



## Episode 1,794: Since We're Losing, We Need a New Strategy

Guest: Bryan Siemon and Tom Mullen

**WOODS:** All right, let's start with your song. Tom, tell us about what you did. Now, we're recording this, you and I are talking December 9th, so this is the night that you premiered the song?

**MULLEN:** Yeah, the song was actually released to radio about six weeks ago, and it's actually already been added to rotation by 43 stations, I believe, and counting. Tonight was the premiere of the music video, which was produced by Brian Siemon, who's produced at least one Jordan Page video and some others on the liberty theme before, so we're really excited about that.

**WOODS:** All right, that's excellent. So now tell me what's the idea behind the song?

**MULLEN:** Well, I had this idea in 2009, believe it or not. I know that because I was being interviewed about my first book, *A Return to Common Sense*. And the person who interviewed me was involved in producing videos and that kind of thing. And I said I have this song in my head called "Invisible Hand" about the free market, and all I had was the chorus. "That's what they call the Invisible Hand," over and over for 11 years. And finally, one day last year, I sat down and said, I've got to write the rest of the song and do something with it. And I thought, well, if John Lennon could put the Communist Manifesto to music and have an all-time classic, somebody should do Adam Smith. I wish it was someone better than me, but here we are.

**WOODS:** So how do you get a song like this out to radio stations?

**MULLEN:** Well, there's a podcast I follow that told me I shouldn't try to do everything myself. And so I actually reached out to someone who does this for a living, a radio promoter and said, hey, I've got something here that's very unique. Would you be interested in helping me with it? And I'm actually using Powder Finger production, so give them a shout out for getting Adam Smith on largely, I think, left-leaning radio stations all over the country.

**WOODS:** So Bryan, what's your role in this?

**SIEMON:** I actually, Tom, made a video for Rebel, Inc. another band that's been part of the freedom movement. And I sent it to Tom trying to get views on the video and people like it. And he came back to me and said, hey, are you interested in making another music video? And of course I like doing that, so I said sure. And then he sent me the hardest song in his

repertoire to make a video for, but yeah, I've really been trying to get into the video-making game, and so Tom gave me the opportunity.

**WOODS:** I think this whole topic comes back to the fundamental question of how we get our ideas out there. And a lot of us, of course, have been trying to get them out there through blog posts and YouTube videos and books and conferences and speeches and academic papers and things of that sort. And that has its place, and we couldn't live without that. But it's limited, because you're only going to reach certain sort of person over and over and over with those kinds of approaches. And obviously, we know, for all of her faults, Ayn Rand was very successful with novels. She was great with nonfiction too, but her novels reached a huge number of people. So by doing this, you're trying to go beyond the usual boundaries. And yet a lot of times people listen to songs and they don't even know what the words are. You ask them what the words are, it's some crazy caricature of what the words actually are. So maybe this works, maybe it doesn't. What are your thoughts about it?

**MULLEN:** Well, I think you're right, and for myself, I wrote on the liberty topics for a good 12 years. And to be honest with you, I was just very burned out. I just felt like I was banging my head against the wall. I mean, I got a lot of high fives from people who already agreed with me, but I never felt like I was making any kind of a difference. And I'm sitting here saying, I'm doing all this, outside of making a living and everything, and it's just not fulfilling for me. And I thought, I enjoy playing music and I'm going to give this a try.

And to be honest with you, I think when you get online the lizard people are everywhere and just waiting to jump all over you with some lizard-person message about the free market and, as you say, the caricatures. But I think most of the people who have radio stations and the people, if you go on my website, SkepticSongs.com, and read some of the reviews of the song, these are people probably coming from the left, but they seem to be people of goodwill who are open to thinking about the message. And sometimes they don't get it right. I mean, the whole idea of the invisible hand is that we're working in our self-interest, not trying to help anybody but ourselves, but that we do help other people. And in some of those reviews, it's apparent they haven't quite got that, but they're trying to get it. And I think the idea of having a song they kind of like and it sounds good to them, and then all of a sudden they want to take a more positive view of the message and try to find something good in it. So I don't know if that's going to be the case as it gets more and more attention, but so far, that's what I've found has happened.

