

To my mind, the most fundamental role for government in a democratic society is to extend equality of opportunity, to insure that each individual has the tools necessary to take control and choose the course of his or her life.

I am running for President because I believe that we as a nation are losing sight of this role for government, and our government is starting to fall short of fulfilling this most basic responsibility. If we continue down our current path, the rare level of freedom and control that this country has achieved will slowly seep away, likely never to return. If we allow this to happen, we, this generation, will have failed as stewards of our country - through neglect, we will have ceded our special place in history, and the United States will go the way of Ancient Rome or the British Empire.

The foundation of our system of government is the belief that all men and women are created equal. For all of the soaring language we use, this is not really a grand idea. It does not suggest that all individuals have equal skills, work ethic or motivations. Instead it suggests that each person has an individual character, with different drives and motivations, and that it is each individual who can best know what will satisfy their individual character. Not that we will necessarily achieve our satisfactions and not that we as individuals always make the best choices for ourselves, just that we are better qualified than any other person or the instrument of government to know what will bring satisfaction to our lives. This includes choosing who we think will do the best job of governing our country.

As simple as this idea is, it was rare throughout history. The vast majority of governments throughout time have been based on an opposite assumption, that most people lack the ability to control their own lives, let alone choose who should lead the country. The United States was one of the very first countries to base its government on this idea. Even today, the idea is not universal – one billion Chinese are assumed by their government to be too stupid to actually choose their government.

It is this idea, that people can choose their own lives that drives our role for government. We recognize that while people might be born equal at some level, they are not born with equality of opportunity. Instead, it is the role of government to extend equality of opportunity. To insure that each child receives a good education, to insure that families are safe in their homes, and people safe on the streets. To give every person the tools to access and prosper in a stable, open financial system. We are born with the ability to control our own lives – it is the government that insures we have the tools to control our own lives.

Our government is slipping away from this role, failing to provide equality of opportunity, because there are ideologues in both the Republican and Democratic Parties who doubt our ability to control our own lives. The Republican Party has perfected the language of individualism and self-determination, but it is a lie. A part of the party has always believed that most people are animals, never actually able to rise above their animal impulses to take control of their lives. These Republicans believe that any effort on the part of government to extend the tools of control to most people is a waste of time and money. Therefore, instead of actually working to insure equality of opportunity, they tell bold untruths suggesting that people are born with equality of opportunity, if only the government will get out of the way.

School Choice is an example of such a lie. Nobody in the Republican Party actually believes it will provide a great education for all children. Instead, it will allow those few who do have choice to get away from the masses that don't. Oversight of the economy is another example. The government hasn't bothered trying to protect against instability and swings in the economy because clever people can make money in either up markets or down markets, but make less money in sideways markets. It is only those masses, who lack the ability to negotiate the booms and bust which suffer from the increasing instability. In the minds of many Republicans, promoting economic stability just means protecting dumb people from their own bad decisions, and they don't think government should bother trying. This Bush Administration, unfortunately, is the culmination of this right wing belief. It is intent on making government so incompetent that people will lose all hope that government can be an instrument to extend equality of opportunity.

The Democrats aren't much better. There is still a part of the Democratic Party that also believes most people cannot control their own lives. They don't believe most people can rise above the effects of their environment to actually choose for themselves. Instead, most people are too swayed by advertising and media to know what is best for themselves; most people are sheep, led from pasture to pasture. These Democrats, at least, believe it is the role of government to protect people from the harm they would do to themselves, to shape people's environments for them to help shape their actions for their own good. Protecting people from harm can certainly give people more control over their lives, but only up to a point. I do accept that people's actions can be shaped by their environment. However, if the goal of government is to extend control, to give people the tools to control their lives, then the government should be working to help people rise above the effects of the environment. It is a truism that the government cannot help people rise above the shaping effects of the environment while the government itself is using the environment to shape people's actions. Many Democrats, like it or not, still believe in the old concept of Noblesse Oblige, the idea that those few who are born able to rise above the insidious impact of advertising are obliged to make the decisions for those of us that cannot. Their intentions might be compassionate, but this is no substitute for individual self-determination.

Equality of opportunity is not just a vague philosophic concept - it has a material impact on the future of our country. The United States of America is by far not the only country that has ever enjoyed a greater level of freedom than other countries. The African trading nations, Persia, China at one point, Great Britain, Rome - many countries have risen to provide their citizens a greater level of wealth and self-determination. All of these countries had one characteristic in

common: fluidity of class structure. Potential does not respect class lines. Potential does not respect racial lines or sexual lines. In every country, potential is spread throughout that country. The countries that have risen have done so because they have been able to tap into every part of their society. In ancient Rome at one point, it was possible to be a foot soldier and eventually become a general and a senator. A person could rise from nothing to become wealthy and powerful, based on their skill and character.

This is why Rome eventually fell – it lost that fluidity. There is a tendency in any culture that does well to calcify. People that make it to the top want to make sure they stay at the top and their children stay at the top. I understand that every parent wants to protect their children, but at the end of the day the health of any country is dependent on a constant revolution, a constant overturning of the class structure. The decline of Rome began when the country began to calcify, and lost the ability to tap into the potential throughout its society. Frustrated potential stops building a country, and eventually begins to tear it down. This has been the pattern throughout history.

To my mind, the United States of America has a chance to cheat history, to avoid the inevitable decline that has brought down every other great nation in history. The United States, because of its democracy, should have a chance to create a permanently churning class structure. The United States is not different from Rome or Persia - potential does not respect economic or ethnic boundaries, but is instead distributed throughout our society. As long as our government works to extend equality of opportunity, we as a nation can tap into that potential. There will always be another poor person with a great idea or a better work ethic, there will always be rich people who are lazy and eventually see their wealth dissipate. That is the way our country is supposed to be. An active government aggressively promoting equality of opportunity is our best chance to maintain the dynamism of our society. As long as our government does so, then the United States, more so than any other country, can break the pattern of history.

So there you have it. I am running for President because I am concerned that there are too many people in both the Republican and Democratic Parties that do not believe in individual self-determination. If we as a nation continue to slip away from the idea of the equality of individuals, we will lose our special place in the world. We will stop being the United States of America. I am running because I still do believe in the equality of all men and women. I am running to hopefully help insure that the United States continue to be a country that extends freedom to all individuals, regardless of ethnicity, creed or heritage, to insure that the United States of America continues to be a country based on the belief that all men and women are created equal.