“Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom must, like men, undergo the fatigue of supporting it.”
– Thomas Paine

In 1776, Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense* showered sparks on the tinder of revolution. With the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Americans formally claimed their rights, and that tinder exploded into a new age for mankind.

But more than 200 years later, the flames of freedom are dying. We cry that Washington has failed us, but that is not where the blame lies.

With our rights, We the People were given the duty to maintain them. We the People are the problem. And We the People are the solution. Our republic will be restored not through political revolution, but through a revolution of the soul—not as we point fingers upward, but as we turn inward.

In an age of blame, this is uncommon sense. And it’s precisely what America needs to rekindle her light.

“Uncommon Sense is earnest, idealistic, counter-intuitive and vital; a Tea Party for the soul. At times it had my heart racing, and at times moved me to tears. This empowering work is elegant in its simplicity and profound in its potential to move the hearts and minds of our people to own their role as the Overseers of Freedom and to advance the cause of liberty.”

– Oliver DeMille, Founder of George Wythe University, Author of *A Thomas Jefferson Education*

“Uncommon Sense is full of inconvenient ideas that truly are the only solutions to our modern problems...Most of us won’t like the answers to our world’s most pressing questions, even when we know they’re true. But these are the fundamental ideas and principles that will take us...to a place more worthy of our national heritage and our individual divinity.”

– Dave Wilson

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UNCOMMON SENSE

A
COMMON CITIZEN’S
GUIDE TO
REBUILDING AMERICA

STEPHEN PALMER
About the Author

Stephen Palmer is a marketing consultant and writer with KGaps Consulting (www.kgaps.com) and a founding partner of The Center for Social Leadership (www.thesocialleader.com).

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Note to Readers

This book is a collection of essays that I have written over the last four years. Although some of them reference past events, my hope is that you will identify and apply the timeless principles found throughout.
Education Must Precede Activism

"Force without wisdom falls of its own weight."
– Horace

I was once teaching a class on the Constitution when I witnessed a sad phenomenon.

This was a room full of people wholly dedicated to the cause of liberty—the people who “get it.”

I asked the class, “How many of you agree with William Gladstone’s quote that the Constitution is ‘...the most wonderful work ever struck off at a given time by the mind and purpose of man’?”

Every attendee raised their hand. I told them to keep their hands raised, then asked, “How many of you have actually read it?” A few hands dropped. “Of you who have actually read it from beginning to
end,” I continued, “how many have read it within the last six months?”

Still more hands dropped. I persisted. “Of those who still have their hands raised, how many of you can tell us what Article III talks about?” More hands dropped. By this time only about half of the room had their hands raised.

By the time I asked who knew what habeas corpus means and what bills of attainder are, not a single person in the room had their hand raised. Mind you, these are the same people who had just said that they agreed with Gladstone’s quote, yet very few of them could answer the most basic questions about the Constitution.

The most common criticisms I receive don’t come from people who take polar opposite positions from my views. In fact, they come from freedom-loving patriots who believe that my recommended action steps are “benign.” For example, they tell me that reading classics will do little to solve our looming problems.

I respect these devoted people. But I do have a different perspective on what needs to happen for our Republic to be restored.
America is primed for a French Revolution scenario. To take it even further, we exhibit many of the qualities of German civilization prior to World War II. We’re a highly-trained, yet poorly-educated populace. We’ve lost our understanding of true education. Furthermore, we have staggering discrepancies in wealth distribution. We’re headed toward a lot of chaos and pain.

Plainly put, we don’t have enough widespread education to sustain an anger-driven revolution. The People trying to fight Washington and other power interests right now is like replacing a strip club with a flea market. There’s no use in fighting unless we have quality replacement options. It’s not enough to just be mad; we must also be wise. And turning inward is the beginning of wisdom.

Confucius said it best in his classic essay *The Great Learning*:

“The ancients who wished to illustrate illustrious virtue throughout the kingdom, first ordered well their own states. Wishing to order well their states, they first regulated their families. Wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivated their persons. Wishing to
cultivate their persons, they first rectified their hearts. Wishing to rectify their hearts, they first sought to be sincere in their thoughts. Wishing to be sincere in their thoughts, they first extended to the utmost their knowledge. Such extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things.

“Things being investigated, knowledge became complete. Their knowledge being complete, their thoughts were sincere. Their thoughts being sincere, their hearts were then rectified. Their hearts being rectified, their persons were cultivated. Their persons being cultivated, their families were regulated. Their families being regulated, their states were rightly governed. Their states being rightly governed, the whole kingdom was made tranquil and happy.”

Not only does turning inward lead to wisdom, but it also leads to power. This is my core message: Fixing ourselves as individuals is what fixes the world.

If this sounds “benign” to you, I probably can’t convince you otherwise. But I would point out that the most influential leaders, from Jesus Christ to Gandhi, have taken this approach. And they seemed to have done a pretty good job of improving the world.
There are others who say, “Yeah, we get it. But what do we actually do about it?” To those I humbly repeat, “Continue working on yourself and your education.” If our education were deep and broad enough we wouldn’t have to ask that question.

I accept that this message may disappoint many. It may seem too simplistic. It may seem to be too little, too late. To those familiar with my writing, I may sound like a broken record. But it’s the light that animates everything that I do and everything I aspire to. It’s the spiritual beating of my heart, the passion blood flowing through my veins, the mission muscles that give me strength to endure.

I’m fed up with the Federal Reserve. But I also don’t have a complete grasp on how our monetary system should operate in the 21st Century, nor do I have a solid plan for making a transition. So I don’t march on Washington to scream at the Federal Reserve; I stay at home and read everything I can find on monetary policy.

I’m sick and tired of weaseling, compromising, ignorant, money-and-power-grubbing politicians. So I prepare myself to be a political leader with integrity, knowledge and wisdom. I’m dismayed by the decay
of the family. But I’m further dismayed by the times when I’m angry and impatient with my wife and children. So I focus my dismay on doing all I can to improve as a husband and father.

This is what I stand for. This is the message you’ll hear for as long as I have breath. And when you see me march on Washington, it won’t be because I’m “mad as hell and I’m not going to take it anymore.” It will be because I actually have real, sustainable solutions and the ability to carry them out.

Until then, I’m working on myself.