



Respect: The Bridge Between Natural Rights and a Free Society

Polar opposites politically, former President Ronald Reagan, and Speaker of the House Thomas O'Neill, often found very little to agree on. They were longtime political rivals, but by six o'clock the two feuding enemies found joy in one another's company and could see their common humanity. The two men worked tirelessly to find common ground, through their strenuous efforts, historic tax reforms, seven tax increases, and a strong united front that brought down the Soviet Union were among a few key successes the two experienced together. When it came down to it, the two men understood they would rarely accept the other's view, yet each man respected the other man's right to hold an opposing opinion.

Freedom is defined as the ability to act as one chooses. Society is the state of being together with other people. In order for a free society to be most successful, citizens understand their rights are equal to those around them, they understand, like O'Neill and Reagan, common ground is found when a significant effort to understand that another man can oppose is made. The 2017 Bradley prize winner Peter Berkowitz stated "A free society requires a set of principles, or standards to which it aspires (1)." These standards or principles are implemented not to impose, but to protect and preserve the freedoms and liberties of all citizens. Built-up from the actions of individuals, a free society follows rules that promote harmonious coaction. A free society is composed of limited government, where freedom creates prosperity and mobilizes aptitude, innovation, and creation. A free society depends on the actions of individuals and respect among one another.

Mutual respect builds trust, meaningful communication, and strong relationships. Spiritual leader of the Tibetan people Dalai Lama stated that "Mutual respect is the foundation of genuine harmony," mutual respect is indispensable in any successful society (2). If one analyzes the relationship of former President Ronald Reagan and Speaker of the House Thomas O'Neill, they will

find the significant amount of respect each man had for one another. While they disagreed on most things, they respected the others' right to oppose. Respect refers to one treating another person as if the others' feelings, thoughts, and concerns are of equal value to one's own. Respect does not mean altering one's own perspective, but rather it means accepting that others are just as significant to their adherents as ours. Mutual respect is the backbone of an amicable society.

Enlightenment age philosopher John Locke reasoned that "in a state of nature all people have the rights to life, liberty, and property (3)." Natural rights are not dependent on laws, customs, or beliefs of any government, and are therefore universal and inalienable. The concept of natural rights is important because it identifies the fundamental liberties that all humans require to be a part of the social structure of society.

Free societies require citizens of great boldness, independence, self-restraint, reasonableness, and knowledge in order to preserve the freedoms and liberties on which their society is built on. Most importantly, citizens must possess an extraordinary understanding of their rights and how respecting others' leads to the preservation of one another's civil liberties. It is the preservation of these freedoms and liberties that Thomas O'Neill and Ronald Reagan fought for every day, they understood it was not only important to ask such responsibility of their fellow Americans, but also of themselves in their own friendship. Without respect for one another's rights, maintaining a free society is virtually unattainable.

An understanding of natural rights and respect builds a free society through mutual trust and cooperation between individuals. Because of this understanding, they accept rules of interpersonal behavior voluntarily, for their own mutual benefit, not because these rules are imposed on them. It is the friendship of former President Ronald Reagan and former Speaker of the House

Thomas O'Neill, that finds itself as a prime example of what it means to be committed to the greater good. Historic tax reforms, seven tax increases, and a united front that brought down the Soviet Union were things achieved by the two men who worked tirelessly to find common ground and understood what excellent outcomes came of respect and understanding one another's rights. While the two were polar opposite political rivals, they never let that affect their ability to respect an opposing viewpoint. It is the understanding of natural rights and respect that Thomas O'Neill and Ronald Reagan had, which builds a free society through mutual trust and cooperation between individuals.

Works Cited

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