

# THE THINKING ON THINGS LETTER

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(562) 230-3334 Elijah Levy, Ph.D.

Hello loyal readers and friends of The Levy Launch. Yup – it's April and we're sliding into May quickly. I decided we need to ingest some cultural literacy (nourishment) to carry us through the next few months. So—read this mighty letter and enjoy the articles.

I know you're wondering about how everyone is at Founders. Well—all is great and we're still waiting to hear about the \$20,000.00 grant I submitted last year. We'll hear by late June – and if we're awarded the money, you'll see me driving a 2014 Porsche 911 Carrera. The \$20,000.00 will work for the down payment to reduce that big monthly note on that mighty car. Just don't tell anyone—because I've got folks fooled that I'm incorruptible.

The residents are doing fine at Founders. I just need to convey a mighty appreciation to all of you for your ongoing support of our work at Founders. The fundraiser at The Anaheim White House was an astounding success and we raised \$4,000.00 for Founders. We sold lots of books and our documentary of Founders. All of you that attended the event are so much appreciated and just know that you're continuing to make a remarkable difference in the

lives of our folks at Founders. Our residents deeply appreciate the concern, love and ongoing support you provide them year after year. Thanks lots.

I want everyone to know our volunteer/internship program is growing at Founders. My students from Southern California University of Health Sciences continue to express an interest in volunteering at Founders. These students are planning to enroll in nursing, PA, occupational therapy and physical therapy programs. After completing my class, the students began volunteering at Founders, spending a day or two a week observing me conduct group. The residents appreciate having them there and being supportive of our great work. I truly appreciate the commitment these students make to understanding mental illness and how they can be a part of our resident's recovery program. Recently, a student from University of Redlands and two of her friends began volunteering. It's just wonderful knowing these young, bright college students make time for us despite being so busy with school and work. You're all so much appreciated: Tiffany Nguyen, Kristine Dao, Rosa Son, Vanessa Nguyen, Kirpa Sudick, Dhara Patel.

One project I'm extremely proud of is the anthology of poetry the residents and I have worked on this year. Our self-published book is titled "Pages Left to Turn: Poetry by Restless Minds" The anthology also includes art, and the poetry captures the challenges of living with a mental illness, recovery and how instilling hope is healing and therapeutic. The art for the cover of the book was created by a resident named Christopher and the title for the book was suggested by another resident named Demetrius. Yup – we've got some very creative and talented folks at

Founders. In this collection of poetry, individuals living with mental illness convey in an intimate, evocative and vivid style their longing for acceptance, meaning and recovery. The therapeutic benefits for the mentally ill writing poetically is a journey of self-discovery and the writing process organizes and clarifies their situation in life. For the mentally ill, writing poetically by using imagery and metaphor is a safe passage to reclaim who one was before the illness emerged. The metaphor relies on an analogy or symbol to create new meaning by expanding the imaginative mind that ultimately pushes one into a new reality that generates insight. The metaphor is fascinating because of its power to silently express a complete picture in an instant. Individuals living with symptoms of Schizophrenia and Bipolar Disorder are a vessel of truth and writing poetically about suffering transforms that truth in a way that makes it meaningful and amenable to healing. What is dormant, and undoubtedly shameful to disclose is awakened, and although it describes the limitations the illness imposes in their lives, it energizes one to act in some way to heal the pain, overcome and defeat ongoing devaluation, loneliness, stigmatization and alienation. In the end, it is hope that gives life meaning and sustains faith for the good life. Without hope, one lives in despair and futility. Meaning gives one the strength to overcome. The evocative nature of poetry transforms silence, alienation and insignificance to sound. The written word-- the poem, allows one to share this experience in a public forum for others to identify with and ultimately connect them to the larger world to reduce alienation and increase integration. At some level, the healthy mind will invariably understand the depth of suffering and through empathy, the ability to take the role of the other, appreciate and render compassion to the mentally ill.

