

Taken from  
America's Exceptionalism:  
The history lesson all Americans should have had but never received

By  
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Chapter 1  
Introduction

We were watching the news coverage of the Restoring Honor rally at the Lincoln Memorial. As the camera panned over the multitude of people at the event, my wife, who is from Mexico, commented, "What does it matter who is president. It does not matter if it is Obama or whoever. If you have ability then you can take care of yourself and not worry about who is president."

After a brief moment of thinking I asked her, "What do you mean?"

"Well," she replied, "if these people had the ability to take care of themselves they would not need to waste their time on Obama this or Beck that."

"So you are saying that ability is all that matters? That the government does not have any effect on the people it has power over?"

In answering this she listed the situations of several of her friends, associates, and neighbors. She explained that even though they are from Mexico these people were able to do well under Bush and are doing equally as well under Obama—all because they have abilities that allow them to take care of themselves regardless of what the government does.

"Well, if ability is all it takes," I replied, "what are they doing here? Why aren't they in Mexico? From my understanding most of these people do not want to be here. They did not want to leave their families and the only places they knew as home to come here. They risk life and limb to be here. Many die trying to get here. Why? I mean if ability is all that counts why do they have to come here to use their abilities to survive. Do their abilities not work in Mexico?"

"The reason why they have to come here," I continued, "is because the system in Mexico, through the government, is designed to keep the elite few rich. As a result the average Mexican lives in poverty and has very little control over his success no matter what abilities he may have. Mexico itself is a rich country. It has natural resources including oil, gold, silver. A thriving agriculture and industrial base. So there is no reason why Mexico should not have a thriving middleclass. Yet the majority of the people cannot make a living there because the government does not provide an environment that allows a person to use their abilities to better themselves and their situation."

“This is why they come here. This is why people from all over the world come here. They mistakenly think that it is the wealth that makes their success here possible. What they do not realize is that that wealth is derived from the system of government we have. That, unlike their homelands, the government here allows the freedom of each individual to use all his ability to achieve the life he desires. It does not matter where he was born, what his parents did, how wealthy was his family. This is why America is exceptional and unlike any other country in the world. This is why people are at the rally. They want to keep that America! For them, for their children, for all! You never hear people talk of the ‘Danish Dream,’ the ‘Australian Dream,’ or the ‘Mexican Dream.’ But the ‘American Dream’ is known around the world. This is what these people understand—that the ‘American Dream’ is unique. They also realize that although Mexicans and others have the United States to run to, Americans have nowhere to go. That there is no other place on the face of the earth that offers the average people the same freedom to succeed as America does. Lastly, they know that once that freedom is lost it is lost for all of mankind.”

Later that night I started to think about what I had said and I came to the realization that this is what makes America exceptional. I also realized that “American Exceptionalism” is currently a hot topic and is at the root of the social war going on in this country. Many, like those at the rally, do believe that America is an exceptional place while others believe that America’s great days, if she ever had any, are long gone or that it was reserved for whites only and at the expense of other groups. The former are fighting to keep the America they grew up in while the latter see internationalism as the future and desire a new America that uses the Western European model for inspiration.

This led me to ponder if either of these groups really knows what “American Exceptionalism” is? Do they understand where it comes from? How America came to be the way she is? Finally, do these people, both for and against, understand what it is they are trying to preserve or destroy? At the time I did not know the answers to these questions and it dawned on me that the answers maybe crucial to the future of our country. After all, both sides appear to have two very different perspectives on the subject. It also appears that both sides use the term “American Exceptionalism” without having a full understanding of just what exactly does it mean or imply.

So, having a passion for history, I dedicated myself to answer three questions on “American Exceptionalism.”

- What is its meaning?
- What is its origin?
- Can it be preserved?

The result of that quest is this book. Within these pages is an incredible narrative that I believe every American should know. Sadly it is a story that few do know since it goes beyond our Founding Fathers. It tells the tale of the Bill of Rights—not of 1781—but of 1689 and how the American Revolution started off as a struggle to preserve those rights and then evolved into a war for independence. In essence it is bigger than America since it is the story of freedom and man's struggle to liberate himself from the chains of aristocratic bondage.

