

Welcome to Civil Discourse. This podcast will use government documents to illuminate the workings of the American Government and offer contexts around the effects of government agencies in your everyday life. Now your hosts, Nia Rodgers, Public Affairs Librarian and Dr. John Aughenbaugh, Political Science Professor.

N. Rodgers: Hey Aughie?

J. Aughenbaugh: Good morning Nia. How are you?

N. Rodgers: I'm good. How are you?

J. Aughenbaugh: I'm quite good because today listeners we get to talk some common sense.

N. Rodgers: Yes. Nice segue, and it won't pain you.

J. Aughenbaugh: It won't pain us or it won't pain me. But this is a rather ironic opportunity.

N. Rodgers: We hardly ever talk. That's silly. We had promised a while back that we were going to look at some of the founding documents and some of the basics of government.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yes.

N. Rodgers: We're getting around to that this season.

J. Aughenbaugh: Because things happen in politics and government and we come across government documents and the best laid plans of mice and men often go astray.

N. Rodgers: Yes.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yes.

N. Rodgers: But they're not today. Because today we are going to talk about Thomas Paine's Common Sense. Now, side note, Thomas Paine had published rather this pamphlet, Common Sense on what day?

J. Aughenbaugh: January 10th, 1776

N. Rodgers: That date's going to sound familiar, 1776. Because if you've grown up in the United States, or if you're actually welcomed to the United States at any point during a test. At some point you've been asked, what's the day of the founding of the United States? People will say July 4th, 1776, which is totally wrong. It's actually August 2nd, but we won't get into that because that's a whole separate issue, she said, bitterly. We are in the revolutionary time frame, starting in the early 1770s, you start to get people in the colonies being crabby about British rule.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yeah.

N. Rodgers: They are starting to feel like they don't have representation, they're starting to feel like the kings may be a lunatic and a despot. Not that we're saying he was, but he was. I'm casting aspersions on King George. The other thing that I think people forget is many of the people who are living at this time whose names you've heard. Jefferson, Madison Adams, Mason Payne.

J. Aughenbaugh: Ben Franklin.

N. Rodgers: Ben Franklin are men of the enlightenment.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yes.

N. Rodgers: They are men who have come out of a series of thinkers, John Locke, Francis Bacon. Those guys who are all coming up with this, what does the word right mean? I have a right to what? They're wrestling with those questions.

J. Aughenbaugh: There's a couple of things that you just mentioned there Nia. One, what many Americans don't remember if they were ever exposed to it. Is the Great Britain had just ended a war with the French.

N. Rodgers: The Seven Year War?

J. Aughenbaugh: Seven Year War, also known as the French Indian War. In Great Britain had won the war. But fighting wars are costly. The British crown was close to bankrupt, so the crown starts casting about for sources of revenue.

N. Rodgers: You look around and you go colonies. That's why we have colonies.

J. Aughenbaugh: Colonies.

N. Rodgers: Because colonies have raw materials, natural resources. They have both producers and consumers. Colonies are the best.

J. Aughenbaugh: That's right.

N. Rodgers: Except for the people who are being colonized.

J. Aughenbaugh: Well, thank you very much.

N. Rodgers: It's not so great, but it's great for the colonizing power. That's why all the powers at the time had colonies.

J. Aughenbaugh: That's right. Whether it was Great Britain, France, Spain, what have you. The British crown began to pass various laws. A lot of them were of a taxing nature. There were surcharges placed

on goods that were produced in the colonies. If the colonies wanted to sell them, the British crown was going to get a cut of the revenue. The problem as far as the colonies were concerned was, but we don't get to go ahead and participate in the decisions to tax us.

N. Rodgers: Taxation without representation. There's a schoolhouse rock for that in case you're wondering.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yes.

N. Rodgers: No more kings.

J. Aughenbaugh: Okay. Even today, I think that you can get a license plate up in the District of Columbia. Because you know, DC residents get taxed but they don't get to do what?

