



The American Miracle

It was in the West that *the Miracle* happened for the first time. The history of the West was driven by a series of creative tensions: *between balancing the rights of the individual and the powers of the state; between the dominant faith and religious minorities; between faith and reason; between religion and government; etc.* But there were also creative tensions inside the human heart, some of which are as old as the human heart: *between desire and responsibility; between self-expression and self-discipline; between the yearning to shine as an individual and participate in, and contribute to, the community; and, again, between faith and reason.*¹

These tectonic plates of “*human nature*” shifted and bumped up against each other, within society and within our own souls. But there was one thing that informed all of these passions and ideas: *the idea that God was watching.* *The Miracle* began with the words below from the *Declaration of Independence*:

*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**,—That to secure these rights. Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed . . .*

The *Declaration of Independence* matters because it helps us see that **we cannot have freedom without equality**. It is out of **an egalitarian commitment** that a people grows — *a people that is capable of protecting us all collectively, and each of us individually, from domination.* If the *Declaration* can stake a claim to **freedom**, it is only because it is so clear-eyed about one fact: *a people’s **strength** resides in its **equality**.*

The *Declaration* conveys another lesson of paramount importance -- **language is one of the most potent resources each of us has for achieving our own political empowerment.**

The Miracle is that even though equality in the *Declaration* is based on the authority of “*an unnamed Creator*” (a clear reference to the unnamed God of the Bible). **You do not have to believe in God or be a theist to accept the arguments of the Declaration. You do, however, require an alternative ground for a maximally strong commitment to the right of other people to survive and to govern themselves.**

For American democracy to work, a majority of her citizens must find **reasons to commit to other people’s survival and freedom that are so strong they command their reverence.** One way or another -- **Americans must hold sacred the survival & flourishing of others.**²

No matter which side of an issue we are on, party we belong to, religion we belong to or support -- whether we are “believers” or “atheists” – our words and actions must demonstrate that we hold sacred the survival and flourishing of all lives, even those that disagree. **BHC**

¹ *Suicide of the West: How the Rebirth of Tribalism, Nationalism, and Identity Politics is Destroying American Democracy* by Jonah Goldberg © 2018; Crown Forum, New York, NY; p. 331

² *Our Declaration: A Reading of the Declaration of Independence in Defense of Equality* by Danielle Allen © 2014; Liveright Publishing Corporation, New York, NY; pp. 21 & 273.