



The
Evolution
Of
Democracy

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LAUS DEO

FOREWORD

Make no mistake, the true intent of this writing is to spark a political

REVOLUTION...

But if nothing else, hopefully it will start a

CONVERSATION.

DEMOCRACY (according to Merriam Webster)

noun | de • moc • ra • cy | \di-`mä-krə-sē\

1(a): government by the people; *especially*: rule of the majority

REPUBLIC (according to Merriam Webster)

noun | re·pub·lic | \ri-`pə-blik\

1(b): a government in which supreme power resides in a body of citizens entitled to vote and is exercised by elected officers and representatives responsible to them and governing according to law

After reading these definitions, compare them to our current form of government and ask yourself...

Do you feel like the American people hold the supreme power in our nation?

In what ways are our elected officials held responsible to us, the people who vote for them?

Does it even matter what a majority of Americans stand for, when our system of government is controlled by political parties and financed by lobbyists?

Chapter 1

A DOSE OF PERSPECTIVE

As children, we are all taught that the roots of our nation grew out of a revolt by 13 colonies against a tyrannical British monarchy. At the heart of this rebellion was a desire for equality, freedom, and self-determination. Even now, more than 240 years since it was first written, the famous words of the Declaration of Independence describe what most of us believe the “American” experience is, or at least what we think it should be...

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

Unfortunately, the sad reality is that when it comes to our government, there are many in power who don’t believe in the simple principle of equality announced in this quote. In fact, history tells us that the founding fathers didn’t truly believe in it either when it was first written, or at least not all of them. As we know, when they said that all “men” are created equal, they literally meant men only, and just the white ones at that. But through a civil war, suffrage efforts, a civil rights movement, and the ongoing struggles of the many who continue to push for equality, we find evidence of fellow Americans coming together to fight for what is inherently right and just. These evolutions of America, as memorialized through Amendments to our Constitution and landmark Supreme Court decisions, were not reached, however, without great sacrifice and extreme dedication by those devoted to their causes, who forced change upon the status quo. In their victories, we see that equality and justice can win out over racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression, but why has it been so difficult? Why are injustices tolerated for so long before they are remedied?

Perhaps some insight may be found by examining the setting in which our current system of government was formed. According to the first census conducted in 1790, taken three years after the Constitutional Convention, the total recorded population of the country was roughly 3.9 million persons. Of this total, over 1.5 million were free women, and nearly 700,000 were slaves. It’s quite an interesting footnote to our history that, when combined, over 57% of the counted inhabitants of this nation, a clear majority, had zero rights with respect to the government when it was formed. It’s even more astonishing to think that the true percentage is actually even higher than that, when you consider the estimated 600,000 or more indigenous persons of the Native American tribes who were not counted in the census.

The largest city populations back in 1790 were New York at 33,131, Philadelphia at 28,522, and Boston at 18,320, with Virginia coming in as the most populous state overall (747,610). Aside from Massachusetts, public education was non-existent in the states. While most of the population was literate, thanks in large part to the Bible, formal education was

essentially reserved for the wealthy and the elite. Communication between the states and their citizens was often a long and difficult process, due to the wide disbursement of a primarily rural population, and no other means of communication beyond the written word and in-person conversation. It was a time before television, radio, the telephone, or even the telegraph had been invented.

For comparison's sake, the last official census in 2010 put our population at nearly 309 million people, a figure nearly 100 times greater than 1790. The top 3 city populations in the last census were New York at 8,175,133, Los Angeles at 3,792,821, and Chicago at 2,695,598, with California checking in as the top State overall (33,871,648). All 50 of the States now maintain formal public education systems, and rather successfully at that, with 88% percent of American adults holding a high school diploma or GED, according to 2015 education attainment data. As for higher education, according to the same 2015 data, 59% of Americans reported completing at least some college, and 33% overall have a bachelor's degree or higher.

As stark of a contrast as the population and education statistics reveal, our present modes of communication and the speed at which information travels might as well have been from another planet when compared to the early years of our nation. What once took days, weeks, or even months, now takes but a few seconds or minutes. In the specific context of communication, it's plain to see that a governmental system developed in the late 1700s had to rely on individual persons to represent the views of the many, simply out of necessity. But when viewed through the lens of our current technological capabilities, it suddenly seems far less appropriate for our present place in time.

There are many Americans, including perhaps even you, who may view the longevity of the American form of government as evidence of its success, and as a reason for why it should forever stay unchanged. After all, it has lasted well over 200 years, and for most of our history, we've enjoyed our place at the front of the line, as leader of the free world. But before we pay the strictest of reverence to history, consider the fact that so much of the success of our nation has come from our ingenuity. We have a knack for solving problems, imagining ideas into life, always improving, and never settling for good enough. The airplane, the automobile, the telephone, the personal computer. The list of what Americans have contributed to the world, including our form of democracy, goes on and on. So why wouldn't we look to continue to improve upon something as important as our government?

If we take a realistic look at the birth of our federal government, we see that it was the end result of debates held by 55 white men, most of whom were wealthy landowners, and many of whom owned slaves. While there were certainly those in the room who solemnly felt the weight of their undertaking, and appreciated the importance of including the people in the process of government, it's also very clear through the historical records, that there were those who placed significantly far less value on the ideals of democracy.

According to the journal kept by James Madison, on May 31, 1787, the delegates to the Constitutional Convention debated the question of whether the members of first branch of the National Legislature (now the House of Representatives) should be elected by the people. Seems like it should be a no brainer, right? Well, not exactly, as it was a closer vote than many would imagine, with 6 States voting in favor, 2 voting against, and 2 left undecided due to a disagreement among their delegates (3 were absent at the time of the vote). Although a people's electorate ultimately carried the day, Madison's notes recall the following from the debates on the floor:

“Mr. SHERMAN opposed the election by the people, insisting that it ought to be by the State Legislatures. The people, he said, immediately, should have as little to do as may be about the government. They want information, and are constantly liable to be misled.

Mr. GERRY. The evils we experience flow from the excess of democracy. The people do not want virtue, but are the dupes of pretended patriots.

Mr. BUTLER thought an election by the people an impracticable mode.”

Madison himself, in the course of arguing in favor of an election by the people, recognized that the overall governmental plan being considered by the delegates had no other role for the people, and cautioned that if not granted this right:

“. . . the people would be lost sight of altogether; and the necessary sympathy between them and their rulers and officers too little felt.”

It is apparent from these quotes that the will of the people was never intended to be the central focus of our government. In fact, the opinions of Madison and Alexander Hamilton printed in the Federalist Papers in support of ratification of the Constitution, reflect an inherent distrust for the will of the people. They warned of overbearing majorities and failed democratic efforts, arguing instead for a republic, where deference is given to “enlightened statesmen,” who they believed were better suited to make decisions in the best interest of the public good. Underlying these arguments in favor of a republic was a clear sense of inequality and elitism between the wealthy and educated few, who were viewed as worthy of ruling, and the rural and uneducated many, who they believed could be swayed at the drop of a hat.

While some of our founding fathers may have had truly selfless motives and the best interests of the people in mind, it would be naïve to ignore that others were likely motivated by personal agendas, with an eye toward protecting their wealth, and perpetuating their own power and influence. And so in that respect at least, maybe not that much has changed between then and now, after all.

Ultimately, the political reforms outlined in this book are grounded in a desire to bring about a universal equality, and a belief that the collective whole of us as people, if given the appropriate governmental structure and opportunity, will continue to guide this nation into

improved versions of itself. The specific aim of these reforms is to bring about a system where we can continue to better our country and better our quality of life, only without the prolonged injustices and struggles faced by those who came before us.

Chapter 2

THE IDEA

As you may have noticed, I've left my name off this book, choosing instead to provide only my status as a U.S. citizen and my initials. This decision to remain anonymous was purposeful for a number of reasons, but the most important of which was to allow the idea of a democratic evolution to be evaluated on its own merits, without an initial bias. As humans, we cannot help but instantly attach some level of bias to an idea when we know the individual from whom it originated. The bias may be positive, negative, or somewhere in between, but as soon as we become aware of the gender, age, race, ethnicity, educational background, occupation, political affiliation, or even the wealth of a person, we cannot help but let some bias, however large or small, attach to the person's ideas. Only by keeping my identity hidden is it possible to ensure that this idea will be provided with the opportunity to receive a truly unbiased evaluation.

Secondly, my hope for this idea is that, without an identified owner, it becomes a shared idea amongst us all. This idea is not intended to benefit any specific individual, or any particular group, but all of us Americans, and all persons living within the borders of our country. In particular now, when the differences between us are on full display across the internet and our televisions on a daily basis, it seems we are in desperate need of a movement to bind us back together as a united nation, even in times when our individual views on specific issues may differ.

Before outlining the fundamental principles of the idea, I believe it's essential to explain that it originates from a core belief that together we are far stronger than we are as individuals. In observing our modern world, I can't help but consistently be amazed at the seemingly endless advancements and achievements reached by people working together and cooperating with one another for a common purpose. Everywhere you look, you'll find examples of things that wouldn't be possible without cooperation. When we work together, human beings are capable of exponentially more than we could ever hope to accomplish on our own as individuals. This simple concept of cooperation is what formed our earliest societies to begin with, and is what I believe is critical to allow our present day society to continue to progress forward.

It is with that introduction that I offer to you, to hopefully adopt as your own, the idea to bring about the next evolution of our democracy:

A. When a Congressional vote is required to:

1. Enact or repeal a law;
2. Confirm a new justice to the Supreme Court; or
3. Declare war or authorize the use of military force in a foreign nation:

Instead of allowing our elected Representatives and Senators to vote in whatever manner they choose, all adult citizens shall have the right to vote on these matters, and the majority of us within each District and State shall determine how the official votes are cast by our Representatives and Senators in Congress.

- B. In order to prevent the President, a single elected official, from standing between the will of the people and the force of law, the executive veto power shall be replaced with the limited ability to call for a national re-vote.

- C. Except in response to a direct military attack on America, the President shall be required to obtain a majority consent of both houses of Congress prior to introducing U.S. Armed Forces into foreign hostilities.

- D. Presidential elections shall be determined by a popular vote of all American citizens, wherever located, instead of the Electoral College.

Chapter 3

TECHNOLOGY & THE OFFICIAL

The thing about most ideas is that they're usually missing some practical component necessary to bring them to life. In order for our democracy to evolve, this practical component is technology. Specifically, a technology based platform that is a reliable, efficient, and trustworthy means of collecting and recording votes cast by the citizens of this country is what is needed to turn this idea into a reality.

One of the primary reasons America continues to remain a global superpower from a military standpoint is the ability of our armed forces to partner with private subcontractors to develop weapons and equipment that they couldn't develop on their own. Every year, hundreds of billions of tax dollars are poured into companies like Lockheed Martin, Northrup Grumman, Raytheon, and numerous others, which fuels research and development, and helps America to maintain its place among the military elite.

From a computing technology perspective, America is also home to some of the leading companies in the world, and continues to be at the forefront in the global advancement and development of this type of technology. Surely, if we can utilize the expertise of our private sector in a military sense, then why can't we partner with our technology leaders in the private sector to develop a digital online voting system? Seeing as how we use technology every day to accurately count how many people like, love, and frown face the latest cat meme, dinner photo, and countless other social media and internet posts, it certainly seems that we should be able to safely and securely count something of actual importance by using technology. If we can pay bills and taxes, manage bank accounts, and do pretty much everything else online, why can't we vote, too? Ultimately, it just comes down to putting forth an organized effort, and allocating resources toward the creation and development of a platform.

Preserving the integrity of a technology based voting system, particularly one that is intended to be used with frequency and regularity, will be of critical importance. While more in the way of cybersecurity will be addressed in a later chapter, for now it's sufficient to state that in order help maintain this integrity, and the trust of the people, the criminal penalties attached to any alteration or attempted manipulation of the system must be severe. An act against our voting system should be considered an act of treason, as the democratic process is something to be revered and kept sacred at all costs.

In this vision for an evolved democracy, the Senators and Representatives will still hold a vital role, only their role will be as true representatives of the people, without the unchecked discretion and power that exists presently. Under this new structure, our elected officials will be the first ones to cast their votes, and their votes will be announced openly and publicly. After this vote by the Senators/Representatives, a vote will then be put to the people, and the decided

majority of the people's vote will control how the official vote is ultimately cast on behalf of their State/District in Congress.

Although perhaps not required, we should expect our elected officials to provide us with the reasoning for their individual votes, specifically in an effort to garner our support to vote the same way. It might be best to think of the official as the one who controls the content presented to us, but not necessarily the outcome. This opportunity to inform, to lead, and to persuade the people makes the role of our Senators and Representatives no less critical than they are today. And from a practical standpoint, we still need individual persons working together to draft legislation, as the process of writing laws isn't a task suited for the collective. But rather than continue to allow these individuals to exercise absolute discretion once elected into office, in an evolved democracy, the people will act as an ever present check on the power of the official.

The current reality is that many Americans do not vote, despite having the right to. On average, less than 60% of us vote in presidential elections. Due to this lack of participation, it's important to have a means of preventing small segments of the population from controlling votes, when most of the citizens in a given State/District are generally disinterested. To address the potential issue, a minimum voting threshold of 33.33% will need to apply to the process. Meaning, if at least 1/3 or more of the registered voters in a particular State/District participate and cast a vote on a matter, then the majority of them will control how their elected official votes on behalf of the State/District. But, if less than 1/3 of registered voters participate, then at the conclusion of the vote, the Senator/Representative will be given a choice to vote in one of two ways when casting the official vote in Congress:

- (1) vote in accordance with their original vote published in advance of the vote by the people; or
- (2) vote in accordance with the decided majority of the people's vote - despite the fact that the minimum 1/3 threshold was not met.