N. Rodgers: Well, they get voting, but they don't have statehood.

J. Aughenbaugh: Well, and they don't have meaningful representation in the Congress. No taxation without representation.

N. Rodgers: Don't tread on me.

J. Aughenbaugh: It even resonates today, so that's one point. But the other point here, Nia, is you touched upon how many of the colonies, in response to these egregious acts of the British Crown began to tap into enlightenment thinking. Enlightenment thinking has a number of characteristics, but one of the main characteristics that becomes quite obvious with Thomas Paine's Common Sense pamphlet and in a future podcast episode. A little bit of foreshadowing. Our discussion of the Declaration of Independence is this enlightenment era thought that the power of government rests with the people. It doesn't come from God, because if it comes from God, you can't go ahead and challenge God.

N. Rodgers: That's never worked out for anybody.

J. Aughenbaugh: But it comes from the people.

N. Rodgers: You have divine right of kings in England. Well, the king is the king because God made him the king.

J. Aughenbaugh: That's right.

N. Rodgers: The enlightenment thinkers are like, are you sure about that?

J. Aughenbaugh: Doesn't the power of the government flow from the people? Therefore, the people should be at minimal consulted.

N. Rodgers: Now, can I just say that. This is the same time, if you'll hearken back to previous episodes, and in fact, in future episodes where we have or will discuss the Federalist Papers.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yes.

N. Rodgers: What you're getting is a whole bunch of people at this time of history in the 1770s are being very crabby about who has the right what and then when The Federalist Papers. Well, now that we've got this thing, what are we going to do with it? How are we going to build it into something that's democratic and useful and all these other things? But prior to the Federalist Papers, you get the people who are saying, should we be leaving? Maybe we should leave. Maybe this is a good time to just piece out and be done. This is that part where the party seems to be dying down and it's not great for anybody. But people are afraid to leave because they don't want to be the first one to leave. Because then it breaks up the party. We're just past that point where people are starting to get their coats. They're like, okay, we're done. This isn't working for us. We are not getting what we need in terms of our own intellectual independence. Because the king is telling us what to do all the time. You get the declaration, you get right. This time period. This comes before the declaration. Thomas Paine, Common Sense is January 10. It comes for another five months that you get.

J. Aughenbaugh: About roughly a declaration of independent. Nia you just mentioned something, and I think that's a third relevant point. Not all the colonists were convinced that the colonies should break from the British Crown.

N. Rodgers: Yes. Some people never want to leave the party. No, no. Let's keep going. It's only 2:00 A.M.

J. Aughenbaugh: Those folks were referred to as Loyalists. Those who wanted to break away, who wanted greater representation had to convince. Many of the people in the colonies, that this would be a worthwhile endeavor.

N. Rodgers: That it would work.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yeah.

N. Rodgers: Because it's a big, scary world out there. If you're going to go off saying we're just going to be our own thing. Think about the history of the British Empire. The British Empire at that point had existed in one form or another for 1,000 years. The American, well not then Americans, because America didn't exist then. But these upstart colonists are like, you know what, we think there might be a better way, we think we could do it better. I'm sure that there was some level of offense at the Loyalists and the Royalists that said, really you think you can do it better? Really, because that's what I would say. If I had been, then I probably would have been in then can we do it better?

J. Aughenbaugh: Yeah.

N. Rodgers: I would have had to be convinced.

J. Aughenbaugh: That's the thing about Thomas.

N. Rodgers: Because I'm a moderate.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yeah. That's the thing about Thomas Paine's Common Sense. In many ways, the success of the pamphlet was pretty incredible. He was a recent immigrant to the United States and he wasn't well known like Ben Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, the whole cabal up in Massachusetts.

N. Rodgers: The smart dudes that hung out together.

J. Aughenbaugh: The folks up in Massachusetts, really got screwed over by the British Crown. Because the British Crown picked the Massachusetts colony for a lot of the egregious laws passed by the Parliament. Thomas Paine wasn't a part of that crowd.

J. Aughenbaugh: In the first three months *Nia*, Common Sense sold over 120,000 copies. We talk about things going viral today.

N. Rodgers: In a nation of then three million people that are not African American and not Native American.

J. Aughenbaugh: That's right.

N. Rodgers: Three million basically was Western European immigrant folks.

J. Aughenbaugh: It was the best selling printed work by far at that time and remained by a living author and remained that way for years.

N. Rodgers: Why do we say by a living author? Because the Bible has been the best selling book.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yes.