In November, I submitted a proposal to the Seckel Foundation asking for \$21, 700.00 to support all the great programs implemented at Founders House of Hope. I received an email indicating we're being seriously considered for funding.

If we're awarded funds, we will expand the supported employment program by creating new job opportunities and enrich the community reintegration program.

Again – we're very excited at the prospect of being funded and how this can dramatically enhance the quality of life for our residents. We will hear if we received the grant sometime in June.

## Benefits of Discovering Your True Self

1. You're curious—and want to know about you
2. You want to know if what you've been taught is true
3. You believe if you knew who you really are—you'd improve the quality of your life

## Fulfillment of Needs

1. You will understand yourself better
2. You will know where you fit in the world
3. It will be easier to make decisions aligned with who you are
4. To understand why people relate to you the way they do
5. It will help you make informed lifestyle choices

## Inner Benefits

1. You will feel the fullness of life
2. You will be able to see through the lenses of truth
3. You will enjoy love and harmony in relationships to others
4. You will feel an inner connection

## Creative Forms of Self-Expression

1. Be innovative
2. Listen to music
3. Write poetry, stories, your memoir
4. Share talents, express yourself in creative ways: photography, drawing, playing musical instrument, mentoring, coaching, being a Big Brother, Big Sister
5. Produce work of lasting value; leave legacy, turn your hobby into a part-time business, travel, volunteer, care for animals, help others in meaningful way

## Life has no meaning

Life or human existence has no real meaning or purpose because human existence occurred out of a random chance in nature, and anything that exists by chance has no intended purpose.

Life has no meaning, but as humans we try to associate a meaning or purpose so we can justify our existence.

There is no point in life, and that is exactly what makes it so special.

## One should not seek to know and understand the meaning of life

The answer to the meaning of life is too profound to be known and understood.

You will never live if you are looking for the meaning of life.

The meaning of life is to forget about the search for the meaning of life

## Creative Writing by Residents of Founders House of Hope

### Joy

Somehow I need to show you, what you do to this boy. You give me happiness as if I just got a new toy. You bring a smile to my face, one that no one can destroy. Being with you is all I want, no where else can I find that joy.

### Never to be Denied

Someway I fill the need to show you how I feel about you inside. That's when you come to be with me and I am there with my arms open wide. I feel the need to have something for you when you come to be by my side. A loving relationship between both of us where we're opened to each other, and we don't have nothing to hide. Your love is special to me, like a groom's new bride. That's when I let you know there is some love here for you. That you will never be denied.

### Suffering Soul

Everybody suffers. You can see it in their eyes. It's the truth, no myth.

I ain't telling you no lies. Pain and sorrow hides deep inside. So that glory and joy can be felt on the outside.

So do not let slide and overflow the pain that you know. You could hurt a body and stop them on the go.

### Shoes

Everybody has them. They take them for granted. But somehow without them like a tree we'd be plants.

You can with your friend buy a similar pair. You'll be just like twins and let the buyer beware.

Some call them dogs. Some call them kicks. Some just for guys, some just for chicks.

They're made of nylon, rubber or leather. You can wear them outside in all types of weather.

Whether for leisure, for sport or for dress you can always wear shoes to avoid a big mess.

### Founders

Founders House is the place for me. Schizoaffective is lots of fun you see. Good food and people, a great combination. God's always watching for little temptations. I love it here. I hope it won't change, cause my favorite song is Home on the Range. If you got time there's something to do, like picnics on the beach and trips to the zoo. At Founders House there's a lot of good people, but you better watch out cause some are deceitful. You can work in the store for a tidy reward. You can go to the Docs group, and even bring your skateboard. Founders is the best, I want to live here forever. It's not a gamble, no need for a lever.

### You and I

It seems so short a time. Since we first met. The moment we felt love. That time made us realize how love can withstand.

The test of time and. The duration of being together. Sharing you by my side. I am yours as you are mine Together we are one.

