



## Straight Talk

By Muriel Sluyter

## How Did We Get Here?

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### Greetings, Gentle Reader,

Without George Washington, this nation could never have become what it is. His very presence gave the people confidence. He was an extraordinary man, a man of integrity, faith, great courage, and determination.

When he became president of this fledgling nation, Washington made sure the people understood he was not their ruler. They wanted him to be their king, but that violated his vision of America. He wanted a free people, who would take responsibility for their own destiny. He knew a courageous, determined, responsible people of honor and decency couldn't long be kept in captivity; neither, unfortunately, could a people lacking these virtues long remain free.

Washington understood these two sides of freedom. If he remained President, the people, who trusted him implicitly, would not learn to do the heavy lifting necessary for self-government. He knew he would become a de facto king, which would destroy everything for which he had struggled and sacrificed.

Freedom develops only when people govern themselves. When people refuse to govern themselves, it's only a matter of time before a tyrant seizes power. All nature abhors a vacuum, and that principle applies in the affairs of men, as well as in nature.

At the end of his two terms as President, Washington told the people the survival of America's freedom was on their shoulders; it would depend solely on the character of the people and the government they would elect.

The American colonists had governed themselves to a great extent, through most of their years as a colony. They were an educated, intelligent lot, by and large, and were equal to the task of self-government, but they needed to be kicked out of the nest and made to fly on their own. Washington did precisely that for them.

So, how do modern Americans measure up by Washington's standards? Probably not very well.

We have lost much of what America had in its infancy, though we have retained some of the concept of power from the people up, rather than from the government down. We still

elect our leaders, though outsiders with power and money are vastly more influential than in our country's early days.

In May, 1987, Thurgood Marshall, Supreme Court Justice, said, "I do not believe that the meaning of the Constitution was forever fixed at the Philadelphia Convention... Nor do I find the wisdom, foresight and sense of justice exhibited by the framers particularly profound. To the contrary, the government they devised was defective from the start..." At another point he said, "You (meaning himself as a justice) do what you think is right and let the law catch up." My interpretation of his view is "Why interpret the Constitution when you can write your own."

Marshall had contempt for the Constitution, for our form of government, and for those who established a country in which he could malign anyone and everything he chose, because of his position as a Supreme Court Justice.

In 1963, Justice William Brennan said, "A too literal quest for the advice of the founding fathers seems to me futile and misdirected..."

Many judges agree with Brennan and Marshall. When a legislative body writes law contrary to a judge's personal philosophy, he can declare it unconstitutional, whether it is or not. Citizen-initiated amendments can suffer the same fate.

Daniel Webster said, "The Constitution was made to guard the people against the dangers of good intentions." If our legislators, judges, and executives repeated these words every morning before leaving for work, America would have vastly fewer laws and statutes. If voters held all the above officials to this concept, Americans still would enjoy vastly greater freedom.

p.s. Congratulations to Newsweek: They have earned the ignominious Dan Rather award for venomously fallacious reporting.