

# Mason Tyler Durham

1242 CR 677, Brazoria, TX 77422

979-236-4036

[heidi.durham@cbisd.com](mailto:heidi.durham@cbisd.com) or [mark.durham@cbisd.com](mailto:mark.durham@cbisd.com)

## Objective:

I would like to pursue a degree in business. My goal is to focus on real estate and property management enabling me to own a successful property investment business.

## Awards and Honors:

- History Student of the Year
- 2nd place - Kid Fish Art Competition
- 1st place - School Science Fair (2 yrs)
- 1st place - Brazoria County Science Fair
- Student of the Month
- 2nd place - VFW's Voice of Democracy Speech Contest
- Brazosport College Career Fair Essay Recipient for CHS
- Junior Achievement Scholarship Recipient for CHS
- 2014 All District MVP - Football
- 2014 & 2015 All Academic - Football
- 2015 All State Academic - Football
- 2015 District Honorable Mention - Football
- 2nd place - Regional Track Discus

## Clubs and Activities:

- National Honor Society
- Peer Assistance and Leadership
- Football
- Track
- 2016 Project Graduation
- Chess Club
- Puzzle Club

## Community Service:

- Feed the Lambs
- Peer Tutoring for Communities in Schools and PALs
- PALs and NHS Holiday Food Basket Project
- Canned Food Drive
- Peer Mediator
- Hidden Hunger Donator & Solicitor
- Roughneck Camp Volunteer
- Assembly of God - Feed the Needy Volunteer

## Work History:

- Fireworks Stand
- Property Investment Temporary Maintenance

# A Leap Of Faith

by

Mason Durham

12th Grade

1242 CR 677

Brazoria, TX 77422

979-236-4036

[heidi.durham@cbisd.com](mailto:heidi.durham@cbisd.com)

or

[mark.durham@cbisd.com](mailto:mark.durham@cbisd.com)

Columbia High School

521 S. 16th Street

P.O. Box 158

Columbia, TX 77486

979-345-5147

## A Leap Of Faith

When we talk about American patriots, famous figures like Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, and John Adams are among the first mentioned. These men spent their lives giving a voice to the American people. This courageous and talented group of individuals came together to establish an ideal that was written almost one hundred years prior. Perhaps, the most influential person to our government died seventy-two years before the Declaration of Independence and never actually set foot on American soil, yet still inspired them to take a leap of faith. It was the 17th century political philosophical theories of John Locke that our founding fathers based all their hopes for the future on.

John Locke was born in 1632 in Somerset, England and raised as a Puritan. He attended Westminster College at Oxford on and off for twenty-two years and attained several degrees in multiple areas of study. While serving as the personal physician for Lord Ashley, the Earl of Shaftsbury, Locke developed a more keen interest in politics. Due to Shaftsbury's involvement in seditious affairs and plots against King Charles II, Locke fled to live in exile in Holland. In 1689, he published three documents that would come to be the reigning common sense of our modern lives. Locke died in 1704 leaving behind a radical political theory that would be fundamental in the formation of a new government that is still the marvel of the modern age.

Over a period of approximately two centuries, "...a number of English, Scottish, and French thinkers generated a veritable treasure trove of political knowledge that undermined the medieval worldview about government, society, and even human

nature itself. The American people were the beneficiaries of this accumulated wisdom — it had yet to be called the Enlightenment — which had its origins in Europe but was now destined to enjoy its fullest implementation in America.”<sup>1</sup> John Locke, who lived during England’s epic constitutional crisis, sought answers to how we should believe and live. Lock’s conclusions can be arrived by simple revelation and reason. His *Essay of Human Understanding*, *Letter of Toleration*, and *Treatises of Government* have been concluded from his life observations and personal experiences of tyranny, which he firmly denounces. “Locke believed that all individuals have “natural rights”—life, liberty, and property—given to them by God. Individuals do not surrender their natural rights when they join an organized society. According to Locke, these individuals make contracts with rulers of the organized societies. The rulers provide protection in return for the obedience of the individuals in society. However, if the rulers violate the natural rights of their subjects, the latter are no longer under any obligation to obey and have the right to replace these leaders.”<sup>2</sup> The key to this theory was a successful balance between the people’s protection and rights.