### Freedom: America Style

Freedom and liberty can mean different things to different people. For example, Marxist-based philosophies define freedom as being liberated from the state of need. They believe that true freedom comes from being free of needing anything, especially basic material needs. Therefore, outcome and not opportunity is the focus of their programs. This is not the freedom that makes America exceptional. The freedom that made America what it is today is best exemplified in an poem by Dean Alfange:

#### *My Creed*

*I do not choose to be a common man.  
It is my right to be uncommon...if I can.  
I seek opportunity...not security.  
I do not wish to be a kept citizen,  
humbled and dulled by having the state look after me.  
I want to take the calculated risk;  
to dream and to build,  
to fail and to succeed.  
I refuse to barter incentive for a dole.  
I prefer the challenges of life to the guaranteed existence;  
the thrill of fulfillment to the stale calm of utopia.  
I will not trade freedom for beneficence  
nor my dignity for a handout.  
I will never cower before any master  
nor bend to any threat.  
It is my heritage to stand erect, proud and unafraid;  
to think and act for myself,  
enjoy the benefit of my creations*

*and to face the world boldly and say,  
this I have done.*

In this poem Mr. Alfange verbalizes the core principles that, until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, made up the dominant political philosophy of the United States: Classical Liberalism. This philosophy is based on four principles:

Limited Government  
Individual Rights  
Free Markets  
Private Property

Almost all the Founding Fathers were Classical Liberals and its philosophy permeates the Declaration of Independence, the Federalist Papers, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights, which are at the foundation of American Exceptionalism. It is the philosophy that led, within a 200 year span, a small union of thirteen colonies to become the dominant superpower of the world. Those who do not believe in America's exceptionalism would point out that during that same period the United States also passed through some of its darkest moments. They point out the tragedy of slavery and the racism it generated, the oppression of the Native American people, and the occupation and annexation of foreign lands. But a review of these events shows that they happened because the nation strayed from the principles of Classical Liberalism. For example, slavery continued to afflict this nation because, out of political expediency and financial gain, the principle of "all men being created equal" was not applied to all. The same could be same for the treatment of Native Americans. Later it was the followers of Classical Liberalism who fought to correct these wrongs. It was not uncommon to find Classical Liberals at the forefront of the emancipation movement, which fought and succeeded in correcting the blight of slavery. Additionally, it was Classical Liberals (and not, as popular myth say, the Statist progressives) that fought to extend the idea of equality to all. Classical Liberals supported the women's right to vote and made up a large portion of the suffragettes. By the 1920s the Progressives, who supported the supremacy of the state over the rights of the individual, would be so discredited that they were forced to create a new image. Due to its popularity and in order to lay claim to its successes they renamed themselves Liberals and the myth of modern Liberalism was born.

One would think that a philosophy that was so pivotal to the establishment and development of the United States would be studied and discussed by its citizens. But once progressives usurped the Liberal title Classical Liberalism started to be removed from the nation's history and political dialog. Today most Americans are not even

aware of it, its role in history, and its significance for the world. Although modern liberalism, Marxism, socialism, fascism, and communism are routinely covered in our schools, most high school students have never been exposed to the philosophy that this country is based on. They never gain an understanding of what has allowed America to become a special place in the world and in the struggle of man to free himself from tyranny. So if American Exceptionalism is dead it is not because it does not work. It is because there has been no attempt to keep it alive.

Yet alive it does remain, in our hearts and in our souls. It is part of the American psyche and culture. It is something that many Americans instinctively sense but often cannot verbalize. This is what this book will attempt to do. It will examine not only the uniqueness of the American experience but also that of its origin: England and Britain. Rather than comparing their history against some unachievable ideal (as the anti-exceptionalism argument does) it will compare it to the track records of comparable countries of the time. This is a more realistic and practical approach since being exceptional has nothing to do with being perfect and everything to do with standing out from the crowd. Lastly, it will look at how the world and all of mankind has benefited from Classical Liberalism and what can be done to preserve the philosophy that has allowed Britain and the United States to become the two preeminent nations for the last 400 years.