Leaving the official a limited amount of discretion in instances of low voter turnout allows for a distinction to be made between a vote with say 5% participation and an even split amongst those voting, compared to one with 30% participation and a heavy majority in favor of a particular outcome. Only after a vote is taken will officials know the true position of the citizens they represent, and so we shouldn't prevent them from acting upon this information under these circumstances, when it makes sense to do so.

Most studies show that people who currently don't vote, choose not to because they feel disinterested with the process of government or that their vote doesn't really matter. For others, it's a matter of inconvenience, as jobs and daily lives take precedence over civic duty, especially when the civic duty requires getting up earlier or getting home late, and standing in a line (in some places for hours) to push a pin through a piece of paper. Perhaps under a structure where

the votes of the people actually mean something, and where we can participate on our own schedule through the convenience of technology, we'll see an increase in the number of people voting, so much so that minimum voting thresholds are just an afterthought. Until such a time, however, this safeguard is a necessity to prevent small groups from distorting the true intent of the system, which is to allow the will of the collective majority to guide our path forward.

Besides enabling greater citizen participation in the process, a technology based system could also provide added benefits by helping to make the traditional electoral process of choosing our officials a more meaningful exercise. Specifically, the system could act as an official source of information concerning candidates for political office, including a professional biography outlining past work history, qualifications for office, and historical voting records (if the candidate has held office previously). In a traditional employment context, virtually all job candidates are required to provide a resume as a condition of being hired, so why wouldn't we require something similar in an even more important governmental context? Additionally, campaign financing information should be reported and displayed via the system. While much progress has been made in recent history to reform campaign financing through transparency, most American voters have no idea where this information is reported or where to find it, let alone utilize it in their electoral decision making process.

Lastly, an official voting system could afford the candidates an opportunity to provide a written statement of their choosing directly to the people. The intent of these statements would be to explain the candidate's views on particular issues, why he or she believes they are worthy of being elected, or any other information they believe to be relevant to the voting public. As is common with our existing social media platforms, the length of candidate statements should probably be limited to a pre-established character maximum, so as to provide all candidates with an equal opportunity to communicate with the people, but also to prevent the system from becoming a substitute for the campaign process itself.

Certainly, these candidate details being suggested for inclusion in the system are not new or unique, and are already generally available now. But the consolidation and simplified presentation of this information into a single official source seems well overdue. Particularly when we consider the outright disregard that many of our politicians have for the truth, and the mud-slinging that characterizes most elections, a validated source of factual information about our candidates seems to be needed more now than ever. Although making this information available and more accessible will not cure all that is wrong with our electoral process, it is a step in the right direction.

This overall idea to modernize government through technology is grounded in an assumption that all American citizens have the ability to access a digital voting system. According to 2016 data from the Pew Research Center, however, 13% of Americans do not use the internet. Unsurprisingly, this group is made up primarily of senior citizens, the poor, and the uneducated. Although this percentage is likely to continue shrinking as time goes by, we must

remain aware of this subset of our population, and ensure that we provide appropriate education and accessibility to the system for everyone. At this point, virtually every public library has a computer, and for those areas without a library, polling stations can be established in public buildings, just as they are now, only with a computer instead of a booth and a pin. Although accessibility is an issue, it is by no means an insurmountable one.

Nearly every aspect of our American way of life has changed dramatically since the late 1700s, and yet our system of government has remained virtually the same. The reality of the situation is that the system is old and antiquated, both in its structure and mechanics, and is in desperate need of an update. As our world continues to be shaped and changed by technology, it only makes sense that our government should be as well. It's time for us to re-think what's possible when it comes to this aspect of our lives.

Chapter 4

FAITH, HOPE, & LOVE

Well before any of these words were ever put to print, I did a good deal of soul searching to try and figure out whether this idea of a democratic evolution was really a good one or not. Mainly, I was worried that unintended consequences might come from transitioning true power over to the people. After all, are we ready for it? Can we really handle it, or were the founding fathers right to believe that we are better off being governed by a select few, instead of governing ourselves? Rather than try and solve these questions on my own, I went out into the world to seek the answers. Ultimately, what I found was a renewed faith in humanity that left no doubt in my mind that not only are we capable of ruling together, but this new form of government represents a hope for a better future that we all can believe in.

So what led to this conclusion exactly? Mostly it was a realization that we humans, despite each of us being entirely unique and distinct from one another, are all basically the same at our core. We are all born into this world from a woman's womb as innocent and vulnerable infants. We are completely dependent upon other people to keep us alive, and as we grow, those people and the environments that surround us will shape who we become. No matter what we eat or where we call home, we all have the same basic survival necessities of food, drink and shelter. In an emotional sense, we all need interaction with other humans, and we all yearn to love and be loved by others. We want to feel free in our thoughts and our actions, and we want to know that our existence matters. And though we'll do all that we can to prevent it, eventually someday, we will all take our last breath, and perish from this earth.

Yet despite all of our similarities, we have become conditioned in our modern societies to be distrusting of one another. We focus more on our differences, which instill fear and divide us. Children are taught to be wary of strangers, and as we grow older, this skepticism of others carries over. The preliminary distrust we have in one another isn't entirely unwarranted though, as the nightly news just about everywhere gives us accounts of people doing terrible things to other people. Personally, I do believe there are some truly evil and wicked people out there in this world (terrorists, rapists, and all those who prey on the innocent), but I also believe there are some truly good and selfless ones, too (Dr. Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, and Honest Abe to name a few). And though I don't have any actual empirical data to back it up, it seems to me that the truly evil and the truly good are the outliers, with the vast majority of the rest of us falling somewhere in between – like a prototypical bell curve.

We are mostly good, but inherently flawed individuals, who sometimes do bad things, particularly when we think that no one will find out, or if we think our actions will only affect us personally. Some of our flaws are more apparent than others, but we all have selfish tendencies that sometimes get the best of us. Interestingly though, when we know that what we are doing

involves other people, or that our actions will have an impact on someone else, most of us will feel a greater sense of responsibility, and are more inclined to do the “right” thing than if left to our own vices and devices. We empathize and adjust our behavior accordingly, because we see ourselves in others, and realize that despite our differences, we’re actually not all that different from one another after all.

Some may disagree with this particular outlook on humanity, and take a more pessimistic (or realistic, depending upon where you stand) view that we are all simply self-serving individuals, inclined to do whatever is best for ourselves and our financial position, regardless of what is best for everyone or someone else. This economic based view of human behavior, while logical and true to an extent, fails to fully take into account the fact that we are not simply a country or a society comprised of individuals. Most of us have families and friends that are an integral part of our daily lives.

In his landmark 1776 work, *The Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith famously noted that a butcher sells quality meat, not out of a sense of benevolence to the common good, but rather to advance his own economic interests. While it’s true that money is certainly one reason why, it shouldn’t be ignored that the butcher also likely fed his family with the meat from his shop, along with his friends and their families. We all form relationships with one another, either through blood or by choice, and we look out for those that matter to us most. We form communities with our neighbors and the people that live around us, and most of us are more than willing to help those who cannot, as evidenced by the more than \$390 billion that Americans gave to charity in 2016 alone. And so while it may be true that we are self-serving to a certain extent, we readily put away our selfishness when it comes to the other humans in our lives, particularly those that we love and care about, or those that cannot care for themselves. Our ability to love and interact with one another on a complex level is ultimately what makes us human, and what separates us from the rest of the animals living on our planet.

Regardless of whether you believe that most people are inherently good, or if you are less trusting and believe that we’re all inherently selfish individuals, the great part is that either perspective leads to the same conclusion. An evolved democracy, where the collective of all citizens is controlling, versus the current model which relies on elected individuals, is an improved way of governing.

Under the current structure, we basically ask our elected officials to be superheroes with super powers. Please put away your inherently human tendencies of selfishness, greed, and advancement of your own personal career, and go be a representative of the people. Oh yes, and please be smarter than the rest of us too, because we need you to figure out the decisions that are best for the most of us overall. We all know this is not the case, and to think that most of our elected officials fall into the truly good and selfless category of humanity, or are of the highest intellect, is just wishful thinking. Once elected, our officials are bombarded by special interest lobbyist groups and constant pressure to hold political party lines and raise funds. Yet, in the

face of all that, they are supposed to put away individualized motives, ignore the millions in campaign contributions, disregard party allegiances, and make decisions that reflect the best interests of the people. C'mon, you're kidding right?

Think about this hypothetical. Candidate Green campaigns tirelessly on a platform that when it comes to dealing with a particular issue they are going to vote X. Candidate Green gets elected, but when the time for the vote comes, Candidate Green doesn't vote X, and votes Y instead. The constituency, or at least those that are actually paying attention, are outraged, and cannot believe the outright lies during the campaign. Publicly, Green gives an evasive answer about some irrelevant provision of the bill that changed their mind. As it turns out, however, Candidate Green was backed by a lobbyist group representing Big and Large Corporations. You see, Big and Large Corporations had a substantial interest in Candidate Green voting Y. Because, however, all of the re-election campaign contributions and speaking engagement fees paid to Green were reported, nothing was illegal, and all was above board. So what exactly is the recourse of the people who voted for Candidate Green? Theoretically they get to vote for someone else next time, but since Green is now the incumbent, there will likely be only one other choice, and that alternative choice will be from a different political party. Either way, it is too little too late, as the horse was let out of the barn when Green voted Y.

Of course in reality it's not as simple as X and Y, but the hypothetical was simplified to illustrate the point that our current form of government is easily manipulated by special interest groups, whose sole interest is their own benefit, with no real regard for the collective whole of the people of this nation. We are not actively engaged in the process once we elect candidates to office, and we are not actively aware of who is backing them. The process is designed to give the illusion that we are in control, but in reality, it enables the status quo, and keeps the power settled where it is.

We are viewed by those who govern us, at best, as sheep, just mindless beings easily manipulated, and in need of direction as to where to go and what to do. At worst, they view us as a mob, capable of mass chaos and unspeakable violence under the wrong circumstances. While at times, these stereotypes have held true, I don't view myself in this way, and my guess is that neither do you. We are all beautifully unique souls in this world, who feel happiness and sadness, comfort and pain, freedom and oppression all the same. We are not simple animals, and so long as our basic necessities are met and our personal safety is not directly threatened, we are not inherently prone to be violent. Together, all of us, every single one of us, contribute to the public good, and together we are capable of carrying that public good forward together. Through technology, we now have the ability to govern ourselves in a more perfect manner than any one individual or system of individuals ever could. Together, we can remove personalized agendas and partisan politics from our government, and for the first time in our history, we can give ourselves an opportunity to show the real capabilities of human cooperation.

Think about it, if it were up to you to decide on a political issue, would you be selfish and consider only yourself, or would you consider your friends, family, and your fellow citizens? I know how I would vote, if given the opportunity. But under our current structure where do you and I, and our friends and families rank with respect to what is influencing our voting officials? As the lines of separation between politics and business continue to be blurred more now than ever, it has become increasingly apparent that we, the people, are likely well down on the priority lists of our elected officials. In an evolved democracy, however, we are able to ensure that we are all the first priority. Even if we are completely selfish in how we vote, and ignore what is in the best interest of others or the greater good, we still end up with a result that reflects what the majority of us believe is the best for us individually. When compared against the current system, where most outcomes are the result of who has the most money and influence, there is no real comparison as to which model is more likely to align with the prevailing views and values of the American people.

Imagine with me for just a minute, a world in which the opinion of the people is truly meaningful, and is not simply an afterthought to the advancement of the individual agendas of power hungry politicians and money hungry corporations. If we have a process and a system that we all believe is fair, puts the people first, and is not susceptible to outright manipulation, then perhaps it will be easier to accept if a vote doesn't go the way you or I want, and we find ourselves in a minority position. At least we can take comfort in the fact that the process was just and equal for everyone, and that no individual person mattered any more than someone else.

Maybe the disgustingly large sums spent on lobbying by special interest groups can become contributions to State budgets and social programs in an effort to gain favor from the voting public who will decide issues. Instead of wasting this money on campaign funds and efforts to brainwash us with as much smear advertising as possible, these funds could be put to good use, toward something that actually adds value to the quality of our lives and helps people. Maybe our nightly news can be about topics that actually matter and make a difference, instead of the steady stream of misery, with sports, weather, and a few feel-good fluff pieces mixed in that we get now. If we know that each of us counts the same, and that we all have a real role in the process, then perhaps we'll all become more engaged with the political and governmental process, and put to rest the fables about the simple nature of humanity. If the power of our officials is not left unchecked, then maybe the political profession will start to attract true leaders, who put the interests of others first, ahead of their own. Together we can show once again that it means something special to be an American, and that we are a nation made up of inherently good and just people, who have faith and trust in one another despite our differences. And so maybe, just maybe, our collective belief in a fair and equal democratic process can remove the divides that have driven us apart, and bind us back together as a single nation united.

It was not all that long ago that the American form of government was a beacon of hope for the world. We provided an example of what can be accomplished through the decentralization of power and empowerment of people. In doing so, we helped to topple many of

the monarchies that previously dominated history. We showed the true power of human cooperation, the power of belief, and the power of dreams. But somewhere along our march to the top of the world, we lost our way, and stopped trusting in one another. We were led to believe that we are not smart enough, and that other smarter (and richer) people know what is best for us. We've been convinced to trust in the process, but the process is inherently flawed. It perpetuates greed and inequality, and allows the advancement of individual agendas over the good of the collective. When combined with our physical, ideological, and theological differences, it is no wonder the process has splintered us to the point where we have lost touch of the common good that runs through us all.

