political philosophy in Scotland, England and France, flourished in the colonies.

The American Revolution resulted from England re-asserting its authority in the North American colonies because it had finally defeated the French and no longer had the diversion of constant war on the European continent.

The Magna Carta

The native-born Anglo-Saxon leaders place restraints King John the brother of Richard the Lion Hearted

Richard and John did not speak English

Richard and John spoke French, they were Normans from northwest France.

It was the first constraint placed on the unlimited authority supposedly granted by God to monarchs.

The Magna Carta was not actually a democratic instrument. However, it was a very first step, albeit a very small step, at establishing the principle that monarchs can have some restraints on their “God-given” authority.

The conflict between King John and his subjects was really a struggle for power between the old rulers, the Anglo-Saxon royalty, and new Norman conquerors.

It was significant in that it established the precedent that some of the monarch’s authority could be curtailed through negotiations.

Precursor to our Constitution

Very limited in scope; an exercise of power by mid-level aristocrats

The first limitation place on the until then unlimited powers of the monarchy

A very small step but an absolutely essential step
Democratic process grows gradually
Two steps forward, one step back.
- *The Declaration of Independence* listed multiple grievances against the King of England.
- Though our Declaration listed these grievances many of the abuses and failures were the responsibility of the Parliament.
- The Parliament often negotiated with the monarch to protect democratic rights in England by allowing the King or Queen have a freer reign to take undemocratic actions in their colonies.
- But it was the abuses of the King they were powerless to correct except by the drastic means took.
- *The Magna Carta* had established the precedent of using grievances as a basis for establishing curbs on the powers of the monarch.

**Cultural Conflict**

- Anglo-Saxons & Danes set establish the cultural norms in England
- Germanic and Nordic notions of limited communal obligations the product of long winters, limited growing seasons, and rocky terrain.
- Values, forged in Pre-Christian northern Europe dominate post-Celtic England.
- Any political document such as the *Magna Carta*, the *Declaration of Independence*, the *Articles of Confederation*, or the *Constitution of the United States* has a cultural context in which it is written.
- The cultural context of the *Magna Carta* was the conflict between the Anglo-Saxon ruling class and their Norman conquerors.
- The cultural values evident in the *Declaration of Independence* and the *U.S. Constitution* were outgrowths of Anglo-Saxon culture in England.
- The Angles and the Saxons were Germanic peoples who had lived in regions of northern Germany close to its present border with Denmark.
- The Angles and the Saxons were people whose values evolved in the cold harsh climate of northern Europe.
- Notions of community and communal responsibility were shaped by those hostile climatic factors.

**Christianity is Changed**

- In Asia and Rome, early Christianity relies on social communities, that is, communal values; communitarian.
Christianity in northern Europe takes on Teutonic values based on limited communal patterns; such as nuclear family; individual.

Christianity is transformed by these new values; that is, changed radically.

“The Lord Helps Those Who Help Themselves,” never appears anywhere in either the New or Old Testament. However, it typified the common beliefs of the pre-revolutionary era in the colonies.

It was a common saying which first was printed in Poor Richard’s Almanac, written by Benjamin Franklin.

The limited notion of communal responsibility has little to do with early Christian values and more a product of Teutonic and Nordic notions of what constituted a community and what are the individuals’ responsibility to that community.

The apparent level of responsibility in the Teutonic and Nordic cultures was primarily to the family, with only limited obligations to the broader community.

Those limited responsibilities involved primarily defense and warfare.

The Celts and the Clan

Celtic communal values evident in the strength of the clan; communal obligations, communal support.

Scottish Celts had emigrated from Ireland around 800 A.D. (C.E.)

Irish Celts had emigrated from northern Spain around 500 B.C.E.

Individualism is not a Celtic value.

Political differences are often the product of cultural differences.

The Celts had a different notion of communal responsibility than did the Angles, Saxons, or Danes.

