



by Kimberly Fletcher

In 1787, after a long hot summer of deep debates and negotiations, Congress approved the Constitution of the United States of America. As Benjamin Franklin, left Independence Hall a woman approached him and asked, “*Sir, what did you give us?*” To which Mr. Franklin replied, “*A Republic ma'am, if you can keep it.*” How profound his words were.

Benjamin Franklin *knew* how hard it would be to keep the Republic. He *knew* how easy it would be for men in power to usurp power and authority (not granted them) if we were not vigilantly watching. He knew how easy it would be for us to forget what the Republic was about, and the ideas that made it strong, if we were not constantly reminding ourselves. He knew how easy it would be for us to start looking to the government to solve our problems and save us from ourselves. He *knew* “keeping” the Republic would mean hard work, a firm understanding of the principles of liberty, and an unwavering commitment to preserve them. Benjamin Franklin knew what a challenge it would be to sustain a Republic, but he fervently believed—if ever there were a people who could do it, it would be us.

After two centuries of freedom, we have certainly done better than any other nation, country or empire but we have definitely *not* done our due diligence in keeping the Republic. In fact, the Republic our Founders left to us is hardly recognizable anymore. All the things our Founding Fathers feared, warned us about, and tried so desperately to protect us against, are the very things we are facing today.

There has been a lot of talk about democracy lately. Democracy seems to be the new buzz word in the world, but I often wonder if the countries currently mulling around the idea of democracy really understand what it means? Even more, do Americans understand what it means? In this revival of liberty, we are experiencing in our country today, I think these are questions every American should be asking themselves. So today, I'd like to share what Democracy means to me.

I think Benjamin Franklin defined it best when he said, “Democracy is two wolves

and a lamb voting on what to have for lunch. Liberty is a well-armed lamb contesting the vote.”

Our Founding Fathers realized the oppression of a Monarchy, but they were also aware of the failings of a Democracy. And while the world looks to America as a symbol of *democracy*, it is the combination of self-governance and representative leadership that is the secret of America’s success. America is not a democracy; it is a Democratic Republic—the divinely perfect combination to promote freedom and protect individual liberties.

If we are to have a discussion about what Democracy means, we must first understand what it is and what it is not. The American experiment is much more than a form of government, it is an ideal. It is the belief that man can, in fact, govern himself and if he will not, then the experiment fails. But, like Benjamin Franklin, our Founders truly believed it *could* be done and that *we* would do it.

Many people are blaming the predicament of our country on the president, his administration, Congress, and the government in general, but in reality, those things are not the problem but merely symptoms of it. You can’t rid a garden of noxious weeds simply by cutting the stems, you have to go to the root. The problem in our country today is not an out-of-control government, the problem is that Americans are not acting American—we are not embracing our divine heritage of liberty, we don’t know our magnificent, providential history, and we are not fulfilling our civic responsibility. The harsh reality is, if we don’t like what’s going on in our nation today, we only have ourselves to blame.

We are a government *of* the people and *by* the people not just *for* the people. If *we the people* are not “by the people”, if we are not willing to do our civic duty and watch over government then corruption will take root and consume our nation until *we the people* are strangled right out of existence. If *we the people* are not willing to be “of the people” and run for elected office then there will be plenty of self-serving, power-hungry individuals who will. If we the people are not fostering a love of liberty in our own homes and our own hearts, then we will never understand and embrace the principles of liberty our nation was founded on. If we are not willing to sacrifice our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor to preserve liberty and sustain the Constitution then freedom in America will cease to exist. We are the reason we are in the state we are in. And we are the only ones who can pull us out of it.

It is true, there have been many forces working against us feverishly trying to destroy this last bastion of hope for the world; but in the end, *we* are the keepers of the flame, not the schools, not Congress, not the media. If our schools aren’t teaching our children about America’s history and heritage, then *we* need to be doing it. If the media is not going to present truth and facts, then *we* need to. It is not the government’s job to raise and teach our children it is *ours*. We cannot count

on others to do our job for us and we cannot legislate our rights and responsibilities away and expect liberty to simply sustain itself in the name of democracy.

If our children are patriots, it is because *we* raised patriots in our homes. If our children know and understand the Constitution, it is because *we* taught them. If our children embrace freedom and love their country, it is because we instilled that love in them through our own examples.

Democracy is the embodiment of self-reliance, self-governance and self-sacrifice; which, simply stated, means the American experiment can only succeed when we are able to govern ourselves in righteousness. As Alexis de Tocqueville so aptly stated, “America is great because she is good, and if America ever ceases to be good, she will cease to be great.”

It is not our government, our wealth, or our rich soil that ensures our democracy, it is our goodness. And if American’s cease to be good, the American experiment will have run its course. But goodness has *not* ceased. It is here, rising up in homes all across America. The spirit of America is alive; it just needs to be awakened.

And that should be our personal quest—to wake up the American people and infuse the light of liberty in their very souls. Every American we convert to Liberty and the Constitution is one American closer to securing a free nation. It is very probable that the day is not far off when our economy will collapse and our government will crumble—but America never will, because America isn’t a president or a Congress, it is us! It is *We the People*. And *We the People* will rise from the ashes waiving the standard of liberty to the world. Every American who understands and internalizes the principles of liberty will rise up, holding the Constitution firmly in their grip and lead the people of this nation to freedom.

So, when I am asked, what does Democracy mean to me? I answer, it means hope. It means believing in something greater than yourself. It means personal responsibility. And if we don’t take that responsibility seriously, instead of explaining to our children what democracy is, we will have to explain what happened to it.

Liberty begins at home. You and I, we hold the keys. We are the keepers of the flame. We must do everything in our power to pass on the flame, make sure it burns bright, and that it continues to be a light on the hill and a beacon of hope to the world. The Constitution is our banner. Raise it high. Because if liberty is to prevail in America, it will be because of you!