You and I.

Be careful about reading health books.  
You may die of a misprint.

A banker is a fellow who lends you his  
umbrella when the sun is shining, but  
wants it back the minute it begins to rain.

Don't go around saying the world owes  
you a living. The world owes you nothing.  
It was here first.

--- All three quotes by Mark Twain

I know some of you enjoy reading the poetry  
I've introduced you to over the years. So—  
here's a list of some of my favorite poets you  
can find on the internet to read:

- |                |                    |
|----------------|--------------------|
| Czeslaw Milosz | Philip Levine      |
| Pablo Neruda   | Octavio Paz        |
| Carl Sandburg  | Rainer Maria Rilke |

Senior Centers I'm teaching  
at these days:

Cerritos Senior Center

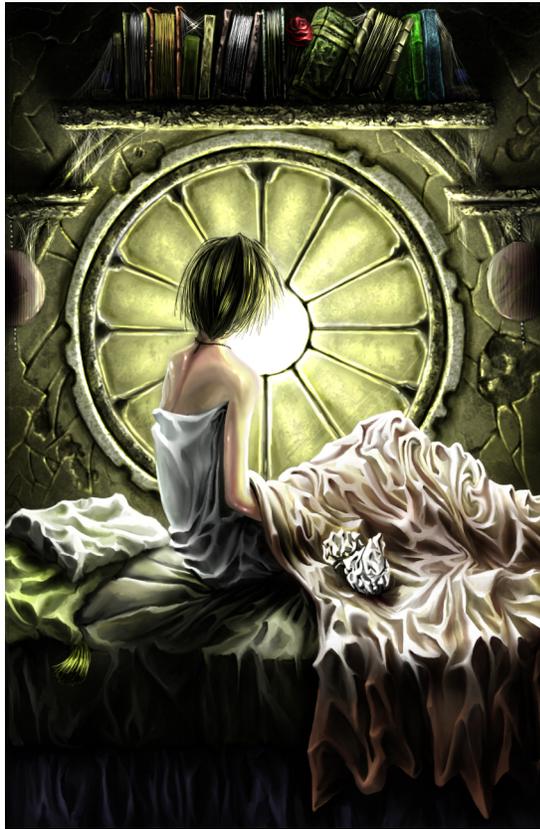
Monday 3:00-5:00

Norwalk Senior Center

Thursday 9:00 – 11:00

La Mirada Activity Center (Vets Class)

Wednesday 9:00 -11:00



Yup – This is Breaking News



Art by Christopher  
Richards

As most of you know, my two colleagues and I have been conducting workshops for law enforcement on how to more effectively interact with the mentally ill. We're finishing up the first year of our two year contract with Orange County Sheriff's Dept. and it's been very gratifying. The positive evaluations we receive from deputies and police officers reinforce that they're learning lots and it's a meaningful experience. My colleagues are Charlie Celano, Police Chief at the City of Tustin, Manny Arzate, Sargeant at Tustin Police Dept and my brother Josef. I can't thank my brother enough for promoting our work and introducing us to departments interested in our training. Josef recently obtained a three month contract to train the entire force at Anaheim Police Department beginning January through April. We just finished training the entire Anaheim Police Dept. We recently did our training at Chino/Ontario Police Dept., Carlsbad Police Dept. and Southgate Police Dept.

A Walk  
by Maria Rainer Rilke

My eyes already touch the sunny hill,  
Going far ahead of the road I have begun.  
So we are grasped by what we cannot grasp; it has inner light, even from  
a distance--- and changes us, even if we do not reach it, into something  
else, which hardly sensing it, we already are; a gesture waves us on  
answering our own wave... but what we feel is the wind in our faces.

