



Hi, my name is Carvel Cook; I'm 58 years old. I do the irrigation at the University of Portland. To come from a small town in Oregon—Brookings—and to never have seen any kind of minorities and to be thrown into the army with draftees and to find out black, brown, white, plaid, polka dot: We're all Americans. We all ate out of the same pot at, when we had chow. We had five spoons in it. We just passed the same pot around.

What it means to me to be American is to be free, to have choices in life, to do, within reason, what is best for me and my family. And also to understand that the cost of freedom isn't free. The right to assemble when I choose, who I choose with; the right to have freedom of speech. We in this country take it for granted that this is something that's always been, always will be, and it's not. It's something that we have to defend day by day. It's so important that, uh, that people understand that this is Disneyland. This is the best that there is in the world. You have the economic freedoms. You've got personal freedoms. You've got political freedoms. You've got religious freedoms that you have no place else in the world.

As the saying goes, "We're the government, we're here to help you," which is specious at best. The government is best to pass some laws and get out of the way, let people do what they can do. It's insane that if I wanted to move from this building here across the street, the City of Portland wants me to pay them \$35,000 or whatever that is just for all these taxes. You know, I mean, it's nuts. I have not seen a workable situation of redistribution of wealth. It doesn't, because it goes through Washington. How many charities—you give to X-Y-Z charity, and they charge 80 percent or 90 percent for their overhead, and that's what government does. How big a bureaucracy do we need? Is it a never-ending bureaucracy?

The people who have a ton of money: Gates, Hollywood people, sports people, business people, sure, they have a ton of money, but they're also buying stuff and putting it back into the economy.

They're not sitting on a big—they're not Scrooge McDuck, sitting on a big pile of gold someplace going, "Yeah, this is mine. I'm not going to spend anymore." And you're going to have, with 300 million people, you're going to have a bell-shaped curve. You're going to have people with a ton of money, and people with nothing, and you're going to have a lot of people in the middle.

Equality is, you can, you can live where you want to live; have an opinion that you want to have; you can do what you want to do without harming society. It's being equal before the law, and if you, if you screw the pooch, the consequences should, also should be equal. Is this person more equal than this person because of skin color? Because of gender? Because of sexual orientation? That's not government's job. Government's job is to set up a set of standards or rules that society can live by. I'm not particularly religious, but the, like the Ten Commandments is a good thumbnail way to live life. Don't covet your neighbor's stuff; don't steal; don't commit murder. Not thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not commit murder.

I vote every election. I don't force my political opinion on anybody but if they ask me I'll tell them, and if they don't like it, then they probably shouldn't ask me again. But you have to be able to discuss things. You have to be able to tell people where you stand, if not to convince them of the rightness or the wrongness of your position but at least to discuss it. If you choose not to vote, then don't be surprised if something happens you don't particularly like. You need to be engaged. If you're not engaged, I don't care if you've got, if you've got, if you can't rub two dimes together. You can still register. You can still vote. That's, that's about as engaged as you can get if you don't have any money.

If you want it bad enough, you can get it here. You don't have to rob people. You don't have to steal. You can get what you need if you want to get off the dime and do something. If you want to sit there and way "woe is me," well, probably is. I think that there's a reason people come to this country. It's not because we're all such nice people. It's that you can, you can make a good life here. You can do what you want to do here. But also, I think, as they said that the tree of liberty has to be watered with the blood of tyrants and patriots every once in a while, and that's what we're doing; that's what our country is about is that we stand up for what's right.