



Center for Civic Education

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Quotations about Democracy, Politics and Government, and Related Matters

“The danger is not that a particular class is unfit to govern. Every class is unfit to govern.”
—*Lord Acton*

“The Spirit that prevails among Men of all degrees, all ages and sexes is the Spirit of Liberty.”
—*Abigail Adams, 1775*

“A government of laws, and not of men.”
—*John Adams*

“Liberty cannot be preserved without a general knowledge among the people, who have a right
... and a desire to know.”
—*John Adams, 1765*

“Remember, democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts, and murders itself. There
never was a democracy yet that did not commit suicide.”
—*John Adams*

“I must study politics and war that my sons may have liberty to study mathematics and
philosophy. My sons ought to study mathematics and philosophy, geography, natural
history, naval architecture, navigation, commerce, and agriculture, in order to give their
children a right to study painting, poetry, music, architecture, statuary, tapestry, and
porcelain.”
—*John Adams*

“The moment the idea is admitted into society that property is not as sacred as the laws of
God, and that there is not a force of law and public justice to protect it, anarchy and tyranny
commence.”
—*John Adams, A Defense of the American Constitutions, 1787*

“Not only every juror's right but his Duty ... to find the Verdict according to his own best
Understanding, Judgment and Conscience, tho in Direct opposition to the Direction of the
Court.”
—*John Adams*

“If there have been those who doubted whether a confederated representative democracy
were a government competent to the wise and orderly management of the common
concerns of a mighty nation, those doubts have been dispelled.”
—*John Quincy Adams*



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“If the meanest man in the republic is deprived of his rights then every man in the republic is deprived of his rights.”

—*Jane Addams, 1903*

“No oppression is so heavy or lasting as that which is inflicted by the perversion and exorbitance of legal authority.”

—*Joseph Addison*

“It is always easier to fight for one’s principles than to live up to them.”

—*Alfred Adler*

“Democracy is a slow process of stumbling to the right decision instead of going straight forward to the wrong one.”

—*Anonymous*

“Suffrage is the pivotal right.”

—*Susan B. Anthony*

“Where liberty dwells, there is my country.”

—*Latin phrase of unknown authorship; motto of Algernon Sydney and James Otis*

“Totalitarianism is never content to rule by external means, namely, through the state and a machinery of violence; thanks to its peculiar ideology and the role assigned to it in this apparatus of coercion, totalitarianism has discovered a means of dominating and terrorizing human beings from within.”

—*Hannah Arendt*

“Democracy arises out of the notion that those who are equal in any respect are equal in all respects; because men are equally free, they claim to be absolutely equal.”

—*Aristotle*

“He who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must either be a beast or a god.”

—*Aristotle*

“For, if liberty and equality, as some persons suppose, are chiefly to be found in a democracy, they will be attained when all persons alike share in the government to the utmost.”

—*Aristotle*



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“For, if liberty and equality, as some persons suppose, are chiefly to be found in a democracy, it must be so by every department of government being alike open to all; but as the people are in the majority, and what they vote is law, it follows that such a state is a democracy.”
—*Aristotle*

“The good of man must be the end of the science of politics.”
—*Aristotle*

“They should rule who are able to rule best.”
—*Aristotle*

After each war there is a little less democracy to save.”—*Brooks Atkinson*

“Judges ought to remember that their office is *jus dicere* and not *jus dare*; to interpret law and not to make or give law.”
—*Francis Bacon*

“The capacity to combine commitment with skepticism is essential to democracy.”
—*Mary Catherine Bateson*

“One of the keys to the survival of free institutions is the relationship between private and public life, the way citizens do, or do not, participate in the public sphere.”
—*Robert N. Bellah*

“Two of the most basic components of a good life are success in one’s work and the joy that comes from serving one’s community. And ... the two are so closely intertwined that a person cannot usually have one without having the other.”
—*Robert N. Bellah*

“Every man to count for one and no one to count for more than one ... appears, more than any other formula, to constitute the irreducible minimum of the ideal of equality.”
—*Isaiah Berlin*

“A union of government and religion tends to destroy government and degrade religion. The history of governmentally established religion, both in England and in this country, showed that whenever government had allied itself with one particular form of religion, the inevitable result had been that it had incurred the hatred, disrespect and even contempt of those who held contrary beliefs. That same history showed that many people had lost their respect for any religion that had relied upon the support of government to spread its faith.”
—*Hugo L. Black*



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“It is my belief that there are ‘absolutes’ in our Bill of Rights, and that they were put there on purpose by men who knew what words meant, and meant their prohibitions to be ‘absolute.’”

—*Hugo L. Black*

“Loyalty must arise spontaneously from the hearts of people who love their country and respect their government.”

—*Hugo L. Black*

“The public welfare demands that constitutional cases must be decided according to the terms of the Constitution itself, and not according to judges’ views of fairness, reasonableness, or justice. I have no fear of constitutional amendments properly adopted, but I do fear the rewriting of the Constitution by judges under the guise of interpretation.”

—*Hugo L. Black*

“Without deviation, without exception, without any ifs, buts, or whereases, freedom of speech means you shall not do something to people for views they have, express, speak, or write.”

—*Hugo L. Black*

“If men were wise, the most arbitrary princes could not hurt them. If they are not wise, the freest government is compelled to be a tyranny.”

—*William Blake*

“What would you do, cut a great road through the law to get after the Devil? ... and when the law was down and the Devil turned round on you, where would you hide ... the laws all being flat? This country is planted thick with laws from coast to coast. Man’s laws, not God’s. And if you cut them down ... do you really think you could stand upright in the winds that would blow then? Yes, I give the Devil benefit of law for my own safety’s sake.”

—*Robert Bolt, A Man for all Seasons*”

“Freedom comes in individual packages.”

—*Shirley Boone*

“A democracy must remain at home in all matters which affect the nature of her institutions.”

—*William Borah*

“Crime is contagious. If the government becomes a lawbreaker, it breeds contempt for law; it invites every man to become a law unto himself; it invites anarchy.”

—*Louis Brandeis*

“[T]he only title in our democracy superior to that of President [is] the title of citizen.”



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—*Louis Brandeis, 1937*

“There is in the American Government ... a want of unity. ... The Sailors, the helmsman, the engineer, do not seem to have one purpose or obey one will so that instead of making steady way, the vessel may pursue a devious or zigzag course, and sometimes merely turn round and round in the water.”

—*James Bryce, The American Commonwealth, 1888*

“Among a people generally corrupt, liberty cannot long exist.”

—*Edmund Burke*

“Nobody makes a greater mistake than he who does nothing because he could do only a little.”

—*Edmund Burke*

“Men are qualified for civil liberty in exact proportion to their disposition to put moral chains upon their own appetites. ... Society cannot exist unless a controlling power upon will and appetite be placed somewhere, and the less of it there is within, the more there must be without. It is ordained in the eternal constitution of things that men of intemperate minds cannot be free. Their passions forge their fetters.”

—*Edmund Burke*

“If you have a plan, we want to hear it. Tell your community leaders, your local officials, your governor, and your team in Washington. Believe me, your ideas count. An individual can make a difference.”

—*George H.W. Bush*

“Civility is not a tactic or a sentiment. It is the determined choice of trust over cynicism, of community over chaos.”

—*George W. Bush, 2001 Inaugural Address*

“We are bound by ideals that teach us what it means to be citizens. Every child must be taught these ideals. Every citizen must uphold them. ... I ask you to be citizens. Citizens, not spectators. Citizens, not subjects. Responsible citizens building communities of service and a nation of character.”

—*George W. Bush, 2001 Inaugural Address*

“The best way to enhance freedom in other lands is to demonstrate here that our democratic system is worthy of emulation.”