Once we realize, however, that we are all in this together, and that together we have the ability to create a system that reflects who we really are, then we can take the next logical step in our political and human evolution. I don't know about you, but I am tired of being just another cog in an unfeeling machine, and a pawn in a game for the ultra-rich. We are more than just voters and tax dollars. We are more than just consumers and employees. We are not simple 'sheeple.' We are the people of these United States, complete with our thoughts and feelings, each of us with good traits and bad, flawed, yet beautiful in our own right.

If we can somehow find a way to look past our differences, trust in one another again, and keep love in our hearts, for ourselves, for each other, and for our homeland, we can break the chains of oppression that have shackled our once proud nation. We can free ourselves from those who seek to control and manipulate us. Though this democratic evolution, we can ensure that our government is continuously administered with the principle of equality upon which it was first founded. When we remove the inherently human flaws from the process, we no longer need to put our faith or hope into individuals. Rather, we can believe in something much bigger than any one of us.

To love is as human and vital to our wellbeing as eating and sleeping. When love is lacking, we do not function the way we should. As it stands today, there is no place for love in our government, but through an interjection of the people into the process, we can change that. Although it may sound somewhat cliché, in order to spell 'evolve' you must first start with 'love.'

"Meanwhile these three remain: faith, hope, and love; and the greatest of these is love."

- 1 Corinthians 13:13

Chapter 5

THE EVIL EMPIRE

In March of 1983, midway through his first term as President, Ronald Reagan famously called out the former Soviet Union as an “Evil Empire,” and cautioned that a recently proposed nuclear freeze was a “dangerous fraud,” designed to reward the Soviets for their unprecedented military buildup in the years prior. Although he openly called for peace, the Cold War had led him to believe that the only way to secure peace was through strength. From Korea to Vietnam, Reagan had witnessed America fight in two separate wars to stop the advancement of Communism and the Soviet agenda. And so for him it was simple, the Soviets were the single biggest threat to the safety and security of America, and they could not be trusted.

With the fall of the Soviet Union in the early nineties, it appeared to signal the end of a decades-long feud and the vanquishing of an enemy. But as we’re all now well aware, the 2016 Presidential election showed quite clearly that our age old nemesis, mother Russia, remains an evil empire, once again intent on perpetrating a fraud on the American people. The difference this time around, however, is that our former-celebrity turned President isn’t warning us of the dangers, but is trying to convince us to look the other way instead.

According to the de-classified joint briefing prepared by the FBI, CIA, NSA, and Department of Homeland Security in January 2017, we know without question that Russia had a clear candidate preference in the election, and that ultimately, they got their man into the oval office. Their efforts focused primarily on leaking private emails and spreading digital propaganda (fake news), a new twist on an age old tactic regularly employed by their comrades of the past. While we can only speculate at the true motives of their leader, Mr. Putin, there are signs to suggest that they may be linked to oil, gas, and energy.

Although now fired in Apprentice like fashion (most likely for calling his boss a moron), the initial choice for Secretary of State by the current Presidential administration, Rex Tillerson, and Mr. Putin shared an extensive history. Tillerson and Putin were basically business partners on a \$3 billion deal between Exxon Mobil and Russian energy giant Rosneft (75% government owned) back in 2011, and in 2013, Tillerson received the Order of Friendship, the highest award given by the Russian government to a foreign citizen. Though he denied under oath any knowledge of lobbying against Russian sanctions during his confirmation hearings, a disclosure report shows that Exxon spent \$3.44 million on lobbying efforts in 2014, which included efforts concerning the Russian Aggression Prevention Act and the Ukraine Freedom Support Act.

Yet despite this all but apparent perjury about his company’s lobbying activities, his very public history with Russia, and a lack of any political, diplomatic or military experience (the typical qualifications of the position), Tillerson was amazingly still confirmed as our nation’s top diplomat by 56 of our Senators. Though a moot point now, the absurdity of this result in the

wake of Russian election meddling is a crystal clear example of how partisan politics, rather than the interests of the American people, really control what happens in American government. I mean seriously, if you had just been briefed by the entire U.S. intelligence community less than a month earlier that Russia had openly interfered in our Presidential election, and now along comes a nominee who has an extensive business history with Russian government officials, is an unconventional choice with no traditional experience, and the job is to administer our nation's foreign policy, how do you not reject him in favor of literally anyone else without such glaring red flags? And how does this choice not raise red flags about the individual who nominated him? If ever there was a time when the confirmation process should have screened out a bad nominee, this was it. But instead, America got a former big oil executive and Putin's business partner as our Secretary of State (at least for a little while).

While much of the world is working to combat climate change, reduce carbon emissions, and embrace alternative energy sources, Russia has a drastically different perspective, given its financial dependency on oil and gas. According to Bloomberg calculations based on Russian Finance Ministry data, oil and gas represent at least 50% of the country's total revenue, and have for the past decade. Given this reliance, any major global shift away from fossil fuels would be catastrophic to the Russian economy. And as if they needed any added incentive, the continued warming of the planet has started opening the Arctic Ocean north of Russia, which once was unnavigable due to ice, is now becoming a prosperous waterway. So when we look at the overall energy policies of our current Presidential administration, including withdrawal from the Paris Accord, the continuous appointment of individuals who deny climate change, and purposeful suppression of the topic, it begs the question, who exactly are these policies designed to benefit?

The declassified joint U.S. intelligence community briefing of January 2017 identified that one major Russian motive for interfering in our Presidential election was to "undermine public trust in the democratic process." As a former KGB agent during the Cold War, it's not difficult to speculate about the disdain Putin has toward America and our allies, who he openly blames for the collapse of the Soviet Union. The U.S. is not a lone victim to election interference, as others throughout Europe have also been subjected to Russian meddling. Regardless of whether the true motives are tied to economic interests, eroding trust in the American democratic process, or both, it is readily apparent that Russia is just getting started, and their interference efforts will continue to plague our future elections. Specifically, the 2017 joint intelligence briefing labeled it as the "New Normal" and stated very definitively that:

"Moscow will apply lessons learned from its campaign aimed at the US presidential election to future influence efforts in the United States and worldwide, including against US allies and their election processes."

At the time of its publication, the bulk of this intelligence briefing focused on the propaganda and influence efforts. It did, however, give a brief mention to the ongoing Russian

efforts to research US electoral systems and related technology as early as 2014, and indicated that ahead of the 2016 election:

“Russian intelligence obtained and maintained access to elements of multiple US state or local electoral boards.”

Rather than expand on this topic or the scope of the access gained, the declassified public briefing quickly concluded, without any further explanation, that the Russian efforts had not targeted vote tallying systems.

More details eventually emerged several months later in June 2017, but only through the disclosure of a classified NSA report leaked to the press by an employee of a government subcontractor (Reality Winner). The leaked report revealed that sophisticated spear phishing attacks were launched by Russian military intelligence, targeting private U.S. companies who supply voter registration software. Once these private companies were compromised by the Russian hackers, the attacks then targeted 122 members of local state and county government organizations responsible for using the voter registration software and administering the election. Unlike the public declassified briefing, this classified report drew far less definitive conclusions concerning the extent and success of the attacks, essentially leaving the matter open-ended:

“It is unknown whether the aforementioned spear-phishing deployment successfully compromised the intended victims, and what potential data could have been accessed by the cyber actor.”

After reading this internal assessment by the NSA, compared to the public briefing, one can't help but wonder, what would happen if there were actual evidence to show that the results of an American election were falsified? Would we do it all over? Who would hold office in the meantime? What if only one State, or just a few, were hacked, would the results still count? Even more importantly, would the American people be informed, or would it be kept hidden from us to maintain stability and prevent mass unrest?

Perhaps the only thing we can be sure of in this whole Russia mess is that the integrity of our future elections is under attack, and it appears to be genuinely at risk. All indications are that we are drastically underprepared to deal with the Russian threat or the fallout if they are successful, and unless we do something soon, we risk losing trust in the system, the process, and our government altogether.

Complicating the issue is the fact that our elections are regulated exclusively by state law, meaning that as a nation, we maintain 50 separate voting systems. Though there is a limited amount of oversight at a federal level through the Election Assistance Commission, the system guidelines offered by this Commission are voluntary for the States to follow, and are hardly adequate measures to protect against sophisticated attacks from an organized and cunning enemy. The scary truth is that the security of our elections is in the hands of private companies, most of whom you or I have probably never heard of, along with our local governments and state

legislatures. From a pure funding standpoint, each of these groups lacks the monetary resources necessary to effectively combat this threat. The sovereignty of our states, which throughout our history has helped to keep an essential balance between national and local interests, is a glaring weakness in the context of cyberwarfare, ripe for exploitation by those who mean to do us harm.

Instead of protecting one single system, we are left to try and protect a patchwork of 50 systems. And so long as we remain divided in this respect, we cannot reasonably expect to protect ourselves. You see, even if some, or even most of the states are successful in their defense efforts, if others aren't, then we all still lose. If, however, we can come together, and formally commit to a national electoral platform which incorporates the latest and the best security technology, then we might stand a fighting chance to preserve the integrity of our elections and trust in the system.

Personally, I am no technology expert, but you don't need to be to have heard of blockchain. A rapidly emerging technology, blockchain is what underlies Bitcoin and other digital currencies, and is where huge money is being invested by the leading companies across virtually every industry, like Microsoft, IBM, JP Morgan, and thousands of others. With high profile data breaches becoming increasingly more common, nearly every company is looking to fortify their cybersecurity efforts. And when we look to the industries with the most sensitive data, and who need the highest levels of protection (technology, financial services, healthcare), we see they have been the quickest to adopt blockchain. The key feature to this technology is its ability to prevent manipulation through mass replication of data. Basically, blockchain records transactions across multiple computers so that the record cannot be altered retroactively without the alteration of all subsequent blocks and the collusion of the network.

Given this natural ability to preserve the integrity of digital transactions, it's not surprising to see there's already a start-up company (Follow My Vote, Inc.) seeking to incorporate blockchain into voting technology, promoting it as a "secure and transparent online voting solution for the modern age." But if the plea for donations that immediately pops up on the company's website is any indication, funding for these efforts appears to be a critical issue. And so it seems that if we're relying on the private sector and our state governments to come together and bring us a viable solution to the problem, we may be waiting for a while.

The one government wasting no time to incorporate blockchain into its elections, however, is Russia. Used locally in Moscow, and used in connection with exit polls conducted in the 2018 Russian presidential election, this technology is being actively tested by the Russian government now. I suppose it only makes sense that if you're going to make it your business to meddle in the elections of other nations, you'd better protect your own elections from counter-attacks by those looking for retribution.

Only with direct funding from our own federal government can we ever hope for a single secure national electoral system, and only with direct federal intervention can it be developed in enough time to prevent further erosion of public trust in the system. With a military defense

budget of over \$800 billion in 2018, it's clear we've placed a high priority on protecting the security of America and preserving our way of life. But despite the fact that our elections are being openly attacked by a foreign enemy, and the massive impact that these attacks are capable of having on our nation, we are not allocating billions toward defending our elections, we're not allocating anything. And ultimately, if we lose the integrity of our elections and the trust of the people in the system, the enemy will have won, and the American way of life will be forever changed.

While money and resources are the key components to building the system, once in place, ongoing monitoring and maintenance will be just as critical to ensure that the system remains a secure and reliable means of administering our democracy. When we look to the existing agencies of the federal government, the agency best suited to be the caretaker of a digital electoral system seems to be the National Security Agency (NSA). Currently tasked with handling cybersecurity for the federal government, and with an official motto of "Defending Our Nation. Securing The Future." it would seem like a natural fit. Unfortunately, as we have learned in recent years, however, this is an agency with a checkered past, and one that has proven that "Big Brother" really is watching.

Originally founded in secrecy in 1952 pursuant to a classified executive order, the NSA has grown exponentially since its inception. Not only is it the largest employer in the State of Maryland, but it's also the State's largest consumer of electricity, with its 2007 totals reported to have surpassed the entire capitol city of Annapolis. Unlike its intelligence counterpart, the CIA, which was created by Congress pursuant to public law, the NSA was created by the President pursuant to no particular law, and lacks a defined legal mandate to guide its activities.

Following the Watergate scandal, which included the misuse of federal resources to spy on political and activist groups, Congress passed the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) in 1978. FISA was aimed at bringing oversight to America's spying activities through the creation of a special court tasked with determining the lawfulness of agency actions. As outlined in a 2013 Washington Post article, however, the FISA court's oversight relies primarily on the self-reporting of violations by the NSA. Even the chief judge of the FISA court admitted that the court is "forced to rely upon the accuracy of the information that is provided," and "does not have the capacity to investigate issues of noncompliance." Given this flimsy approach to oversight, which is basically the equivalent of the honor system, coupled with a lack of defined parameters, and literally billions in resources, we really shouldn't be all that surprised to learn of the numerous transgressions of the NSA.

According to the documents famously leaked by Edward Snowden, it was divulged that not only is the NSA collecting phone, email, and internet data on all of us, but they were also spying on hundreds of millions of private foreign citizens and governmental leaders. With efforts targeting enemies and allies alike, the agency has listened in on countless diplomatic conversations, and even gone so far as to tap the cell phone of German Chancellor Angela

Merkel and spy on the Vatican ahead of the selection of Pope Francis, proving that literally no one is off-limits. It doesn't stop there though, as they are not just passively watching, but actively hacking and carrying out offensive cyberattacks, with more than 230 conducted in the year 2011 alone. Let's stop and think on that for a minute. How would we feel if we learned that a foreign government was listening in on our President's cell phone calls or hacking our computer systems? Of course we would be outraged, and rightfully so.

