

Gimme Shelter...And Lots Of Other Free Stuff

James Madison, 'The Father of the Constitution,' issued a prescient warning before the ink was even dry on that historic parchment.

The new American republic was perhaps a doomed experiment because, in Madison's words, 'There is not sufficient virtue among men for self-government.'

One of the great 'virtues' the Founders extolled was the absolute necessity for individual self-reliance. Without it, we would inevitably become a nation of givers and freeloaders.

Can anyone deny that's precisely what has happened?

Millions of voters, their hands outstretched like pitiful urchins in a Dickens novel, believe the federal government owes them. To them, all that jibberish about 'self-reliance' is a quaint relic, kind of like powdered wigs, breeches, and tricorne hats.

The government, meaning their fellow citizens, apparently owes them a job, education, health care, food, shelter, and financial security. That's just for starters. Let's not forget free condoms, intoxicants, and the other necessities of life.

But it's hard to blame the 'gimme' crowd. To borrow from Sam Cooke, they 'don't know much about history.'

They have been taught to scoff at the 'dead white males' who founded this nation, and they were raised to expect government goodies. Beyond that, it's part of human nature to accept freebies when they're offered. After all, how many well-heeled folks refuse to cash those Social Security checks that they really don't need?

No, let's place the preponderance of blame on our so-called leaders.

For months we heard Bernie Sanders, may his demagogic campaign rest in peace, railing against corporate greed and big banks. He was essentially telling his young and gullible followers that their lot in life is determined by some guys in slick suits on the corner of Broad and Wall.

That is false, and it is downright dangerous!

Then there are the odious race hustlers like Al Sharpton and Black Lives Matter. They have blood on their hands, black blood, because they look the other way as young black men slaughter one another. They prefer to blame 'institutional racism,' white privilege, and even gun manufacturers.

Yeah, that's the ticket – it's the fault of Mr. Smith and Mr. Wesson!

Last week a professor named Eddie Glaude Jr., who teaches African-American Studies at Princeton University, actually decried the 'myth of black-on-black crime.' We'll mention again that 913 people have been shot in Chicago this year, most recently a one-year-old girl who was hit in the neck. Her family probably isn't buying into Glaude's 'myth' deal.

Presumptive nominees Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton aren't immune to wishful thinking. They say they'll punish U.S. companies who move jobs overseas.

Okay, but who will fill those jobs here when our broken schools and dysfunctional families turn out millions of young people who are downright irresponsible and ill-educated. They know how to ask for stuff, but have very little idea how to go out and get stuff on their own. Legally, that is.

What can society do for an 18-year-old who has ink on her neck, a baby on the way, and can't string together a coherent

sentence? Let's face it, she's probably not going to be a CPA or RN any time soon.

The cycle continues.

Mr. Trump and Secretary Clinton can vow to bring jobs back, but someone also has to have the guts to talk about the corrosive culture and the message that it sends to young Americans. Far too many of our citizens turn JFK's admonition on its head, asking only what the government can do for them.

It took decades to reach this state of affairs, which was accelerated by Barack Obama and his expansion of the welfare state. It will take decades to reverse course, if that is even possible.

It's worth considering a pithy quote from Benjamin Franklin, who was 81 during the sweltering summer of 1787 when the Constitution was hammered out in Philadelphia. He was the oldest person to sign the document, and tears streamed down his face as he affixed his signature.

When Franklin left the hall that September day, he was approached by a Philadelphia woman named Mrs. Powel. 'Well, Doctor,' she asked, 'what have we got, a republic or a monarchy?' Franklin's reply: 'A republic, if you can keep it.'

229 years later, sadly, that remains an open question.