—*Jimmy Carter*



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“The experience of democracy is like the experience of life itself—always changing, infinite in its variety, sometimes turbulent and all the more valuable for having been tested in adversity.”

—*Jimmy Carter*

“We have become not a melting pot but a beautiful mosaic. Different people, different beliefs, different yearnings, different dreams.”

—*Jimmy Carter*

“The fact that a man is to vote forces him to think. You may preach to a congregation by the year and not affect its thought because it is not called upon for definite action. But throw your subject into a campaign and it becomes a challenge.”

—*John Jay Chapman*

“Democracy is not an easy form of government, because it is never final; it is a living, changing organism, with a continuous shifting and adjusting of balance between individual freedom and general order.”

—*Ilka Chase*

“Democracy is like blowing your nose. You may not do it well, but it's something you ought to do yourself.”

—*G.K. Chesterton*

“The average man votes below himself; he votes with half a mind or a hundredth part of one. A man ought to vote with the whole of himself, as he worships or gets married. A man ought to vote with his head and heart, his soul and stomach, his eye for faces and his ear for music; also (when sufficiently provoked) with his hands and feet. ... The question is not so much whether only a minority of the electorate votes. The point is that only a minority of the voter votes.”

—*G. K. Chesterton*

“Tradition means giving votes to the most obscure of all classes, our ancestors. It is the democracy of the dead.”

—*G.K. Chesterton*

“[There is] no nobler motive for entering public life than the resolution not to be ruled by wicked men.”

—*Cicero*

“Of the three forms of government, monarchy, aristocracy, and the people, the best is a mixture of all three for each one taken on its own can lead to disaster. Kings can be



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capricious, aristocrats, self-interested, and an unbridled multitude enjoying unwanted power more terrifying than a conflagration or a raging sea.”

—*Cicero*

“Many forms of government have been tried, and will be tried in this world of sin and woe. No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.”

—*Winston Churchill*

“The empires of the future are the empires of the mind.”

—*Winston Churchill*

“Salus populi suprema lex esto [the welfare of the people shall be the supreme law].”

—*first attributed to Cicero*

“A right is not what someone gives you; it’s what no one can take from you.”

—*Ramsey Clark*

“Government is a trust and the officers of the government are trustees, and both the trust and the trustees are created for the benefit of the people.”

—*Henry Clay*

“I think sometimes our young people believe either that government is not a good thing to be involved in ... or that if they did get involved, what they did wouldn’t make a difference. Nothing could be further from the truth. We are around here as a nation after more than 224 years because more than half the time, more than half the people turned out to be right on the really big issues. There is no place in the world that is a better example of what free people can do when they work together ... I frankly think that a lot of this fashionable cynicism is a kind of self-indulgent arrogance that has no place in America.”

—*Bill Clinton, 2000*

“There is nothing wrong in America that can’t be fixed with what is right in America.”

—*Bill Clinton*

“Democracy is a small, hard core of common agreement, surrounded by a rich variety of individual differences.”

—*James B. Conant*



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“Men speak of natural rights, but I challenge anyone to show where in nature any rights existed or were recognized until there was established for their declaration and protection a duly promulgated body of corresponding laws.”

—*Calvin Coolidge*

“The more I study it [the Constitution], the more I have come to admire it, realizing that no other document devised by the hand of man ever brought so much progress and happiness to humanity.”

—*Calvin Coolidge, 1929*

“The prospects for stable democracy in a country are improved if its citizens and leaders strongly support democratic ideas, values, and practices. The most reliable support comes when these beliefs and predispositions are embedded in the country's culture and are transmitted, in large part, for one generation to the next. In other words, the country possesses a democratic political culture.”

—*Robert Dahl, 1998*

“In the democratic vision, the freedom achieved by a democratic order is above all the freedom of self-determination in making collective and binding decisions: the self-determination of citizens entitled to participate as political equals in the making of the rules and laws under which they will live together as citizens.”

—*Robert Dahl, Democracy and Its Critics, 1989*

“To consider the Supreme Court of the United States strictly as a legal institution is to underestimate its significance in the American political system. For it is also a political institution, an institution, that is to say, for arriving at decisions on controversial questions of national policy. As a political institution, the court is highly unusual, not least because Americans are not quite willing to accept the fact that it is a political institution and not quite capable of denying it; so that frequently we take both positions at once. This is confusing to foreigners, amusing to logicians, and rewarding to ordinary Americans who thus manage to retain the best of both worlds.”

—*Robert Dahl*

“Compared with the political systems of other advanced democratic countries, ours is among the most opaque, complex, confusing, and difficult to understand.”

—*Robert Dahl, How Democratic is the American Constitution?, 2003*

“An essential element in the meaning of the common good among the members of a group is what the members would choose if they possessed the fullest attainable understanding of the experience that would result from their choice and its most relevant alternatives. Because enlightened understanding is required, I would propose to incorporate



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opportunities to acquire enlightened understanding as essential also to the meaning of the common good. Still further, the rights and opportunities of the democratic process are elements of the common good. Even more broadly, because the institutions of polyarchy are necessary in order to employ the democratic process on a large scale, in a unit as large as a country all of the institutions of polyarchy should also be counted as elements of the common good.”

—*Robert Dahl, 1989*

“You can only protect your liberties in this world by protecting the other man’s freedom. You can only be free if I am free.”

—*Clarence Darrow*

“A constitution that is made for all nations is made for none.”

—*Joseph de Maistre*

“Agitation and mutability are inherent in the nature of democratic republics, just as stagnation and sleepiness are the law of absolute monarchies.”

—*Alexis de Tocqueville*

“Americans of all ages, all stations in life, and all types of dispositions are forever forming associations ... at the head of any new undertaking. Where in France you would find the government or in England some territorial magnate, in the United States you are sure to find as an association.”

—*Alexis de Tocqueville, 1835*

“Better use has been made of association and this powerful instrument of action has been applied for more varied aims in America than anywhere else in the world.”

—*Alexis de Tocqueville, 1835*

“Democracy does not give the people the most skillful government, but it produces what the ablest governments are frequently unable to create: namely, an all-pervading and restless activity, a superabundant force, and an energy which is inseparable from it and which may, however unfavorable circumstances may be, produce wonders.”

—*Alexis de Tocqueville*

“Democratic nations care but little for what has been, but they are haunted by visions of what will be; in this direction their unbounded imagination grows and dilates beyond all measure. Democracy, which shuts the past against the poet, opens the future before him.”

—*Alexis de Tocqueville*



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“I think it may be admitted as a general and constant rule that among civilized nations the warlike passions will become more rare and less intense in proportion as social conditions are more equal.”

—*Alexis de Tocqueville*

“Is it your object to refine the habits, embellish the manners, and cultivate the arts, to promote the love of poetry, beauty, and glory? Would you constitute a people fitted to act powerfully upon all other nations, and prepared for those high enterprises which, whatever be their results, will leave a name forever famous in history? If you believe such to be the principal object of society, avoid the government of the democracy.”

—*Alexis de Tocqueville*

“If, in short, you are of the opinion that the principal object of government is not to confer the greatest possible glory upon the body of the nation, but to ensure the greatest enjoyment and to avoid the most misery to each of the individuals who compose it—if such be your desire, then equalize the conditions of men and establish democratic institutions.”

—*Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, Vol. 1, 1945*

“It cannot be repeated too often that nothing is more fertile in prodigies than the art of being free; but there is nothing more arduous than the apprenticeship of liberty.”

—*Alexis de Tocqueville*

“It is extremely difficult in democratic times to draw nations into hostilities; but ... it is almost impossible that any two of them should go to war without embroiling the rest. The interests of all are so interlaced, their opinions and their wants so much alike, that none can remain quiet when the others stir. Wars therefore become more rare, but when they break out, they spread over a larger field.”