N. Rodgers: In the United States before the beginning of the United States because the Bible just is a highly selling book. But anyway so Common Sense here it is. I think what's so great about Common Sense is the language that's used in it.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yes.

N. Rodgers: It's what I call and this is a technical term so don't throw it around, fufi. It's not fufi language. When you look at a lot of our founding documents they are written with the idea that they will be read 100 years in the future. They are written in what I think of as fufi language. Thomas Paine didn't do that. Thomas Paine was like listen y'all, here's how it needs to be. He spoke,

J. Aughenbaugh: It was very fluent.

N. Rodgers: Eloquently in this way that he used metaphors that regular folks understood. Do you know what I mean? The success of his pamphlet is in part because of its consumability.

J. Aughenbaugh: He was not necessarily writing for the elites. He was writing for the basically common man. Because again at that time women, people of color, the indigenous population were not expected and were not allowed to participate in the affairs of the state but he was trying to go ahead and reach the masses.

N. Rodgers: You have a quote in here. Can I read it?

J. Aughenbaugh: Yeah go ahead.

N. Rodgers: Challenging the King's paternal authority in the harshest term. He mocked royal actions in America and declared that "even brutes do not devour their young, nor savages make war upon their own families."

J. Aughenbaugh: Yes.

N. Rodgers: It paints such a clear picture of what he's getting at there and it's very accessible language.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yes even brutes.

N. Rodgers: Even brutes do not devour their young. Like even the worst people don't hurt their own children. Why are we pretending this man is our royal father.

J. Aughenbaugh: He was attacking one of the logics that the British Crown had made which was, we know best.

N. Rodgers: Very paternalistic.

J. Aughenbaugh: We know best and we're trying to go ahead and sustain the kingdom that has spawned you. Paine's response was, well, that doesn't make any sense if you think about how brutes don't devour their young and savages don't even make war upon their families but yet you are going to war with the colonies that you created and you say you only have their best interests at heart. He just went ahead and turned the logic of the British Crown right around and said, really? You are doing what even the most savage of creature in nature does not do.

N. Rodgers: How was it received at the time? Wouldn't it have been like if you think about it in terms now of sales it'd be a huge best seller.

J. Aughenbaugh: It would be viral.

N. Rodgers: It would be a meme that everybody knows including my mother who's not on the Internet.

J. Aughenbaugh: It's one of the descriptions that I came across when I was doing research for this episode that I saw over and over again. It was the first viral mass communication event in the United States, 120,000 copies in the first three months. By the end of the revolution half a million copies were sold.

N. Rodgers: Half a million copies in a population of 2.5 million.

J. Aughenbaugh: Basically you had 20% of the colonists owned a copy. Now let's just go ahead and yawn.

N. Rodgers: My gosh what author today would not absolutely kill for those numbers? If 20% of Americans would buy your book, holy moly, you would be.

J. Aughenbaugh: If you think about it in terms of today's population that would mean about 60 million people bought and it's not a long pamphlet. Again he was trying to persuade the masses. The masses we're not going to read a 350 page book and the publicity was word of mouth because no mainstream publisher wanted to upset the Crown so this was word of mouth. Here's the other thing and I've already mentioned this. Thomas Paine was born and raised in England. He had been in Philadelphia for a little more than a year. He only gets to Philadelphia because Ben Franklin wrote him a letter of recommendation. The initial printing of the pamphlet.

J. Aughenbaugh: He was anonymous. It was done in part because they were afraid that if they went ahead and attached his name and he was a nobody. That the elites would speak against the publication.

N. Rodgers: So it was listed as written by an Englishman?

J. Aughenbaugh: Yes.

N. Rodgers: The title of it was, Common Sense Addressed to the inhabitants of America on the following, sorry, I'm reading introducing subjects on the origin of government on monarchy and hereditary succession, thoughts of peaceful state of American affairs, and on the present ability of Americans written by an Englishman. By the way, we will link to the PDF of this, which is 29 pages. It is not a hugely long.

J. Aughenbaugh: No, not at all.

N. Rodgers: Thing to read, but it is something that would be interesting to read. In case you're wondering, the language is extraordinarily accessible.

J. Aughenbaugh: And Payne didn't just start with the writing of common sense. He then wrote a second series of pamphlets that were published in December of 1776, that were extremely influential with the militia. The army led by whom?

