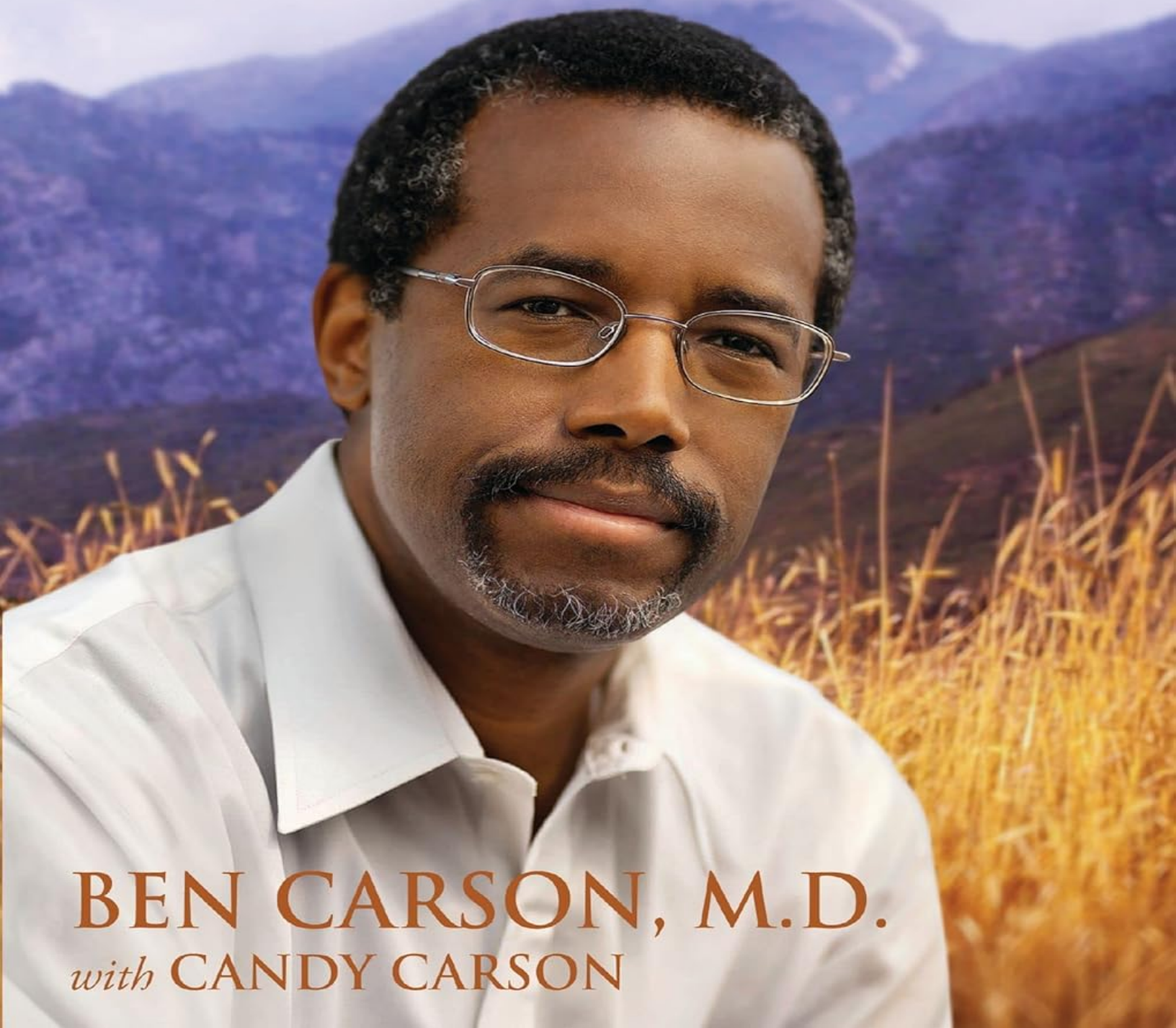


AMERICA *the* BEAUTIFUL

Rediscovering What Made This Nation Great

A New York Times Bestseller



BEN CARSON, M.D.
with **CANDY CARSON**

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the BEAUTIFUL
Rediscovering What Made This Nation Great

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with CANDY CARSON



To those who have given
their time, resources, and even their lives
to create and preserve
“One nation under God, indivisible,
with liberty and justice for all.”
Also to the late Patricia Modell
and to Art Modell,
who represent true American patriotism.

