

Not a Damn Thing



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“One Voluntaryist’s Perspective” is an original column appearing most Mondays at Everything-Voluntary.com, by the founder and editor Skyler J. Collins. Archived columns can be found here. OVP-only RSS feed available here.

Entitlement is a destructive mentality. It blinds people to the responsibilities that they have to themselves, to their lives and their happiness, which causes laziness and sloth. It makes people believe that the lives and labor of others are theirs by right, as if others live to serve them. If there’s one lesson that I could impart to every child in the world, it’s this: no one else owes you, and you owe no one else, a damn thing.

No One Else Owes You

At appropriate times I’ve counseled my children that no one owed them anything. They came into this world with nothing, including any debts owed. Nobody else, in the entire world, including mom and dad, owe them a single thing, like time, money, food, clothing, shelter, anything. Anything and everything they want in life, they must find a peaceful way to get it. Their lives are their own, and the lives of others belong to those others, not to my children, nor to me, nor to you.

What they have they’ve either received as a gift from someone who loves them, found, or earned. Because I love my children, I gift to them enough to meet their basic needs, and more to make sure their lives are rich with learning opportunities and excitement. I give these things freely, and at least right now, only conditional to the level of love and respect they show me, within reasonable expectations of their age. They don’t owe me anything for my sharing of my abundance with them. As the time has come that they’ve desired more than what I offer, I’ve proposed trading value for value. When they want something more from me, they’re shown how they can earn it, and they have.

You Owe No One Else

As important as the above principle is, it would be incomplete without this counterpart. No one owes you anything, and you don’t owe anything to anyone else. Your life is yours to live, to do with whatever you decide. Nobody but you is entitled to your life and the fruits of your labor. Anybody claiming otherwise better have an explicit agreement from you. If they

don't, if their claim has been pulled out of the air, they are attempting to take your life, to enslave you to them. They want something, and instead of recognizing the fact that no one owes them anything, they are choosing to take it without regard to right or the will of those they take it from. They demand from others their lives, and for that they are the enemies of reason. They show with their actions their unwillingness to live in peace with others, to live civilly. They are a threat to you and to your loved ones. If they are not removed from society, either through banishment or death, their choice, then you and society have decided to value their lives, the lives of thugs and criminals, above your own.

Implications

The implication that no one owes you anything is that you must earn everything you want in life. To do that, you must create value for others, something that they want more than what they currently have. You have no right to take what you want from others, because it is neither owed to you nor do you have a right to it. Value must be traded for value.

And the implication that you owe no one else, but yet others claim that you do, in effect enslaving you, means that you have a choice to make. You can rightfully resist them, and there are many violent and nonviolent ways of doing that, or you can submit to them. Resisting may or may not be foolish, and submitting may or may not be wise. Different political climates, as well as one's self-imposed obligations to those he loves, determine the prudence in either resistance or submission. Either way, the fact remains you don't owe anything to anyone, and no one owes anything to you.

Final Thoughts

These considerations have been empowering for me as an individual. To know where I stand in regards to my responsibilities to myself, and my obligations to others, has also been very liberating. I am my own master. I know it and have internalized it. Every child and every adult in the entire world, the entire universe even, should likewise know it and make it the bedrock principle of their lives. You won't have liberty, peace, and ultimately happiness without it.

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