N. Rodgers: George Washington.

J. Aughenbaugh: George Washington, yes.

N. Rodgers: Can I read that quote?

J. Aughenbaugh: Yes.

N. Rodgers: This is something that people think is in common sense.

J. Aughenbaugh: But it wasn't.

N. Rodgers: But it's not, it's the next one.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yes.

N. Rodgers: These are words that you will hear. This will sound familiar to many of the listeners. These are the times that try men's souls, the summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country. But he that stands, it now deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell is not easily conquered. Yet we have this consolation with us that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yes.

N. Rodgers: These are the times that try men souls.

J. Aughenbaugh: You hear this from politicians of all stripes throughout our country's history.

N. Rodgers: Washington had it read aloud; didn't he? To his troops. Because he was like, this is the Shakespeare Henry V moment. When Henry V is talking at Agincourt and he says, men will feel sad that they were not here this day to serve and die with us. Like it's a similar.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yes.

N. Rodgers: Similarly inspiring.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yes.

N. Rodgers: These are the times that try men and souls, people who are okay with war when it's easy they're not the ones that are here now. The ones that are here now are the ones who are here in the dead of winter when it's terrible and the conditions are horrible and yet we have to keep going.

J. Aughenbaugh: I mean, because Washington ended up having those words read. He was at [inaudible] Ferry on the Delaware River. Some really important American political figures were a part of that army that heard those words. Folks like John Marshall, Alexander Hamilton, James Monroe, and Aaron Burr.

N. Rodgers: All the names you've heard.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yes. Not bad for somebody had only been in the United States for a little over a year.

N. Rodgers: Well, when you think about it too, at that time it was December. People were fighting up north. I don't know if anybody here has ever been up north in December. Aughie has. It's cold, it's miserable. And the British were really smart because at that point the British were saying, you know what? We will give everybody pardons. If you just put down your arms, we will let you walk away.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yes.

N. Rodgers: We will let you walk away with no punishment. Even though I'm not entirely certain that would really have been the case long term. But in the moment General Howe was promising, it's all right, everybody give up and go home. And Washington was like, no, we have to hold the line. We have to stay here and fight. And they did, I don't know. Thomas Paine to me is more accessible.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yes.

N. Rodgers: As a man than Jefferson or Adams or Madison. Who seem a little more.

J. Aughenbaugh: Well, there were elites in American society.

N. Rodgers: I want to say that they were Ivy League and Payne was VCU. He's just more accessible. He was more in tune with what actual real people. That's because he hung around in taverns and churches and where people hung around. He went and listened to what people's concerns were, what the average man in those places was thinking.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yes.

N. Rodgers: And talking about, and he heard their fears and he responded to them in a way that was okay, listen, like he didn't try to be all like well, lofty gold, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah because that sounded to them like guys who were not living their lives.

J. Aughenbaugh: That's right.

N. Rodgers: Payne sounded like a guy who was living their life. I know he gets mocked for it all the time, but when Clinton said, I feel your pain, that actually resonated with people because you believe that as a child of a single mother growing up at a time when that wasn't the common.

J. Aughenbaugh: Experience.

N. Rodgers: Experience and growing up poor in a place called hope. Those things that they did actually let him access some of the inactive tissue among what we think of as real people.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yeah.

N. Rodgers: I don't understand the experience of the Waldorfs. They don't understand my experience. They've never wanted for anything in their lives, ever. They don't understand my experience and I don't understand what it's like to have that sort of unimaginable wealth like I don't.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yeah, the freedom. You're not anxious. You're trying to figure out how you're going to make ends meet. In today's language.

N. Rodgers: Where the next meal is coming from.

J. Aughenbaugh: When you don't live, paycheck to paycheck.

J. Aughenbaugh: You often wonder, do these people understand the stress and anxiety and fear that I lived for?

N. Rodgers: If the United States had lost the Revolutionary War, a lot of the elites could have picked up and gone somewhere else.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yes.

N. Rodgers: Jefferson would have moved to France almost immediately.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yeah.

N. Rodgers: I mean, and so we Franklin, they would have just been like, well never mind. We're just going to go someplace else. But your common dude, your common colonizing guy, common revolutionary, could not do that.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yeah.