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PROLOGUE

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA is still the pinnacle nation in the world today. It is not, however, the first pinnacle nation to face a decline. Ancient Egypt, Greece, Rome, Great Britain, France, and Spain all enjoyed their time at the top of the world, so to speak — in many cases, for several hundred years. Then, as they began to decline, they all experienced some peculiar similarities: an inordinate emphasis on sports and entertainment, a fixation with lifestyles of the rich and famous, political corruption, and the loss of a moral compass.

One certainly sees this pattern being repeated in American society today, and if we continue to follow the course of other pinnacle nations prior to us in history, we will suffer the same fate. The question is, *can we learn from the experiences of those nations that preceded us and take corrective action, or must we inexorably follow the same self-destructive course?*

What was it about the United States of America — the child of every other nation — that was so different and so dramatically changed the world? For within only two hundred years of the founding of this nation, men were walking on the moon, creating artificial intelligence, and inventing weapons of mass destruction, among other things. In its relatively short history, America has transformed humankind's existence on earth. Among the many factors involved in our success was the conscious creation of an atmosphere conducive to innovation and hard work. People cared about their neighbors, and when some became fabulously wealthy, they were willing to share their proceeds with those less fortunate. There was a sense of community, which meant that everyone was responsible for everyone else, including the indigent. But perhaps most importantly, there was a well-defined vision for the nation.

For the first time in the world, a nation was envisioned that was “of, by, and for the people.” This meant that there would be a great deal of individual, family, and community responsibility for everyone's lives, as

opposed to government responsibility. This also meant that there would be unprecedented freedom to lead one's life without interference. A legitimate question for America to ask itself at this point in history is, do we still agree with the vision of the founding fathers? Or have we become much wiser than they were and therefore feel the need to adopt a different vision? Perhaps it is better to invest the government with great power and with the responsibility for taking care of all of us. We will consider both questions in this book.

If one goes back and looks at the belief system of many of our founding fathers, the faith they had in God, exemplified in both their words and deeds, is impressive. Some will argue that the United States has never been a moral nation because we engaged in slavery, and this certainly is an ugly chapter in our nation's history, one that we will also examine as we seek to understand what it is that makes America beautiful.

Unfortunately, many today have come to equate morality with political correctness, but I believe that political correctness is a very dangerous force. Many people fled to this country from other countries where dictators and oppressive governments tried to tell people what they could think and what they could say. The ability to think and speak freely was one of the major tenets upon which this nation was established, and I suspect that the founding fathers would turn over in their graves if they could see how such tenets are being violated on a regular basis today by people adhering to political correctness. If people can't freely speak their minds, conversations become muted and debate withers.

In this book, we will examine whether we can advance the great experiment that is the United States of America, perpetuating a free and prosperous nation that is "of, by, and for the people," and whether we can learn from the mistakes of our past. If we can, rather than seeing the decline that has characterized all other pinnacle nations before us, I believe our best days will still lie ahead of us.

AMERICA'S HISTORY OF REBELLING FOR CHANGE

OF ALL THE NATIONS IN THE WORLD, of all the social experiments that have been tried down through the centuries, there is no country I'd rather be a citizen of and call home than America. Where else but in this land of opportunity are people given so much freedom to pursue their dreams, with the potential to bring out the best in everyone?

I have been fortunate enough to visit forty-nine of America's fifty states, and I never cease to be amazed by the tremendous diversity one finds here — from big metropolitan cities to small countryside towns, from tropical islands to forested mountain ranges. Vast expanses of farmland produce more than enough food to feed our nation, and huge industrial areas produce airplanes, trains, cars, washing machines, and a host of other devices. The creative innovations of Silicon Valley and Seattle give us technological strength, and the great Northeastern corner of our country boasts some of the most prestigious educational institutions in the world. Add to that our ethnic and cultural diversity — one of our greatest strengths — and you begin to see how this nation's diversity enabled it to rapidly become a world power.

Does America have its flaws? Absolutely. We've certainly made our share of mistakes over the centuries and then some. But in spite of our missteps, our nation's history shows that out of our darkest periods, we have responded time and time again to work toward "liberty and justice for all." One of America's most respected legacies is indeed that of rebelling for change.

