

America is Not the Norm

by [Chenyuan Snider](#) (August 2021)



There is An America, Zhao Gang, 2007

In the late 1980s, I was assigned to live with American students in my college to help them learn Chinese. At one time, a Chinese student, who was a member of the Communist Party, asked the American students, “Who holds the power in America?” All the American students unequivocally answered, “People!” My Chinese friend laughed and retorted with a sense of contempt and disbelief, “No! Reagan holds the power!” I listened to the sharp debate and was dumbstruck by the notion that there was a place where people lived freely and were given the right to make political decisions. My mind could not grasp the concept—it was outside my frame of reference.

Living with American students, I had the impression that American culture, in general, cherishes freedom and values individual worth and dignity. For those who have grown up in America, this might not be so evident, for it's been often taken for granted. Unless you've lived in another culture long enough, you will unlikely see the reality that a person living in this country is freer and has more worth and dignity than people in the most part of the world. How did America come up with the notion of freedom? Where does the concept of human dignity and freedom come from?

One day while reading the Hebrew Scripture, my heart was stirred by the words in front of me, "When you make your neighbor a loan of any kind, you shall not go into the house to take the pledge. You shall wait outside, while the person to whom you are making the loan brings the pledge out to you" (Deut. 24:10-11). The purpose of this passage is to recognize that an individual household is a sanctuary of privacy and thus, cannot be invaded even under the legitimacy of taking a pledge to secure a loan. It defends individuals' dignity and property rights. Even the ones who have fallen upon hard times and have been compelled to take a loan are under this protection. I was profoundly touched by God's heart, His deep care and sensitivity towards His special creation. I thought, should I have read this passage while I was still an atheist, I would have immediately recognized the otherworldly quality of this passage and would have abandoned my atheism right there! Neither human heart nor human mind is capable of producing such writing. Long before I became a Christian, I had recognized that our basic physical needs, though they are important, are not enough for us to live as human. There is something about being human that is intrinsically sacred. Only when that sacredness is acknowledged and prized do we live truly as human beings.

Where does our sacredness come from? Genesis tells us God created us in His image and likeness. Our sacredness comes

from our Creator who imparted in us the unalienable rights to live with freedom and dignity. Freedom is one of the central themes in the Hebrew Scripture (Ex. 6:6; Deut. 6:21; 15:15; 16:12; 24: 18, 22). Throughout human history, there have been many who attempted to achieve freedom. However, secular endeavors of liberation always end up in tyranny and atrocities because they do not acknowledge that human dignity is the possession of everyman. Instead, my freedom is your bondage. Critical Race Theory is a clear manifestation of this lack of recognition of human dignity. On the surface, the Communist Party appeared to have freed millions of disadvantaged Chinese in 1949. Yet, in reality, millions were killed and Mao's Cultural Revolution (1966-76) was the darkest moment in Chinese history. Ironically, he was designated as "Our Great Deliverer."

America is unlike any other place in human history. Our political system, the Constitutional Republic, has given the greatest freedom to the people. Its three branches are designed to safeguard our freedom and to ensure that power resides in the hands of the people. America has attracted millions of people from every corner on the earth. Some, even abandoning their reputable professions in their homeland, came here and are willing to work in a less regarded occupation. Why? As God's image bearers, we cannot feel satisfied unless our freedom is met and our dignity is recognized. Even the most spiritual believers do not desire to live in oppression if they can help it, because the longing for freedom and dignity is part of our divine imprint, the unalienable rights bestowed by our Creator.

It is my conviction that God raised up America as a shining city on a hill, a beacon of hope to the world to demonstrate His will for all human beings, to live freely with dignity. America is not founded on human intelligence and sagacity. Rather, its foundation is built on the God of the Hebrew Scripture who created us in His image and likeness and

granted us with freedom and dignity. In Deut. 23:21-22, God demands us to fulfil the vow made to Him. However, He also states that to make or not to make a vow to Him is entirely voluntary, leaving freedom for us to make that decision. Our founders recognized that God made us free, thus, religious faith and conscience cannot be coerced. In our Bill of Rights, the freedoms in the First Amendment reflect these thoughts.

America is not a norm but an exception because she alone is built on the biblical principle of human freedom and dignity whose origin is in the image of God. It is an earthly representation of God's will for us to live freely with dignity. That reality also points us to Christ in whom we have ultimate freedom. Until now and possibly until the return of Christ, America is the best country in human history with the highest degree of human freedom and dignity. While seeking spiritual growth, we should never ignore this earth on which God has placed us. We are responsible to leave a free society to our children and grandchildren. There will never be a more urgent moment than now for us to carry out this responsibility.

Yes, America is far from being perfect and she has made many mistakes. But if we step back and look at the big picture, we might be able to appreciate the green forest instead of focusing on the fallen leaves.

The expression, "we are at a crossroad," has become a hackneyed cliché because, though many warnings have gone out, they usually disappear in the dark with few echoes and rejoinders. When I was in elementary school living in China, I learned this poem written by a Communist youth in the 1920s: "Life is precious, love is priceless. For the sake of liberty, both I will renounce!" He died in prison fighting for what he believed and did not live to see the "liberation" of the Chinese people by the Communist Party in 1949. If a communist had that passion for secular freedom, will we, who are the beneficiaries of the freedom built on biblical principles, not

fight to defend her? Will we watch the supreme liberty in human history fall before our eyes and do nothing?

America is not a norm but an exception, which requires exceptional valor and gallantry to stand up and fight for her. May God, the originator of our liberty, waken in our hearts a passion for freedom that we may treasure what we've had and defend her with bravery and heroism—may God bless America!

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Chenyuan Snider was raised in Communist China and majored in Chinese language and literature in college. After immigrating to the U.S. and having studied at Assemblies of God Theological Seminary and Duke Divinity School, she became a professor and taught at Christian colleges and seminary. After March of 2020, she began to use her unique voice to provide a warning about various kinds of Marxist influences in our society. She lives in northern California with her husband and has two grown children.

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