

Collectivism vs. Individualism



Send him mail.

"Food for Thought" is an original bi-weekly column appearing every other Tuesday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by Norman Imberman. Norman is a retired podiatrist who loves playing piano, writing music, lawn bowling, bridge, reading, classical music, going to movies, plays, concerts and traveling. Archived columns can be found [here](#). FFT-only RSS feed available [here](#).

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While listening to Obama's speech today it suddenly struck me that the ever-recurring theme behind all of his analysis concerning what made this country great was the idea of collectivism. He seemed to begin many of his sentences with the word "we." "We" created a great education system. "We" created a great system of roads. "We" are responsible for a great food distribution system. "We" created abundance in housing. "We" created all that is great about America in a spirit of national cooperation as if only the "we" are capable of producing the "good."

Obama's chimerical ramblings are reprehensible. Individual entrepreneurs, innovators, inventors and other risk-takers have always been responsible for the creation of prosperity in any nation. The reason why America progressed far beyond the reach of other nations is because its government did not interfere with the efforts of those individuals who made the progress possible. In other words, individual freedom was the battle cry, and the ideology of individualism was a highly respected appellation, steering the nation into a prosperous and peaceful society.

The "we" is rampant in America today and has sorrowfully become so powerful that it will be difficult to overcome. The "we" has infected the entire population like a plague. Almost every person has an opinion about how the "we" should handle the various societal problems. Instead of demanding dismantling the government-run education system or the government-run health care system or government-run entitlement programs, they debate how much "we" should compromise in their implementation, how much "we" should spend on those programs, which of "us" should pay for it and how extensive those programs should be.

The pharaohs of ancient Egypt might just as well taken the same great pride as Obama in the building of the pyramids by their slaves by claiming that “we” built those great monuments.

The truth is that only the energy of individuals can create anything. Ideas, innovations, inventions and technology derive from individual thought, energy and commitment. Individuals take risks even if it is a group of individuals. Each is taking a risk *qua* individual. It is individualism that built America and it is the thwarting of individual effort that will cause its destruction.

The choice is either collectivism or individualism. Both ideologies cannot exist in the same society if peace, prosperity and harmony are the goal.