I grew up in inner-city Detroit and Boston at the tail end of one of those dark periods in America's history. Slavery had long been abolished, but widespread racism remained. The civil rights movement was on the verge of completely transforming the social landscape, but such change often comes slowly. And today, decades later, I can still pinpoint the moment when I came of age regarding racism in America.

My brother and I were playing in Franklin Park in the Roxbury section of Boston when I wandered away alone under a bridge, where a group of older white boys approached me and began calling me names.

"Hey, boy, we don't allow your kind over here," one of them said. He looked at the others. "Let's drown him in the lake." I could tell they weren't just taunting me, trying to scare me. They were serious, and I turned and ran from there faster than I had ever run before in my life. It was a shocking introduction for a little boy to the racism that ran through America at the time.

Growing up, we faced constant reminders of how we were less important than white people. Even some of those who claimed to be civil rights activists could be heard saying such things as, "He is so well educated and expresses himself so clearly that if you were talking to him on the telephone you would think he was white."

By that time, economic hardship had forced us to move to Boston, and we were living with my mother's older sister and brother-in-law in a typical tenement, where rats, roaches, gangs, and murders were all too common. One day my uncle William was giving me a haircut in the kitchen while we watched the news on television when I saw white police unleashing ferocious dogs on groups of young black people and mowing them down with powerful water hoses. Even little children were being brutalized.

Perhaps even worse than the overt racism that I witnessed on television was the systemic racism I witnessed in my own family. My aunt Jean and uncle William had two grown sons who frequently stayed with them in their dilapidated multifamily dwelling. My brother, Curtis, and I were very fond of our older cousins, who always made us laugh. But both of them were constantly in trouble with the police, which resulted in their brutal, racially motivated beatings or Uncle William having to bail them out of jail.

Unfortunately, their close friends were drug dealers and gang members, many of whom were killed or died young. Ultimately both of my cousins were killed because of their association with the wrong people.

One could legitimately ask the question. Which is worse, overt racist behavior by the police, or a society that offered certain segments of its population little in the way of opportunities, increasing the likelihood of “criminal associations”? We didn’t realize these friends of our cousins were dangerous for us to be around. We only knew that they joked around with us, gave us attention, and even brought us candy from time to time.

It wasn’t just our inner-city neighborhood where racism flourished; I found it at school as well. During report-card-marking day in the eighth grade, for example, each student was supposed to take their report card from classroom to classroom and have their teacher place a grade in the designated spot. I was very excited because I had all *As*, and I had only one more class to go for a clean sweep. That class was band, which was going to be an easy *A* since I was an excellent clarinetist. That last *A* would make me a shoo-in for the highest academic achievement award in eighth grade that year. I was beaming as I gave Mr. Mann my report card, but my joy quickly turned to sorrow when I saw that he had given me a grade of *C* in order to ruin my report card and my chances of receiving the highest academic award. I knew that my winning the award would have been an eye-opening experience for many people at Wilson Junior High School, since I was the only black student in the class.

Much to Mr. Mann’s chagrin and to my delight, band was not considered an academic subject and did not count; therefore, I received the highest academic award after all. One of the other teachers was so upset about this that she literally chastised all the white students at the award ceremony in front of the entire school for allowing a black student to outperform them academically. The scene is depicted in the movie about my life, *Gifted Hands*, although in reality she ranted and raved a lot longer than the movie suggested. It was at least ten minutes, although it felt like longer.

In retrospect, I realize that all of these teachers and some of the students were simply products of their environment, but they triggered in me a strong desire to start my own personal civil rights movement to show everyone that I was just as good as they were by doing better than they did

in school. As my academic awards and accomplishments continued to pile up, I had to combat feelings of superiority, which proved to be just as difficult as the task of fighting off an inferiority complex. Nevertheless, by the time I was in high school I had come to understand that people are people, and that their external appearance was not a good predictor of what kind of people they were.

In April of 1968, on the day after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated, a major riot broke out at my high school in inner-city Detroit. Most of the black students were so outraged that they were trying to physically harm anyone who was white. Some very serious beatings took place, and I saw many of my white friends being harassed. The student population of the school was about 70 percent black, so the white students did not have much of a chance. At the time, I held a job as the biology laboratory assistant setting up experiments for the other students. The department even trusted me with a key to the science classrooms and the greenhouse. So during the riot, I used that key to open the greenhouse and hide several white students during the melee.