Notions of communal responsibility differ widely among the peoples of Europe, where American values primarily evolved, and differ greatly from the peoples of the world.

The political and social reforms of the administration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt to combat the Great Depression were originally crafted by FDR’s predecessor as Governor of New York, Al Smith, an Irish-American.

During the last half of the 19th Century and the first 20 years of 20th Century there was the influx of European immigrants with similar communal values as those held by the Celts.

These immigrants settled into the major cities of the northeast and the mid-west, and subsequently the Democratic political machines which dominated those cities.

This process changed the character of the Democratic Party from the most conservative political party to the most progressive.
At the time of Abraham Lincoln the Republicans were the most progressive political party (Liberals) and the Democrats were the conservatives.

**Threats to democracy**

- The belief that society is comprised of an elite and an other
- Religious beliefs that God shows his favor through material success.
- Seeds planted for the emergence of industrialists and other elites
- Racism—Ethnicism—Tribalism
- Religious intolerance
  - Feudalism saw a society stratified by a status established by God.
  - The relationship in feudalism was that God established an elite whose responsibility it was to protect the common people who in turn had an obligation to serve the elite.
  - American industrialists believed they were the royalty of America.
  - They believed that their success in business was an indication that God had selected them for this status as had God selected the royalty of Europe.
  - Social Darwinism saw divide among humans similar to that fostered in feudalism.
  - The difference was that in Social Darwinism the divisions among people were not determined by a deity but by the workings of nature, that is, the selection process.
  - “Survival of the Fittest.” was the slogan of the Social Darwinists which best exemplified this pseudo-social theory.

**What is Racism?**

- Evaluation of individuals based on race; pre-judging. Often reflected as hatred based on racial identities.
- Is racism the world’s greatest injustice?
- It is America’s greatest injustice.
- It’s South Africa’s greatest injustice
- More people die each year from violence spawned by tribalism than racism.
- Racism is often depicted as being the worst scourge of the human race.
- However, far more incidents of collective violence which result in multiple deaths happen among people of the same race than between the races.
- Racism happens to be America’s greatest manifestation of bigotry.
- It was also South Africa’s most serious injustice.
• Most other African nation’s injustice involves inhumane treatment of one tribal group by another.

What is Tribalism?
• Tribalism: Evaluation of individuals based on some characteristic or affiliation other than race. Hatred of someone who manifests these characteristics and/or affiliations.
• Both perpetrator and the victim will be of the same race, or even sometimes linguistic group.
• These are my own theories, not necessarily accepted by the broader academic community.
• This does not mean they are unacceptable or irrational, it just means that I do not have a specific anthropologist in mind that has extensively developed this theory to which I have seen references.

Conflicts based on Tribalism
• Bosnia: Slavic Orthodox Christians & Catholic Slavs slaughter Islamic Slavs;
• Northern Ireland: Descendants of Celts from Scotland (Protestants) establish an apartheid system oppressing Celts from Ireland (Catholics)
• Africa: Hutus & the Tutsis, united 150 years ago, slaughter one another; 1.5 million die.
• The conflict in Northern Ireland is often inaccurately portrayed as a religious conflict.
• Religion plays a role in Northern Ireland but only to the extent that it identifies the indigenous people of the island.
• The Catholics are also the native (i.e. indigenous) Irish.
• The English coerced and enticed Protestant Scottish lowlanders (a different group than the highlanders who wear kilts and play bagpipes) to emigrate to Ireland to provide a buffer for the English elite between them and the Irish majority, which happened to be Catholic.