It has even been reported that the WannaCry ransomware attack, which swept across the globe back in May 2017, resulting in an estimated \$8 billion in losses, was caused in large part because of the NSA. Ahead of that attack, the NSA reportedly discovered vulnerabilities in the Microsoft operating system, but rather than alert Microsoft (an American company and domestic technology leader) to these security weaknesses, the NSA kept this information secret, so it could be exploited for its own use. Ultimately, the details of the Microsoft vulnerabilities were exposed, either through a leak or a hack at the NSA, and so too was the security of thousands of companies around the world.

If ever there was an agency in need of re-purposing, the NSA is the poster child. So why not give them the direction and purpose they so desperately need? Let's hold them to their motto, and instruct them to defend our nation and secure our future by protecting our electoral system, instead of hacking our social media and infringing on our civil liberties. The NSA has the expertise and the resources, and the system needs a dedicated team to keep it safe. So let's kill two birds with one stone, and make the NSA an agency that serves a vital purpose. In doing so, we can transform it into an agency that we can be proud of, instead of one that we're ashamed and afraid of.

Ultimately though, evolving our democracy is about more than just modernizing our electoral system to protect it from our enemies, or even reigning in a wayward agency with a history of transgressions. It's about healing the past, and starting over anew. Elsewhere in his famous "Evil Empire" speech, Reagan acknowledged that, "Our nation, too, has a legacy of evil with which it must deal." And he recognized, "The glory of this land has been its capacity for transcending the moral evils of our past."

In the context of the speech, Reagan was referring primarily to the ugly history of slavery and racial inequality in our country. But when we take a look back through our history, we find that our evils are not limited to these areas alone. Depending upon the specific criteria utilized, we find that America has been engaged in active military conflict for somewhere between 50-90% of its history. Even when we're not doing the fighting ourselves, we're supplying weapons and resources to help decide winners and losers.

More recently, there's a strong argument to be made that American actions in the Middle East enabled the rise of ISIS through the power vacuum left behind after the Second Gulf War. For those that remember, we were told that the war in Iraq was being waged to eliminate weapons of mass destruction, but as we know now, there were none to be found. This means

either (a) we were lied to about the true motives for the war by our own government, or (b) they screwed up royally in going to war over bad intelligence. Considering that an estimated 180,000 - 200,000 Iraqi *non-military civilians* have died since the U.S. led invasion began in 2003 (according to figures published by the Iraq Body Count Project), either possibility is appalling and wrong on so many levels. When you add in the contributions of ISIS in the region, and the mass exodus and humanitarian crisis that resulted, the sickening truth is that the actions of America in the Middle East helped set into motion a series of events with horrific consequences.

Meanwhile, our other active military campaign in Afghanistan, has been ongoing for more than 17 years, and appears to have reached a stalemate. According to recent reports, the situation has gotten worse instead of better, with body counts on the rise and the Taliban controlling nearly 40% of the country. This, despite the fact that we have poured more than \$780 billion into our efforts there. When combined with the \$800 billion spent in Iraq, it seems like such a waste considering the results. It's so sad to think about how much potential good could have been done with over \$1.5 *trillion* dollars, but instead our tax dollars were spent on weapons, death, and an almost two decade long military occupation of foreign lands. We're told these efforts are necessary to protect our freedom, but at what point are these efforts no longer justified? As heinous and reprehensible of an act as 9/11 was on our country, to put things into perspective, that attack took the lives of 2,996 Americans. The total number of persons who have died on all sides as a result of the responses in Iraq and Afghanistan is more than 500,000.

Most of us probably don't think of ourselves as a warlike people or view America as a warlike nation, but for many outside of our borders, the evidence points to the contrary. Although I personally have never served in combat, my guess is that nearly all who have, did so with the hope that peace would eventually be achieved through their efforts. The unfortunate irony, however, is that America has never enjoyed any prolonged period of peace throughout its history. And looking ahead, it seems unlikely we ever will, unless that is, we can do something to break the cycle of violence.

The Constitution provides the office of the President with the title of Commander in Chief and the ability to direct our armed forces. The power granted is not absolute, however, as the power to declare war is vested in the Congress. Since the beginning, the true lines of division between the President and Congress in this area have been somewhat murky. In total, we've used military force abroad more than 100 times in our history, but declared war in only five (5) instances: the War of 1812, the Mexican-American and Spanish-American wars, and World Wars I and II.

President-initiated military action (without direct Congressional approval) dates as far back as Washington and Jefferson, and though often debated, has generally been regarded as acceptable based on the intent of the framers. When the Constitution was drafted in the late 1700s, a declaration of war was regarded as a formality intended to solidify a nation's commitment to a conflict which had already started through a series of initial skirmishes or after

battles had already occurred. Within this context, it seems that the original text of the Constitution allows the President the ability to deploy our military forces at will, without the need for Congressional approval. It does not, however, provide any detail about when a vote by Congress is needed to declare war.

Following the “conflicts” in Korea and Vietnam, the latter of which lasted nearly 20 years, Congress sought to limit the military powers of the President when it passed the War Powers Resolution in 1973. Although initially vetoed by then President Nixon, the veto was overridden by a supermajority of Congress and the Resolution passed anyway. Since its enactment, however, this Resolution has been viewed as controversial and possibly unconstitutional. Because the division of military power between the President and Congress is a topic addressed in the Constitution, the argument is that this division of power cannot be altered by ordinary legislation, but rather it requires a formal Constitutional Amendment.

The War Powers Resolution stipulates that the President must notify Congress within 48 hours of committing armed forces to military action, and it forbids armed forces from remaining for more than 60 days without a Congressional authorization or a declaration of war. Given the somewhat shaky foundations of this law, however, in some cases past Presidents have ignored its mandates. And though it was successfully utilized to obtain Congressional authorization for the use of force in Iraq in 1991 and Afghanistan in 2001, it has failed to bring about any true clarity to the uncertainty left behind by original text of the Constitution in this area.

Regardless of how we reached this point, or what the original intent was, the fact remains that President-initiated military action has resulted in the deaths of millions of people, and has had a major impact on America and the rest of the world. In the case of Korea, it seems we are still feeling the effects of the decision of President Truman nearly 70 years later, when we consider that hatred of America that was preached in the North as a direct result of our country’s intervention into their civil war.

Whether Truman or any of our past Presidents were right or wrong, justified or not, is not the point. Rather, the point is that the use of military force has far reaching consequences that affect all of us. And so when it comes to situations of this magnitude, where lives are literally at stake, don’t we the people deserve the right to make these decisions, rather than having a single individual make them for us? And perhaps even more importantly, don’t our brave servicemen and women, who are risking their own lives, deserve to know that the cause they’re fighting for has the support of a majority of their country?

As we look back at Vietnam, not only did our government use a draft to randomly select young men to unwillingly fight and die in a distant jungle, reminiscent of a real life Hunger Games, but the cause, like Korea before it, was to intervene in another nation’s civil war. And for what exactly, to stop the spread of communism? Well guess what, the communists eventually won, despite the sacrifices of so many young men and their families. And making matters even worse, for those who were fortunate enough to live, their homecomings were

marred by the sad reality that most of their country didn't support their efforts. After risking death and undoubtedly watching friends die, it had to be gut wrenching for the returning soldiers to see Americans openly protesting their efforts, forcing them to question whether their sacrifices were really worth it.

But just as our soldiers were not wrong for dutifully following orders and doing what was asked of them, neither were the protestors who exercised their 1st Amendment rights in an effort to try and effectuate change. So if neither were in the wrong, then the only logical choice for the blame in Vietnam seems to be the system itself, which allowed an unpopular and unsupported military effort to proceed. The killing of other human beings, when not done in defense to an attack, goes well beyond simple foreign policy. For the sake of our country and for those who valiantly serve it, the worthiness of the cause should be decided by a majority of the whole of the nation, rather than a single person elected to office.

If any more convincing was needed, look no further than our current President, who I'll simply refer to as No. 45 (mostly to try and avoid any possible trademark lawsuit). In No. 45 we find a President who is historically divisive. Though he has the support of his loyal base even in the face of his childish antics and bully behavior, he stands in stark contrast to the values and views of many others throughout the country. But despite this vast disapproval by so many, it still doesn't change the fact that No. 45 is the one at the helm of our military, and that he alone has the power to affect us all for years well beyond his term in office.

Whether it's No. 45, or someone else down the line, there are inevitably going to be times when the views of the person we elect President are not aligned with prevailing views of the nation. But unlike other unpopular policy decisions which can be changed or reversed in future terms if needed, the death, destruction, and endless echo of military violence cannot be undone. And so if Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, or Afghanistan collectively aren't enough of a reason, then let the bravado of No. 45 be the wake up call to show why it's time to formally limit the military powers of the President.

Even if we don't agree with the actions of our political leaders, the reality is that those actions reflect upon us, and the people are the ones who ultimately pay for the sins of our government. History has proven that even the most powerful empires fall in the end, and if we hope to escape the same fate, we must do something to change our ways. We can no longer accept being kept in the dark by our government for the benefit of our security, and we can no longer turn a blind eye to the effects of American actions on the rest of the world.

By putting the decision making authority for military action into the hands of the people, perhaps we can begin to move past our nation's "legacy of evil," as Regan referred to it, and start to heal old wounds. Although we cannot undo the past, we can send a message to the rest of the world that things have changed, and that a new day has dawned in America. We can show that we are not a ruthless, self-serving and murderous people, but rather the vast majority of us are a kind and compassionate people, who genuinely value life, liberty, and equality for all persons.

Although there are no guarantees that the people will always make the right decisions, it's become clear the old way of doing things isn't working. Violence breeds violence, and we are seeing more of it everywhere we look, both at home and abroad. Through a shift in power to the people, however, there is hope that we can break this cycle that has plagued America throughout its history. Through the evolution of our democracy, we can embark on a new path for our nation, in the hopes of preserving a better future for us all.

Chapter 6

A BLUEPRINT FOR EQUALITY

When I first began thinking about this idea and embracing the concept that we are all equals, and should all count the same, I initially thought the Senate was a problem. I wondered whether it should still hold a place in our new form of government, seeing as how it doesn't really fit with the theme of equality. I mean why should the roughly 39 million plus people of California get the same two Senators as the residents of Wyoming with a population of less than 600,000? This is nothing against anyone from Wyoming, but from a pure mathematical perspective, those folks hold exponentially more power compared to Californians and many others across the country.

In the course of discussing these musings with a friend of mine, he astutely pointed out that what we have in the Senate is the result of the Great Compromise. After googling 'Great Compromise' and wishing I'd paid closer attention in history class, I found out that I was in pretty good company with my original opinion. Apparently, both Ben Franklin and Thomas Jefferson were initially opposed to the idea of the Senate as well, and believed that a single-house legislature, with representation based solely upon population, was a better means of governing. This shouldn't be completely surprising though, as they came from Pennsylvania and Virginia, the two biggest States at the time. Eventually, however, Franklin and Jefferson came around to support the Senate, as it was the middle ground needed to get the smaller states to join with the larger states and ratify the Constitution.

As I continued my research into the history of the Senate, I too came around to embrace its role, but only after stumbling onto the story of the Senatorial Saucer. According to legend, Jefferson and George Washington were sitting at a breakfast table discussing the merits of the Senate one morning when Washington asked, "Why did you just now pour that coffee into your saucer before drinking?" When Jefferson replied, "To cool it," Washington made his point by explaining that "We pour our legislation into the senatorial saucer to cool it."

Though I found the story amusing, the real value of the anecdote didn't hit me until I watched news coverage of the 2016 national vote held in the United Kingdom to decide whether the country should remain in, or leave the European Union. I was shocked to see how many of the U.K. citizens being interviewed were asking if they could vote again, once they found out that the measure to "Brexite" and leave the EU had passed by a slim margin. It was then I realized that, even if flawed, our Senate and a two-chamber legislature can serve a very valuable purpose in the context of an evolved democracy. It gives us the chance for a do-over if we don't like the results the first time around. Particularly in a system where the collective is in control, it seems vitally important that we have a mechanism to keep our initial reactions from being controlling. Upon further reflection, or in the face of new information, we sometimes change our

minds for the better. And through a second legislative chamber, it specifically helps to ensure that we're able to defer to our better judgment, rather than our first impressions.

Additionally, keeping the Senate intact preserves the original compromise struck between the large and the small States, and keeps the idea of a democratic evolution simple. For most of us, our natural instinct is to gravitate toward what's comfortable and safe. If an idea is too radical, it's more likely to be dismissed or invoke a sense of fear. And so it doesn't seem there's much to gain by stirring up old debates settled long ago, and proposing drastic measures like eliminating an entire chamber of the legislature. Instead, by limiting the changes to only those specific areas needed to solve legitimate problems, and leaving the rest alone, it helps to keep things familiar, and increases the likelihood that more people will be open to a new way of doing things. Ultimately, if this idea is ever going to come through to reality, it's going to take fellow citizens from all of the states, large and small.

The 2016 election marked the fifth time in U.S. history that a President was elected to office, but failed to win the popular vote, this time by more than 2.8 million votes. As expected, the outcome stirred a national debate over the merits of the Electoral College, just as it had in the past when similar results occurred. There is, after all, something very un-democratic about an election which results in a winner who receives less votes than their opponent.

Of all the arguments offered in support of this method, the only one that ever seemed to make any sort of sense to me was the one based on population disparity. The argument suggests that without the Electoral College, Presidential candidates wouldn't bother to campaign in the less populous States or rural areas, and would focus all of their attention on the large cities. In theory, this argument seems to have some merit, but as we now know it was the Senate that was devised to balance the interests between the large and the small States, not the Electoral College. When you further consider our modern day media and availability of information, the argument becomes even less compelling, as there's simply no longer a need for a candidate to be physically present in a State in order to reach its voters.

