

What the American Flag Means to Me

Meaning is a personal, subjective phenomenon. What people, places, things, ideas, principles, *et cetera* mean to any of us is something that each of us decides for ourselves. And meaning can certainly change or evolve as time goes on and people encounter new ideas and have new experiences.

The American flag, the “star-spangled banner” is one of those things whose meaning to me has changed significantly over the course of my life. Once upon a time it meant being a winning nation, the best the world had ever seen in terms of righteousness, justice, freedom, and opportunity. When I saw the flag, those are the ideas that were brought to mind, ideas that I value, and they produced the warm and fuzzies deep inside. I admired and waved the stars and stripes with a sense of pride.

The meaning you derive from the American flag may be very similar to this. And that’s okay. Again, meaning is a personal, subjective phenomenon. Your meaning is just as valid as mine. As you expect me to respect the meaning you derive from the flag, I too expect you to respect the meaning I derive from it. What the American flag means to me today is very different than what it meant to me as recently as 10 years ago.

Today the American flag means none of those things: righteousness, justice, freedom, and opportunity. While I still greatly value those ideas, they are no longer brought to mind when gazing upon the red, white, and blue. Rather, these are the ideas that are brought to my mind by the American flag today:

Perpetual War: The United States has been at war my entire life, and for nearly the entire life of the nation itself. War is mass murder; it’s sending innocent people to murder other innocent people who have no direct conflict with one another. I remain unconvinced that any war that the United States has engaged in during its existence was justified on either ethical or practical grounds. This includes the very first war, the Revolutionary War, and goes all the way through the Civil War, the World Wars, the Korean War, Vietnam, the War on Drugs, the War on Poverty, *ad infinitum*, or so it seems.

War on Drugs: The United States is committed to violently imposing its morality on people innocent of hurting other people or taking their stuff, ie. innocent, nonviolent people. This is one hundred percent evil in my book. Where its actions are in response to actual crimes, it is directly responsible for creating the conditions that inspired the crimes to occur. Prohibition of nonviolent vice does not make vice disappear. It pushes it underground to be exploited by the most unscrupulous among society. The War on Drugs, like Prohibition before it, is responsible for every violent or dangerous problem created by those involved in the drug industry.

Welfare Statism: Helping a person in dire straits is noble. Forcing other people through threat of imprisonment at best, death at worst, to help a person in dire straits is an unconscionable wrong. What's more, welfare statism creates dependency and disincentivizes thrift, ingenuity, and hard work. The United States welfare system has done little but to serve as a destructive force toward the institutions of family, fraternity, and community, and the promotion of pride in a parasitic and predatory institution, the state.

Corporate Privilege: Opportunities do not abound when government restricts entrepreneurialism through any sort of barriers to entry in every industry in an economy. Markets supply all the regulation needed to ensure the safety and security of goods and services provided to members of society on a voluntary basis. Existing business is protected to the extent that competition is being artificially restrained through government-based regulations. The United States has steadily fallen on economic freedom indices over the last couple of decades due to the ever-growing penchant of its politicians to cozying up to Big Business in order to maintain the revolving door of corporatism.

Inflationary and Fraudulent Monetary Policy: Central banking allows bankers and their privileged friends to reap the benefits of money-printing at the expense of savers and final-spenders, when prices have risen due to an increase in the money supply. The United States has toyed with central banking since its birth and is currently on the Federal Reserve System. The Federal Reserve System is directly responsible for the destruction of the US dollar (97% of its purchasing power now gone) and the destruction of a countless number of savings accounts and investment projects due to its loose monetary policy and credit expansion. Economic booms and their subsequent busts do not just occur naturally. They must be created by the controllers of the money and credit supplies.

Confiscatory Fiscal Policy: Taxation in the United States is a very onerous thing. Here are just some of the taxes Americans are forced at gunpoint to pay: sales tax, payroll tax, income tax, capital gains tax, property tax, estate tax, unemployment tax, gas tax, import tax, vehicle tax, and on and on. And the worst part of all is that no politician, judge, prosecutor, or bureaucrat can provide any evidence that their codes and constitutions apply to anyone within their imaginary jurisdiction. In other words, they are just people forcing other people to pay them, all under the American banner of "the land of the free."

There's no really no end to the horrors committed by people wearing and waving the American flag. All of these things and more are what the flag means to me today. How could it not when all of these things are slapped with the image of the flag as if what the flag means to so many well-meaning people is what's going on here?

Will the flag's meaning to me ever change? I sure hope so! I want the American flag to represent what it's supposed to represent, in my opinion: righteousness, justice, freedom, and opportunity. But so long as the American government exists and is engaging in all of

the anti-righteous/justice/freedom/opportunity practices listed above, it won't.

Here's to the day that I can look back at this article, and rip it to shreds.