

R. DAVID BRANDT

COMMON SENSE 2.0



A REVOLUTION TO ESTABLISH
REAL EQUALITY AND RESTORE
AMERICA'S MIDDLE CLASS

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A Revolution to Establish Real Equality and Restore America's Middle Class

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This is dedicated to the great American historian
Clay Jenkinson, whose words inspired me to write this book.
Also, my eternal gratitude to my family, my wife, Ashlyn,
and children, Hallsey and Lucas, whose encouragement
sustained me through the process.



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PREFACE

I BEGAN WRITING THIS BOOK long before the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis in May 2020. I had been tentatively working on it for about a year, and I honestly wasn't sure when the right time might be to publish a book like this. I can now see God's providential hand in the timing. While most every African American—and some portion of white America—have long been aware of police brutality, something about this event has finally captured the nation's attention.

Protesters in every state and throughout the world are now calling on the United States to live up to its own ideals, to provide the rights guaranteed by the Constitution to *every* American. It's going to be one hell of a fight, because no sooner did protesters hit the streets decrying police brutality than police came out with tear gas, flash bangs, clubs, and rubber bullets to prove them right. The fact that peaceful protesters were attacked for no reason shows that police departments will not easily accept reform.

I say all this because I don't think it's possible—or responsible—to write a book like this without acknowledging what

appears to be a tipping point in our nation's history, a moment when we might finally come to terms with the consequences of slavery, America's original sin. People who are not of color cannot possibly understand what it's like to grow up black or brown in America. Yet, many of them *are* beginning to understand what it's like to have their lives controlled by powerful interests, to have their incomes slashed, to live without affordable healthcare, to see the wealthy and powerful gorge themselves on corporate welfare while others suffer.

Please forgive what might be an awkward transition, but quite possibly, these marginalized Americans are beginning to recognize what it's like to be used and manipulated by powers beyond their control. If so, a coalition might emerge, a coalition of peaceful revolutionaries, forming a movement to take back their country.

Some have not yet awoken. If you're one of them, I write this book for you. It's okay. It's not normal to jump into politics, at least not the way politics is currently being practiced. It's not normal to crave political power for its own sake. No matter—*you* can help us become the America that we were supposed to be. There's still time, but not a lot.

Right now, our nation is going through a phase that, in one way, mimics previous patterns, but in another, is something altogether new. By every metric that matters, 90 percent of our country is losing ground. Our quality of life is eroding while the one percent are doing better than ever. Forgive the cliché, but the American dream has become a nightmare. Time to wake up.





INTRODUCTION

LET'S BEGIN WITH A QUICK-AND-CONCISE REVIEW of humankind's time on Earth, focusing specifically on how we have helped and harmed one another. It won't take long, because, as much as we've progressed in areas of technology, medicine, and creature comforts, human nature has not changed all that much through the millennia. In the beginning, we were just a small group of sparsely scattered people. As our population grew, we began to congregate and started working together, sharing our collective knowledge. Okay, I can already sense your boredom, but stay with me. It will make sense.

As we advanced, some became ambitious. They got people to work for them, building vast enterprises which elevated their own standard of living—which makes perfect sense and still does. However, others decided they wanted more, and the easiest way to accomplish this was to pay their workers less. In the absence of a democratic form of government, things quickly spun out of control. There were societies composed of small groups of “haves” and very large numbers of “have nots.” With few exceptions, this is exactly how the world has worked until quite recently: a relatively

small group of people using a large portion of the population to build and expand their own wealth and power.

In some parts of the world, benevolent leaders created societies where human dignity and fairness were valued, and democratic forms of government later evolved. In other places, however, such a transformation required violence, followed by constant vigilance to protect freedoms won. Which brings us to America.

After a bloody revolution and unlikely victory, we won our freedom . . . at least some of us did. Only one time since the Revolutionary War have we shed blood to preserve the nation. Ironically, it was for the sole purpose of denying freedom to slaves and to preserve the wealth of plantation owners. Those rich white Southerners far outnumbered their poor white neighbors. So, how did they persuade those who had so little to fight on their behalf? They simply convinced them that the North was attempting to deny them their way of life, that freed slaves would take their jobs and possibly do them harm. Sound familiar? It comes right out of a playbook that is still being used today—the politics of division.