It's often stated that the concept of the Electoral College initially arose out of concerns that citizens from one state wouldn't be familiar with candidates from another state. Keep in mind the historical context, and the lack of communication amongst the population in the late 1700s. To address the issue, the framers put the selection of the President into the hands of Electors, who they presupposed would be involved with government and politics, and would have knowledge of the candidates, unlike the ordinary citizens of the time. Underlying this solution, however, is an elitist mentality that influenced much of our early government. As Alexander Hamilton blatantly put it in the Federalist Paper No. 68, "the office of President will never fall to the lot of any man who is not in an eminent degree endowed with the requisite qualifications."

It wasn't until well after the Electoral College was first created that the people were given any rights in the process, when the states, on their own accord, held popular elections to

determine which candidate would receive their electoral votes. At a federal level, the selection of electors is left entirely up to the states, and those electors, as far as the Constitution is concerned, are free to vote however they choose. In fact, many states don't even formally require their electors to vote in accordance with the outcome of the popular election. Although infrequent, there have been several instances throughout our history of so-called "faithless" electors, who have cast electoral votes for candidates other than the ones to whom they were originally pledged, and contrary to the outcome of their state's popular vote.

In 1961, the 23rd Amendment to the Constitution was ratified and provided that the District of Columbia would always receive the same number of electoral votes as the least populous state. With an estimated 2018 population just shy of 700,000, D.C. ranks just ahead of Vermont and Wyoming, the two least populous states, and only slightly behind Alaska and North Dakota, each of which were allocated three (3) electoral votes in the last election.

The rationale behind the 23rd Amendment was pretty clear, as it sought to extend the right to participate in the election of the President to a large group of American citizens who were left out of the process, simply because where they lived wasn't considered in the original plan. So would it surprise you to know that there are currently over 4,000,000 American citizens living in the American Territories who still have no right to participate? Cumulatively, the populations of fellow citizens living in American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands would rank no. 28 if measured alongside the states, just ahead of Oklahoma and just behind Oregon according to 2018 population figures. Something seems patently unjust about a system that leaves such a large group of citizens out of the process of electing our nation's highest official. After all, one of the main reasons America sought independence from England was a lack of representation in the process of government. Yet here we are in modern times, with a group citizens larger than the populations of Iowa, Kansas and Mississippi, left without any say in the one national election we have. If it was important enough to enact a Constitutional Amendment for 700,000, why wouldn't over 4,000,000 be given similar consideration?

Of all the reasons which justify a change to the manner in which we elect our President, however, perhaps the most compelling is that the real origins of the Electoral College are rooted in slavery, and the north versus south divide that permeated the early years of our nation. Supported principally by the southern States, the Electoral College allowed slaves to be counted as 3/5 of a person for the purpose of allocating electoral votes. The direct skew of slavery on the system is best evidenced by comparing the two largest states at the time, Pennsylvania and Virginia. Following the first Census, those two states had nearly identical populations of free persons, yet Pennsylvania received 15 electoral votes and Virginia 21. This also helps to explain why 8 out of the first 9 terms of the office of the President were served by individuals hailing from Virginia, the most populous slave state at the time. If the Senate was the compromise between the large and the small states, the Electoral College was the equivalent between the slave-holding south and the opposing north.

So why exactly then are we preserving a process that yields undemocratic results, lacks any formal rights for the people, excludes millions of citizens, and was conceived out of the most vile and disgusting part of our history? When it comes to the process of electing our nation's top official, the person who represents America to the world, and who sets policy for the entire country, we deserve better. We deserve a true democratic election that is fair, just, and aligned with our current values, instead of a deeply flawed system that's a byproduct of a bygone era filled with bigotry and hatred. Every other election in America, at all levels of government, determines the winner through a democratic popular election, and so it only makes sense that our most important election would be conducted the same way, particularly when there's no good reason to do so anymore.

The overall concept of involving people directly in the process of government is generally referred to as pure or direct democracy. It's not an entirely new concept to the American political system, as many state and local governments currently utilize referendums, propositions, and initiatives to allow the general voting public to determine certain matters. These types of measures, however, are often used inconsistently and infrequently across state and local levels, and have no role whatsoever within our federal system.

From a historical perspective, the most prominent example of a direct democracy in action was ancient Athens, where all adult male citizens were allowed to vote on all major issues of government at an open air assembly, with results determined by a show of hands. The Athenians were also known to take great care to ensure the judges and jurors for their court system were selected at random from the eligible population, primarily in an effort to avoid corruption and abuse of power. But even such a progressive system, with an emphasis on equality and impartiality, was not without its flaws. As critics like Aristophanes and Plato pointed out, the people often lacked enough information to make well informed decisions, and the agenda and outcome of the assemblies were heavily influenced by the elite. These shortcomings of Athenian democracy in some instances led to inexplicably bad results, like the executions of six generals who actually won the battle of Arginousai, and the death sentence handed down to the famous philosopher, Socrates.

The notoriety of the failures in Athens cast a shadow on direct democracy that persisted well beyond the time of the Greeks. Centuries later, the Federalist Papers cited to the Athenian example in support of the idea that a republic, rather than a pure democracy, was a superior form of government, and better suited for the American union. Hamilton and Madison argued in these Papers that pure democracies lead to the oppression of minority groups by overbearing majority factions, but that in a republic, "enlightened statesmen" would prevent such outcomes. Ironically, as we know now, our republican form of government hasn't protected against the oppression of minority groups, but instead it condoned it for much of our history.

This notion that putting the people in charge leads to bad outcomes is an outdated concept that stemmed from the practical imperfections of an ancient system. But we no longer

live in ancient times. We are not forced to decide matters on the spot by a show of hands, and we are not an uninformed group of citizens. Rather, we are living in the dawn of a new digital age of information, and we are a nation of educated people, fully capable of understanding things when someone takes the time to explain them to us.

A more contemporary example, and really the only example of a modern direct democracy is Switzerland. The Swiss system makes extensive use of referendums across all levels of government, and even incorporates formalized opinion polls of its citizens ahead of prospective legislation to ensure it has adequate support. In fact, all laws passed by the national legislature are subject to a potential repeal by a majority vote of the people via a referendum, provided at least 50,000 or more citizens petition for the referendum within three months of the law being passed. There's even a requirement placed on the Swiss federal government that it must recognize and hold a referendum concerning any proposed change to the national constitution which is supported by a petition of least 100,000 citizens. It's quite a stark contrast to the American federal system, to say the least.

The Swiss system, developed primarily throughout the 19th century, has proven that a direct democracy can be both sustainable and successful. There has been no oppression of segments of the population, or downfall of the system because the people were given a legitimate role, but rather it's been quite the opposite, as the country has enjoyed stability and peace. The Swiss, of course, have famously maintained a state of neutrality since 1815, despite two World Wars ravaging the continent around them. Though geography and other factors contributed to their ability to remain neutral through those wars, it's no stretch to conclude that a government controlled by its people is less likely to put its fellow citizens in harm's way.

The revised form of government being proposed in this book seeks to blend the traditional elements of our representative republic with the core concepts of direct democracy, and through the combination, minimize the flaws of each. Our federal government was built upon a foundation of checks and balances in order to prevent any one branch from becoming too powerful. This idea of an evolved democracy is a direct extension of that tradition, but with the people acting as a check on the power of the government itself, so as to prevent individual officials from becoming too powerful. By making these changes, the hope is that we're able to achieve a more appropriate balance of power in our nation.

The Preamble to the Constitution provides that the purpose of the federal government is to “establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common [defense], promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty. . .” From there, it goes on to enumerate the various powers granted to the branches of government in order to effectuate this purpose. Specifically, the first clause of Article I, Section 8 gives Congress the power “To regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several States . . .”

Generally referred to as the Commerce Clause, this singular provision has acted as the basis for thousands of laws across a wide range of topics. Drug regulations, civil rights, labor

relations, and even more recently health care, all have come under the umbrella of Congress regulating commerce amongst the states. Though some may view the Congressional power to tax or provide for the national defense to be more important in the grand scheme of things, the Commerce Clause is the one most frequently invoked to pass legislation, seeing as how nearly every matter can usually be connected back to national commerce in some way.

Commerce in America means capitalism, and although there is no direct mention of it in the original text of the Constitution, our economic system is a huge part of our identity. For most people outside of our country, America and capitalism go hand in hand, and as Americans, we take great pride in our brand of economics. After all, there's something to be said for making your own way in life, with effort and talent, instead of having things predetermined and controlled by the government. Thus far, history has proven that capitalism and free market economies are superior to rival systems like communism. In China, however, where communism continues to be the prevailing form of government for over a billion people and a growing economy, they are challenging this traditional notion. The primary problems with communist forms of government like China, however, are that they tend to breed corruption and suppress individual liberties and freedoms. Despite its economic success, China may be the most poignant example of modern day governmental oppression, through its control of information and its citizens. But despite the superiority free market economies and democratic systems have in these respects, they're not immune to corruption either, and capitalism is generally regarded as a cold and unfeeling system, which rewards greed and selfishness.

In a capitalist economy, the entire premise is that we are not created equal. There are winners and losers in business, and the name of the game is to succeed over your competitors and earn profits. All of it, every bit of it, comes down to making money. There's rarely any love, compassion, or sympathy for others in capitalism, nor should there be, as these concepts run opposite to what capitalism is all about. That is, however, exactly why we need to solidify and reinforce the concept of equality into our form of government. If we ever hope to strike a healthy balance between the commercial and societal interests in our nation, we need to start treating government and business differently, not the same.

The flaws and failures of communism have shown that a group-centric system, with equitable intentions, is ultimately impractical and unworkable from an economic standpoint, as it's simply not possible to spread wealth equally amongst billions of people. But just as communism's attempt to impart equality into economics is what ultimately dooms the system, the invasion of commercial interests and inequality into American government is primarily what plagues ours.

The purpose of government isn't to enable commerce to the detriment of the people, but rather it is supposed to be there to protect our welfare by establishing the baseline rules upon which commerce is conducted. For too long now, these roles have been reversed, with commercial interests guiding our government and influencing our laws, instead of the other way

around. But through an evolution of our democracy, we can begin to swing the pendulum back to the middle, where the interests of citizens are given equal consideration to the interests of corporations and politicians.

A major part of integrating equality into government is making sure that we all count the exact same. The fact that we vote someone into office shouldn't suddenly make that individual more important than the rest of us. Rather, it should only mean that the office itself is important enough to warrant an election to determine who will fill it. At the end of the day, the elected official is still just one person. And when it comes to government, no individual person should be any greater than the rest, regardless of position, power, money, or influence. One person, one vote, no more, no less. There's ample room for inequality based on wealth and status in the economic world of capitalism, but when it comes to establishing justice, and providing for the liberty and the welfare of the people, the true purpose of our government, we need to ensure that the core concept of equality permeates throughout the entire system.

To that end, once we've taken the measures necessary to place the outcomes Congressional votes into the hands of the people, we can't simply let those votes be undone by a Presidential veto. After all, a system predicated on equality can't allow one single person, in a nation of more than 300 million, the ability to override what a majority have already decided. Instead, the President will be given the opportunity to call for a national re-vote in the event he or she disagrees with the results reached by the people and Congress. Like the new process with Representatives and Senators, the President will be the first to vote, and will be expected to explain to the nation why he/she believes the legislation is not in the best interests of the country and why a veto is necessary.

Unlike the current process, however, where a two-thirds supermajority of Congress is needed in order to override the President, in an equality-based system, the President's vote will count as one, and a simple majority of the popular vote cast nationwide will decide whether the bill becomes a law or is vetoed and returned to Congress. This revised approach, though a clear departure from the past, preserves the original intent of the veto power, which was to allow the President an opportunity to interject an opinion concerning legislation, but to prevent that opinion from being controlling in the face of adequate support to the contrary. Specifically, by changing to a simple majority, from the current 2/3 supermajority, it reinforces the concept that no individual is greater than another, including the President.

Beyond controlling Congressional votes and Presidential vetoes, the other process of government where involvement of the people is needed in order to achieve true equality is the confirmation of Justices to the Supreme Court. Like other Presidential nominees, the nine Justices comprising the Court require confirmation by a majority of the Senate. But unlike other executive appointees, once confirmed, these Justices sit on the bench for life, typically serving well beyond the terms of the President and the Senators who put them in power.

Ultimately, these nine individuals wield great authority in our country, deciding what is and what isn't constitutional, and functioning as the primary check on the powers of Congress, the President, and the States. In many respects, the Court acts as the last line of defense for the American people, stepping in when our Constitutional rights are infringed upon by our governmental institutions or elected officials.

The lifetime terms granted to Supreme Court Justices were meant to insulate them from the political process, and help ensure that decisions could be made impartially, free from the pressure of the President and Congress. When being sworn in, each Justice recites an oath to “do equal right to the poor and to the rich . . . and impartially discharge and perform all the duties incumbent upon [them].” But despite the very clear mandates of neutrality and impartiality attached to the role, the process of appointing Justices to the Court has proven to be one of the most highly politicized in the federal system.

One of the more famous examples of politics impacting the Court took place in February 1937. While leading a country ravaged by the Great Depression, then President Franklin Roosevelt (FDR) announced plans to introduce legislation to add to the number of Justices making up the Court from nine (9) to fifteen (15). FDR's proposal was widely viewed as a blatant attempt to pack the Court with Justices favorable to his New Deal legislation, which up to that point, had been struck down by a sitting conservative majority. Though these efforts to increase the size of the Court eventually failed, the open announcement of his intentions seemingly had a major impact.

