



THE UNPATRIOTIC TRUTH

A.M. BER

The Unpatriotic Truth

How History's Patterns Explain America's Crises

A.M. Ber

First published by Gravel & Ink Publishing 2025

Copyright © 2025 by A.M. Ber

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise without written permission from the publisher. It is illegal to copy this book, post it to a website, or distribute it by any other means without permission.

First edition

What you are about to read reflects the research, perspectives, and hard-earned conclusions of the author. These viewpoints have been formed through years of rigorous study, examination of historical records, analysis of reputable sources, and ongoing engagement with human rights and current events. While every reasonable effort has been made to ensure factual accuracy, the author makes no guarantees regarding completeness or absolute precision. The conclusions, and opinions expressed in this work are entirely the author's own and do not represent the views of any organizations, employers, institutions, or publishers associated with the author. This book is intended for educational and informational purposes only. Any errors or omissions are unintentional, and the author assumes no liability for any losses, damages, or consequences arising from the use or reliance upon the material presented. This book was written with the intention of opening minds, hearts, and conversation. All readers are encouraged to continue their own research, question everything, and form their own informed opinions.

Introduction

Chapter 1	The Constitution: What It Really Says
Chapter 2	Enslavement, Women, Indigenous Nations, Sexual and Gender Minorities
Chapter 3	Reconstruction
Chapter 4	The Rise of Corporate Power
Chapter 5	Red Scares and the Silencing of Dissent
Chapter 6	Civil Rights: More Than MLK
Chapter 7	Policing and Incarceration in America
Chapter 8	Protest, Power, and Backlash
Chapter 9	Voter Suppression: Not New, Just Rebranded
Chapter 10	Christian Nationalism and the Politics of Religion
Chapter 11	The Billionaire Class
Chapter 12	Disinformation and the War on Truth
Call to Action	
Bibliography	

Introduction

History isn't just something that happened. It's something we live in. It shapes our laws, our rights, our fears, our freedoms, and our future. But let's be honest, most Americans didn't get the full story. We got a sanitized version, a patriotic myth, and a confusing blur of dates and dead men. We learned about the Constitution without fully understanding who it protected. We heard about freedom while skipping over who was denied it. We celebrated progress without reckoning with the cost. That's not entirely our fault. A lot of the most important history, the kind that helps us make sense of what's happening right now, has been buried, distorted, or erased. Not because it's boring, but because it's dangerous. Because if more Americans really understood how power works, how injustice persists, and how

citizens can change things, the people at the top might start to lose their grip.

This book is for anyone who wants to understand the United States better; not just where we are, but how we got here. Understand why our politics feel broken, why our rights are on the line, why the same fights keep happening over and over again, and what we're actually up against. It's not a textbook. It's a wake up call.

The truth is, the past doesn't just live in museums or textbooks. It lives in voting booths, courtroom decisions, paychecks, prisons, police budgets, protests, school boards, and even your social media feed. Every major issue we face today, from abortion rights to book bans, from corporate greed to climate collapse, is connected to a long, traceable history. Walk into any American city and you'll see history made physical:

redlined neighborhoods that still show the effects of segregation, monuments to Confederate generals who fought to preserve slavery, schools named after politicians who championed exclusion, highways that carved up Black and Latino communities, banks that still carry the names of institutions built on enslaved labor.

- **The housing crisis?** It's connected to decades of discriminatory lending practices and zoning laws designed to keep communities segregated by race and class.
- **The climate crisis?** It's connected to an energy system built by corporations that knew their products were dangerous but chose profits over the planet.

- **Mass incarceration?** It's the direct descendant of Black Codes, convict leasing, and a drug war designed to criminalize political dissent.
- **Voter suppression?** It's the modern evolution of literacy tests, poll taxes, and violent intimidation that kept Black Americans from the ballot box for a century after the Civil War.

This isn't ancient history. This is the foundation of the house we're all living in. The people in power know this history intimately. That's why there's a growing effort to erase or rewrite it; to ban books, to restrict what teachers can say, to paint truth tellers as "un-American." Because historical ignorance isn't just unfortunate, it's useful. It's strategic. It keeps people divided, distracted, and disoriented. It keeps us from seeing the bigger picture.

