

Portrait of a People

Over two hundred years ago, our founding fathers struggled to build the foundation for a democracy and a nation. It was a democracy founded upon disagreement and rebellion against a tyrant thousands of miles away, and few would venture to guess that the same foundation which was laid over two centuries ago, is that upon which we still stand today. These ingenious men authored the Constitution and the Bill of Rights and through these two documents built a government in which law, not man, reigns supreme. They built a government by the people and for the people, a government that requires both the participation and consent of those who are governed. The founders had been ruled so long by an oppressive monarch that they felt, as Thomas Paine said in *Common Sense*, "the law ought to be King." They created the rule of law under which no man, citizen or ruler, was above the law. The founders' dream was that all men would be created equal under the law, and that the rulers and the laws of their new nation would not be synonymous. The rule of law which was set so long ago must be protected by the citizens of this nation in order to defend those liberties and opportunities which are so underappreciated today. In order to protect the social, political, and economic rights in our country, and more importantly our communities, and to hold fast the vision of the Founding Fathers and the foundation which they built, the rule of law must be upheld.

The framers of the Constitution saw the rule of law as a vital piece in the safekeeping of the social order and civil liberties of this nation. They believed that we as a nation would be less likely to fall victim to authoritarian or dictatorial rule if we were to be governed by a set of rules laid down by the people, rather than to be governed by an individual or a group of individuals. They supported the notion that laws should express the will of the people, not the directions of kings or dictators. The power was left in the hands of the people, in hopes that justice would be

followed more closely and opportunities made more available to all. Abraham Lincoln once said, "America will never be destroyed from the outside. If we falter and lose our freedoms, it will be because we destroyed ourselves." The government is only as strong and as fair as the people whom it governs. Equity and opportunity were given, and should be upheld so that the citizens of this nation not falter and lose those rights.

So let us, as a people, continue to strive to protect, preserve, and uphold the rule of law, which so dominates our society and provides us with the freedoms which we hold so dear. For not unlike the conditions in the streets of Afghanistan and Iraq today, our country, without the rule of law, would most certainly be dominated by chaos and anarchy.