—*Alexis de Tocqueville*

“No protracted war can fail to endanger the freedom of a democratic country ... it must invariably and immeasurably increase the powers of the civil government; it must almost compulsorily concentrate the direction of all men and the management of all things in the hands of the administration. ... All those who seek to destroy the liberties of a democratic nation ought to know that war is the surest and the shortest means to accomplish it.”

—*Alexis de Tocqueville*

“Nothing is so irresistible as the tyrannical power commanding in the name of the people, because while wielding the moral power which belongs to the will of the greater number, it acts at the same time with the quickness and persistence of a single man.”

—*Alexis de Tocqueville*



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“The power vested in the American courts of justice of pronouncing a statute to be unconstitutional forms one of the most powerful barriers that have ever been devised against the tyranny of political assemblies.”

—*Alexis de Tocqueville, 1835*

“Thus not only does democracy make every man forget his ancestors, but it hides his descendants and separates his contemporaries from him; it throws him back forever upon himself alone and threatens in the end to confine him entirely within the solitude of his own heart.”

—*Alexis de Tocqueville*

“There is one safeguard known generally to the wise, which is an advantage and security to all, but especially to democracies as against despots. What is it? Distrust.”

—*Demosthenes*

“A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience.”

—*John Dewey*

“Individualities may form communities, but it is institutions alone that can create a nation.”

—*Benjamin Disraeli*

“No government can be long secure without a formidable opposition.”

—*Benjamin Disraeli*

“Human rights stand upon a common basis; and by all reason that they are supported, maintained, and defended for all the human family. The essential characteristics of humanity are everywhere the same.”

—*Frederick Douglass, 1854*

“If nothing is expected of a people, that people will find it difficult to contradict that expectation.”

—*Frederick Douglass*

“It is procedure that spells much of the difference between rule of law and rule by whim or caprice.”

—*William O. Douglas*

“Yet as I read the Constitution, one of its essential purposes was to take government off the backs of people and keep it off.”

—*William O. Douglas*



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“The best cause requires a good pleader.”
—*Dutch proverb*

“Democracy don’t rule the world,
You’d better get that in your head;
This world is ruled by violence,
But I guess that’s better left unsaid.”
—*Bob Dylan*

“Consensus is what many people say in chorus but do not believe as individuals.”
—*Abba Eban*

“Laws alone cannot secure freedom of expression; in order that every man may present his views without penalty, there must be a spirit of tolerance in the entire population.”
—*Albert Einstein*

“Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, in a final sense, [is] a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.”
—*Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953*

“Here in America we are descended from revolutionists and rebels—men and women who dare to dissent from accepted doctrine. As their heirs, we may never confuse honest dissent with disloyal subversion.”
—*Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1954*

“History does not long entrust the care of freedom to the weak or the timid.”
—*Dwight D. Eisenhower*

“Politics ought to be the part-time profession of every citizen who would protect the rights and privileges of free people.”
—*Dwight D. Eisenhower*

“The future of this republic is in the hands of the American voter.”
—*Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1949*

“America is woven of many strands; I would recognize them and let it so remain. ... Our fate is to become one and yet many.”
—*Ralph Ellison, 1952*



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“Two cheers for democracy: one because it admits variety and two because it permits criticism.”

—*E.M. Forster*

“Every democratic system evolves its own conventions. It is not only the water but the banks which make the river.”

—*Indira Gandhi*

“Rights that do not flow from duty well performed are not worth having.”

—*Mohandas K. Gandhi*

“Democracy is measured not by its leaders doing extraordinary things, but by its citizens doing things extraordinarily well.”

—*John Gardner*

“I often think it’s comical
How Nature always does contrive
That every boy and every gal,
That’s born into the world alive,
Is either a little Liberal,
Or else a little Conservative!”

—*W.S. Gilbert*

“Democracy! Bah! When I hear that word I reach for my feather boa!”

—*Allen Ginsberg*

“Now the whole world needs restructuring, i.e., progressive development, a fundamental change.”

—*Mikhail Gorbachev*

“Education ... like democracy, is always in the making, forever incomplete, founded in possibilities.”

—*Maxine Greene*

“The security of our nation is not at the ramparts alone. Security also lies in the value of our free institutions. A cantankerous press, an obstinate press, a ubiquitous press must be suffered by those in authority in order to preserve the even greater values of freedom of expression and the right of the people to know.”

—*Murray I. Gurfein*



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“The complete independence of the courts of justice is peculiarly essential in a limited constitution.”

—*Alexander Hamilton*

“Bestowing representation on the basis of equal representation rather than population contradicts the fundamental maxim of republican government, which requires that the sense of the majority must prevail.”

—*Alexander Hamilton, “Federalist 22”*

“Self-sufficiency and a contempt of the science and experience of others are too prevailing traits of character in this country.”

—*Alexander Hamilton, 1798*

“I believe that America, the world's strongest democracy, ought not to be afraid of democracy, but we are.”

—*Lee Hamilton*

“The United States must of course remain militarily strong, but it should rely less on its military strength and more on the attraction of a free, open, and prosperous country that is strong enough and confident enough not to impose its will upon others and to allow diversity in the world's political and economic systems.”

—*Lee Hamilton*

“Although the job of a Congressman involves several different roles, the main ones are as representative and legislator. As a representative, a member serves as an agent for his constituents, ensuring that their views are heard in Congress and that they are treated fairly by federal bureaucrats and other public officials. As a legislator, a member participates in the lawmaking process by drafting bills and amendments, engaging in debate, and attempting to build a consensus necessary to address our nation's problems. Fulfilling these roles may sound easy, but can be enormously difficult.”

—*Lee Hamilton*

“If we are to keep our democracy, there must be one commandment: Thou shalt not ration justice.”

—*Learned Hand*

“The spirit of liberty is the spirit which is not too sure it is right.”

—*Learned Hand*

“What do we mean when we say that first of all we seek liberty? I often wonder whether we do not rest our hopes too much upon constitutions, upon laws, and upon courts. These are



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false hopes; believe me, these are false hopes. Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women; when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can save it; no constitution, no law, no court can even do much to help it. While it lies there, it needs no constitution, no law, no court to save it. And what is this liberty which must lie in the hearts of men and women? It is not the ruthless, the unbridled will; it is not freedom to do as one likes. That is the denial of liberty, and leads straight to its overthrow. A society in which men recognize no check upon their freedom soon becomes a society where freedom is the possession of only a savage few—as we have learned to our sorrow.

What then is the spirit of liberty? I cannot define it; I can only tell you my own faith. The spirit of liberty is the spirit which is not too sure that it is right; the spirit of liberty is the spirit which seeks to understand the minds of other men and women; the spirit of liberty is the spirit which weighs their interest alongside its own without bias; the spirit of liberty remembers that not even a sparrow falls to earth unheeded; the spirit of liberty is the spirit of him who, near two thousand years ago, taught mankind that lesson it has never learned, but has never quite forgotten—that there may be a kingdom where the least shall be heard and considered side-by-side with the greatest."

—*Learned Hand*

"Nothing is more important to America than citizenship; there is more assurance of our future in the individual character of our citizens than in any proposal I, and all the wise advisers I can gather, can ever put into effect in Washington."

—*Warren G. Harding, 1920*

"In view of the Constitution, in the eye of the law, there is in this country no superior, dominant, ruling class of citizens. There is no caste here. Our Constitution is colorblind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens. In respect of civil rights, all citizens are equal before the law. The humblest is the peer of the most powerful."