When politicians talk about "making America great again," they're counting on you not knowing what America was actually like in the past, or for whom it was great. When they invoke the "Founding Fathers," they're hoping you won't ask too many questions about what those men believed, who they excluded, or how they accumulated their wealth and power. When they say protesters should be "more respectful" or "less divisive," they're hoping you've forgotten that every major advance in American freedom came through disruption, resistance, and people refusing to wait for permission to demand justice. The powerful understand that historical ignorance is a form of political control. If you don't know how you got into a burning house, you're less likely to know how to get out. But history is also a weapon, our weapon. It shows us the blueprints of

oppression and the playbook of those who fought back.

It reminds us that injustice isn't new, but neither is courage. It proves that ordinary people, when informed and organized, can do extraordinary things.

Every right you enjoy today was won by people who were told they were asking for too much, moving too fast, or threatening the stability of society. The eight hour workday, the right to vote, the ability to attend integrated schools (or even attend school at all), the freedom to marry who you love, and every right enjoyed by every person that is not a rich white male; none of these were gifts from benevolent leaders. They were victories won by movements of people who understood that power never gives up power voluntarily. History shows us that the arc of justice doesn't bend toward freedom automatically. It bends because people grab it

and pull. And the more people know about how this bending has happened before, the better equipped they are to keep pulling.

You don't need a PhD to understand the forces shaping your life. You just need a clear map. That's what this book aims to be. This book won't tell you everything that's ever happened in American history. It's not a comprehensive timeline. It's not exhaustive. And it's definitely not neutral. It's focused. It's urgent. And it's political; not in the sense of partisan left versus right, but in the sense that everything from your paycheck to your privacy is affected by political power. This book is about how that power was built, how it was challenged, and how it continues to shape the world around you. Each chapter is designed to give you essential context for understanding current events through the lens of

historical patterns. You'll see how decisions made decades or centuries ago are still driving inequality, conflict, and resistance today. You'll learn about the people, often erased from mainstream textbooks, who fought to expand democracy and hold America accountable to its highest ideals.

You don't need to read this book in order, though there's a logic to the sequence. You can jump around, focus on the chapters that feel most relevant to your life right now, or read it straight through. But as you move through it, a pattern will emerge, one that exposes how today's crises are not accidents or isolated incidents. They're the result of long, deliberate choices made by people with power to protect their power.

This book will make some people uncomfortable. It challenges myths that many Americans were raised to

believe. It asks hard questions about institutions we've been taught to revere. It connects dots that some people would prefer to leave unconnected. If you're looking for a book that celebrates American exceptionalism without examining American contradictions, this isn't it. If you want history that makes you feel good about the past without thinking critically about the present, you'll want to look elsewhere. But if you want to understand why our democracy feels fragile, why inequality keeps growing, why the same fights keep erupting, and what you can actually do about it, keep reading.

The stakes have never been higher.

Authoritarianism is on the rise, not just in distant countries, but here at home. Democratic norms are being shredded. Rights that took generations to win are being rolled back in real time. Facts are being weaponized.

Billionaires are writing policy while working families struggle to survive. Extremists are running for office, and winning. Climate change is accelerating while meaningful action is blocked by fossil fuel money and willful ignorance. And through it all, too many Americans are being told to "just trust the system" when the system has repeatedly failed them, or to "be patient" when patience has been used as a tool to delay justice for generations.

We're living through a moment when the contradictions built into American society from the beginning are finally becoming impossible to ignore. The gap between our ideals and our reality is widening. The tension between democracy and oligarchy is reaching a breaking point. The question isn't whether change is coming, it's what kind of change we'll get. If

we don't understand how we got here, we're not going to get out. But if we do understand; if we study the playbook, recognize the patterns, and learn from both the mistakes and the victories of the past; we can flip the script. This isn't just about history. It's about power, truth, and what we do next.

Throughout this book, you'll encounter a recurring section that asks, "Would You Have Been the Hero... or the Problem?" These aren't just thought experiments. They're mirrors. History is full of people who believed they were good, moral, patriotic Americans while participating in or enabling systems of oppression. They didn't see themselves as villains. They saw themselves as reasonable people protecting order, tradition, and stability. They convinced themselves that

the people demanding change were too radical, too impatient, too disruptive.