“The English colonies were unique in the New World. The Spanish and French colonies were governed by viceroys and governors who reported directly to their monarchs.... By contrast, the English colonies were largely self governing.”<sup>3</sup> For nearly one hundred fifty years, the colonies of America served as a haven for those seeking relief from the religious, political, and social fragmentation of Europe. It was here, that

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph J. Ellis, *American Creation: Triumphs and Tragedies at the Founding of the Republic* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 4.

<sup>2</sup> Terry M. Mays, *The A to Z of Revolutionary America* (The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2007), 169-170.

<sup>3</sup> Daniel P. Murphy, Ph.D., *The Everything American Revolution Book* (Adams Media. 2008), 1.

John Locke's political thoughts deeply influenced the founding of a new American Republic. We see them clearly set forth in the Declaration of Independence and again in the framing of our U.S. Constitution. "The Declaration of Independence is the seminal document in the first instance, the Constitution in the second. The former is a radical document that locates sovereignty in the individual and depicts government as an alien force, making rebellion against it a natural act. The latter is a conservative document that locates sovereignty in that collective call "the people," makes government an essential protector of liberty rather than its enemy, and values social balance over personal liberation."<sup>4</sup> Unknowingly, Locke helped to inspire and justify the American Revolution in suggesting that it is our right to rebel when the government violates the individual rights of the people.

America was full of self made men and women that clawed out a life for themselves without any help from the King. Therefore, a duty to the crown and favoritism did not have the same meaning as it did in English society. Revolutionary patriots were considered crazy and dangerous. The circulated radical hints of ordinary people being in control of their government could destroy the whole political and social monarchy in the colonies. "...For those who cared about the fate of America, not as a loose collection of states and localities but, rather, as a single nation--particularly those who had seen first hand the deficiencies of the continental government--...something drastic needed to be done to save their experiment in liberty and union."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Joseph J. Ellis, *American Creation: Triumphs and Tragedies at the Founding of the Republic* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 9.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Beeman, *Plain, Honest Men: The Making of the American Constitution* (Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2009), 18.

Advantageous timing is everything and the turmoil in the colonies made it receptive to hints of revolutionary ideas like those presented by Thomas Paine in his pamphlet *Common Sense*. It was with these seventy-nine pages artfully penned to present a modified version of Locke's political theories, along with simple facts and plain arguments supporting American Independence from England that truly rallied the American patriots to risk their lives, reputation and property for something uncertain. Thomas Paine's headstone contains a quote by John Adams: "Without the pen of Paine the sword of Washington would have been wielded in vain."<sup>6</sup>

My ancestor, Matthew Sparks (P-294537)<sup>7</sup>, took a leap of faith to support the creation of a new government based on a one hundred year old theoretical philosophy that was unprovable. He placed his hope and unwavering belief in a fragile document proclaiming that the government must have the consent of the governed and the people have certain "unalienable rights," including "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."<sup>8</sup> As an American patriot, he destroyed everything he knew to create The United States of America, "...and if their Citizens should not be completely free and happy, the fault will be entirely their own."<sup>9</sup>

Our founding fathers took what was essentially John Locke's "government in a box" and meshed it with other political theories and ideals to create something that echoed what the people wanted America to be. This was a new land with new

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<sup>6</sup> Paine, Thomas. Memorial Headstone. 2001. Photograph Findagrave.com. Web. 12/20/1015.

<sup>7</sup> Sparks, Matthew P-294537. "Matthew Sparks." *NSSAR Patriot and Grave Record*. SAR Patriot Index Edition III, 2002-2004. Web. March 10, 2015. <<http://www.patriot.sar.org>>

<sup>8</sup> Terry M. Mays, *The A to Z of Revolutionary America* (The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2007) 169.

<sup>9</sup> Joseph J. Ellis, *American Creation: Triumphs and Tragedies at the Founding of the Republic* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 4.

possibilities, why not a new kind of government to go along with it. They had no way of knowing if it would work, but isn't that what a leap of faith is, belief in something that is uncertain.

## Bibliography

Daniel P. Murphy, Ph.D., *The Everything American Revolution Book: From the Boston Massacre to the Campaign at Yorktown--all you need to know about the birth of our nation* (Adams Media, 2008), 1.

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