—*John Marshall Harlan, 1896*

"A state that denies its citizens their basic rights becomes a danger to its neighbors as well: internal arbitrary rule will be reflected in arbitrary external relations. The suppression of public opinion, the abolition of public competition for power and its public exercise opens the way for the state power to arm itself in any way it sees fit. ... A state that does not hesitate to lie to its own people will not hesitate to lie to other states."

—*Václav Havel*

"The more the state 'plans' the more difficult planning becomes for the individual."

—*Friedrich Hayek*



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“Only very slowly and late have men come to realize that unless freedom is universal it is only extended privilege.”

—*Christopher Hill*

“We Americans have no commission from God to police the world.”

—*Benjamin Harrison*

“Only very slowly and late have men come to realize that unless freedom is universal, it is only extended privilege.”

—*Christopher Hill*

“They that are discontented under monarchy, call it tyranny; and they that are displeased with aristocracy, call it oligarchy: so also, they which find themselves grieved under a democracy, call it anarchy, which signifies the want of government; and yet I think no man believes, that want of government, is any new kind of government.”

—*Thomas Hobbes*

“The freeman, casting with unpurchased hand
The vote that shakes the turrets of the land.”

—*Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr.*

“In contrast to totalitarianism, a democracy can face and live with the truth about itself.”

—*Sidney Hook*

“No governmental action, no economic doctrine, no economic plan or project can replace that God-imposed responsibility of the individual man and woman to their neighbors.”

—*Herbert Hoover, 1931*

“While democracy must have its organizations and controls, its vital breath is individual liberty.”

—*Charles Evans Hughes*

“It is not enough to merely defend democracy. To defend it may be to lose it; to extend it is to strengthen it. Democracy is not property; it is an idea.”

—*Hubert H. Humphrey*

“Surely anyone who has ever been elected to public office understands that one commodity above all others, namely the trust and confidence of the people, is fundamental in maintaining a free and open political system.”

—*Hubert H. Humphrey*



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“Equality and justice, the two great distinguishing characteristics of democracy, follow inevitably from the conception of men, all men, as rational and spiritual beings.”

—*Robert M. Hutchins*

“The death of democracy is not likely to be an assassination from ambush. It will be a slow extinction from apathy, indifference, and undernourishment.”

—*Robert M. Hutchins*

“So long as men worship the Caesars and Napoleons, Caesars and Napoleons will arise to make them miserable.”

—*Aldous Huxley*

“Democracy is only an experiment in government, and it has the obvious disadvantage of merely counting votes instead of weighing them.”

—*William R. Inge*

“Anything that keeps a politician humble is healthy for democracy.”

—*Irish blessing*

“The life of a republic lies certainly in the energy, virtue, and intelligence of its citizens.”

—*Andrew Jackson, 1865*

“It is not the function of our government to keep the citizen from falling into error; it is the function of the citizen to keep the government from falling into error.”

—*Robert H. Jackson*

“Men are more often bribed by their loyalties and ambitions than by money.”

—*Robert H. Jackson*

“The military constitutes a specialized community governed by a separate discipline from that of the civilian.”

—*Robert H. Jackson*

“Those who begin coercive elimination of dissent soon find themselves exterminating dissenters. Compulsory unification of opinion achieves only the unanimity of the graveyard.”

—*Robert H. Jackson*

“Thought control is a copyright of totalitarianism and we have no chain to it.”

—*Robert H. Jackson*



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“The deadliest enemies of nations are not their foreign foes; they always dwell within their borders. ... The nation blessed above all nations is she in whom the civic genius of the people does the saving day by day, by acts without external picturesqueness; by speaking, writing, voting reasonably; by smiting corruption swiftly; by good temper between parties; by the people knowing true men when they see them, and preferring them as leaders to rabid partisans or empty quacks.”

—*William James*

“The nation blessed above all nations is she in whom the civic genius of the people does the saving day by day... by speaking, writing, voting reasonably; by smiting corruption swiftly; by good temper between parties; by the people knowing true men when they see them, and preferring them as leaders to rabid partisans or empty quacks.”

—*William James*

“Christianity neither is, nor ever was, a part of the common law.”

—*Thomas Jefferson, 1814*

“Equal rights for all, special privileges for none.”

—*Thomas Jefferson, 1780*

“He who permits himself to tell a lie once, finds it much easier to do it a second and third time, till at length it becomes habitual; he tells lies without attending to it, and truths without the world’s believing him. This falsehood of the tongue leads to that of the heart, and in time depraves all its good dispositions.”

—*Thomas Jefferson, 1785*

“After all, it is my principle that the will of the majority should always prevail. If they approve the proposed Convention in all its parts, I shall concur in it cheerfully, in hopes that they will amend it whenever they shall find it work wrong. ... Above all things I hope the education of the common people will be attended to; convinced that on their good sense we may rely with the most security for the preservation of a due degree of liberty.”

—*Jefferson to Madison, 1787*

“Whenever the people are well informed, they can be trusted with their own government; that whenever things get so far wrong as to attract their notice, they may be relied on to set them to rights.”

—*Thomas Jefferson, 1788*

“I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but inform their discretion.”



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—*Thomas Jefferson, 1820*

“That government is the strongest of which every man feels himself a part.”

—*Thomas Jefferson*

“There is a debt of service due from every man to his country, proportioned to the bounties which nature and fortune have measured to him.”

—*Thomas Jefferson*

“The republican is the only form of government which is not eternally at open or secret war with the rights of mankind.”

—*Thomas Jefferson, 1790*

“The support of state governments in all their rights, as the most competent administration for our domestic concerns, are the surest bulwarks against anti-republican tendencies.”

—*Thomas Jefferson, 1801*

“There is a natural aristocracy among men. The grounds of this are virtue and talents.”

—*Thomas Jefferson*

“Though the will of the majority is in all cases to prevail, that will to be rightful, must be reasonable, that the minority possess their equal rights, which equal laws must protect, and to violate which would be oppression.”

—*Thomas Jefferson*

“Though written constitutions may be violated in moments of passion or delusion, yet they furnish a text to which those who are watchful may gain rally and recall the people; they fix too for the people the principles of their political creed.”

—*Thomas Jefferson, 1802*

“Where everyman is ... participator in the government of affairs, not merely at an election one day in the year but every day ... he will let the heart be torn out of his body sooner than his power be wrested from him by a Caesar or a Bonaparte.”

—*Thomas Jefferson, 1816*

“At the establishment of our constitutions, the judiciary bodies were supposed to be the most helpless and harmless members of the government. Experience, however, soon showed in what way they were to become the most dangerous; that the insufficiency of the means provided for their removal gave them a freehold and irresponsibility in office; that their decisions, seeming to concern individual suitors only, pass silent and unheeded by the public at large; that these decisions, nevertheless, become law by precedent, sapping, by



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little and little, the foundations of the constitution, and working its change by construction, before any one has perceived that that invisible and helpless worm has been busily employed in consuming its substance. In truth, man is not made to be trusted for life, if secured against all liability to account.”

—*Thomas Jefferson, letter to Monsieur A. Coray, 1823*

“It has long, however, been my opinion, and I have never shrunk from its expression ... that the germ of dissolution of our federal government is in the constitution of the federal judiciary; ... working like gravity by night and by day, gaining a little today and a little tomorrow, and advancing its noiseless step like a thief, over the field of jurisdiction, until all shall be usurped.”

—*Thomas Jefferson, letter to Charles Hammond, August 18, 1821*

“The Constitution ... is a mere thing of wax in the hands of the judiciary which they may twist and shape into any form they please.”

—*Thomas Jefferson, letter to Judge Spencer Roane, September 6, 1819*

“The germ of dissolution of our federal government is in the constitution of the federal judiciary; an irresponsible body, (for impeachment is scarcely a scare-crow) working like gravity by night and by day, gaining a little today and a little tomorrow, and advancing its noiseless step like a thief, over the field of jurisdiction, until all shall be usurped from the states, and the government of all be consolidated into one.”

