



Respect: The Bridge Between Natural Rights and a Free Society

As humans have sought order in our society, discussion over the relinquishing of certain freedoms in exchange for legal protections has persisted. However, there are some rights that are simply unassailable. Popularly discussed by John Locke and known as natural rights, "life, liberty, and property" are the fundamental rights that cannot be taken away by no man nor government ("Natural Rights"). Soon, ideas of natural rights found their way to the American Colonies. Violation of the colonists' natural rights by King George was cited as the grounds for revolution in the Declaration of Independence ("Natural Rights"). The natural rights of American citizens are protected in the Bill of Rights, becoming the basis of our newfound government's delimited interaction with its citizens (McDonald, Michael P, et al). Since then, natural rights have continued to play a momentous role in the maturation of our free society by creating prospects for all of our citizens to live as they desire.

Without natural rights, governments may confine citizens' rights, thereby deterring their citizens from living to their fullest, on the grounds that laws defend the order in communities. For example, in legalist societies like the Qin Dynasty, society was surely in order, but innovative thought was completely suppressed (Mark). However, with the assurance of the protection of natural rights in our Constitution and Bill of Rights, individuals can proclaim their independence, so long as their actions do not impede on others' natural rights (McDonald, Michael P, et al). For some, those life-fulfilling goals are to fight for equality, to educate, or to innovate. These individuals that are the first to live with liberty create capillary waves in our society. Even the smallest ripples can stimulate others to alter their lifestyle and start reclaiming their own self-autonomy. For example, Martin Luther King Jr. exercised his freedom of speech, delivering 'I Have a Dream' in 1963. To this day, his words "I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal" continue to resonate and inspire many (King, M. L.). The preservation of natural rights has allowed King to liberate the oppressed and has permitted King's legacy to extricate others to claim their natural rights.

As individuals seek their freedoms, their influences extend to the furthest outskirts of society. Practicing their freedom of speech, these individuals' activism for equality can give the underserved members of society equality of opportunity, meaning access to the resources they need to accomplish more than they could have before. Their commitment to education can give others the knowledge and skills required to support themselves, in a career and in relationships, and support those around them. Their innovation in technology can enhance our quality of life. Technology, such as pig-to-human heart transplants and insulin medication, has given people a second chance at life. These chances to live and partake in our society would not be accessible to the underserved and oppressed if it weren't for our citizens' ability to pursue their ambitions. When our most vulnerable citizens are shielded from breaches of their natural rights and freed from the bounds of inaccessibility, then our society is truly unrestrained.

Coupled with natural rights, mutual respect and understanding foster a more robust, autonomous, and nurturing society. If members of our society respect each others' natural rights and ambitions, we can operate knowing that we are free from judgment. Time and time again, judgment deters many individuals from taking a stand and exposing the injustices in our society. However, if we can cast aside judgment and sustain an open-minded discussion, we can efficiently identify inequities and determine ways to remedy them. As improvements are meticulously delivered to our society, and more members of society are able to exercise their natural rights, our community grows stronger. Thus, our society is no longer just an aggregate of people under a social contract; it is a supportive community where everyone can thrive.

An understanding of natural rights and respect ultimately builds a free society by devising opportunities for growth. This development creates a snowball effect, whereby the individuals that gain prominence prompt advancements in our society and inspire others to exert their natural rights and live freely as well. Together with mutual respect, our society can conduct open discussions to help rectify injustices and aid our society's progress in becoming harmonious and free.

Work Cited

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