By that time in my life, I understood the extent of racism in America, but I also was beginning to have hope for the future. Having lived and studied among both black and white cultures, I knew that there are good white and black people and there are bad white and black people. It mattered not what color your skin was on the outside, but rather what the condition was of your heart and mind inside. And as I better understood human nature, I felt more emboldened to do things differently than everybody else and to chart my own course for a successful life.

I think that many of the people involved in the founding of our nation also felt they were victims of injustice, but they too had a profound understanding of human nature and set out to design a system different from previous governments that would level the playing field.

Today our nation faces a challenge of a different kind — one that nevertheless requires of us all a movement to stand up for our civil rights. One that asks us to educate ourselves as to the founders' original vision for our nation and to take action to assure we protect and pursue that vision. While many nations lean on their past to give them a sense of

accomplishment, the United States has a history of redefining itself and moving forward to ensure that there is indeed liberty and justice for all.

A NEW WORLD SPRINGS FORTH

The dangers that face our nation today are every bit as great as those we have faced in the past. The question is whether we have lost our capacity to endure hardship and sacrifice for future generations. We face a national budgetary crisis that threatens to rip our country apart and destroy our way of life, yet many concern themselves only with the governmental benefits they might lose. I write with the hope that we can reawaken the spirit of greatness that created the wealthiest, most compassionate, freest nation the world has ever seen. In this book we will embark upon a brief review of pertinent parts of our history that have everything to do with finding our way forward to a prosperous future.

Whether the first people to arrive on the North American continent were migratory tribes that traveled across a land bridge between what is currently Russia and Alaska, or whether they were ancient sailors who navigated the ocean — America has always had a rich and diverse ethnic background. Our nation began that way and we continue to expand that way. All kinds of people are responsible for our nation's rapid development and great accomplishments, and by the same token, we share blame for many of the atrocities that have occurred on American soil.

The impetus for Europeans to quickly settle the Americas came from the discovery of vast mineral deposits and other natural resources that could create enormous wealth. It was Amerigo Vespucci, an acquaintance of Columbus, who is credited with America's discovery in 1497, five years after Columbus landed in the Caribbean Islands while searching for a new route to the spice-rich Far East. Chinese Admiral Cheng Ho, who visited the Americas in 1421, could lay claim as well — and there is also evidence that Scandinavian explorer Leif Erikson reached the Americas hundreds of years before any of these other explorers. Regardless of who “discovered” America, Columbus's expeditions certainly raised awareness back in the Old World as to the New World's vast potential for increasing the wealth of

those nations that were able to exploit it. And once this became known in the Old World countries, explorers began to arrive.

The Spaniards had significant colonies and exploited the mineral wealth here, and America could easily have been a Spanish-speaking nation, but an intense rivalry between Spain and England, particularly during the latter part of the sixteenth century, put America up for grabs. Spain's domination of the oceans was challenged by England and the Dutch, who were building an extremely large merchant marine fleet in Europe. The final nail in the coffin of Spanish domination of the oceans took place in 1588, when the Spanish Armada was sunk in a battle with the English and, more importantly, by a ferocious storm, which decimated their mighty fleet. Because the English dominated the seas in the early 1600s, they decided it was their right to begin colonizing America, and the first of the permanent English colonies, Jamestown, was established in 1607.

I still remember the idyllic pictures of the Jamestown settlement in my school books as a child, but in reality the settlement was anything but ideal. Many of the settlers were English gentlemen who had no idea how to work in a wild environment. They quickly ran out of food while battling the Algonquin and enduring very harsh winter conditions. You don't have to have much of an imagination to visualize how desperate those early settlers must have been. The vast majority of the early settlers succumbed to starvation and violence, and there are even credible reports of cannibalism. They suffered extreme hardship and personal sacrifice, all to create a more stable and prosperous future for subsequent generations.

The Europeans had also not anticipated the fierce resistance shown by the Native Americans, who had no intention of simply handing over their land. Although many movies portray the Europeans as vastly superior to the Native Americans in warfare, their most effective weapons were the diseases they brought, against which the Native Americans had no immunological resistance. These diseases wiped out whole villages and tribes through massive epidemics that were far more effective than any fighting force. While the Native Americans were being vanquished, the English, French, and Spaniards, among others, fought for the dominant position in the New World. The Jamestown colony would never have survived if it had not been for the friendship developed with the tribe of

Powhatan, who taught them some basic fundamentals of farming and traded food for beads — a gracious, saving exception to the conflict and warfare that characterized our nation's early history.