### Creative Writing by Residents of Founders By Andy Knight

Founder's is the place I live where we all participate and give. Giving and sharing for one another like a band of brothers. Money draw Tuesday's gives excitement and cheer. Spending our money wisely saving the rest for the year. The food comes in many varieties from Chinese to Mexican. It helps to know a little Spanish when getting in line for seconds again. In back we smoke taking time to reflect on a joke. From characters we once knew to the childhoods from which we grew. From Bipolar to Schizophrenia we are all dealing with a dilemma. Medications our cure knowing what to take is up to the doctor for sure. From Irma to Judy we are all put in check when unruly. And in time we begin not to listen to those who are untruthful. Group time is always played out in a serious way when Dr. Levy comes each and every day. Making our troubles disappear he steadily keeps our minds in gear. Founder's is a haven for me now but in the future I hope to move out somehow. For it won't be long for my illness to be gone keeping my head up right and strong.

### The Meaning of Life

I've collected what some of the greatest thinkers have to say about this complicated subject—the meaning of life. Enjoy.

Abraham Maslow – Meaning is experienced by the self-actualized, growth motivated person who delights in using his creative powers for their own sake, and who can affirm himself and simultaneously transcend himself through peak experiences.

Paul Tillich – Man can choose to make his life meaningful by surrendering in faith and love to Jesus. By opening to Jesus and experiencing His acceptance and forgiveness, one experiences the joy and freedom of new being and the courage to be oneself.

Abraham Joshua Heschel – Man experiences his life as meaningful when he lives in G-d's presence—not simply by encountering G-d in the world, but primarily by serving G-d in everyday life, infusing every moment with the spirit of G-d and by dedicating himself to ends outside himself.

Rollo May – Meaning is experienced by a person centered in himself, who is able to live by his highest values, who knows his own intentionality, feels the power of his will to choose, and is able to love.

Founders House of Hope is a 90 bed residential care facility for the mentally ill located in Artesia, CA Residents at Founders are encouraged to participate in the recovery and psychosocial oriented rehabilitation program offered during the week. Residents are seen by mental health professionals, in addition to physicians to evaluate and monitor their health status. The psychosocial rehabilitation program includes a supported employment program enabling residents to work on site in Founders Hut, a convenience store providing toiletries, snacks and drinks for residents. The hut is managed by residents and they receive a stipend for hours worked. Employment in Founders Hut is a privilege afforded to residents who consistently attend their rehabilitation groups.



I want everyone to know that I added a page to my website called Center for Career Development. This section includes material on how to search for work and network, how to write a great resume and cover letter and how to prepare for an interview. My website is:

[www.thelevylaunch.com](http://www.thelevylaunch.com)

I also added a page titled Center for Lifelong Learning for all of you serious folks interested in increasing your cultural literacy. On this page, you'll be introduced to some of the world's greatest poets, writers and essayists. There's material there on how to balance life, work and school, how to write an ethical will and memoir writing. You just need to spend time here to familiarize yourself with some of the world's greatest literature and films. In addition, there's material on Gordon Parks' writing, art and photography.

## Thinking on Work

by Elie Levy

Do you live to work or work to live? Should our work be more to us than just a paycheck? And what's wrong if work is just a paycheck to us? Work is an indispensable activity for defining our sense of self. However, work alone does not pull for or engage our total self. It represents one dimension of our multiple selves/identities from which we can feel worthwhile and draw self-esteem. Interestingly, influences how others think of you. It is more than just an instrument enabling us to live a utilitarian life? The view of work as instrumental is a traditional American view, a consumerist perspective of work which may or may not fulfill our yearning for meaning and purpose in life. One can define work as an activity performed for economic security and sustenance. In this way, work is conceived of as instrumental and a means to an end. In contrast, honoring one's inner, passionate voice or calling also represents work—but is an activity carrying deeper, inherent value for the individual. In this condition of employment, the individual sees clearly how performing his dignified work contributes to enhancing the lives of others or connecting to the larger community. Americans want to work and we have a peculiar curiosity about what each of us does for work. We want to work and believe we should work, even if we don't need the money. Our belief that work, in part defines who we are has its origins in Protestantism, and is defined as the Protestant Ethic which asserts that work is virtuous. We have a duty to work and for some, it may represent a manifestation of an internal drive. The individual who works benefits by accomplishing goals and gaining self-worth.