**WOODS:** So first of all, how do people find the song? I'll just link to it I guess on the show notes page, [TomWoods.com/1794](http://TomWoods.com/1794). Obviously you have the video, so presumably that's available in the usual places.

**MULLEN:** Yeah, that's on every platform, Spotify, Apple, Deezer. Whatever music platform you're on, if you search "Tom Mullen Invisible Hand" or just "Tom Mullen." I think I'm one of the only Tom Mullens that makes music, believe it or not. You'll find me pretty easily. And there's an album out that will also be released to radio in January, but you could already hear it on Spotify, Apple, etc. called *Into the Twilight*. And this song is I think the sixth track on it.

**WOODS:** Okay, let's go back in time a little bit, because I don't remember exactly when and where we met, but at one of these events you and I met. For both of you guys, was Ron Paul the catalyst?

**SIEMON:** Yes, you and I met actually at Paul Festival in 2008 — or I mean Revolution March in 2008, Paul Festival in 2012. In fact, you signed the book *Who Killed the Constitution?* for me in 2008. So for me, it goes back that far. The Ron Paul movement is probably the start of it. And when I look at your book *Who Killed the Constitution*, Tom Mullen's book *Return to Common Sense*, these are things that really helped me go down that rabbit hole in the freedom movement. And so when he produced the song "Invisible Hand," I thought I understood it, which I did, but the challenge there was how to get other people to understand that concept. And I think we all go through it throughout the days. But going back into the past, yeah, we met at the Revolution March and at the Paul Festival in 2012.

**MULLEN:** Yeah, and I think I could add that in 2007, this is the way I discovered Ron Paul, is my wife came home and said she heard on NPR that there was a Republican running as a libertarian. Now, I only discovered the Libertarian Party four or five years before that, and I puffed out my chest and said, *Yeah, I'm sure. These Republicans always say they're libertarian. Allow me to educate you why this guy's a phony.* And so I went on his website, and I went, oh, my gosh, this guy's for real. I had never heard of him. And I could not believe what I was reading. I said, *Hey, hon, come on over here. I think this is for real.*

So I kind of got involved with it, and then I had no idea about the libertarian literature and the Mises Institute, any of that stuff. And I thought, I'm going to write this letter. And I heard that they were organizing this Revolution March and I just sent it off to the organizers. And I hadn't met anybody, and I said, "I think somebody should read this letter." I had no idea I would be going to do it. So eventually Bryan got back to me and said, "I think you should come and read it." Okay, so I go to read the letter, and I still don't get it. I'm up there, and I don't realize I'm making a speech. So I start reading it. I don't know what I'm doing. And people start cheering. And it was about like, halfway through. I got the idea, here's what I'm supposed to do. I'm supposed to read a few lines, wait and let everybody cheer and have a good time, and then read some more. [laughing] So it's like I learned all this on the fly. It wasn't the most graceful thing ever, but that's how I got started. That's where I met Bryan.

**WOODS:** And so Bryan, what are you doing these days?

**SIEMON:** Mostly, I'm making videos. I still do a little political activism, but most of it I think is keyboard warrior, nothing else, passing around articles and telling people how they're wrong. Other than that, I have a wife and two kids and just working the daily grind to make a living and support the family.

**WOODS:** Are you guys discouraged at this point? I remember when we first knew each other. This was in the heyday of Ron Paul. And I remember thinking that probably he wasn't going to go anywhere, but that at least it would be a good thing for him to do, it would be worthwhile to get his ideas out there. And I didn't know the — none of us, I think could appreciate the intensity of the support for him that emerged. And especially given that he was talking about things that are so far removed from what was in normal political discourse and that run absolutely counter to what people are taught in school, year after year after year. The fact that there were as many people as there were, who were willing to listen to this message, was a source of tremendous encouragement to me. And then he did even better the next time. And I didn't know where things were going to go after that, but I thought, well, surely we've got some real momentum to capitalize on. And then it all dissipated. And now I don't know what to think. I mean, what are your thoughts on all this?