—*Thomas Jefferson, letter to Charles Hammond, Aug 18, 1821*

“The great object of my fear is the federal judiciary. That body, like gravity, ever acting, with noiseless foot, and unalarming advance, gaining ground step by step, and holding what it gains, is engulfing insidiously the special governments into the jaws of that which feeds them.”

—*Thomas Jefferson, letter to Judge Spencer Roane, Mar 9, 1821*

“The judiciary of the United States is the subtle corps of sappers and miners constantly working under ground to undermine the foundations of our confederated fabric. They are construing our constitution from a coordination of a general and special government to a general and supreme one alone.”

—*Thomas Jefferson, letter to Thomas Ritchie, December 25, 1820*



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“This was the object of the Declaration of Independence. Not to find out new principles, or new arguments never before thought of, not merely to say things which had never been said before; but to place before mankind the common sense of the subject, in terms so plain and firm as to command their assent, and to justify ourselves in the independent stand we are compelled to take. Neither aiming at originality of principle or sentiment, nor yet copied from any particular and previous writing, it was intended to be an expression of the American mind, and to give to that expression the proper tone and spirit called for by the occasion.”

—*Thomas Jefferson, letter to Henry Lee, May 8, 1825*

“To all of which is added a selection from the elementary schools of subjects of the most promising genius, whose parents are too poor to give them further education, to be carried at the public expense through the college and university. The object is to bring into action that mass of talents which lies buried in poverty in every country, for want of the means of development, and thus give activity to a mass of mind, which, in proportion to our population, shall be double or treble of what it is in most countries.”

—*Thomas Jefferson, letter to Jose Correa de Serra, November 25, 1817*

“The opinion which gives to the judges the right to decide what laws are constitutional and what not, not only for themselves, in their own sphere of action, but for the legislature and executive also in their spheres, would make the judiciary a despotic branch.”

—*Thomas Jefferson, letter to Abigail Adams, September 11, 1804*

“A wise and frugal government, which shall leave men free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned—this is the sum of good government.”

—*Thomas Jefferson, First Inaugural Address, 1801*

“The goal to strive for is a poor government but a rich people.”

—*Andrew Johnson*

“The life of a republic lies certainly in the energy, virtue, and intelligence of its citizens.”

—*Andrew Johnson, 1865*

“Evil acts of the past are never rectified by evil acts of the present.”

—*Lyndon B. Johnson, July 21, 1964*

“I am a compromiser and maneuverer. I try to get something. That’s the way our system works.”

—*Lyndon B. Johnson*



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“The stakes ... are too high for government to be a spectator sport.”

—*Barbara Jordan*

“The deadliest foe of democracy is not autocracy but liberty frenzied.”

—*Otto Kahn*

“I am only one; but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; I will not refuse to do the something I can do.”

—*Helen Keller, 1950*

“Democracy is never a final achievement. It is a call to an untiring effort.”

—*John F. Kennedy*

“If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.”

—*John F. Kennedy*

“Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other.”

—*John F. Kennedy, 1962*

“The high office of president has been used to foment a plot to destroy the Americans’ freedom, and before I leave office I must inform the citizen of his plight.”

—*John F. Kennedy, Columbia University, November 12, 1963*

“Mothers all want their sons to grow up to be president but they don’t want them to become politicians in the process.”

—*John F. Kennedy*

“The ignorance of one voter in a democracy impairs the security of all.”

—*John F. Kennedy*

“When we got into office, the thing that surprised me most was to find that things were just as bad as we’d been saying they were.”

—*John F. Kennedy*

“Power ... is not an end in itself, but is an instrument that must be used toward an end.”

—*Jeane J. Kirkpatrick*

“The secret of the demagogue is to appear as dumb as his audience so that these people can believe themselves as smart as he is.”

—*Karl Kraus*



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“History does not provide us with any instance of a society that repressed the economic liberties of the individual while being solicitous of his other liberties.”

—*Irving Kristol*

“As I would not be a slave, so would I not be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy. Whatever differs from this, to the extent of the difference, is no democracy.”

—*Abraham Lincoln, 1858*

“America will never be destroyed from the outside. If we falter and lose our freedoms, it will be because we destroyed ourselves.”

—*Abraham Lincoln*

“I am not ashamed to confess that twenty-five years ago I was a hired laborer; hauling rails, at work on a flatboat—just what might happen to any poor man’s son. I want every man to have [a] chance.”

—*Abraham Lincoln, 1860*

“I believe each individual is naturally entitled to do as he pleases with himself and the fruit of his labor, so far as it in no wise interferes with any other man’s rights.”

—*Abraham Lincoln, 1858*

“I see in the near future a crisis approaching that unnerves me and causes me to tremble for the safety of my country. As a result of the war, corporations have been enthroned and an era of corruption in high places will follow, and the money power of the country will endeavor to prolong its reign by working upon the prejudices of the people until all wealth is aggregated in a few hands and the Republic is destroyed.”

—*Abraham Lincoln, in a letter to Col. William F. Elkins, November 21, 1864*

“Let us at all times remember that all American citizens are brothers of a common country, and should dwell together in the bonds of fraternal feeling.”

—*Abraham Lincoln, 1860*

“The ballot is stronger than the bullet.”

—*Abraham Lincoln*

“What I want is to get done what the people desire to have done, and the question for me is how to find that out exactly.”

—*Abraham Lincoln*



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“If all power is in the people, if there is no higher law than their will, and if by counting their votes, their will may be ascertained—then the people may entrust all their power to anyone, and the power of the pretender and the usurper is then legitimate. It is not to be challenged since it came originally from the sovereign people.”

—*Walter Lippmann*

“Right law must be intelligible, intellectually accessible to the people whom that law is to serve, whose law it is, the law-consumers and the citizen.”

—*Karl N. Llewellyn*

“Prosperity or egalitarianism—you have to choose. I favor freedom—you never achieve real equality anyway: you simply sacrifice prosperity for an illusion.”

—*Mario Vargas Llosa*

“Wherever Law ends, Tyranny begins.”

—*John Locke, 1690*

“A state also of equality, wherein all the power and jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another: there being nothing more evident, than that creatures of the same species and rank promiscuously born to all the same advantages of nature, and the use of the same facilities, should also be equal one amongst another without subordination and subjection, unless the Lord and master of them all, should by any manifest declaration of his will set one above another, and confer on him by an evident and clear appointment an undoubted right to dominion and sovereignty.”

—*John Locke*

“The legislative cannot transfer the power of making laws to any other hands: for it being but a delegated power from the people, they who have it cannot pass it over to others.”

—*John Locke, Second Treatise of Government*

“Without general elections, without unrestricted freedom of press and assembly, without a free struggle of opinion, life dies out in every public institution, becomes a mere semblance of life, in which only the bureaucracy remains as the active element. Public life gradually falls asleep.”

—*Rosa Luxemburg*

“We are as great as our belief in human liberty—no greater. And our belief in human liberty is only ours when it is larger than ourselves.”

—*Archibald MacLeish*



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“The business of the law is to make sense of the confusion of what we call human life—to reduce it to order but at the same time to give it possibility, scope, even dignity.”

—*Archibald MacLeish*

“A popular government without popular information or the means of acquiring it is but a prologue to farce or tragedy or perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance, and a people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power knowledge gives.”

—*James Madison, 1788*

“I believe there are more instances of the abridgment of the freedom of the people by gradual and silent encroachments of those in power than by violent and sudden usurpations.”

—*James Madison*

“By a faction, understand a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community.”