**Instrumental Work** Instrumental work is dignified work—it is goal oriented and practical in nature. Meaning can be drawn from instrumental work. Instrumental work provides opportunities for the individual to express his fulfillment and to structure his daily life. American industrialization emerged from instrumental work—where employees produced fabricated goods like steel and textile. In pre-industrial America work was limited to farming, trapping and fishing. As our economy transformed into industrialization farm workers were replaced by the mechanical reaper and cotton gin. Machines were being invented to replace the farmhand and workers migrated to the city to work in offices and factories. Satisfied workers in instrumental jobs are paid for their work and they receive fringe benefits such as medical care, pension and paid vacations. With regard to exercising control, workers are generally more satisfied when their jobs allow them to control their work schedule. The opportunity to maximize learning new duties on the job also adds to job satisfaction.

**The Service Revolution** In the 1970's the service revolution emerged, with employment growing in the service and retail industry. Approximately 30 million new jobs in banking, retail, fast food restaurants and skilled nursing homes were created. In addition, opportunities in the computer industry surfaced. Post-industrial America is now witnessing a growth in service occupations in health care, education, and retail trade which is altering our experience of what constitutes meaningful work. The transformation from manufacturing goods to providing services resulted in the decline of industrialization. Concomitant shifts occurred as workers who operated machinery during industrialization now interacted with customers while becoming a service oriented, post-industrial economy. Workers, on average are interacting with people rather than machines—and as a result are reporting increased job satisfaction.

**Connectedness** For some, work needs to provide deeper meaning so that one understands how their job connects to the big picture; how what they do makes a difference in the lives of others. It can express our deepest yearnings for dignity, for we want to express our validation that the individual receiving your service is a valued human being deserving to be treated in a dignified way. Ideally—what should drive work? Perhaps it needs to be charged by spirit; by something that ultimately deepens and enriches our lives; that allows us to connect the work we do to the larger picture. Our needs for validation and feeling worthwhile can derive from the work we do when others acknowledge that our work has made a difference in their lives. William James said "I will act as if what I do makes a difference." Remember, you want to make meaningful contributions to the world—and by clarifying the values that drive your life the more you'll see a connection to how your work contributes to the satisfaction and pleasure of others. I think sacred work is something you truly value—it's work that pulls for the best in you; something that is intrinsically motivating for you and it's work that is valued for itself. If one feels that his/her work truly pulls for their knowledge, talents and assets; and they are passionate about their work— then he/she can assert that it's real, true work. Passion comes from deep inside of us—it's charged by spirit and it intrinsically drives us to perform at our highest levels.

Since childhood, our socialization process taught us we needed to be something; to become something as life unfolded—to become a nurse, plumber, lawyer, teacher, bus driver, firefighter, pilot, mechanic. Also, do you think that we're socialized to "have" rather than "be"? If being informs our actions, and defines our self-concept as a great mother, father, plumber, recruiter, lawyer, student—then we're likely to become self-assured and feel the connection to what we've become and what we represent to others; we are a great sibling, plumber, mother to my kids because I operate in my role as a mother exceptionally well—I draw self-esteem from my functioning as a mother in this role. On the flip side, to "have" suggests we concern ourselves with materialistic consumption where we're likely to define who we are by objects to accessorize our lives. Again—in moderation this isn't so bad, but if you're primarily driven by attaining objects of status to show others your success then you'll be working long hours for more money, spend time looking for others to compare yourself to, discover they've got more than you, and you'll likely become what I call the "hungry and dying for attention" individual. It's chasing conspicuous consumption. Accumulating material status/objects does not lead one to be passionate about their work. What's the problem? In our culture money can be used symbolically to define the success and for some, it is life-enhancing; in other words, it buys one life—because without money you are likely to experience social death (those in poverty).