Most of us like to believe we would have been on the right side of history. We imagine ourselves hiding enslaved people on the Underground Railroad, marching with Dr. King, protecting Jewish neighbors from Nazi persecution, speaking out against injustice wherever we found it. But the uncomfortable truth is that most people, when faced with those situations, weren't heroes. They were bystanders. They kept their heads down, went along to get along, and convinced themselves that it wasn't their place to get involved. The hero test isn't about making you feel guilty. It's about making you be honest, because the same systems, the same patterns, the same choices are playing out right now. The real

question isn't what you would have done in 1787 or

1963. The question is, what are you doing today?

By the time you finish this book, you'll

understand that you're not just reading about history,

you're living in it. The choices you make, the stands you

take, the silence you keep, the actions you avoid; all of it

becomes part of the historical record that future

generations will study. They'll ask the same questions

about us that we're asking about previous generations:

How did they let it get so bad? Why didn't they do more

when they had the chance? How could they have been so

blind to what was happening right in front of them? The

answers to those questions are being written right now,

by all of us, including you. I am not asking you to

become a professional activist or run for office or change

your life overnight. I am asking you to pay attention, to

make connections, to ask questions, to speak up when it matters; to understand that democracy isn't something that happens to you, it's something you participate in.

Chapter 1: The Constitution

What It Really Says

The U.S. Constitution is often treated like a sacred document; framed on classroom walls, quoted in Supreme Court arguments, sworn upon in courtrooms across America. Leaders invoke it like scripture. Citizens pledge allegiance to the republic it created. It's praised as the blueprint for freedom and justice, a revolutionary document that changed the world; and to be fair, it was revolutionary for its time.

But here's the truth they don't teach in most classes: the Constitution was written by a small group of wealthy white men to protect their own interests and power. It wasn't handed down from heaven. It wasn't

inspired by divine justice. It was a political document, crafted by politicians, designed to solve the specific problems of the people who wrote it, not the people they ruled over. That doesn't make it worthless, but it does make it human; flawed, limited, and desperately in need of the kind of honest examination it rarely receives. Let's start with what the Constitution genuinely accomplishes:

- **It creates a structure of government** - three branches (legislative, executive, and judicial) with defined roles and responsibilities. This wasn't accidental. The Founders had just fought a war against a king, and they were determined not to recreate monarchy in America. So they distributed power, creating a system of checks and balances designed to prevent any single

person or group from accumulating too much control.

- **It establishes federalism** - a balance between state and federal authority. The Articles of Confederation had created a weak central government that couldn't collect taxes, regulate commerce, or enforce laws. The Constitution swung the pendulum back, giving the federal government real power while still preserving state authority over many local matters.
- **It provides a framework for making and enforcing laws** - how bills become laws, how the president enforces them, how the courts interpret them. This wasn't just theory; it was a practical solution to the chaos of the Confederation period, when different states had different currencies,

conflicting trade policies, and no unified approach to national defense.

These were significant achievements. The Constitution created a system of government that has, with modifications, lasted over 230 years; longer than most constitutions in world history.

But here's what the Constitution conspicuously fails to address:

- **It doesn't guarantee equality.** Nowhere in the original document will you find the words "all men are created equal". That's from the Declaration of Independence, which has no legal force.
- **It doesn't originally grant the right to vote.** This might shock modern Americans, but the Constitution leaves voting qualifications almost

entirely to the states. It assumes elections will happen, but it doesn't specify who gets to participate in them. This wasn't an oversight. It was intentional.

- **It doesn't say anything meaningful about women, Indigenous peoples, or enslaved people,** except when it explicitly treats some of them as property. For a document supposedly about "We the People," it has remarkably little to say about most of the people actually living in America in 1787.
- **It doesn't address economic inequality, corporate power, or political parties,** forces that now dominate American politics in ways the Founders never imagined (or chose to ignore).

The Constitution set up a government "by the people", but it very specifically defined "the people" as white, land owning men. Everyone else would have to fight their way into the promise of democracy, decade by decade, amendment by amendment, movement by movement.

We need to talk honestly about who wrote this document. The Constitutional Convention of 1787 wasn't a representative gathering of colonial America. It was **55 wealthy white men**, meeting in secret, in Philadelphia. No women. No Black people. No Indigenous representatives. No poor farmers or laborers. Many of the delegates owned enslaved human beings. Some were land speculators who would profit from westward expansion. Others were merchants and lawyers whose

businesses depended on the very systems of power they were designing.