The good news is this: the Founding Fathers *did* leave us with a form of government that allows for peaceful change, and there have been pivotal points in our nation's history where this has occurred, despite dirty political tricks, deceit, and outright corruption by those with bad intent. In each instance, the oppressed had to become so marginalized, so abused, and so fed up that they rose up in defiance.

Who are these people? They are the very soul of this nation. They don't expect too much out of life. They are happy to play their role, so long as they can maintain some form of dignity and provide for their families. They are not greedy or overly ambitious. They shun politics. In many ways, they often enjoy life more than

those who have great wealth. They are normal, pragmatic people, focused on solving problems, not getting caught up in political ideology. They often remain silent until they are robbed of their humanity or their ability to provide for their families. These are the circumstances in which we find ourselves today.

For the greater part of our existence, this nation has been controlled by two parties, each with agendas crafted by political extremists. There is little appetite for compromise between them, and, as a result, the gap between the haves and have nots is widening. As sad as it seems, this is only a part of the problem. Slavery still haunts us today. Outright enslavement and subsequent segregation have been replaced by systemic racism, ugly in all its forms.

Racism continues to keep people of color from receiving good educations, owning homes, and building wealth. You would think a shrinking white middle class might be motivated to stand in solidarity with their fellow black Americans, but well-funded politicians are using unlimited resources to sow the seeds of division. Many poor rural Americans are content to live in poverty, so long as they are allowed to own plenty of guns, maintain their religious freedoms—which *are not* being threatened—and sit superior in their own minds over people who do not look like them. These are not good people, but they are Americans, and they do vote. The only way you, the “frustrated majority,” can lessen their influence is to get involved in the political process, or, at the very least, go out and vote. Of course, not all poor, rural white Americans fit this profile, but enough of them do to form a potent political voting bloc.

Before we go any further, let me explain who comprises America’s frustrated majority. They, for lack of a better word, are “normal.” I’m not being sarcastic, and, at the end of this book, I

will explain what I think it means to be a “normal,” pragmatic American. It’s not what you might think.

To continue, we are approaching a point where even the most politically complacent should be willing to rise up and force the extreme left and far right to moderate their positions, to promote the best interests of the nation as a whole. It’s time we ask ourselves: *What kind of country do we want to live in?* That’s what this book is about. Before we can ask that question, we need to get a clear view of what America looks like at this moment in time.

This book does not contain elaborate political arguments. It’s a straightforward, common-sense call to political arms, written in plain language. It’s a call for a “non-violent” revolution . . . while that is still possible. With each passing year, more and more is being taken away from hard-working Americans. The top one percent pay a fraction of the taxes they once did, if they pay any at all. Many large corporations pay not a penny in federal income tax.

If the American way is to survive, the frustrated majority must get involved. Admittedly, a group of unorganized activists can do little against the powers of the Republican and Democratic parties. What’s needed is a third party.

For now, we have to deal with the parties we have; this is not an ideal situation. Republicans are guilty of showering the wealthy with unearned tax breaks and businesses with corporate welfare. Democrats will condemn the cost of health-care and then gladly accept contributions from insurance and pharmaceutical companies.¹

This book is designed to cut through the massive disinformation campaign being waged by big business and its enablers in congress. The goal here is to present a set of facts, along with a

starting point for a course of action that might correct what has become a massive imbalance of power and wealth. Throughout the book, great pains have been taken to back up and attribute all assertions with unbiased sources. I say “unbiased,” but these sources most certainly have agendas, and that is to do things differently from how they are currently being done. So, of course, the old political guard is going to question their motives.

One last thing before we commence: the title of the book. *Common Sense* was a political pamphlet written by Thomas Paine in 1776. Its contents have been studied by countless historians since. Yet, Wikipedia probably provides the most straightforward description of its purpose:

“Writing in clear and persuasive prose, Paine marshaled moral and political arguments to encourage common people in the Colonies to fight for egalitarian government.”

Am I arrogant to think I can pick up where he left off? Clearly, I am no one special. A former TV reporter, now public relations professional, I am just another citizen. But guess what? When he wrote *Common Sense*, Thomas Paine was no one of real consequence. I am an American just like you, and I’ve had enough. I just hope the words in this book can spark the passions of those who, for too long, have remained silent. You know, the “frustrated majority.” Maybe you are among them. If so, just remember: you don’t have to do everything—just do *something*. Together, maybe we can make this country what we all hope it can be.