N. Rodgers: Everything was tied to this piece of land. Everything was tied to this local town. Everything was tied here. You didn't have the resources that would allow you to pick up and leave.

J. Aughenbaugh: To have somebody like Penn who used blunt everyday language and used metaphors that could be understood by the common person really resonated.

N. Rodgers: I want to mention here to a thread of faith runs through that threat of religious connective tissue runs through common sense that you don't find in the other founding documents. Now I actually

like that. I like that the declaration and the Constitution and the Bill of Rights don't rely as heavily on religion.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yeah, because religion can exclude if you don't feel as part of the mainstream.

N. Rodgers: Exactly. If you're not part of the religion they're referencing. But Penn actually threads that through common sense because it was a thing that common people had enormous experience. There were not colonists who just blew off church on Sundays. They just didn't. It wasn't mandatory, but it was dang near.

J. Aughenbaugh: In today, many Americans are unaware of how closely associated so many of the colonies were with particular religions.

N. Rodgers: Exactly.

J. Aughenbaugh: There are charters from the British Crown in some instances explicitly allowed a colony to be built with a dominant religion. In my home state of Pennsylvania, William Penn received a charter so he could create a Quaker colony. Maryland was created with the dominant religion of Catholicism. I think South Carolina was Baptist.

N. Rodgers: Exactly.

J. Aughenbaugh: Okay?

N. Rodgers: While I appreciate that the founders didn't put a lot of that into the founding documents.

J. Aughenbaugh: The founding document themselves.

N. Rodgers: It is important that they appear in common sense. It is important that Penn drives home this idea of you can still believe in God and not believe in the king, because that's a scary thing if you have believed in the divine right of kings up until that time. Because you are, it's what you mentioned earlier. You are not only defying the king, you are defying God.

J. Aughenbaugh: God. Yes.

N. Rodgers: Penn makes it okay by saying no, you're not, you're not defying God. God made you the thinking natural creature that you are and gave you natural rights. Gave you rights that you should feel you have access to.

J. Aughenbaugh: To, that's right.

N. Rodgers: That's a powerful thing for him to weave into that because some people would have felt that they were being disloyal to God if they were disloyal to the king. Nobody wants to do that. If they think that it's going to cost them eternally. Like that's going to cost you your soul. No thanks.

J. Aughenbaugh: In that's attention. It still exists today in American politics when we sometimes have elite politicians make fun of Americans who have strong religious beliefs.

N. Rodgers: Excellent point. Thank you.

J. Aughenbaugh: Again, one of the reasons why we're exploring some of these founding documents is to go ahead and demonstrate not only how these founding documents have influenced us, but they tap into tensions, conflicts, debates that are still with us today. We're still trying to make sense of how we incorporate religion into our public sphere and for many Americans.

N. Rodgers: In what ways is it allowed or not allowed?

J. Aughenbaugh: Allowed.

N. Rodgers: Yeah.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yeah.

N. Rodgers: It's not an easy question to answer.

J. Aughenbaugh: No. To me it is noteworthy how Penn, okay, makes references to God. But again, he flips around. I mean, the logics he used in common sense, I mean rhetorically, are just fantastic. Taking a logic like religion and how the British Crown was saying you can't challenge us because of divine right. Penn was just, but what if as many of you believe God gave us natural rights?

N. Rodgers: Correct. Then how do we square that circle? Like how?

J. Aughenbaugh: Yeah.

N. Rodgers: Why is the king more divine than any other human?

J. Aughenbaugh: Human, that's right.

N. Rodgers: We have not seen proof of that. In fact, with Mad King George, we have seen a distinct lack of proof of that.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yes.

N. Rodgers: Part of it was I put to you and I could be completely wrong, I don't think common sense would have worked if there had been a more benign monarch that the revolution needed George to be a nut job who tried to, and I know that's not correct term to use, to be a person who stamped all over the colonies as hard as he could.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yes.

N. Rodgers: To get money, to ensure his power to do all those things. If he had not done that, if he had been the benign King Aughie who had said y'all go and do whatever you want to do, you would never say that because you're not from the south. But anyway, you guys go do whatever it is you want to do, then there wouldn't have been a revolution.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yeah.

N. Rodgers: The part of what you get there is this combination of person acting badly along with people who are very smart and do not care for a person acting badly and think that they can get out from under a person acting badly.