George Washington owned over 300 enslaved people. Thomas Jefferson owned over 600. James Madison owned over 100. These men weren't wrestling with the morality of slavery as some abstract philosophical question; they were writing laws to protect their own wealth and power, much of which depended on forced labor. This doesn't mean everything they created was bad, but it does mean we need to understand their motivations. They weren't divinely inspired. They were politicians solving political problems with the tools and prejudices of their time.

You can't understand the Constitution without grappling with its most infamous provision: the Three-Fifths Compromise. Southern states wanted

enslaved people to count toward their population for purposes of representation in Congress, giving them more seats in the House of Representatives and more votes in the Electoral College. But they didn't want enslaved people to count for taxation purposes, and they certainly didn't want to give them any actual political rights. Northern states saw the hypocrisy immediately: if enslaved people weren't citizens with rights, why should they count for political representation? The "compromise"? Count each enslaved person as three-fifths of a person for both representation and taxation.

Let that sink in. The Founding Fathers sat in a room and mathematically calculated the fractional humanity of enslaved human beings in order to distribute political power. This wasn't a regrettable side note in an

otherwise noble document. This was central to the entire system. It affected the balance of power in Congress, the composition of the Electoral College, and the outcome of early presidential elections. The Three-Fifths Compromise wasn't just about slavery. It was about ensuring that slaveholding states would have disproportionate political power for generations to come, which they did. The presidency, the Supreme Court, and the legislative agenda were shaped by this mathematical dehumanization for the first 75 years of American history.

The first ten amendments, the Bill of Rights, are often seen as the moral heart of the Constitution. They guarantee free speech, due process, protection from unreasonable searches, and other fundamental rights. But here's what many people don't know: they weren't

originally part of the Constitution at all. The Founders initially argued that a bill of rights was unnecessary, maybe even dangerous, because it might imply that the government had powers it wasn't explicitly granted. It was only after fierce opposition from Anti-Federalists, who feared the new federal government would become tyrannical, that the Bill of Rights was added. And even once ratified, the Bill of Rights didn't apply to everyone:

- **Free speech?** Not if you were enslaved. Not if you were Indigenous. Not if you were a woman who dared to speak publicly about politics. The Sedition Act of 1798, passed just seven years after the First Amendment, made it illegal to criticize the president or Congress.
- **The right to a fair trial?** Not if you were accused of participating in a slave rebellion. Not

if you were an immigrant during wartime. Not if you were Native American.

- **Freedom of religion?** Not if your faith fell outside Protestant Christian norms. Catholics faced discrimination. Jews were excluded from public office in many states. Muslims, Buddhists, and Indigenous spiritual practices weren't even recognized as legitimate religions.
- **The right to bear arms?** This applied to white men defending their property, which often included enslaved people. Armed Black people were seen as a threat to public order, and many states specifically prohibited enslaved and free Black people from owning weapons.

It took decades of organization, litigation, bloodshed, and constitutional amendments to make the Bill of

Rights meaningful for people who weren't white, male, Christian, and property owning.

The system of checks and balances is rightly celebrated as one of the Constitution's most important innovations. In theory, Congress can limit the president through impeachment and control over spending. The president can veto congressional legislation and appoint judges. The Supreme Court can strike down unconstitutional laws from either branch. But in practice, checks and balances didn't help when it came to protecting the rights of marginalized groups:

- **Slavery?** All three branches of government protected it. Congress passed fugitive slave laws. Presidents enforced them. The Supreme Court ruled in Dred Scott v. Sandford (1857) that Black

people "had no rights which the white man was bound to respect."

- **Jim Crow segregation?** Upheld by the Supreme Court in Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) as "separate but equal." Congress refused to pass anti-lynching legislation. Presidents looked the other way.
- **Japanese American internment during WWII?** Congress authorized it, President Roosevelt ordered it, and the Supreme Court approved it in Korematsu v. United States (1944).
- **Modern voter suppression and gerrymandering?** Still happening, still often upheld by courts, still ignored by politicians who benefit from it.

The system was designed to protect power, and it does exactly that; even when "power" means the power to oppress, exclude, and exploit. Sometimes what's missing from a document tells you as much as what's included.

The Constitution's silences are revealing:

- **No guarantee of the right to vote.** This seems impossible, but the Constitution mentions elections without specifying who can participate in them. Voting was left to the states, which used this freedom to exclude women, Black people, Indigenous people, immigrants, and poor people for generations.
- **No mention of political parties.** The Founders worried about "factions," but they didn't anticipate, or plan for, the two party system that

would dominate American politics within a generation of ratification.