In time, the English Jamestown settlement grew and thrived, especially after the introduction of indentured servants and slaves in 1619 and the development of American tobacco, which quickly became all the rage in England and other parts of Europe. The rapid growth of the tobacco industry turned out to be a financial bonanza for the fledgling colony, enabling it to survive. There were early attempts at remote self-rule, the most permanent of which was the establishment of the House of Burgess, which consisted of a governor and “councilors,” appointed by the governor, and some representatives of estates.

Around the time of the establishment of the House of Burgess, a second permanent colony was being established by the pilgrims in Plymouth, Massachusetts, in the harbor of Cape Cod Bay. These religious separatists were interested in the New World primarily because they felt that their freedoms were compromised both in terms of religion and life in general. In an attempt at self-rule, they constructed an agreement of behavior known as the Mayflower Compact, the first formal constitution in North America. In this contract, they agreed to the fair and equal treatment of everyone for the good of the colony. Unfortunately, “everyone” did not include women, those who were not land owners, slaves and indentured servants, or the region's natives. To their credit, they were attempting to build a type of society that was foreign to most of the world, since most colonies were governed according to the wishes of the ruler. These were immature baby steps toward a more noble goal, but at least they were steps in the right direction.

Over the next few decades, an explosion of colonization occurred, largely from people seeking religious freedom and/or financial opportunities. Many in Europe saw an opportunity to escape the oppressive and overbearing governmental systems under which they languished, and these people emigrated in droves, bringing with them a strong determination to make a better life for themselves and their offspring, unfettered by oppressive overseers disguised as government. The opportunities to enrich themselves through their own efforts brought out the best in many people, but it also

brought out avarice, greed, and a host of unethical behaviors that invariably accompany freedom. Fortunately, those whose characters were constrained by religious principles far outnumbered those lacking moral rectitude. The British remained technically in charge of all these colonies, but due to the independent-minded nature of many of the colonists and the distance involved, British control was somewhat tenuous. The other great power of Europe, France, was also vying for control and power in the New World, but they were largely distracted by their ongoing wars with the Iroquois, and seemed to be much more interested in trading and exploration than they were in establishing permanent settlements.

Throughout the mid- and late seventeenth century, immigrants flooded in not only from England, but also from France, Germany, and other parts of Europe. Migrating into the area that was to become Pennsylvania, a large influx of Quakers provided a solid base for the abolitionist movement that was to come. By the end of the seventeenth century, the colonies had become more sophisticated and organized, establishing Virginia, Massachusetts, New York, Maryland, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Delaware, New Hampshire, North Carolina, South Carolina, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, with Georgia added in 1732. Thus the basis of the original thirteen colonies was in place.

During the rapid expansion of colonial life in America, England jealously guarded its sovereignty over America. The myth of royal supremacy engendered a royal entitlement belief known as “the divine right of kings” given by God to rule over the people. This right was ferociously guarded, and when it was challenged by British people like Colonel Algernon Sidney, public execution quickly followed. The English crown not only felt that it had a right to rule the colonies, but also to extract money from them. For several decades, England had been involved in ongoing warfare, mostly with France and Spain, which had drained the treasury; therefore, the king felt that the massive expenditures to protect the American colonies during the French and Indian War should be repaid in part by those who benefitted — namely, the colonists.

This ambitious taxation was a haunting echo of the life the colonists had experienced in the Old World and set out for the New World to escape. But

it was also a harbinger of the times we find ourselves in today in America. In both instances, unrest began to stir in the people.

GROWING RESENTMENT OVER OUT-OF-CONTROL TAXATION

The British Parliament had imposed many taxes on the colonists under the revenue acts, but still they were not satisfied with the amount of money being collected. So in 1765, the Stamp Act was passed, which imposed a levy on just about every type of legal document imaginable, including marriage licenses, college degrees — even such ordinary items as newspapers and playing cards. Needless to say, the colonists were not pleased about this, even though British citizens in England were already paying not only this tax, but many other exorbitant taxes. The Americans felt that once they acquiesced to more British taxation, there would never be an end to escalating tax rates, so they began to boycott British products. The colonists vigorously — and sometimes even brutally — encouraged their fellow Americans to use only products produced in the New World, and they began attacking British tax collectors, sometimes beating them, or even worse, tarring and feathering them. They also used these same intimidation tactics later on fellow Americans to assure compliance with boycotts of British goods. Finally, in 1766, the British Parliament repealed many of the taxes, including the Stamp Act. The colonists celebrated the repeal, even erecting a statue of King George in New York.