—*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*

“Pure democracies have ever been spectacles of turbulence and contention; have ever been found incompatible with personal security or the rights of property; and have in general been as short in their lives as they have been violent in their deaths.”

—*James Madison, “Federalist 10”*

“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 effect of [a representative democracy is] to refine and enlarge the public views, by passing them through the medium of a chosen body of citizens, whose wisdom may best discern the true interest of the nation.”

—*James Madison*

“It is of great importance in a republic, not only to guard the society against the oppression of its rulers, but to guard one part of the society against the injustice of the other part.”



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—*James Madison*

“[The government of the United States is] a government limited ... by the authority of a paramount Constitution.”

—*James Madison, 1788*

“In republican government, the legislative authority necessarily predominates. Justice is the end of government. It is the end of civil society. It ever has been, and ever will be, pursued, until it be obtained, or until liberty be lost in the pursuit. A coalition of a majority of the whole society could seldom take place upon any other principles, than those of justice and the general good.”

—*James Madison from notes on the Constitutional Convention*

“He enumerated the objections against an equality of votes in the second branch, notwithstanding the proportional representation in the first. The minority could negative the will of the majority of the people. They could extort measures by making them a condition of their assent to other necessary measures. They could obtrude measures on the majority by virtue of the peculiar powers which would be vested in the Senate. The evil instead of being cured by time, would increase with every new State that should be admitted, as they must all be admitted on the principle of equality. The perpetuity it would give to the preponderance of the Northern against the Southern Scale was a serious consideration.”

—*James Madison*

“We are teaching the world the great truth that governments do better without kings and nobles than with them. The merit will be doubled by the other lesson that religion flourishes in greater purity, without than with the aid of government.”

—*James Madison, 1822*

“The general question must be between a republican government in which the majority rule the minority, and a government in which a lesser number or the least number rule ... no government ... can be perfect. ... The abuses of all other governments have led to the preference for republican government as the best of all governments, because the least imperfect that the vital principle of republican government is the *lex majoris partis*, the will of the majority.”

—*James Madison, 1833*



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“Religion. The inefficacy of this restraint on individuals is well known. The conduct of every popular assembly, acting on oath, the strongest of religious ties, shews that individuals join without remorse in acts against which their consciences would revolt, if proposed to them separately in their closets. When indeed religion is kindled into enthusiasm, its force like that of other passions is increased by the sympathy of a multitude. But enthusiasm is only a temporary state of religion, and whilst it lasts will hardly be seen with pleasure at the helm. Even in its coolest state, it has been much oftener a motive to oppression than a restraint from it.”

—*James Madison, 1787*

“Government is instituted to protect property of every sort; as well that which lies in the various rights of individuals, as that which the term particularly expresses. This being the end of government, that alone is a just government which impartially secures to every man whatever is his own.”

—*James Madison, “Essay on Property,” 1792*

“No freeman shall be taken, or imprisoned, or outlawed, or exiled, or in any way harmed ... except by the legal judgment of his peers or by the law of the land.”

—*Magna Carta, 1215*

“A modern democracy is a tyranny whose borders are undefined; one discovers how far one can go only by traveling in a straight line until one is stopped.”

—*Norman Mailer*

“The first requirement of politics is not intellect or stamina but patience. Politics is a very long run game and the tortoise will usually beat the hare.”

—*John Major*

“War should never be entered upon until every agency of peace has failed.”

—*William McKinley, March 4, 1897*

“I have fought against white domination and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.”

—*Nelson Mandela*

“It is a strange fact that freedom and equality, the two basic ideas of democracy, are to some extent contradictory. Logically considered, freedom and equality are mutually exclusive, just as society and the individual are mutually exclusive.”

—*Thomas Mann*



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“The human being is in the most literal sense a political animal, not merely a gregarious animal, but an animal which can individuate itself only in the midst of society.”

—*Karl Marx*

“The government of the Union, then, is emphatically and truly a government of the people. In form and in substance it emanates from them. Its powers are granted by them, and are to be exercised directly on them for their benefit.”

—*John Marshall, 1819*

“The people made the Constitution, and the people can unmake it. It is the creature of their own will, and lives only by their own will.”

—*John Marshall, 1821*

“No free government nor the blessings of liberty, can be preserved to any people, but by ... a frequent recurrences to fundamental principles.”

—*George Mason, Virginia Declaration of Rights, 1776*

“A state is nothing more than a reflection of its citizens; the more decent the citizens, the more decent the state.”

—*George Mason*

“The freedom of the press is one of the great bulwarks of liberty, and can never be restrained but by despotic government.”

—*George Mason*

“O my brothers, love your country! Our country is our home, the home which God has given us, placing therein a numerous family which we love and are loved by ... a family which by its concentration upon a given spot, and by the homogeneous nature of its elements, is destined for a special kind of activity.”

—*Giuseppe Mazzini*

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

—*Margaret Mead*

“Democracy is the art and science of running the circus from the monkey cage.”

—*H.L. Mencken*

“The cure for the evils of democracy is more democracy.”

—*H.L. Mencken (also attributed to Alfred E. Smith)*



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“It is lamentable to think how a great proportion of all efforts and talents in the world are employed in merely neutralizing one another. ... It is the proper end of government to reduce this wretched waste to the smallest possible amount, by taking such measures as shall cause the energies now spent by mankind in injuring one another, or in protecting themselves from injury, to be turned to the legitimate employment of the human faculties.”
—*John Stuart Mill, 1848*

“No man in this country is so high that he is above the law. No officer of the law may set that law at defiance with impunity. All the officers of the government from the highest to the lowest are bound to obey it.”
—*Samuel F. Miller*

“Civility costs nothing and buys everything.”
—*Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, 1756*

“The tyranny of a prince is not so dangerous to the public welfare as the apathy of a citizen in a democracy.”
—*Montesquieu, 1748*

“Bad officials are elected by good citizens who do not vote.”
—*George Jean Nathan*

“Man’s capacity for justice makes democracy possible, but man’s inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary.”
—*Reinhold Niebuhr*

“In Germany, the Nazis first came for the communists, and I did not speak up, because I was not a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak up, because I was not a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak up, because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, and I did not speak up, because I was not a Catholic. Then they came for me ... and by that time, there was no one to speak up for anyone.”
—*Martin Niemöller*

“Democratic contrivances are quarantine measures against that ancient plague, the lust for power: as such, they are very necessary and very boring.”
—*Friedrich Nietzsche*

“No advance in wealth, no softening of manners, no reform or revolution has ever brought human equality a millimeter nearer.”



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—*George Orwell*

“Democracy means not ‘I’m as good as you are,’ but ‘You’re as good as I am.’”

—*Theodore Parker*

“Let the people think they govern and they will be governed.”

—*William Penn*

“The greatest praise government can win is, that its citizens know their rights and dare to maintain them.”

—*Wendell Phillips*

“Whenever war is declared, truth is the first casualty.”

—*Arthur Ponsonby, Falsehood in Wartime: Propaganda Lies of the First World War, 1928*

“There is more selfishness and less principle among members of Congress ... than I had any conception of, before I became President of the United States.”

—*James K. Polk, December 16, 1846*

“For forms of government let fools contest;
Whate’er is best administered is best.”

—*Alexander Pope*

“There is only one motivation for imposing burdens on voting that are ostensibly designed to discourage voter-impersonation fraud, if there is no actual danger of such fraud, and that is to discourage voting by persons likely to vote against the party responsible for imposing the burdens.”

—*Judge Richard A Posner, 7th Circuit Court of Appeals*

“We are a democracy, and there is only one way to get a democracy on its feet in the matter of its individual, its social, its municipal, its state, its national conduct, and that is by keeping the public informed about what is going on.”