- **No discussion of corporations.** The Constitution talks about regulating commerce, but it doesn't address what happens when private corporations become more powerful than governments, which they have.
- **No guarantee of healthcare, housing, education, or economic security.** The Constitution is a political document, not a social one. It tells you how the system of power should be organized, but it doesn't promise that the system will meet people's basic human needs.
- **No plan for what to do when those in power abuse it.** Impeachment exists, but it requires political will that often doesn't exist. What

happens when the system itself becomes corrupt?

The Constitution doesn't really say.

Understanding the Constitution historically doesn't mean tearing it down. It means seeing it clearly, as a starting point, not a finished product. As a framework, not a promise fulfilled. As a human document created by flawed people trying to solve the political problems of their time. The most important changes in American history; the abolition of slavery, women's suffrage, civil rights, labor protections; didn't come from the original Constitution. They came from people **organizing, demanding, marching, striking, voting, and refusing to accept exclusion**. They came from movements that forced the system to live up to its rhetoric about freedom and justice.

The Constitution has been amended 27 times since ratification, with the first amendments added in 1791, proof that the Founders themselves knew it was incomplete. But most of the real changes came through interpretation, legislation, and social movements that transformed what the Constitution means in practice.

When people today talk about "constitutional originalism", interpreting the Constitution exactly as the Founders intended, they're often trying to freeze the document in 1787, complete with all its exclusions and blind spots. But the Constitution the Founders wrote protected slavery, excluded women, and concentrated power in the hands of wealthy white men. Returning to that is not originalism. That's regression.

Today's political crises aren't constitutional accidents. They're the predictable result of a system

designed by and for a narrow slice of society, modified over time but never fully democratized. When the Electoral College overturns the popular vote, that's not a bug, it's a feature, designed to give smaller (originally slaveholding) states disproportionate power.

When the Senate gives Wyoming the same representation as California despite a 70 to 1 population difference, that's not an oversight. It's the Connecticut Compromise in action. When the Supreme Court makes partisan decisions that contradict public opinion, that's not judicial activism. It's lifetime tenure, operating exactly as intended.

When money dominates politics and corporations have constitutional rights, that's not corruption. It's the logical extension of a system that always prioritized property over people. This doesn't mean the Constitution

is worthless. It means it's unfinished. And the people working to finish it; to expand democracy, protect rights, and hold power accountable; aren't destroying the system. They're doing what every generation has done: trying to make the promise of democracy real.

Understanding the Constitution isn't about reverence or condemnation. It's about seeing it as what it is, a tool. And like any tool, it's only as good as the people using it. We can use it to protect rights, or to deny them. We can interpret it to expand democracy, or to concentrate power. We can amend it to meet modern challenges, or pretend that 18th-century solutions are sufficient for 21st-century problems.

The real question isn't what the Founders intended. It's what we intend. What kind of society do we want to build? What does democracy look like when

it includes everyone? What would a constitution written by and for all Americans actually say? Those are the questions that matter. Because the Constitution isn't a relic to be worshipped. It's a living document, and it's only as alive as the people willing to breathe new life into it.

The Constitution was written by men who spoke eloquently of liberty while owning human beings. They debated property rights with more passion than human rights. They intentionally left poor people, women, Indigenous peoples, and enslaved Africans out of the democratic equation. And today, we still live under the legal framework they constructed. So ask yourself:

- If you had lived in 1787, would you have challenged a Constitution that protected slavery,

or celebrated it as a brilliant compromise that held the nation together?

- Would you have been one of the few voices questioning why only white, landowning men held political power, or would you have defended that exclusion as "natural" or "necessary"?
- Would you have demanded that "We the People" actually mean all the people, or would you have been satisfied as long as it included you?

Now come back to the present:

- When people today criticize the Constitution or call for structural reforms, do you listen with an open mind, or do you shut them down in the name of "patriotism"?
- Do you insist the Constitution is perfect as written, or do you understand that it has always

reflected the power and prejudices of those who wrote it more than the humanity of those they excluded?

- Are you the kind of person who pushes a nation toward justice, or the kind who insists it's already just enough?

History doesn't just live in textbooks. It lives in your instincts. Your beliefs. Your reactions to criticism of American institutions. So... would you have been the hero, or the problem? And more importantly: What are you right now?