Justice Owen Roberts, previously a conservative, changed allegiances following FDR's announcement, and began to decide cases in line with his liberal counterparts instead. As a result, key New Deal initiatives, including the national minimum wage, the National Labor Relations Act, and the Social Security Act were declared Constitutional by the Court, and remain in place to this day. Justice Roberts' change of heart is often referred to as the “switch in time which saved nine,” since it caused Congress to lose interest in increasing the number of Justices, once the New Deal legislation was allowed to stand. Although the size of the Court remained unchanged, the story evidences both the influence politics, as well as the impact that a single Justice can have on our entire nation.

An even more recent example of the influence of politics on the Court has been on display since March 2016, when a Republican majority in the Senate refused to hold confirmation hearings for then President Obama's nomination of Merrick Garland. Specifically, Garland was slated to fill the vacancy left behind by the death of the notoriously conservative Justice Antonin Scalia. Even though there were still more than nine months left in Obama's term at the time, the nomination was ignored, and the seat left vacant for an unprecedented length of time, all in the hopes that the next presidential election would yield a Republican victor. The Republican majority's refusal to consider Garland had nothing to do with his judicial

qualifications or ability to decide cases impartially, but rather their only issue was that he was nominated by a President of the opposite political party.

This defiance was eventually rewarded when the 2016 election produced a Republican President, and a new nominee, Justice Neil Gorsuch, was eventually put to the Senate for confirmation. Although still holding a majority by the time Gorsuch was nominated, the Republicans lacked the 60 seats needed to get a confirmation vote to the floor according to Senate rules. This allowed the Democratic minority the ability to prevent a vote through the use of a filibuster, effectively stalling out the process. Not willing to accept defeat, however, the Republican Senators took what many referred to as the “nuclear option,” and voted to change the longstanding Senate rules and remove the filibuster, which had been in place for more than 200 years. With history shoved aside and the rules conveniently changed, the vote made it through to the Senate floor, and the Republican agenda finally came to pass when Justice Gorsuch was confirmed in April 2017 by a final tally of 54 to 45.

Fast forward a year and half, and the “nuclear option” would once again pay dividends for the Republican Party when Justice Bret Kavanaugh was nominated to replace the retiring Justice Kennedy, who had traditionally been a swing vote on the Court. Despite seemingly credible accusations of sexual misconduct, openly partisan and argumentative Senate testimony, and even a call from the National Council of Churches and civil rights groups to step aside, Justice Kavanaugh still managed to be confirmed by a vote of 50 to 48, showing that the #MeToo movement apparently hasn’t reached the U.S. government.

As I watched the Kavanaugh confirmation saga unfold with the rest of the country, I couldn’t help but wonder if the outcome would have been different had the American people been allowed to decide the matter. Currently, just over 50% of the U.S. population is female, yet despite being the most gender diverse class in history, women still only hold 21 of the 100 seats in the Senate. Unsurprisingly, however, gender played little part in the actual confirmation vote, as all but one Senator voted according to political party lines.

These recent events and the overall history of our nation’s highest Court show quite clearly that politics have played a monumental role, despite the fact that Justices are supposed to be neutral and impartial. So how do we remove partisan politics from the equation? We let the people decide who will serve in this critically important role. It only makes sense that the people should have a say in who is looking out for our rights and liberties, particularly when the protection being sought is from the other parts of government. By letting the President pick, and the Senate confirm, it creates separation in the process, but it doesn’t do enough. It’s like saying the fox and wolf will work together and split duties over who’s watching the hen house.

To ensure the process works fairly, confirmation votes must be mandatory for all nominees, so as to prevent inappropriate stall tactics. One of the principal purposes of giving justices lifetime terms is to create a degree of randomness in the appointment process. Once a vacancy arises on the Court through death or retirement, and the President has submitted a

nomination to the Senate, it should automatically trigger the need for hearings, followed by a confirmation vote. Like the new legislative process, the Senators will vote first, openly and publicly, and explain their reasoning. It will then be up to the people to vote, and provided a minimum of 1/3 of a State's registered voters participate, then the majority will control how both of their Senators vote on behalf of the State in Congress.

This proposed new process for confirmation of Justices isn't completely perfect from an equality standpoint, however, seeing as how it will continue to be the Senate, rather than population-based House of Representatives, in charge of confirmations. But again, in the interest of preserving familiarity, we'll keep the changes limited to only what's needed to solve the problem, and not re-open the large versus small state issue. In doing so, we'll still take a big step toward removing the influence of party politics, and returning impartiality into the institution which has "Equal Justice Under Law" inscribed on the face of its building.

It might be best to think of this overall idea for a democratic evolution like a remodel or a renovation project, as opposed to a tear down and rebuild. We're creating something new, but utilizing the existing structure. And like any major renovation project, we're going to need a plan and a blueprint to be our guide. Blueprints and plans are critical to coordinating efforts and keeping everyone involved on task, so that a common goal can be achieved, and the integrity of the structure is preserved. For our purposes, the blueprint for equality consists of three new Constitutional Amendments:

AMENDMENT XXVIII

SECTION 1: The election of all members of Congress and of the President and Vice President shall be conducted via a digital federal voting system operated and maintained by the Government in conjunction with the several States. Congress shall provide the funding necessary for the development, operation, and maintenance of the system as a component of the national defense budget, and shall have the power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

SECTION 2: The operation and security of the federal voting system created by this article shall be the responsibility of the National Security Agency ("NSA"). The President may appoint a successor or supplemental agency to replace or assist the NSA in this capacity, provided such appointment is confirmed by a majority of both houses of Congress.

SECTION 3: The registration of citizens to the federal voting system and the administration of system credentials shall belong to the several States, Territories and the District of Columbia, pursuant to procedures established by the NSA or other federal agency designated as responsible for the operation and security of the system. Each State, together with the District of Columbia shall appoint an official auditor, whose

responsibility it shall be, together with the other auditors (collectively the “Audit Board”), to review and certify election results conducted via the federal voting system. In the event the Audit Board concludes that election results were altered or compromised by an illegal actor or actors, or that a systemic issue adversely impacted the reliability of election results, a simple majority of the Audit Board shall decide whether or not to void the election results and re-conduct the election in whole or in part.

SECTION 4: Any intentional alteration or attempted alteration of the records of the federal voting system established by this article shall be considered an act of Treason against the United States. A conviction under this article shall not require the Testimony of two Witnesses, provided credible digital evidence exists, which can be corroborated by two independent expert Witnesses, only one of which may be an employee of the Government.

SECTION 5: All future voting matters designated as belonging to the citizens of the United States, whether through Congressional legislation or Amendment hereto, shall be conducted via the federal voting system established by this article and shall be subject to the oversight and regulation of the Audit Board, as set forth in Section 3 above.

AMENDMENT XXIX

SECTION 1: Prior to any official vote in either House of Congress to: (i) enact a Bill into Law; (ii) declare war or authorize use of military force in a foreign nation; or (iii) confirm any Presidential nominee to the Supreme Court, all such matters shall first be subject to a vote amongst the citizens of the various Districts and States, as the case may be.

SECTION 2: All votes required by this article shall be held on no less than 24 hours’ notice to the public, and voting periods shall be uniform across the States and Districts. The specific timing and duration of citizen voting periods shall be determined by Congress, conforming to the minimum requirements established by this section.

SECTION 3: All Senators and Representatives shall participate with their constituency in the votes required by this article. The individual votes of the Senators and Representatives shall be published in the federal voting system in advance of the vote by the citizens. If any Senator or Representative does not publish a vote in advance of the vote by their constituency, due to incapacity, abstention or otherwise, a vote shall be cast in Congress on behalf of said official’s State/District which conforms to the decided majority of the citizen vote, and Sections 4 and 5 below shall not apply.

SECTION 4: Provided at least one-third (1/3) or more of the total registered voting citizens of a District or State, as the case may be, participate in a vote required by this

article, then the corresponding Senator or Representative for such District/State shall cast an official vote in Congress which conforms to the decided majority of the citizen vote.

SECTION 5: In the event less than one-third (1/3) of the total registered voting citizens of a District or State participate in a vote required by this article, then the corresponding Senator or Representative for such District/State shall have the option to cast an official vote in Congress which: (i) conforms to the decided majority of the citizen vote, or (ii) conforms to the initial vote published by the Senator/Representative in accordance with Section 3 of this article.

AMENDMENT XXX

SECTION 1: The President and Vice President shall be elected jointly by the direct vote of the citizens of the United States, without regard to whether the citizens are residents of a State or the District of Columbia. The persons having the greatest number of votes for President and Vice President shall be elected. The provisions of this section shall supersede all conflicting provisions concerning the election of the President and Vice President appearing in Article II and Amendments XII and XXIII of this Constitution.

SECTION 2: The War Powers Resolution, Public Law 93-148, codified in the United States Code, Title 50, Chapter 33, Sections 1541-48 is hereby adopted and made part of this Constitution.

SECTION 3: Every Bill which shall have passed the House of Representatives and the Senate, shall, before it becomes a Law, be presented to the President of the United States. If the President approves, he or she shall sign it, but if not, the President may initiate a vote amongst the citizens of the United States to veto the Bill. The President shall participate in all such votes, and a simple majority of the participating citizens, inclusive of the President, shall determine whether the Bill becomes a Law or is vetoed and returned to the House of Congress from which it originated.

All votes initiated by the President pursuant to this article shall be held on no less than 24 hours' notice to the public, and the specific duration of the voting period shall be determined by the President. Provided, however, if any Bill is not vetoed and returned to Congress within ten Days of presentation to the President (Sundays excepted), the Same shall become a Law, in a like Manner as if the President had signed it.

The provisions of this section shall supersede those previously set forth in Article I, Section 7, Paragraph 2 of this Constitution.

SECTION 4: Upon receipt of a nomination from the President to fill a Vacancy on the Supreme Court, the Senate shall be obligated to commence confirmation hearings on such nominee within thirty (30) days thereof, and shall be obligated to conclude such

hearings and the corresponding vote by the citizens the United States, as required under Amendment XXIX of this Constitution, within sixty (60) days thereof.

Ultimately, these three Amendments provide the blueprint needed to achieve a true and lasting equality amongst us all, and to evolve our democracy into an improved version of itself. It should be noted, however, that there is an intended order in which these Amendments ought to be enacted. Specifically, Amendments 29 and 30 are meant to be enacted as a pair, but only after the digital federal voting system created by Amendment 28 is established and in place. Without the digital voting system created by no. 28, the expanded citizen voting announced in nos. 29 and 30 would simply be too impractical to administer. First we need the technology, and then we can put it to use. And so we must exercise patience, and keep the end goal in mind, since it won't happen all at once. Specifically, this segmented approach is what makes having a blueprint to work from so critical, as it's necessary to ensure that the finished product turns out as we intended while we work through the various stages of progress.

In order to enact Amendments, the Constitution provides for a two-step process which includes: (1) proposal, and (2) ratification. First, an Amendment can be proposed by either (a) 2/3 of both Houses of Congress, or (b) via a national convention called for by 2/3 of the State legislatures. Thus far throughout our history, we've never used option (b), as all of our Amendments have been proposed directly by Congress. Like they say, however, there's a first time for everything.

These days, getting 2/3 of Congress to agree on what to order for lunch would be a miracle unto itself, and so asking 2/3 of them to agree to Amendments which would directly limit their own powers seems like an unlikely, if not impossible task. If this is going to happen, it will most likely need to be a movement rising up out of the states. Eventually state support is needed anyways, as the second step of ratification requires approval by either (a) 3/4 of State legislatures, or (b) 3/4 of ratifying conventions held in the states.

Given these requirements, it's clear that we're all going to have to come together in order to actually make this happen. If we unite behind this plan, we can manifest a new destiny for our nation, and we can do more than just survive, we can thrive. We can revolutionize the way our government is run, and we can establish a new hierarchy, where people are no longer governed, but instead we govern ourselves.

Before we finish this blueprint, however, there is one final matter to attend to. In all governments and countries around the world, symbolism is of great importance. Flags bear unwritten messages through their visual symbols, and so too do the buildings and traditions of governments. Since its conception, the primary symbol used in connection with the American form of government has been a tree with three branches, representing the legislative, executive, and judicial components. Underlying the symbolism of the tree is a doctrine that separates

power amongst the branches, to ensure that no single branch can become too powerful. It was the French philosopher Montesquieu who originally came up with this concept in his 18th century work “Spirit of the Laws,” and inspired the framers of the Constitution to adopt it for America. But in this symbol of a tree, with its outstretched branches sprawling toward the sky, where exactly are the people?

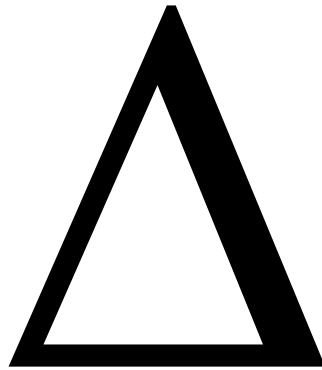
It seems most likely that we’re the trunk and the roots, stuck toiling in darkness while the branches tower and flourish above. Sure, some of us may be lucky enough to get a glimpse of light here and there at the right time of day, but most are buried deep underground, never aware of what’s actually happening above. The thing about trees and branches though, is that they can become overgrown if left alone. In fact, sometimes they can even threaten our progress and wellbeing, like when they start growing too close to power lines or our homes. And when that happens, you can either cut down the tree, or cut off the branches. From a symbolism standpoint, a tree without branches doesn’t say very much, and so in the tradition of our very first President, I say let’s chop down the tree and adopt a new symbol altogether. We’re going to need something that better represents our new form of government. Something that puts the people first, now and always.