It wasn't long, however, before the taxation monster raised its ugly head again, for in 1767, the Townshend Act was passed. This famously included taxes on tea, which the colonists had grown increasingly very fond of. Through trickery and parliamentary procedures, the Townshend Act allowed the British's almost bankrupt East India Company to gain a virtual monopoly on tea sales, exacerbating tensions between the colonies and England. The colonists once again decided to boycott English imports, prompting an angry response from England, who sent four thousand British troops to quell the colonial protests. To sustain themselves in the New

World, the British troops competed with the locals for jobs, which further inflamed tensions between the sides.

In December of 1773, some of the colonists were so outraged with the taxes on tea that they disguised themselves as Native Americans, boarded British ships in Boston Harbor, and destroyed the tea by tossing it all into the harbor. This, of course, was the famous Boston Tea Party. The British were so outraged that they closed Boston Harbor and instilled a harsher governing structure. More taxes and regulations followed, many of which were quite punitive and became known by the colonists as the “Intolerable Acts.” There were frequent clashes between the locals and the soldiers without bloodshed, but this changed on March 5, 1770, when a crowd surrounded a group of redcoats in an angry confrontation and the British soldiers fired shots into the crowd. Five of the locals were killed, the first of whom was Crispus Attucks, an African-American and the first American to die in the Revolutionary War.

The tensions between Great Britain and America continued to build and numerous skirmishes, some of which are well documented by historians, broke out. One of the most famous fights took place on June 17, 1775, at Breed’s Hill,¹ where approximately 2,500 British troops attacked an American installation defended by only about 1,400 troops. It was an intense battle and the British lost approximately 40 percent of their troops, while the Americans lost less than a third of theirs. Even though the British eventually won that battle, it was a Pyrrhic victory, with the devastating psychological impact of their heavy casualties impacting the rest of the war.

The combination of heavy taxation, excessive regulations, and lack of representation in their governing structures irritated the colonists to the point that many of them began talking not only about ways to protest, but also about the desire to declare independence once and for all from the British Crown. With all of their backbreaking hard work, they felt it unfair to have such a significant portion of the fruits of their labors confiscated by a government that neither represented their interests nor respected their freedom. Nevertheless, many colonists (known as Tories or Loyalists) remained loyal to the British Crown and felt that the benefits of British citizenship — or at least of being a British colony — were too great to sacrifice for an uncertain future of independence.

WAKING UP TO SOME “COMMON SENSE”

In 1776, as Washington’s ragtag army kept British forces engaged, public sentiment was growing in favor of independence. All the colonists needed was a spokesman to galvanize public opinion toward resistance from Great Britain — and an unlikely figure emerged in the form of Thomas Paine. He had only been in the country for a little over a year, “arriving as a failure in almost everything he attempted in life. He wrecked his first marriage, and his second wife paid him to leave. He destroyed two businesses and flopped as a tax collector. But Paine had fire in his blood and defiance in his pen,”² and America was and still is a country of fresh starts.

An editor of a Philadelphia magazine, Paine published a fifty-page political pamphlet, *Common Sense*, in January of 1776, which began with one of the most memorable lines in American history: “These are the times that try men’s souls.” The pamphlet resonated so well with the colonists’ feelings about independence that over 120,000 copies of the pamphlet were sold within the first three months, and half a million copies were sold in the first year. To put the impact of Paine’s pamphlet *Common Sense* into perspective, in the United States today you would have to sell about 65 to 70 million copies of a publication — or about one copy per four to five people — to equal the proportionate distribution.

Spurred on by the message of *Common Sense*, enthusiasm for independence grew dramatically, even among former Loyalists. Paine donated the profits from the sale of *Common Sense* to George Washington’s army, saying, “As my wish was to serve an oppressed people, and assist in a just and good cause, I conceived that the honor of it would be promoted by my declining to make even the usual profits of an author.”³ Thomas Jefferson even included a portion of *Common Sense* as the prelude to the Declaration of Independence, which was adopted by Congress in July of that year. The publication clearly resonated deeply with the American colonists’ desire for independence.

In fact, their longing for self-government and willingness to fight — even die — for freedom became so strong that the words of politician Patrick Henry became a rallying cry for the colonists when he said, “Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery?”

Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!” Finally, in 1776, each of the colonies (except Georgia) sent delegates to the First Continental Congress, where the process began for the drafting of the Declaration of Independence.

TEA PARTIES — THEN AND NOW

The rebellion of the Boston Tea Party has many similarities with the political movement today known as the Tea Party. For the sake of simplicity, let’s call the colonial protesters the old Tea Party movement and call the political movement established in 2009 the new Tea Party movement.

In the days of the old Tea Party, the British government and American Loyalists attempted to establish and maintain control of the colonies. When the Patriots first began to resist such efforts, those in power tended to deny that there was any real resistance from anyone except extremist, fringe individuals. Let’s call this the *denial phase*. But as the protests became more prolific, denial was no longer tenable, and the powers that be decided to ignore the movement. Their hope was that if they paid no attention to the protesters, it would be less likely that others would join them and the movement would simply fade away. Let’s call this the *ignore phase*. Unfortunately for those in control, ignoring the movement did nothing to lessen its intensity and, in fact, gave it time to grow even more powerful. The colonists ended up inflicting significant damage on those in power, forcing them to fight back, in many cases, with more force than necessary. Many of the regulations subsequently imposed were a part of this punitive *resistance phase*. The more the established powers resisted, however, the more determined the colonists were to overcome that resistance. Some of the British military leaders actually began to admire the tenacity and bravery of the colonial fighters.

After the Battle of Breed’s Hill, some of the enthusiasm of the British and American Loyalists began to wane, and doubts began to creep into their thinking about whether the growing war was really one worth fighting. The

British had a long and successful history of colonizing many parts of the world, which had brought them great power and wealth, but America and the Americans were different than any of the other groups they had ruled. Perhaps, they considered, America should be exempt from the sovereign dictates of the throne. Maybe they were more like England than any of the other colonies in the world.

At some point in the struggle to regain power, it becomes easier for a ruler to exempt an unruly but powerful subject from punishment than to suffer defeat. During this *exemption phase*, it became increasingly easy for the Loyalists to desert the throne and align themselves with the Patriots, who were gaining power and the admiration of the populace. Many of those formerly in power — the American Loyalists, dedicated to the British crown, for example — began to believe and act on the very things they once railed against, conforming to the ideology and actions of their previous enemies. This we shall call the *conforming phase*. The final phase is the *transformation phase*, in which the ideology of the resistance movement becomes the mainstream philosophy governing a now changed society. And in the case of the American Revolution, the ideas of the old Tea Party — less central government, more local rule, and more personal responsibility — became the basis for a new society that rapidly rose to the pinnacle of the world.

THE NEW TEA PARTY: DIRECTING AMERICA TODAY

The old Tea Party would probably have never been birthed if large segments of the colonial population had not felt oppressed and betrayed by the very government that was supposed to be taking care of their needs. If one were to make an acrostic of the first letters of each of these phases — denial, ignore, resistance, exempt, conforming, and transformation — one gets the word *DIRECT*, and that's basically what happened: an enthusiastic group of fervent believers was able to *direct* a fledgling new nation away from corrupt, oppressive, nonrepresentative government to a fairer, limited, and representative government.

Now let's look at the same *DIRECT* acrostic with respect to the new Tea Party. Late in 2008 and early in 2009, a number of things happened that caused great concern to a large number of Americans. Among these were the passage of the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, the bailout of several major financial agencies, and talk about dramatic reform of the nation's health care system. Scattered small protests about these things were seen around the nation, but the entrenched powers of government and most of the media denied their significance.

Then on February 19, 2009, a business news editor on CNBC by the name of Rick Santelli in a national broadcast from the floor of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange severely criticized government plans to refinance "underwater mortgages," those mortgages whose values are less than the balance owed because of the collapse in housing prices. Many of the derivative traders on the floor in the background applauded, and the hosts of the show were bewildered.

The video of Santelli's outburst went viral, with special emphasis on the part where he called for another tea party, during which traders would gather all of the derivatives for their mortgages and dump them in the Chicago River in protest of the massive corporate infusion at the expense of taxpayers. Shortly after that, many people on television began to refer to the various local protests as "tea parties." The entrenched political establishment and most of the media ignored how fast these protests were growing, just as the British had regarded the colonial protests during the American Revolution. However, as the numbers and intensity of these protests began to multiply, the media began to make fun of the protesters in the hope that this would discourage others from joining in. The passage of the new health care legislation in December of 2009, contrary to what the majority of Americans wanted, was like pouring gasoline on a fire, and it dramatically increased the strength of the Tea Party movement. From the perspective of those in the new Tea Party, not only was the government spending money that it didn't have at an alarming rate, but it had now enacted a gigantic federal program that was going to be very expensive and impose freedom-robbing regulations.