## How to Become an Outstanding Instructor

Becoming an outstanding university professor means asserting that the fundamental values underlying one's teaching philosophy includes creating a safe, respectful environment for students to share and providing them with feedback on the quality of their thinking; in written feedback on their essays and in classroom discussion. An instructor's evaluations should consistently indicate students appreciate the copious feedback provided on their grammar, the quality of their critical thinking and content. In addition, professors should interact with students in culturally proficient ways. Students from varying culture groups desire to be treated in culturally competent ways so they are included in the fluid, natural classroom learning environment. An instructor needs to ensure students understand the foundational concepts in the field. By acting as a mentor to their students, instructors contribute to their intellectual growth and encourage students to gain new perspectives on issues they find challenging. Our students ought to feel compelled to reexamine central ideas presented to them so they can evaluate their worthiness. An outstanding instructor reminds their students to not accept what they read uncritically, and to evaluate assumptions and evidence to determine their validity and reliability. These elements of critical thinking add incredible value to students' development of intellectual integrity, intellectual humility and unbiased thinking.

Incorporating various teaching strategies, including powerpoint presentations, case analysis, interactive lectures, simulation/role play and small group exercises maximize on the learning modalities students bring to the classroom. Further, cooperative and incidental learning is maximized using these teaching strategies. Diversity in the classroom can also be leveraged and used as a strength. In addition, and depending upon the class, the use of collaborative or individual centered projects can be used. Requiring writing assignments enables instructors to evaluate student writing and thinking abilities. Using instructional technology between classes to reinforce learning is also recommended. For example, posting a discussion forum between classes and having students respond to the discussion will further enrich understanding of concepts and application. After reviewing student responses, instructors can evaluate if learning objectives for the course are being met. Instructors can imbue their teaching with integrity to convey to students that their learning is very important. To achieve this objective, outstanding instructors write their own curriculum, which includes lecture notes, powerpoint slides and cases for small group activities. Students appreciate their instructors writing and sharing their curriculum with them to deepen and reinforce learning.

In every course outstanding instructors should take time to teach critical thinking. Students appreciate being taught how to think rather than what to think, and teaching students how to ask the right questions about material they're learning reinforces that learning is a process of searching for and approximating the truth. In this process, students appreciate that much of what they are being exposed to has implications for how they perceive themselves in the world and in their workplace. The application of analysis and logic to solve problems is an indispensable exercise and an ability students must learn to become outstanding thinkers. The objective is to facilitate students' acquisition of life-long learning skills preparing them for challenges they will encounter in their workplace and life. Instructors want students to appreciate that what they're exposed to are not immutable facts they must accept as self-evident truths.

The act of teaching primarily concerns engaging students in fundamental ways to determine what they are capable of intellectually and emotionally as a result of their learning. The best instructors attempt to effectively engender these abilities so they become habits of the mind and heart. In addition, the development of abstract reasoning abilities is indispensable to creating a collaborative learning environment where students understand concepts and theories central to a discipline. Instructors clarify concepts and theories to provide students with the foundation to deepen and grapple with the higher order intellectual issues. The mental models students bring to the classroom need to be challenged and outstanding instructors convince them that they can reshape how they think, act and feel, and how modifying these processes more fully maximizes on their reasoning capacities. Learning is more than accumulating information, rather it is undergoing deep, fundamental transformation that influences thinking and one's capacity for developing intellectual humility, empathy and integrity. Ultimately, we want our students to ask: What do I know and how do I know it? Where is the strong evidence for believing this? Where are the gaps in my understanding?