**MULLEN:** Well, I can remember, I actually had a press pass, and I can't remember for whom. It might be from *Washington Times*. I wrote there for a while. And I covered Ron Paul's Tampa event in 2012, and I remember the theme was We Are the Future. You might have spoken at it, Tom. I can't remember that. But I really believed that at the time, I never thought Ron Paul was going to be president because, not his fault, the electorate's. But I really felt like the neocons had been damaged beyond — you know, their time was ending, and I really did feel like there was going to be a more libertarian wave coming. And I was very discouraged to see that, as much as Trump has been a little bit better on some things than any of his predecessors in recent memory, that people jumped right on to that as if it were — I mean, if you're a Ron Paul fan, you've got to have a lot of problems with Trump. And just so many people didn't seem to have that. So I was somewhat discouraged.

The COVID thing has really discouraged me, to the point where I've really thought it's hopeless at some point. And I've got to give you some credit, Tom Woods. You've just been like a rock through this. I just can't thank you enough for all the stuff you've put together and got out there where we could all use it and say: look, look at these charts, please. There is no science behind any of this. And I'm actually a little more hopeful now than I was maybe six months ago.

**SIEMON:** Yeah, it's a great job. And to answer your question, I think, yeah, I am discouraged. Most of my discouragement comes from the people around me. Throughout the years, I've talked about Ron Paul and the movement. And I mean, you guys know all the stuff you hear and get back. *Well, he's not charismatic, or he's an isolationist, or he's this or that.* And to see Trump or anybody else talk about the stuff that Ron Paul talked about, not everything that Ron Paul talked about, but little segments of it, and then people cheered, I'm like, well, where were you back in 2008 or 2012? Why weren't you cheering it then? Trump, no wars in for years, and now every Republican thinks that's great. Well, where were you before that when Ron Paul was saying we don't need any wars? So I think I'm a little discouraged by that.

And I know about the mainstream media and how they try to control the narrative, and so when I look at the people around me, I kind of wanted to smack them in the back of the head and say: come on. Wake up. Wake up. Fine, don't vote for Ron Paul. There are other freedom people out there. Pick them. Pick somebody who's not the same as the old person, the last person that was in everybody.

**WOODS:** Well, these days I find myself in a position that I never really imagined I'd be in. I used to think it was much too cynical for people to say:

Look, it's hopeless. Most people just don't want liberty, so just work to secure the freedom have yourself and your family the best you can. And that freedom is not just political, but it takes the form of having a job that gives you some flexibility or working for yourself, or just whatever you can do to live a life that is free in meaningful ways. Just go ahead and do that, and forget about Joe Blow who just wants to be told what to do.

And I used to think, no, come on. We have to be more ambitious than that, and we can't give up. And yet, I feel like, geez, you know what? I've been fighting for the freedom of these people for years and years and years, and what I get in return is I'm shamed for going out for dinner by these very same people I'm trying to fight for.

**MULLEN:** Right. Yeah, you know, Tom, I can't believe I'm saying this, and what's really encouraged me is been the people here in western New York. Now, I lived in Florida the whole time I was involved in the political stuff and doing all the writing. I lived in Florida from 2004 to 2014, and I moved back for a number of reasons, at least half of them family reasons. But I really liked the culture here better, and I moved back knowing that the political climate was even worse. I mean, obviously New York is a very deep blue state, and even my hometown of Buffalo is a solidly Democratic state. But believe it or not, I mean, I'm seeing the pushback, and I mean very strong push back from Buffalonians. And it really, really encouraged me. I thought Jim Ostrowski and I were the only two in like the whole area, but we've had a bunch of Buffalo businesses organize together and start resisting this. We've had people show up at the county executive's house to let him know they're not happy with the decisions he's making. And I'm really surprised by that. I really am. I thought Buffalo would just march lockstep, drone-like, stay home, it saves lives no matter what the charts say. And they've pleasantly surprised me. I mean, I don't think they're going to be out there talking deregulation tomorrow or anything like that, but maybe there is a little more of a spark left than I thought there was six months ago.

