

A Man's a Man for a' That

I believe the myth of the "American dream" and the Scottish myth as expressed in Robert Burns' poem and song "A Man's a Man for a' That" share the same root. In using the word myth here, I refer not to something untrue, but to the powerful original meaning of *myth* as used to describe the stories or the *self-evident truths* which we live our lives by. Myths are not amenable to "proof", but are necessary to create the fabric of the societies we live in. A fundamental part of the myth in both US and Scottish society is that "all men are created equal" - and that that is self-evident.

Growing up a Scot I have always felt a strong connection to the universal struggle and kinship of peoples across the globe and there are many examples of this idea being a part of the fabric of what it means to be Scottish. Other phrases such as "we're a' Jock Tamson's bairns" come to mind as well as Hamish Henderson's epic song "Freedom Come a' Ye". The mere fact that Burns' egalitarian message is celebrated world o'er is testament to his universal appeal. Now is a good time to reflect on this mighty root at the base of US philosophy and expressed so beautifully and powerfully by the founding fathers.

We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.

– Alasdair Fraser
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