More Tribalism
• Indonesia: Muslims and Christians in conflict; different tribes feud.
• Israel: Jews and Palestinians both considered Semites; a people who originated near Iraq 5000 years ago.
• In General: Wherever large-scale conflict exists among people of the same race.
• Palestinian suicide bombers succeed in penetrating Israeli security because they Palestinians have the same ethnic origins as do many Israelis.
• Even in Iraq the success of the suicide bombers in killing innocent Iraqis is based on the fact that the Sunnis and the Shia are of the same ethnicity, that is, they look alike in terms of ethnic characteristics.
• Even in Indonesia where differences are portrayed as being religious, often there is a tribal or ethnic difference at the root cause. One tribe will have converted to Christianity while other tribes or ethnic groups remained Muslim. The tribal conflict will have preceded the so-called religious one.
• But are many other instances it is strictly religious with fundamentalists of all the major religions.

Where did tribalism originate?
• One theory: Pre-historic man survived in inhospitable conditions and limited resources by challenging all strangers
• If they did not look like you, dress like you, kill them, at least drive them away from your limited water, food & fire
• Only the extremely paranoid & selfish survived.
• This pattern impacts upon evolutionary patterns of survival; a factor of selection.
• These anthropological theories are just one possibility, one contributing factor, as to why humans indulge in bigotry.
• These theories do not contradict, and may only complement, the cultural, pathological and sociological factors which produce racism and other forms of bigotry.

My Theory!
• Racism is merely tribalism on a large scale
• In short: Racism is Pan-tribalism
• Racist premises and theories regarding the color of skin and issues of so-called savagery are products of this innate, universal and visceral human emotion; they are not causes.
This is supported by the evidence that the vast majority of inter-group conflicts are not base on racial issues.

Important Disclaimer
• Acknowledging an anthropological premise does not mean such instincts are not insidious; not anti-social.
• Many anti-social behaviors can be attributed to evolutionary selection in an extremely hostile environment.
• Such behaviors must be suppressed.
  • One difference between strict ideologues and members of the scientific community is that ideologues often seek simplistic answers.
  • The view the problem in simplistic terms and base all subsequent actions on that false premise.
• Human beings are complex and the factors which produce human behavior are similarly complex.
  • Simplistic answers or solutions to problems are more often wrong than not.

A Basic Principle
• In a democratic society, every human endeavor impacts upon the political process; in short, the process includes almost everything; nothing is excluded
• Personal morals impacts upon politics; Clinton, Mills, Gingrich, & Gary Hart
• Life and death issues impact on politics
• Condit’s paramour, Thurmond’s health.
  • Though every human endeavor impacts upon the political process it does not mean that every human failing is worthy of impeachment, that is, criminal.
• The history of impeachment, first used in England in the 15th Century, was that it was used against national leaders or holders of national offices for crimes unique to that office.
  • Common adultery and perjury regarding that adultery are not offences unique to leadership positions.
• The setting to deal with non-criminal failings of leaders is the democratic election.
  • President Clinton impeached for having an adulterous relationship and lying about it to a grand jury investigation.
  • Representative Wilbur Mills, one of the most powerful committee chairs on Capitol Hill was caught with a stripper in an incident involving the Tidal Basin.
• Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich was in an adulterous relationship himself while orchestrating the House’s impeachment of President Clinton for similar behavior.
• Democratic presidential candidate Senator Gary Hart was found to have had an adulterous relationship with a woman who had ties to lobbyists. This all became known while he was running for president.
The Founders & Immorality

• Alexander Hamilton is questioned about frequent visits to the home of an unsavory merchant.
• Impeachment is threatened until Hamilton admits that he is there to “visit” with the man’s wife; adultery tolerated.
• Rumors about Ben Franklin’s personal immorality. (e.g. illegitimate children)
• This is an indication that the Founders never intended impeachment to be used for common human failings or transgressions.
• Though many of the Founders might have been appalled at such immoral behavior, there was a “gentlemen’s code” that the transgressions of colleagues with regards to sexual matters were often ignored if not tolerated.
• This “code” was still being practiced in the 1960s when journalists became aware of the extent of President John Kennedy’s adulterous relationships.
• The criminal violations of Watergate removed all obstacles to journalists holding back about reporting any presidential misbehavior.