

The Pledge of Allegiance

The point so often missed about the Pledge of Allegiance is that America is supposed to be a free society, yet our children are forced (*yes, I said forced*) to recite a pledge...to a flag, to the nation, and to the concept of God. Why? To teach them to be patriotic? No, the truth is the Pledge of Allegiance is indoctrination. If you want to teach children to be patriotic, give them a reason to be patriotic. The first step would be to stop removing civics and history classes from public schools, and then be more honest about our history so it does not only pertain to white children. A nation based on liberty and law should be honest about its history and inclusive to all citizens and guests.

It is true that America allowed slavery but fought to abolish it. It is also true that we then treated minorities like second class citizens (*and in many ways still do*). It is equally true that we committed genocide against the Native Americans. It is true that we used and abused Chinese immigrants to build our railway system. It is very true that we allowed, and continue to allow, private industry to commit inhumane acts for profit. It is absolutely true that we started a number of wars whenever it suited us economically. These are truths that cannot be hidden, so talk about them. Hiding the truth or lying about it does not make someone patriotic. Quite frankly, neither does a hollow pledge.

Yes, I called the pledge hollow, and it absolutely is. The pledge lacks merit when children do not understand the words they are being coerced into saying. They are neither taught the true history of the pledge or their right to not say it for any reason including religious convictions. Sitting quietly while other children say the pledge is not a sufficient solution. The children who refuse to say the pledge (*and that act is their right*) are still subject to the indoctrination of the recital. They have to hear it day in and day out. In addition, these children are now more easily singled out by bullies and cruel faculty members. I have argued this for years and have had many angry parents basically (*and at times literally*) say “*Fuck any kid who doesn't say the pledge*”. But that is not how our society is based.

Rousseau discussed the Will of All in his epic *The Social Contract*. The Will of All is a majority rule concept. If we allowed majority rule, our democracy would stomp on the rights of every minority group and every individual who did not fit into the norm. And that is why civil liberties exist; to protect the few from the many.

What is this true history that I speak of? The Pledge of Allegiance was not written until almost 100 years after America was founded. It was thrown together hastily for a Columbus Day celebration which we know is a white supremacist myth with a very bigoted following from the Nativists (*these were white guys who hated everyone else including other white people, especially the influx of Irish, Italian, Polish, Jewish, gypsy, and etc. immigrants*). This version of the pledge did not mention God at all. In fact, schools did not recite this pledge or even have flags for decades. It took the work of the VFW, American Legion, and the Knights of Columbus (*yep, the KOC has a bigoted history and founding*) to establish both.

When the pledge was instilled in schools it was the Jehovah's Witnesses who were the first to refuse to say it, seeing it as idolatry, which is how I saw it as a child and I refused to say it.

These kids were punished severely as I was. Some were beaten and choked by faculty. Nonetheless, they usually won their cases in court. That did not stop angry mobs led by the VFW, American Legion, and KOC groups to run people out of town. The pledge has a very violent, bigoted, and bloody history. It became a further legal infringement of civil liberties when in 1956 Congress violated the first amendment and added the phrase "*Under God*". This stemmed from the Red Scare when citizens were not allowed to be communists. Communists had to be weeded out and the pledge was used once again for bigoted purposes. To a large extent, we are still not allowed to be communists, socialists, or even liberal.

So much for freedom and liberty.

The Pledge of Allegiance is a violation of our children's civil liberties. Every child has the right to say it, just as every child has the right to pray. However, the school is a government agency. The school is also for ALL children. Therefore, the school cannot lead children in prayer any more than it can legally lead the children to pledge their allegiance to a flag (*idolatry*), to the republic (*nationalist indoctrination*), or to God (*religious indoctrination*). That is, however, if you believe the Constitution and the Bill of Rights are laws that should be followed.

Accordingly, the crux is that the Supreme, federal, state, and local courts have historically argued that the "*under God*" phrase is not an acknowledgment of a specific religion because "*God*" is a universal concept. Unless you are an atheist or a Buddhist, or your God is Satan or the Earth. Or worse, if you realize the actual context being put forth is that God is represented in our flag and our nation, which is blasphemy to some of us.

Yes, I said "*us*". As a child, I believed that pledging my allegiance to the flag was a form of idolatry and I would be punished for eternity for this form of prayer to a false idol. My parents did not coerce me into believing this. In fact, my father punished me (*along with some overzealous teachers and a few bullies*). I realized this ideal on my own in an atmosphere that was not conducive to individualism. And I took my lumps for that conviction. Some would say I deserved it. But did I? Did I deserve to be brutalized for not pledging my allegiance to the flag? The answer, of course, is no. Specifically, if you believe in the concept that we are free. I have heard the argument that by not saying the pledge you dishonor all the men who fought and died for our freedom. Yet, do we not dishonor them further by forcing people to say a Pledge of Allegiance rather than teach why we should love America? Do we not dishonor them further by limiting the freedom of the few to placate the many? Is that the America you really want to live in?

Christian groups who subscribe to the Dominionism agenda want to rewrite history, rewrite laws, and completely change our culture to create a Christian theocratic tyranny. They use the Pledge as evidence that we were always a Christian nation. This simply is not true. We are a nation filled with Christians and many other schools of thought because the Constitution allows for and protects freedom of religion. This also provides "*Freedom From Religion*". The sad part is that even people who do not prescribe to Dominionism will agree with the Pledge being integral to our society. These people claim it is tradition. Lots of things are a tradition that should never have been. Slavery was tradition and we all know it was morally wrong. Going to church on Sunday is tradition. Turkey on Thanksgiving is tradition. These are all things that are either wrong or violate someone's rights if forced upon them.

It really comes down to choice. Making kids recite the pledge without knowing the history of it or their rights around it is indoctrination. I say “*making*” because kids do not have a choice and are coerced through the veiled threat of punishment from faculty and in many cases a very real threat of physical harm from bullies and their parents, as was the case with me. I say indoctrination because, if the pledge is so important to have the kids recite then why not teach them what they are reciting, what it means, and why they are reciting? Most importantly, they should know their rights. How will you teach that to elementary school kids? Why must they recite it? The reasons behind this are scary.

We are in the midst of an angry nationalist mentality, especially since 9/11. The breaking points that Dominionists will use to take over will include nationalism, militarized police, and if necessary, the multitude of Christian fundamentalists who are in Congress and/or have military training. They will try to rewrite history. They will hold up traditions like the pledge and use them as emotional issues to rile people up, much like the issues of abortion, marriage equality, and the fabricated “*War on Christmas*”.

I don't want that for anyone. I am not moving to another country to placate the mob. I am staying right here, and I am going to force people to think this through logically rather than emotionally. I am planting seeds in the minds of everyone who reads or hears my words. Some have claimed I am paranoid. Perhaps my mind does deduce things in this way because I am a database programmer and I am trained to see connections and relationships that other people overlook. Perhaps I am hypersensitive to history and the symbiotic replaying of events as they unfold. However, it is clear to me that we are heading into a cultural upheaval and the results will be the closing of our open society. The pledge will be a very large nail in the coffin of liberty my friends.