J. Aughenbaugh: He became such an easy target, King George.

N. Rodgers: He set himself up.

J. Aughenbaugh: Because he became such an easy target, a pamphlet like the Common Sense, okay, had a real straw person for listeners. What I'm referring to is the infamous rhetorical technique of creating a straw person.

N. Rodgers: Then knocking them down.

J. Aughenbaugh: Knocking them down. It's easy to do because it's made of straw. It's not made of concrete, it's not made of thick wood.

N. Rodgers: If you assume the worst thing about your enemy in writing and then you break him down, of course everybody's on your side.

J. Aughenbaugh: Side. King George over-

N. Rodgers: Set himself up.

J. Aughenbaugh: Over and over again.

N. Rodgers: He's like, wait. What bad decision can I make here? Let me make that decision.

J. Aughenbaugh: I mean, if you think about it, Nia, if you were a loyalist, you would almost want to go ahead and send emissaries.

N. Rodgers: Please don't make any more decision.

J. Aughenbaugh: To the crown and say, for the love of everything holy in the world-

N. Rodgers: Please sit down.

J. Aughenbaugh: Could you get him to shut up? Cannot ask Parliament to pass yet another law that's going to go ahead.

N. Rodgers: Oh my gosh. It sets people off when you get all kinds of things. We're going to force you to pay for certain things. We're going to force you to pay import taxes and export taxes. We're going to quarter.

J. Aughenbaugh: Soldiers.

N. Rodgers: Soldiers in your house. I mean, just all, it's like, wow. It's like every time he came to a fork in the road where a decision could be made and one would be less harmful and one would be more harmful. He chose inevitably, the more harmful route.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yes.

N. Rodgers: Wow, you have a real gift like even on percentages, you shouldn't be able to do that every time, even if you were just rolling dice and flipping coins. But he managed to make bad decision after bad decision. Then he opens the door for something like Thomas Paine, who is passionate but also has the gift of common speak.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yes.

N. Rodgers: Because all the most passionate people in the world, if they all talked like Shakespeare. Well, Shakespeare back in the day would've been just talking like regular people. If somebody came along now and spoke like Shakespeare, I don't know how much of a crowd they'd get. Five times we'd be all standing around going, would they say?

J. Aughenbaugh: I always like to use the example of Bea Wolf? Because if everybody spoke like the writing in Bea Wolf, most of us would be like, okay, one, I don't understand what you just said.

N. Rodgers: Exactly.

J. Aughenbaugh: Two, I'm pretty sure that is a version of English that none of us here use and I'm tuning out.

N. Rodgers: Right.

J. Aughenbaugh: But he wanted people to tune in. He wanted people to go ahead and say whatever residual feelings of, positive feelings that I have for the crown, of me trying to hedge my bets. You mentioned this earlier in the podcast.

J. Aughenbaugh: If you were looking at the potential success of the revolution, and you were a betting person, you would not have gone ahead and placed a lot of money on the colonists.

N. Rodgers: Colonists against, at the time, the most powerful empire in the world.

J. Aughenbaugh: But Thomas Paine goes ahead and says, yeah, but that part of your brain that says this is intolerable, that this is unacceptable. We can act on this, and we should act on this. And we should act on this because if this was a truly benevolent, caring parent, they would not treat us this way.

N. Rodgers: Any parent that really loves you isn't going to eat you.

J. Aughenbaugh: No.

N. Rodgers: I don't care how bad the plane crash. I don't care if you're hanging off the top of a Chilean mountain. That's just, they're not going to do it. Especially if you're still alive. That's the other thing. We would suggest that if you get a chance to read it, to sit down with it. It's interesting writing, it tells you a lot about what he thought about the enlightenment ideas and how they applied to the situation then, but it also gives you a lot of idea about what he thought common people needed to be convinced of. It gives you an insight into the mind of common people at the revolutionary period.

J. Aughenbaugh: Because for the revolutionary war to be successful, or the colonists to be successful, it could not just be the elites. At some point in time, any nation fighting a war has to be able to convince the masses that the sacrifice, that the hardship is going to be worthwhile. That's where common sense played a really important role in all of this.