As the protests grew, however, they could no longer be ignored, and the resistance phase began to set in. The attacks from much of the media, from several members of Obama's administration, and from the Democratic Party were relentless and mean-spirited. As with the colonial Tea Party, resistance only served to strengthen the movement, which was beginning to be joined by many notable political figures and other individuals. During the 2010 midterm primaries, Tea Party membership had grown to the point that it was able to significantly influence the outcome of the primaries. Since their values were more closely aligned with the values of the Republican Party than those of the Democratic Party, they concentrated on the Republican primaries, where they prevailed in several states, removing the entrenched traditional Republican candidate and replacing them with a Tea Party candidate.

It became increasingly clear that the Tea Party was not simply an arm of the Republican Party, but rather a significant force for real change. Its constituents recognized that both the Democrats and the Republicans were responsible for excessive spending, incessant pork barrel projects to benefit special constituent groups, and intrusion into the private lives of citizens. Tea Party members were especially outraged by the fact that the president and Democratic congressional leaders did not seem particularly interested in the feelings of the people, as manifested by their cramming of the health-care bill down the throats of the American people. As with the colonial Tea Party, denial, ignoring, and resistance had all failed to stem the tide; therefore, it was time for them to exempt themselves from the struggle to quash the rebellion.

Commentators stopped deriding the Tea Party and began recognizing it as a legitimate political force. They began to think that maybe it was different from some of the other fringe movements that had popped up over the course of the preceding decades. Officials of the Obama administration stopped calling them "tea baggers" and began treating them with respect. As this book is being written, the conforming phase is beginning, and I wouldn't be surprised to see the transformation phase arise before or soon after the 2012 presidential election.

OUR NATION IS IN HOT WATER

For several decades now, America has basically had a two-party system: Democrats and Republicans. Each of these parties has been engaged in the gradual but consistent growth of the central government and its claim on power. Ever-expanding programs offering benefits to the masses are difficult to resist, and with the proliferation of the news media it also became possible for elected officials to gain great notoriety and power. This power became addicting to many elected officials who, instead of going to Washington, DC, for a brief time to represent their constituency, wanted to hold their positions for extended periods of time — even for life. This growing power and the progressive intrusion of government into the lives of the people was so insidious that it went largely undetected. This process is much like the frog that willingly sits in the saucepan as the temperature is gradually increased until the water is boiling, killing the frog. The frog would have immediately jumped out of the saucepan, however, if the water was already boiling from the beginning.

In early 2009, many throughout America voiced their discontent as they began to worry about the excessive government spending for such programs as TARP (Troubled Assets Relief Program) and the proposed bailout for many Wall Street entities and large companies such as General Motors. The country was already in significant debt, with no clear indication of how that money was going to be repaid. It is easy to see how our growing debt, excessive spending, and elected leaders ignoring the will of the people closely resembles the set of circumstances that precipitated the American Revolution.

WILL WE ONCE AGAIN REBEL FOR POSITIVE CHANGE?

America got off to an auspicious start centuries ago because its citizens were unwilling to be herded like sheep by an elite group of “leaders.” They were driven instead by a desire to take ownership of their own fate and establish a nation created by them and for them. Their self-determination

and celebration of freedom to control their own lives helped birth our great nation.

Today, however, a fundamental shift has occurred in the role of our nation's government and the role of its people, and so throughout this book, we will determine whether those seeds of independence still remain viable or whether they have been supplanted by passivity and acceptance of the status quo. For freedom is an elusive bird, constantly on the move, progressively distancing itself from complacency. Do we value our freedom enough to pursue it, or have we lost our way without realizing it? Do we benefit from the principles that established this nation without understanding them?

What will we as America's citizens write in this next chapter of our history? Will we settle for being herded by our leaders' understanding of what is best for us? Or will "we the people" once again rally together, educating ourselves as to the best possible solutions for a way forward, communicating to our leaders our collective desires, and demonstrating that we truly are a nation that rebels for positive change?