The best instructors want their students to distinguish mere observation from inference, facts, assumptions and conjecture. The process of applying one's reasoning abilities and evidence to support conclusions is significant to generate internal consistency, self-reliance and intellectual consistency. Finally, identifying assumptions and the role they serve in creating efficient thinking is important. In the end, students are asked to consider the implications of their reasoning; how it influences their work environment, work policy issues or ethical and moral business issues. We want our students to think more deeply about issues they care about at work and how to systematically analyze and propose organizational change through grappling, probing and identifying structures and resources to initiate and impact change. In conclusion, students experience a sort of intellectual enthusiasm and curiosity from learning how to ask the right questions about material they are exposed to. The best instructors understand that teaching means engaging students intellectually and emotionally, so that they develop habits of the heart and mind to understand and clarify concepts, issues and assumptions that may be ignored. Supporting our student's capacities to identify their counterproductive assumptions about the world, teaching them to ask how material they're learned has implications for how to interact with others and the world is an invaluable habit of the mind.

## Natural Rights and Liberty

Well, I think there's lots to be thankful for living in America and I'll try to explain it in this very brief historical-developmental piece. Let's start with defining culture as a shared system of symbolic knowledge where behavior is patterned from speech (language) and where predictable behavior patterns are established to nurture cultural stability (a fancy way of saying getting along with each other), in the form of cultural codes for social life, role expectations and social norms all for the purpose of creating predictability and survivability of the culture. Culture emerges because a people want to survive and live together on cooperative terms. How about we call culture a social glue for now. The goal of social organization and cooperative behavior is to reduce the incidence of unpredictability in behavior of a culture and its people. We can discuss it also in terms of reducing uncertainty in behavior of a people which reduces chaos/anomie (social disorganization). Culture also creates social expectations among a group of people. Rules, social norms and values surface to increase conformity and unity. Culture is a social bond that creates consistency in thought and action.

Cultures also evolve—meaning they develop new and more efficient functional methods of survival. It's an end product of civilizations that has survived for thousands of years. I need to remind you that human beings are the only species that communicate using higher order abstraction and a symbolic language. Remember, cultures survive because most members behave predictably to create a safe environment for people to pursue comfortable living. The use of language or speech communication results in thought, religion, art, science, government and social institutions. For a culture to survive it needs to transmit cultural elements such as social organization, art, play, economic organizations, religion, science, technology, language and social control.

So, what are the fundamental assumptions of the American culture? Self-governance is one of the assumptions posited early on by the colonists. The colonists were suspicious of the theocracies, monarchies or other forms of rule that threatened the rights of individuals and their liberty. What is liberty? Liberty is freedom from despotic rule. We enjoy religious freedom; meaning we can find G-d in our way and we have political freedom, physical freedom and freedom of speech. Ever wonder why some cultures don't survive? It's probably because they could not transmit culture bound values—they weren't open to exploring and interacting with other cultures to examine how other social systems function and bring vitality to their people, they could not protect themselves from environmental dangers or they were conquered by other cultures.

Historically our culture's roots began with the colonist's focus on liberty. The early colonists agreed that self-governance was a cultural value that resulted in the writing of the constitution and Declaration of Independence. The Civil War reflected a pivotal period in our history and culture because it represented a war about individual rights. Essentially, our country was divided around the issue of slavery and natural rights. What is the one core value of American culture? It is "natural right" and the shared belief that everyone belongs. On the flip side, the pursuit of happiness through self-reliance and the belief that one should pursue his/her own destiny can lead one to be emotionally detached from his/her social institutions. A few authors label this phenomenon as a "culture of narcissism" or preoccupation with the "private self" which interferes with our desires to deepen our involvement in the lives of others. The other concern and natural outcome related to our culture's emphasis on individual rights and achievement is the belief in "rugged individualism" where one makes it based on their abilities.

Do we have a national identity? We must realize that our national identity shifts from time to time depending on changes in the political climate and social conditions. During WWII America was strongly united against the forces of fascism and Nazism. Our national identity was strong and unswerving. Today our national identity can be perceived as fragmented by partisan politics and the differing views about the causes of our social ills and other controversial social problems.