



## Patriotism

By Rod Blum

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Samuel Clemens, better known by his pen name Mark Twain, was born in 1835 during a visit by Halley's Comet. Twain predicted that he would "go out with the comet" as well. Halley's Comet returned to Earth on April 20 1910 - Twain died the next day. Six years before he hitched a ride on the comet, Twain wrote the following about patriotism in his journal: "In the beginning of a change the patriot is a scarce man, and brave, and hated and scorned. When his cause succeeds, the timid join him, for then it costs nothing to be a patriot."

Too many Americans think it costs nothing to be a citizen-patriot because our freedoms have been inherited – paid for with the blood and sacrifices of those who came before us. One such noble group were the original American patriots who fought the Revolutionary War against a vast empire the sun never set on – the British Empire, whom at its height ruled over a quarter of the Earth's population. Those brave souls were fighting for the very ideas that gave birth to our country – such as freedom, inalienable rights and self-determination. These principles compelled hundreds of thousands of ordinary people like you and I – farmers, shopkeepers, carpenters and wives - to put their lives on the line. My concept of patriotism is a devotion to the same principles that our original patriots fought for.

The principles are all there in that glorious document named the Declaration of Independence. All men are created equal. They are endowed not by government but by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, such as life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Government must be limited to protecting the peace and preserving our individual freedoms and liberties. It's the right of a free people to rid themselves of a government that becomes destructive of those principles, as our founding patriots did in 1776.

True patriots are motivated by a sense of responsibility to our founding principles and those who came before us. But they're also motivated out of self-interest for themselves and their families. If all citizens took seriously the responsibility of taking care of themselves and their families think how much better off our country would be and smaller our government. True patriots understand the marvelous rewards our free society bestows on us - rewards that come from hard work and personal responsibility – not government handouts.

Through some very flawed logic, today's conservative patriots are labeled "extremists" by the major media and big government advocates. The principle of patriotism has been turned on its head - the defenders of liberty and the Constitution are portrayed as mean-spirited and unpatriotic while those who support increasing socialism and the nanny state are seen as patriots.

Based on these twisted standards the very Founders of our country would be labeled “extremists”.

Though we inherited our freedoms, the burden we must bear is constant vigilance of our government. Freedom, independence and self-determination are the bedrocks on which this nation was founded – and we stray from those principles at our own peril. We must not be silenced by political correctness, for bad things happen when good people stay silent. We must stand up and make our voices heard - question our elected leaders boldly. Former President Andrew Jackson, in his farewell address in 1837 said, “You must remember, my fellow-citizens, that eternal vigilance by the people is the price of liberty, and that you must pay the price if you wish to secure the blessing.” Mark Twain could not have penned it better.