Looking elsewhere in the symbology of American government, we find numerous examples of Greek influence. Being the birthplace of democracy, ancient Greece provided inspiration to nearly all of our prominent government buildings, including the Supreme Court, the Capitol, and the White House, each of which incorporate column architecture, reminiscent of the Parthenon and Greek building style. At the center of these most important buildings in our nation’s capital sits the Washington Monument, an obelisk. Although obelisks were Egyptian creations, the English word for these structures originates from the ancient Greek ‘obeliskos’ and the classical writings of Herodotus, who first described them to the western world. Originally used by the Egyptians to symbolize the creation of the world and stability, the obelisk at the center of our capital memorializes our first President, the revolution he led, and the creation of our nation. At the apex of this iconic Monument, are four isosceles triangles, which define its unmistakable shape. In the Greek alphabet, the isosceles triangle is the symbol used to represent the letter delta, and in mathematics, delta represents the difference or change between two numbers.

Like the tree before it, the Greek letter delta is also a familiar symbol, it’s three-part in nature, and it has the ability to convey a message without words. Delta signifies change, and so it seems like a natural fit to forever memorialize the changes we’ll make through this modernization and reformation of our government. But unlike the tree which had three equal branches, this new symbol reflects a clear hierarchy amongst the component parts of government. The legislature, due to its control by the people, is placed in a superior position relative to the others. Instead of staring up at the branches towering above, in an evolved democracy, the people sit atop government, and are supported by a foundation of the executive and judicial functions. Just as the Great Compromise once achieved equality amongst the states

through the establishment of an institution designed to be unequal, this new form of government allows us to achieve equality amongst all American citizens through its purposeful inequality.

Legislature



Executive

Judiciary

Chapter 7 LET'S BE HEROES

Once upon a time, there was a brave and courageous people who fought for freedom and liberty against all odds. Their enemy was one of the mightiest empires the world had ever seen, run by a ruthless king, with vastly superior military and naval forces. But these people had heart, they had determination, and they had each other's backs. They truly believed in their cause, and were willing to risk everything, because they knew that living under oppression, isn't really living at all.

To help raise the army and support needed to win their war for freedom, a Declaration was drafted to announce their Independence from the king. With promises of equality and a new form of self-government, the Declaration inspired those who read it to join in the revolution. It united the people in a common cause, offering hope for a better future. Ultimately, it was this unity that allowed a group of outnumbered and overmatched rebels to pull off the impossible, and triumph over the mighty king and his empire.

By winning their freedom and establishing a new form of government, the people changed not only their own lives, but the lives of future generations, and millions around the world who would be inspired to act and duplicate their story. These revolutionaries were true heroes who changed the course of history. Although it would later be the politicians and generals who were most remembered, it was the courage, sacrifice, and conviction of ordinary people who came together for a common goal that forged a nation.

As the years passed, the sacrifices of these first patriots were forgotten, and the promises of equality gave way to the personal interests of connected politicians and wealthy businesses. Laws were enacted not because they were in the best interests of the people, but because they benefitted certain individuals and agendas. The people were kept blind to the back room dealings, and became conditioned to believe that their government was the best there was to be had. Most never questioned the merits of the system, and accepted the influence of money as an ordinary part of the process.

Eventually one day when a wealthy businessman with questionable ethics, an immeasurable ego, and no prior political experience was elected President, things seemingly went from bad to worse. For his supporters, this President was a shot across the bow to the established political hierarchy, and a clear attempt to shake things up. Though many could relate with a desire for change in government, for them, this President was the opposite of what they believed in, and the absolute wrong kind of change. Thanks to his abrasive nature and divisive views, this controversial President stoked the political and racial tensions running through America. It appeared the nation was regressing, and taking steps backwards from the progress made throughout its history. But as the old saying goes, it's always darkest before the dawn.

You see, love him or hate him, one thing was clear, this President was polarizing, and the federal government was getting attention unlike ever before. With a steady stream of new controversies, staff firings, Twitter outbursts, and 24/7 news coverage reporting on every detail, even those without any interest government, or who stopped paying attention long ago, couldn't help but take notice of what was going on.

Once the spotlight was turned on, however, the people soon began to realize just how dysfunctional things had become. It was more than just the President, the whole system was failing them. Partisan politics and special interests had warped their government to the point where the people were an afterthought. But keep in mind these were not just any people, and this was not just any country. This was America, a nation founded upon rebellion and protest. And so millions took to the streets, marching to call attention to injustices and hypocrisy. They marched against police brutality, racism, and sexism. Even the nation's youth marched for gun control when they saw firsthand the influence a powerful lobbyist group can have on the laws of the land.

There seemed to be a growing sense among the collective of the people that unity was the key to solving their problems, but they lacked a common cause to bind them together. Their efforts, like their opinions and their politicians, were often divided, preventing any meaningful change from taking place. Until one day, along came an idea aimed at helping to fix the flaws in the system, instead of any one particular issue. This idea sought to transfer real power to the people and create a form of government predicated on fairness and equality, instead of wealth and influence. Ultimately, this was an idea to allow the people to govern themselves, instead of being governed by a select few.

At the heart of the idea was technology, and technology would prove critical to its advancement. Thanks to the internet, unlike ever before in history, the people had a medium to communicate and mobilize independent of any government or formal media outlet. Through this idea, people started talking to one another again, and more importantly, they started trusting and believing in each other once again. Strangers became new friends, united by a shared goal. And as the number of people who embraced the idea continued to grow, for the first time in a long time, there was once again a genuine hope that a better tomorrow was possible.

With the nation desperate for change, and fully tuned into the issues of government, the idea began to spread like a wildfire. Had it come along at any other point in time, it most likely wouldn't have gotten enough attention, or been considered impractical, but the setting was just right for one small spark to ignite a roaring blaze.

Eventually the idea turned into a true movement of the people. Theirs was a movement grounded in love and inclusion, not hate and division. Rising up together as one, the people took back their country, and made good on the promises of equality first announced in 1776. By choosing to rely on one another and stand together, they evolved not only their democracy, but in the process, they evolved themselves. Like their revolutionary counterparts who fought for

freedom before them, those who joined in the movement became heroes, helping to change the lives of millions, and eventually the course of history.

So you might be wondering at this point, did they live happily ever after? Well, that part is actually up to you. I obviously took some creative liberty when writing the ending to the story above (call it wishful thinking on my part), but the real ending is yours to write. I may have taken the first step in outlining the vision, but it's up to you to carry it forward into reality. Without you, these are just words on a page with no real meaning. But with you, this can be the start of something monumental. Whether you realize it or not, you and I have the ability to create lasting and meaningful change in our world, but we can't do it alone. We're going to need to raise an army to succeed in this revolution, and so recruitment is priority number one.

Unlike revolutions and armies of the past, our ranks aren't limited to young men willing to risk their own lives and to take the lives of others. Rather, our army is open to men and women alike, and persons of all ages, young and old. All races, all religions, all are welcome. And you certainly don't need to risk your life or take anyone else's, because this army isn't about killing. Enough have died already preserving our freedom. Instead, our revolution is about establishing an era of peace and prosperity, and making good on the sacrifices of those who gave their lives for our country.

Though we may not bear arms like our military brethren before us, we must emulate their warrior spirit and determination if we're going to be victorious. In this revolution, there is no foreign enemy to defeat, but rather our true enemies will be apathy and distraction. More now than ever, we're being conditioned to move on to the story of the day. Forget about what happened yesterday, look what's going on right now. In a world with so much information and so many diversions at our fingertips, it's really easy to lose focus. And so our challenge will be not only to get people to pay attention, but to hold that attention long enough to see these changes through to completion. Particularly with a project of this magnitude, long term focus is crucial, and so we must resolve to never give up, no matter what, not until the end goal is reached. Little by little, day by day, we must fight to gain ground, to spread the word, and advance our position. If we refuse to accept defeat, then eventually we will achieve success.

For any army to prevail, it must provide its soldiers with basic training, and prepare them for their opposition. Our opposition is most likely to come from those already in power, who would rather keep things the way they are, or from people who are simply afraid of change. In order to win over the hearts and minds of our fellow citizens in a war of information, and to convince those who may be apprehensive, it's not going to be enough to point out the benefits of a reformed system. We must also actively dispel the concerns of the naysayers. To this end, there are four main areas which seem most likely to be raised in opposition of the idea:

1. Cybersecurity threats to a digital voting system.

There will be concerns that a digital voting system can't be kept safe. But the one thing we learned from 2016 is that our elections aren't secure now. As a nation, we maintain a decentralized patchwork of voting systems, which are vulnerable and underfunded and from a security standpoint. Even with the use of paper ballots, voter registrations, vote tallying, and vote reporting all still utilize technology in some capacity, which means they're subject to possible attack and corruption. Unless we take the process off the grid completely, which seems counterproductive and impractical in today's day and age, there will invariably be cybersecurity concerns surrounding our elections.

While there has been a heightened awareness placed around election cybersecurity and increased cooperation between federal and state agencies since 2016, if we expect to adequately protect the most fundamental of processes in our democracy, we must take a unified approach, and put national resources and investment into the tools needed to develop a sustainable defense. In particular, blockchain technology has the potential to solve our election security issues. Although this technology is still in its infancy, it can be a bonafide game changer thanks to its incorruptibility. As evidenced by the billions being invested by the private sector and even foreign governments, blockchain isn't just another tech fad, it's rapidly becoming the foundation for security in a digital age.

Nearly every person who works in cybersecurity will tell you just how critically important it is to have an incident response plan in place to be able to react to cyberattacks. Having pre-defined procedures helps to ensure there is no panic if and when something happens. Like anything else, preparedness is key. Under our current structure, however, we have no established procedures or plan in place to deal with the fallout if our elections were ever successfully hacked. We have 50 states, each with their own sets of rules. But with a singular system, and a set of rules administered jointly together between the federal government and the states, it allows us to get organized, and get on the same page. It means there doesn't need to be panic and pandemonium if the worst case scenario happens, because we'll be ready and prepared for it, just in case.

2. Lack of efficiency in a system that requires regular public voting.

Concerns over efficiency are probably best addressed by pointing to the fact that the current legislative process is highly inefficient in its own right. Look no further than the filibuster, a time honored tradition in the Senate since the early 1800s. The

filibuster allows a senator to speak indefinitely on any topic, unless at least 3/5 of senators vote to conclude the debate. Some senators have gone so far as to read from the phone book and recite recipes in order to waste time and prevent a vote from taking place. In fact, the longest filibuster in history came from South Carolina Senator Strom Thurman, when he spoke for just over 24 hours straight, reading from the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, and even George Washington's farewell address, as he sought to stall a vote on the Civil Rights Act of 1957. Together with his fellow senators from the south, they consumed a total of 57 days filibustering before the Act eventually passed.

To put a public vote in context, as long as the technology is there to support it, we're really only talking about adding as little as a day, and a probably no more than a week at most. In a system that once allowed a nearly two-month long blatant waste of time before the passage of the Civil Rights Act, it sure seems there's room to spare an extra few days for something as important as giving the American people a legitimate role in the legislative process.

3. People are not capable of governing themselves.

This particular opposing view is likely to take on several different forms. People aren't smart enough. It will be mob rule. The masses are easily manipulated. I imagine these arguments are most likely to come from those who think they're smarter than everyone else, or from the glass half empty type of folks. But the logic necessarily fails with each. We're all people (including our current officials), and so if people are not smart enough, then who is exactly?

Concerns over mob rule are generally unfounded thanks to the Bill of Rights. These first 10 Amendments, ratified in 1791, provide all Americans with certain basic human rights that cannot be infringed upon by the government, regardless of who's in charge. Whether it's the people at large, or a system of representatives, the Bill of Rights draws a line that cannot be crossed without running afoul of the Constitution.

As for the masses being easily manipulated, though I do believe we are each fully capable of making up our own minds, it's true that some of us are more inclined to be leaders and others to be followers. Good, bad, or otherwise, persuasion is a part of the equation when dealing with public opinion, which is why we'll still elect our officials, even in a reformed system. The Senators and Representatives will provide an official source of information and opinions to the voting public to prevent us from being a leaderless group. Ultimately, the official and the people will work in tandem, with each acting as a check on the power of the other.

The real truth of the matter is that the American people have never been given an opportunity to lead in this nation, and so no one actually knows how it will turn out if we get the chance. What we do know, however, is that the current way of doing things has resulted in bitter partisanship, distrust, and division amongst our government officials, and even fellow Americans. If we ever hope to end up with different results, then we've got to try something different.

As individuals, we all have our limitations, but when we work together, we accomplish amazing things. So why should we be afraid of working together for purposes of government, rather than rely on a system which is comprised of individuals? It's impossible for any single person to possess the knowledge of the people at large. Our collective views and beliefs are what establish our societal standards, but yet our government and system of laws is a byproduct of the views and beliefs of a select few. There's wisdom to be found in the collective, but so far throughout our history, it's never been given a chance to fully shine through.

4. It's too big of a change.

There's no doubt that these proposed changes are significant, seeing as how they seek to alter the hierarchy of power in our government. But the end result isn't really all that different from what we have now, only with key changes to help fix the problems. We're not talking about overthrowing the system and starting over. We're talking about reforming it. The institutions, the officials, and the structure will all still be the same, only with the people as active participants.

