

P. J. O'ROURKE

The Time to Be a Libertarian

People have said to me, “P.J., isn’t this a terrible time to be libertarian?” And I understand what they mean, but none of these bad things that we have been experiencing make it a terrible time to be a libertarian. They make it a *necessary* time to be a libertarian. When your house is on fire, that’s not a terrible time to be a volunteer fire fighter. Our job as libertarians is to teach the world that individual liberty, individual dignity, and

putting the man on that side of the room while the elites stand in the middle taxing sperm and eggs.

Goodness itself is an individual trait. Think about the death of Socrates. What do you suppose would have happened to that charming old bloke, that loveable eccentric full of questions, if Socrates had gone around Athens and asked each individual Athenian, “Should I be condemned to death?” Individuals would never have killed Socrates. They

And here at home, we have that Cosa Nostra with its code of *omertà*, the Clinton Foundation. Or the “Feel the Bernies” expressing their First Amendment rights by smashing windows on K Street, and the Make America Great Again Crips and Bloods wearing their colors on their baseball caps.

The libertarian is the anti-mob. The anti-mob is you, each of you.

I want to give you just one example of what you, the individual, can achieve,

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individual responsibility are the best safeguards against the failures of bloated elite political overreach, and to teach the world that reason is the best tool for adjusting to change.

Good things are made by free individuals, in free association with other individuals. (Notice that’s how we make babies.) Individual freedom is about bringing things together; politics is about dividing things up. Political elites would have us making babies by putting the woman over on this side of the room and

had to become a mob first. And what always comes to the fore in a mob? Mobsters. The alternative right in KKK bed sheets or, less comically, Marine Le Pen, or the likes of Vladimir Putin or Xi Jinping—or the worst possible example: that murderous president of the Philippines, Rodrigo Duterte. (The citizens of the Philippines were so overwhelmed with their populist fear of violent crime that they ended up giving themselves a dose of quack political homeopathy and elected a violent criminal president.)

and indeed did achieve. It was something that political elites all around the world were unable to achieve for thousands of years. All the way through the known existence of man, they were unable to abolish slavery. And the abolition of slavery was a matter of individual private enterprise, private social enterprise.

The abolition movement was founded in Great Britain in the 18th century by the Quakers. Now, the Quakers were not political elites, and the Quakers had

very little political influence—partly that was because of their silly hats, but mostly because Quakers, as religious dissenters, were not eligible to stand for parliament. And once this abolition movement was founded, it drew its strongest support from individuals who were anything but elites. Abolition drew its strongest support from the Industrial Revolution's new working class—

women and factory workers. They had no political influence whatsoever. The right to vote in Britain was limited to people with money and knee breeches, and yet abolition prevailed. Not only were all the slaves in the British Empire freed in 1833, but also, at the behest of the abolition movement, the British Navy would go on to fight the slave trade everywhere else in the world.

All because of private social enterprise engaged in by individuals in Quaker meetings, in community organizations, through the work of clubs and lodges and fellowships—much like saying “my bowling league cured Zika.” Well, it could be done if we could get more research scientists to learn to bowl. Or let the Cato Institute be your bowling league, now more than ever. ■



“There are ways that you all **influence policy** in this country that you don't even realize.”

—Mick Mulvaney

Cato's Impact, 40 Years In

What role does Cato play in the public policy landscape? At the 40th Anniversary Celebration, Director of the Office of Management and Budget MICK MULVANEY and Cato's chairman of the board of directors BOB LEVY offered some thoughts on Cato's importance and impact.

MICK MULVANEY: I want to tell you one of my favorite Cato stories—it's a story that shows just how influential Cato can be, in ways that you don't even know.

I met John Allison when I was 25 years old. I was a young lawyer on my very first deposition. I went to the middle of nowhere in eastern North Carolina, and

there I met John Allison. In the middle of the deposition we took a break for lunch and he came back early and we were just chatting, waiting for the court reporter to come back. And he asked me, “So son, where are you from?” I told him, “I'm from Charlotte.” He asked where I went to school, and I told him I went to

Chapel Hill for law school. Then he asked, “What's your favorite book?” And I said, “Well, when I was in eighth grade my dad gave me a copy of *Atlas Shrugged*, and I thought it was really cool.” That's the right thing to say to John Allison, apparently, and I sort of followed his career from afar after that.

When I got to Congress, he had just become president of Cato, and I invited him to dinner at the Capitol Hill Club with a couple of friends of mine, including Rep. David Schweikert (R-AZ), who was on the Financial Services Committee with me. We were talking about Dodd-Frank, and I asked him if he