—*Joseph Pulitzer*

“The general object was to produce a cure for the evils under which the United States labored; that in tracing these evils to their origins, every man had found it in the turbulence and follies of democracy.”

—*Edmund Randolph*

“Democracy is not a fragile flower; still it needs cultivating.”

—*Ronald Reagan*



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“Peace is more than just the absence of war. True peace is justice, true peace is freedom. And true peace dictates the recognition of human rights.”

—*Ronald Reagan, 1986*

“Politics is supposed to be the second-oldest profession. I have come to realize that it bears a very close resemblance to the first.”

—*Ronald Reagan, 1977*

“Democracy forever teases us with the contrast between its ideals and its realities, between its heroic possibilities and its sorry achievements.”

—*Agnes Repplier*

“A democratic form of government, a democratic way of life, presupposes free public education over the long period; it presupposes also an education for personal responsibility that too often is neglected.”

—*Eleanor Roosevelt*

“Our children should learn the general framework of their government, and then they should know where they come in contact with the government, where it touches their daily lives and where their influence is exerted on the government. It must not be a distant thing, someone else's business, but they must see how every cog in the wheel of a democracy is important and bears its share of responsibility for the smooth running of the entire machine.”

—*Eleanor Roosevelt*

“For twelve years this Nation was afflicted with hear-nothing, see-nothing, do-nothing government. The nation looked to government but the government looked away. Nine mocking years with the golden calf and three long years of the scourge! Nine crazy years at the ticker and three long years in the breadlines! Nine mad years of mirage and three long years of despair! Powerful influences strive today to restore that kind of government with its doctrine that that government is best which is most indifferent. For nearly four years you have had an administration which instead of twirling its thumbs has rolled up its sleeves. We will keep our sleeves rolled up. We had to struggle with the old enemies of peace—business and financial monopoly, speculation, reckless banking, class antagonism, sectionalism, war profiteering. They had begun to consider the government of the United States as a mere appendage to their own affairs. We know now that government by organized money is just as dangerous as government by organized mob.”

—*Franklin D. Roosevelt*



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“Never before in all our history have these forces been so united against one candidate as they stand today. They are unanimous in their hate for me—and I welcome their hatred. I should like to have it said of my first administration that in it, the forces of selfishness and of lust for power met their match. I should like to have it said of my second administration that in it, these forces met their master.”

—*Franklin D. Roosevelt*

“In the field of world policy; I would dedicate this nation to the policy of the good neighbor.”

—*Franklin D. Roosevelt, March 4, 1933*

“Inside the polling booth, every American man and woman stands as the equal of every other American man and woman. There they have no superiors. There they have no masters save their own minds and consciences.”

—*Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1936*

“The only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror.”

—*Franklin D. Roosevelt, March 4, 1933*

“The President is merely the most important among a large number of public servants. He should be supported or opposed exactly to the degree which is warranted by his good conduct or bad conduct, his efficiency or inefficiency in rendering loyal, able, and disinterested service to the nation as a whole. Therefore it is absolutely necessary that there should be full liberty to tell the truth about his acts, and this means that it is exactly necessary to blame him when he does wrong as to praise him when he does right. Any other attitude in an American citizen is both base and servile. To announce that there must be no criticism of the President, or that we are to stand by the President, right or wrong, is not only unpatriotic and servile, but is morally treasonable to the American public. Nothing but the truth should be spoken about him or anyone else. But it is even more important to tell the truth, pleasant or unpleasant, about him than about anyone else.”

—*Teddy Roosevelt, Kansas City Star, May 7, 1918*

“The principle on which this country was founded and by which it has always been governed is that Americanism is a matter of the mind and heart; Americanism is not, and never was, a matter of race and ancestry. A good American is one who is loyal to this country and to our creed of liberty and democracy.”

—*Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1943*

“To waste, to destroy our natural resources, to skin and exhaust the land instead of using it so as to increase its usefulness, will result in undermining in the days of our children the very prosperity which we ought by right to hand down to them amplified and developed.”

—*Teddy Roosevelt, 1907*



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“American time has stretched around the world. It has become the dominant tempo of modern history, especially of the history of Europe.”

—*Harold Rosenberg*

“That the schools make worthy citizens is the most important responsibility placed on them.”

—*Franklin D. Roosevelt*

“If we enquire wherein lies precisely the greatest good of all, which ought to be the good of every system of law, we shall find that it comes down to two main objects, freedom and equality.”

—*Jean Jacques Rousseau*

“The body politic, like the human body, begins to die from its birth, and bears in itself the causes of its destruction.”

—*Jean Jacques Rousseau*

“I am sure there was no man born marked of God above another, for none comes into the world with a saddle on his back, neither any bootied and spurred to ride him.”

—*Richard Rumbold*

“There is but one method of rendering a republican form of government durable, and that is by disseminating the seeds of virtue and knowledge through every part of the state by means of proper places and modes of education and this can be done effectively only by the aid of the legislature.”

—*Benjamin Rush, signer of the Declaration of Independence*

“I am sure that there was not man born marked by God above another; for none comes into this world with a saddle on his back, neither any bootied and spurred to ride him.”

—*Hannibal Rumbold*

“Throughout human history, the apostles of purity, those who have claimed to possess a total explanation, have wrought havoc among mere mixed-up human beings.”

—*Salman Rushdie*

“If one man offers you democracy and another offers you a bag of grain, at what state of starvation will you prefer the grain to a vote?”

—*Bertrand Russell*



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“A habit of basing convictions upon evidence, and of giving to them only that degree or certainty which the evidence warrants, would, if it became general, cure most of the ills from which the world suffers.”

—*Bertrand Russell*

“Democracy is a political method, that is to say, a certain type of institutional arrangement for arriving at political—legislative and administrative—decisions and hence incapable of being an end in itself.”

—*Joseph A. Schumpeter*

“Democracy substitutes election by the incompetent many for appointment by the corrupt few.”

—*George Bernard Shaw*

“A good citizen is an earner, because independence is the indelibly necessary quality of genuine, democratic citizenship.”

—*Judith N. Shklar*

“Active citizens ... are public meeting-goers and joiners of voluntary organizations who discuss and deliberate with others about the policies that will affect them all, and who serve their country not only as taxpayers and occasional soldiers, but by having a considered notion of the public good that they genuinely take to heart. The good citizen is a patriot.”

—*Judith N. Shklar, 1991*

“The simple act of voting is the ground upon which the edifice of elective government rests ultimately.”

—*Judith N. Shklar*

“To be a stateless individual is one of the most dreadful political fates that can befall anyone in the modern world.”

—*Judith N. Shklar*

“Whether in private or in public, the good citizen does something to support democratic habits and the constitutional order.”

—*Judith N. Shklar, 1991*

“Civil authority, so far as it is instituted for the security of property, is in reality instituted for the defense of the rich against the poor, or of those who have some property against those who have none at all.”

—*Adam Smith, Wealth of Nations, 1776*



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“Justice is conscience, not a personal conscience but the conscience of the whole of humanity. Those who clearly recognize the voice of their own conscience usually recognize also the voice of justice.”

—*Alexander Solzhenitsyn*

“The object of government is not to change men from rational beings into puppets, but to enable them to develop their minds and bodies in security, and to employ their reason unshackled. ... The true aim of government is liberty.”

—*Baruch Spinoza*

“Without the ability to participate intelligently in politics, one cannot use one's votes to advance one's aims nor can one be said to participate in a process of reasoned deliberation among equals.”

—*Tom Christiano, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*

“However sugarcoated and ambiguous, every form of authoritarianism must start with a belief in some group's greater right to power, whether that right is justified by sex, race, class, religion or all four.”