Slavery wasn't abolished because it was easy. A war was fought to rid our nation of this stain because it was the right thing to do, and because human beings aren't meant to be controlled by other humans. Women weren't granted the right to vote because it was a good time for a change. It was earned over fifty years of raising awareness, and because equality actually means something here. Our nation didn't become what it is today because the American people sat on their hands and turned a blind eye to injustices. It became great because we recognized our flaws, and there were enough of us willing to stand up, stand together, and do something about it, even if it meant taking on a well-established hierarchy. We don't fear the underdog role, we embrace it, and we use it to inspire us onto victory.

We're at a point in our history where we either do something to fix the problems, or we watch as division destroys us from the inside out. The time for 'me' first must come to an end. If we're going to continue to prosper and thrive, it's time to start

putting ‘we’ first. Though it may seem like a daunting task, we have history on our side. This country was founded by rebels who stood up against oppression. A nation of pioneers and innovators. We’ve done this before, and we can do it again. The time has come to be a part of something bigger than ourselves. It’s our turn to leave our mark on America.

According to a 2018 report published by Scientific American, the tipping point for new ideas to make their way into the collective mainstream is around 25% of the population. If the first 25% adopt the idea, then the majority of the rest will follow naturally. Though there will always be some small percentage that will never be swayed, we don’t need to convince everyone. We just need a quarter of the population. When you consider the impact of social media and the countless forms of communication available to us, 25% isn’t a pipe dream, it’s a number we can reach.

So how do we get there? How do we achieve the critical mass needed to actually make this happen? Once again, it all starts with you. This is your idea now, and it’s up to you to make it a reality. Consider it my gift to you. One of the main reasons why I chose to author this work anonymously and publish it for free was to be able to give it away to you. It’s no longer my idea, it’s yours. Just promise you won’t treat it like an ugly sweater you got from your grandma one year for your birthday, tucked away in the bottom drawer, never to see the light of day. This idea isn’t something to put on the back burner, it’s something to act on.

Despite what Hollywood shows us, there’s no Superman or Wonder Woman coming to save the day. The superheroes we see on the big screen are fictitious characters, the products of someone’s imagination. What’s interesting about these characters, though, is that despite being the product of one person’s imagination, they’ve made their way into our collective consciousness, to the point where virtually everyone knows of them. Even if you’re not into comic books or superhero movies, you know who Spiderman and Batman are. Ideas are imagined into life every day, and some grow so big that they reach us all. Just because we’re not children anymore doesn’t mean that we have to stop imagining. We may not have super powers, but you and I can save the world if we work together. The opportunity to be a real-life hero is right here in front of you, right now. So will you choose to act?

You don’t need to commit your life to this cause, but if we’re going to be successful, we need citizens like you to be active in your efforts to effectuate change. Talk to your friends and family, talk to your co-workers or classmates. Just keep talking, and keep the conversation going. Explain how it will work, explain how this idea will solve our biggest problems, or simply encourage them to read this book, and formulate their own opinions.

Try not to focus your efforts only on like-minded individuals, who share the same political or social views. You never know where an ally might come from. Remember, this idea

is about everyone, and we're going to need as many to join our ranks as possible to win this fight. Is your heart beating? Are you breathing? Then this movement is about you, and giving you a voice.

At various points throughout this book, I've been openly critical of our current President, and to a lesser extent the Republican Party. And though I do believe the criticism is justified, my hope is that it doesn't alienate those who don't share the same opinions. One of the major goals of this whole idea is to lessen the impact that individuals and political parties have on the process, and so it shouldn't be construed as favoring one party over the other. To think that we all fit neatly into one of two boxes, as either a liberal or conservative, doesn't do justice to the complexity of human beings and the issues we face in our modern society. Yet for whatever reason, we take a simplistic binary approach to law and government, limiting ourselves to just two choices. That approach may have worked in simpler times, but right now, it's plain to see that it's holding us back.

As you look to spread this idea out into the world, if you're met with opposition or animosity from someone who doesn't agree or has a different opinion, don't be deterred. Resist the urge to respond with anger or hostility, and instead simply explain to your fellow citizen that this idea is just as much about them as it is about you. Though we've talked about raising an army, and drawn several military comparisons throughout this chapter, this isn't actually a revolution at all. It's an evolution. Revolutions are violent and bloody, but an evolution is a natural progression. Species evolve and adapt to changing environments in order to survive, and so must we.

Virtually all of the major world religions, and in particular Christianity, the belief system for more than 70% of Americans, teach that we were gifted with free will, and that we ought to treat each other how we want to be treated. Even for those who aren't religious, these basic concepts still ring true. At the end of the day, that's what this idea is all about. It's about giving us a chance to exercise our free will on a regular basis, and it's about looking out for one another and having each other's backs. So when we compare it to what we have presently, there is no real comparison as to which is a more natural means of governing.

When we think about our freedoms as Americans, most of us initially recall the First Amendment and its protections of free speech, freedom of religion, and a free press. But also included in the First Amendment are two other freedoms: the freedom to peaceably assemble and the freedom to petition the government. The freedom to assemble has, of course, been used quite famously and extensively throughout our history by groups who marched on Washington in an effort to spur change. Unlike those movements of the past that relied on assembly, we have technology available to aid our efforts, which makes our freedom to petition even that much more of an effective tool.

Generally described as any nonviolent, legal means of encouraging or disapproving government action, the Supreme Court characterized it this way in a 2010 decision: "The right to

petition allows citizens to express their ideas, hopes, and concerns to their government and their elected representatives. . .” In the past, this meant mailing letters to your local congressman or gathering signatures at rallies or by canvassing a neighborhood. No longer, however, are we constrained to the number of physical signatures we can track down in person, or the number of letters we can hand write and mail. We have the ability to reach millions of fellow citizens instantly through the internet, and thanks to email, communication with our government officials is quicker and easier than ever before.

It’s unfortunate, but it seems our officials are becoming immune to the efforts of citizens to assemble and rally around certain issues. Though our modern-day marches get national media attention, those in power seem content to simply wait it out, assuming the public will lose interest soon enough, rather than take any action in response. So instead of simply assembling, we must use our freedom of petition to get their attention. If you don’t already know who your government officials are, or how to get in contact with them, there are a number of available resources online. In particular, the website www.commoncause.org/find-your-representative is a quick way to find this information, simply by inputting your address. And remember that your freedom to petition isn’t limited to just the federal government, but applies to state government, as well.

So here’s my suggestion for a simple way to exercise your freedom to petition, which can have a powerful effect. Send five emails a month: two to your U.S. Senators, one to your U.S. Representative, one to your State Senator, and one to your State Representative. (For those in Nebraska, who don’t have a state representative, four emails will do.) Don’t worry if you’re not much of a writer, or are short on time, as I’ve got you covered. Just put ‘Evolution’ in the subject line, and copy and paste Amendment nos. XVIII – XXX from Chapter 6 into the body of the email. You’re certainly free to write more or less if you want, as that is, after all, your First Amendment right. But know that great care was taken when drafting these proposed new Amendments to ensure they addressed all of the practical details necessary make these reforms functional.

Once you know who your officials are, and have their email addresses, the whole process shouldn’t take more than ten minutes. If we each commit just ten minutes a month to exercising our Constitutional freedom to petition our government, and we are steadfast in our efforts, we can’t be ignored. Together, if enough of us speak up in unison, our voices will be as loud as thunder, shaking the very foundation upon which our government rests.

Another simple, yet powerful way to exercise your freedom is to sign an online petition. To help get things started, I’ve started one already at: <https://www.change.org/p/the-american-people-the-evolution-of-democracy>. Awareness is key, so please be sure to spread the word to as many as possible. Having a count of how many citizens support this idea is critically important, as it quantifies our reach. Though the power of the people in government may be limited now, we still hold the right to elect our officials. And so if we make it known that enough of us stand

in favor of this idea, our officials will eventually have to support it as well, simply out of self-preservation. If not, then we elect someone else into office that does. It may take time to drive our numbers high enough to force the hands of our officials, but it doesn't necessarily have to. After all, if we were able to make a laughing soccer mom in a Chewbacca mask and doped up kids leaving the dentist overnight celebrities, known to millions of Americans, then why can't we do the same or better with something as meaningful as this?

Before the Bill of Rights or the Constitution were drafted, the Declaration of Independence granted the American people rights with respect to our government, even before it was formed. These rights were given to us at a time before the war for freedom was won. These were not the victors dividing up the spoils, but these were truths written by those seeking to forge something new. These words were meant to inspire action. When we dust off the less quoted language of the Declaration, we find that our government isn't meant to be static, but rather it's subject to change by the people when we see fit:

“ . . . Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.”

These were the original rights given to us as Americans, before anything else, but yet we have never exercised them. Our government remains essentially the same as when it was formed, only now, its age is starting to show. It's no longer adequate to support a modern society like ours, and it's impeding our progress. The time for us to rise up together as one, and exercise our original rights as Americans has come. Although the words of the Declaration were written centuries ago, they provide a guiding light to show us the way as we seek to evolve our democracy. Like the patriots who first found inspiration in these words, so too shall we.

As you begin your journey, and follow in the footsteps of the revolutionaries who came before you, I wish to leave you with three final things to further inspire you along the way. Each has proven inspirational to me at various points throughout my own two year journey of writing this book, and I believe that each truly captures the essence of this idea. Because this work has been primarily political in nature, it seems only fitting that we conclude it with a quote, a speech, and a slogan.

Rather than cite to one of the many great quotes from the founding fathers, our final quote instead comes from Dr. Jonas Salk, the inventor of the polio vaccine. Through his work, the lives of millions of people were saved. And even long after his own death, his work continues to save lives. What would otherwise be a deadly and debilitating disease, is now virtually non-existent, all thanks to him. Though he could have patented his vaccine, and reaped a financial windfall, Dr. Salk decided to give it away for free, and never made any money from it. When asked why, he simply explained that he felt it belonged to the people. A true hero in

every sense of the word, his life's philosophy is embodied in the following quote, which is etched in stone at the Salk Institute in San Diego:

“Hope lies in dreams, in imagination, and in the courage of those who dare to make dreams into reality.”

The speech was delivered by perhaps an even more unlikely candidate, as it comes from Charlie Chaplain, who is best known for his work in silent films. In 1940, however, Chaplain wrote, directed, and produced his first sound film, *The Great Dictator*. This film was a political satire comedy-drama, intended to condemn the rise of Hitler and Mussolini and to call attention to the growing anti-Semitism that much of America and the rest of the world outside of Europe wasn't aware of. At the time when it premiered, America had not yet entered into World War II. Though *The Great Dictator* was commercially successful in its day, money wasn't what drove Chaplain to make the film. He was looking to make a difference in the world. Unfortunately, the film didn't win any of the five Oscars it was nominated for, but eventually Chaplain's efforts were formally recognized when the film was selected by the Library of Congress for preservation in the national registry for its historical and cultural significance.

In the film, Chaplain plays two roles, one as the dictator (his spoof on Hitler) and one as an ordinary Jewish barber, who happens to look like the dictator. At the end of the film, thanks to a case of mistaken identity, the barber has an opportunity to deliver a speech to a giant crowd, who think he's the dictator. This speech has since become famous, and you may have even heard it before. I found it myself about a year or so ago, while I was about halfway through writing. The first time I heard it, I felt as if Chaplain had written it specifically in support of this book and this idea, and I knew it needed to be included somewhere. Although some of the technological references in the speech are dated at this point, I'm still astounded at just how applicable his words remain still, more than 70 years later.

I've probably listened to it a dozen or so times since, as it's only about 3½ minutes long, but every time I hear it, I'm just as inspired as I was the first time. And so if you even if you've heard it before, I would encourage you to listen again, only this time putting it into the context of this idea. There are several versions of the speech on the internet, but my favorite is this particular one on YouTube: www.youtube.com/watch?v=WibmcsEGLKo. (A direct clip from the film, without the added images and background music, can be viewed at <https://www.charliechaplin.com/en/articles/29-The-Final-Speech-from-The-Great-Dictator->.)

Lastly, throughout American history, slogans have proven to be an integral part of the political process. From the original 'Tippecanoe and Tyler Too' through to the more recently used 'Change We Can Believe In' and 'Make America Great Again,' slogans are a short and simple way of expressing what a candidate or a movement stands for. Their purpose is to inform and rally support, and the good ones have been successful in doing just that. For this evolution of our democracy, I believe the following slogan best sums up what it's all about:

Heal the past. Script the future. Live in the moment.

Remember why we are doing this, and where we have come from. Our past is our past, and cannot be changed, but it need not define us going forward. Instead, think about who we can become, and what we can achieve. Take stock each day of where we are at from a progress standpoint. Until we reach our end goal, we must continue to advance the line, stand united, and stay strong. But perhaps more importantly, don't forget to enjoy the journey, and take it all in along the way. After all, it's not every day that an opportunity comes along to be a part of something bigger than yourself, to change history, and to save the world. So what do you say, will you join me in this movement? Together, we can be heroes.

AFTERWORD & DEDICATIONS

- To E.H.L., E.R.L., and S.L.L. You are my world and my everything. Your love was the greatest inspiration for this book. I love you with all my heart, forever and ever.
- To my mom, dad, and grandparents. Your unconditional love and support made me who I am, and laid the foundation for these ideas. I hope to have made you proud.
- To the Hillside crew. Your friendship taught me that family doesn't always share the same blood. Thanks for always having my back, and know that I've always got yours.
- To all of my friends, family, and colleagues who have discussed this idea with me over the past several years. Your feedback has contributed more to this book than you'll ever know.
- To all those who know me, or who figure out who I am, I ask that you please keep my identity a secret. Perhaps someday when the time is right, I'll reveal myself, but whether or not that day comes, it doesn't change the fact that this idea belongs to you now.
- And lastly, to you the reader (listener). Thank you for reading (listening).