N. Rodgers: I'd like to shout out your guy, Scott Liell, who wrote Thomas Paine, Common Sense, and the Turning Point to Independence. "By including all of the colonists in the discussion that we determine their future, common sense became not just a critical step in the journey towards American independence, but also an important artifact in the foundation of American democracy." By him saying, "It matters what the common people think. They have to be behind it as an idea, or this experiment is going to fail."

J. Aughenbaugh: Again, listeners, I know at times, I really stretch to go ahead and take one of these governing documents, one of these historical documents, and try to show its relevance today. But what Scott is mentioning here is what political scientists refer to as legitimacy. The people have to find the government legitimate.

N. Rodgers: [inaudible] matters.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yes. That's such an important characteristic of a healthy functioning democracy. Because if you think the government is legitimate, even if you don't like a specific act of governance, you're willing to accept it, because you find the government legitimate.

N. Rodgers: Which is a discussion we are having here in 2024.

J. Aughenbaugh: 2024, yes.

N. Rodgers: Are elections legitimate? Is the government legitimate? What we need is Thomas Paine to come back and write a pamphlet now, except it couldn't be a pamphlet, and to do a Instagram story now, that we could get out to the masses that would say, we have to work together as people in order to make this work. We have to be willing to walk through the scary part to get to the good part. Can I just say, as we wrap up, one of my favorite things about your notes is that a lot of times you put things in the notes that you don't actually fully mention in the podcast recording. You put them there to remind you of things. For listeners, sometimes he doesn't want, quote, read out, and I do it anyway because I like them. Because Aughie does a great job of pulling out the interesting stuff in an article or in a document. But you made a note that when it hit the cobblestone street, of 1776, and I love that. I love that about you and I love that about these notes. When it hit the cobblestone streets, because they were, in fact, cobblestone at that point, and it made me laugh out loud.

J. Aughenbaugh: When I was rereading the notes last night in preparation for our recording today, I was just like, "Wow, did I get sentimental here?"

N. Rodgers: It hit the cobblestone street.

J. Aughenbaugh: Streets. I was waxy there looking. But if you think about it, they did not have paved streets. They had cobblestone.

N. Rodgers: More importantly, when you think about it, they had no mass media, so they had no way to get the word out for this. If you can sell 120,000 copies of something by word of mouth, if that were published today, it would sell millions and millions of copies by those standards. Just think about the fact that what happened was a guy would buy it, he would read it in a pub, or somewhere, he would read a section, hey, listen to this, and he would read out a section, and people would say, "Oh, I got to go get one of those. I need to read that for myself." That's a pretty powerful connection, and think about the fact that 120,000 copies in a time when reading wasn't widely.

J. Aughenbaugh: No, you're not talking about an educated populace.

N. Rodgers: People weren't reading as widely. You were lucky if you could read the Bible.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yes. There may be one or two family members who could read. Everybody else would be read too.

N. Rodgers: Exactly. You're seeing what you're having is people are getting this, they're taking it home and they're reading it to their families.

J. Aughenbaugh: That's powerful.

N. Rodgers: Thomas Paine, man. He's got it going on.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yeah, kudos.

N. Rodgers: Can I tell you a secret?

J. Aughenbaugh: What?

N. Rodgers: I always mix him up with Patrick Henry. I don't know why I do that, but I'm like, "Give me liberty or give me death, Thomas Paine," and we were like, "No." I'm like, "Oh, Crad, that's Patrick Henry." I don't know why I do that.

J. Aughenbaugh: Well, in part it's easy to go ahead and confuse or conflate them because they were both very passionate authors.

N. Rodgers: And said really cool things that people remember. These are the times that try men souls. That's been in every film noir ever. Anyway. Thank you, Aughie. Next time we're going to talk about the Declaration of Independence.

J. Aughenbaugh: Yes.

N. Rodgers: I'm looking forward to it.

J. Aughenbaugh: So am I. Taking me way, way back, and we're taking you, our faithful listeners, way way back.

N. Rodgers: Wouldn't we consider that a list of well-written complaints?

J. Aughenbaugh: I might use a different word, but I'm not allowed to use that word on the podcast.

N. Rodgers: We have rules. All right, Aughie, I'm looking forward to it. I'll talk to you soon.

J. Aughenbaugh: All right. Bye, Nia.

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