—*Gloria Steinem*

“As citizens of this democracy, you are the rulers and the ruled, the lawgivers and the law-abiding, the beginning and the end.”

—*Adlai Stevenson, 1956*

“I have great faith in the people; as for their wisdom—well, Coca-Cola still outsells champagne.”

—*Adlai Stevenson*

“Making peace is harder than making war.”

—*Adlai Stevenson*

“We mean by ‘politics,’ the people's business—the most important business there is.”

—*Adlai Stevenson*

“It's not the voting that's democracy, it's the counting.”

—*Tom Stoppard*

“Let us never forget that our constitutions of government are solemn instruments, addressed to the common sense of the people and designed to fix and perpetuate their rights and their liberties.”

—*Joseph Story*



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“People who want to understand democracy should spend less time in the library with Aristotle and more time on the buses and in the subway.”

—*Simeon Strunsky*

“Constitutions are checks upon the hasty action of the majority. They are the self-imposed restraints of a whole people upon a majority of them to secure sober action and a respect for the rights of the minority.”

—*William Howard Taft, 1900*

“There is a limit to the application of democratic methods. You can inquire of all the passengers as to what type of car they like to ride in, but it is impossible to question them as to whether to apply the brakes when the train is at full speed and accident threatens.”

—*Leon Trotsky*

“Once a government is committed to the principle of silencing the voice of opposition, it has only one way to go, and that is down the path of increasingly repressive measures, until it becomes a source of terror to all its citizens and creates a country where everyone lives in fear.”

—*Harry S. Truman*

“I am a democrat only on principle, not by instinct—nobody is that. Doubtless some people say they are, but this world is grievously given to lying.”

—*Mark Twain*

“The government of the United States is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion.”

—*George Washington, Treaty of Tripoli, 1796*

“Equality is the public recognition, effectively expressed in institutions and manners, of the principle that an equal degree of attention is due to the needs of all human beings.”

—*Simone Weil*

“It would seem that man was born a slave, and that slavery is his natural condition. At the same time nothing on earth can stop man from feeling himself born for liberty. Never, whatever may happen, can he accept servitude; for he is a thinking creature.”

—*Simone Weil*

“Democracy’s ceremonial, its feast, its great function, is the election.”

—*H.G. Wells*



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“Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe.”

—*H.G. Wells*

“In Italy for thirty years under the Borgias, they had warfare, terror, murder, and bloodshed but they produced Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, and the Renaissance. In Switzerland, they had brotherly love; they had five hundred years of democracy and peace and what did that produce? The cuckoo clock.”

—*Orson Welles*

“Act as if the whole election depended on your single vote, and as if the whole Parliament (and therein the whole nation) on the single person whom you now chose to be a member of it.”

—*John Wesley*

“In every human breast, God has implanted a principle, which we call love of freedom; it is impatient of oppression and pants for deliverance.”

—*Phillis Wheatley*

“Democracy is the hole in the stuffed shirt through which the sawdust slowly trickles.”

—*E.B. White*

“Democracy is the recurrent suspicion that more than half of the people are right more than half of the time.”

—*E.B. White*

“I cannot repeat too often that [democracy] is a word, the real gist of which still sleeps, quite unawaken'd, notwithstanding the resonance and many angry tempests out of which its syllables have come. ... It is a great word, whose history, I suppose, remains unwritten because that history has yet to be enacted.”

—*Walt Whitman*

“Political democracy ... with all its threatening evils, supplies a training school for making first class men. It is life's gymnasium, not of good only, but of all.”

—*Walt Whitman*

“There are three kinds of despots. There is the despot who tyrannizes over the body. There is the despot who tyrannizes over the soul. There is the despot who tyrannizes over the soul and body alike. The first is called the Prince. The second is called the Pope. The third is called the People.”

—*Oscar Wilde*



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“Freedom is an indivisible word. If we want to enjoy it, we must be prepared to extend it to everyone, whether they are rich or poor, whether they agree with us or not, no matter what their race or the color of their skin.”

—*Wendell Willkie*

“Knowledge—Zzzzzp! Money—Zzzzzp!—Power! That’s the cycle democracy is built on!”

—*Tennessee Williams*

“It’s not healthy for a society if the people hate their own government.”

—*Garry Wills*

“Term limits mean that you don’t trust the voters. ‘Stop me before I vote again.’”

—*Garry Wills*

“All these financiers, all the little gnomes of Zurich.”

—*Harold Wilson*

“Democracy is not so much a form of government as a set of principles.”

—*Woodrow Wilson*

“Liberty has never come from the government. Liberty has always come from the subjects of government. The history of liberty is the history of resistance. The history of liberty is a history of the limitation of governmental power, not the increase of it.”

—*Woodrow Wilson*

“This sacrifice of individual interests to the greater good of the whole formed the essence of republicanism and comprehended for Americans the idealistic goal of their Revolution. ...

This republican ideology both presumed and helped shape the American’s conception of the way their society and politics should be structured and operated.”

—*Gordon Wood, 1969*

“A judge ... is a public servant who must follow his conscience, whether or not he counters the manifest wishes of those he serves; whether or not his decision seems a surrender to prevalent demands.”

—*Hiller B. Zobel*

“The U.S. political system has decayed over time because its traditional system of checks and balances has deepened and become increasingly rigid. In an environment of sharp political polarization, this decentralized system is less and less able to represent majority interests and gives excessive representation to the views of interest groups and activist organizations that collectively do not add up to a sovereign American people. ... The



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depressing bottom line is that given how self-reinforcing the country's political malaise is, and how unlikely the prospects for constructive incremental reform are, the decay of American politics will probably continue until some external shock comes along to catalyze a true reform coalition and galvanize it into action."

—*Francis Fukuyama*

"In the United States, the government is intended to be a government of men. A corporation is not a citizen with a right to vote or take a hand otherwise in politics. It is an artificial creation, brought into existence by favor of the State solely to perform the functions allowed by its charter. Interference by it with the state and attempts by it to exercise rights of citizens are fundamentally a perversion of its power. Its stockholders, no matter how wise or how rich, should be forced to exercise their political influence as individuals on an equality with other men. That is the basic principle of democracy."

—*The Tribune, 1904*

"Every friend of republican government ought to raise his voice against the sweeping denunciation of majority governments as the most tyrannical and intolerable of all governments. ... The general question must be between a republican government in which the majority rule the minority, and a government in which a lesser number or the least number rule the majority. ... Those who denounce majority government altogether ... denounce at the time all republican government and must maintain that minority governments would feel less of the bias of interest or the seductions of powers."

—*James Madison*

"If majority governments ... be the worst of governments, those who think and say so cannot be within the pale of the republican faith. They must either join the avowed disciples of aristocracy, oligarchy or monarchy, or look for a utopia exhibiting a perfect homogeneity of interests, opinions and feelings nowhere yet to be found in civilized communities."

—*James Madison*

"The general object was to produce a cure for the evils under which the United States labored; that in tracing these evils to their origins, every man had found it in the turbulence and follies of democracy."

—*Edmund Randolph*

"None of the [state] constitutions have provided sufficient checks against democracy."

—*Edmund Randolph*

"The evils we experience flow from the excess of democracy."

—*Elbridge Gerry*



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“To defend a doctrine of natural rights today, requires either insensibility to the world's progress or else considerable courage in the face of it. Whether all doctrines of natural rights of man died with the French Revolution or were killed by the historical learning of the nineteenth century, everyone who enjoys the consciousness of being enlightened knows that they are, and by right ought to be, dead. The attempt to defend a doctrine of natural rights before historians and political scientists would be treated very much like an attempt to defend the belief in witchcraft. It would be regarded as emanating only from the intellectual underworld.”

—*Morris R. Cohen, Reason and Nature, 1932*