**SIEMON:** And I think that, with all the discouragement throughout the year since 2008 and the freedom movement coming on, there have been a lot of people who are — I mean, the topic has definitely changed. If you remember social media and the news back then and you remember it now, to get people to talk about even the Federal Reserve back then was difficult. And now they actually talk about. I think there is some light being made.

But at the end of the day, Tom, as you said, you go out and people still shame you. It's surprising in America that you would have to deal with that. You would think in America, when you talk about freedom, people would just naturally open up their ears and say, "Yeah, I'm listening." But I've had a group of my core friends and stuff around here that they kind of jokingly, like, when they start talking politics, *Here comes Bryan with his freedom talk*. Like it's a mocking thing, like talking about freedom and individual rights is something to mock. And I find that interesting. It's just how the media and the political landscape has been able to do that, to control that, to market that message like that, that people that think that way, that want to be free, that want to live their lives are some kind of extremists or weirdos. It's just weird to me.

**WOODS:** Well, I guess it's true that during even this time, I've discovered a lot of people I didn't know before. I've learned about a lot of people who do great work. It's kind of like the Ron Paul thing. I met people I never would have met otherwise, people I admire very much. Well, a lot of those people have emerged during this time. And I feel like I've come into contact with a portion of the public that is somehow uncowed, and that's sort of nice. But I feel like they really are irreconcilable Americas. And I don't mean that one America wants wealth redistribution and the other doesn't. All of America wants wealth redistribution, so that's not the dividing line.

**SIEMON:** Right.

**WOODS:** But this thing, this lockdown policy where we can only think of one thing at a time, we can think about COVID, nothing else — and even then, the lockdowns haven't had a lot to show for themselves — I know that they feel like they probably don't ever want to deal with us ever again, because we weren't taking a pandemic seriously. I feel like that's all they were thinking about and not the devastating consequences of every ridiculous, anti-scientific

decision they've been making since March. I don't really want to have much to do with them. So I have found like the remnant. I have found an America that I feel comfortable with. It's just those are the only Americans I really feel like dealing with anymore. I just can't believe people would have allowed this to go on.

I'm not quite at the age where I'm super vulnerable to the virus. But if I were, I can tell you right now for an absolute fact I would be like Gene Epstein, who is 76, and saying: of course, I'm against lockdowns. I'm not going to ruin the lives of young people to protect me. Young people aren't responsible for my health. So I just feel like I just want to get away.

And unfortunately people talk about separating and secession and stuff. But even if that were a live option, the problem is not so much that we have these neat little lines we can draw and that this state would be better off with this other state and all that. It's that within the states, there's division. You just mentioned Western New York. Western New York is very different from New York City. So even if a state were to secede, let's say, then you still have all the internal divisions. I don't really see how you solve it.

**MULLEN:** Yeah, bring back the city-state if I can't have anarchocapitalism.

**WOODS:** Yeah.

**MULLEN:** That's what I've said many times. But what hit me while you were speaking there is that how the lizard people are smart, and they've turned our own stuff against us to some extent, because they've turned going out — let's just say that you have exposure to this virus. It's in your body, but your immune system has handled it or is in the course of handling it. They've turned the nonaggression principle around and said you're not allowed to leave your house because you might be harming someone else. Rather than, no, I'm not allowed to keep people in their houses because they might harm me, it's my job if I'm vulnerable to stay home; they've kind of flipped that around. So as silly as it is, they almost speak in our language a little to neutralize us, I think, on that scope.

And they've really, as Bryan alluded to, the word *freedom* or the word *liberty* has become a pejorative. They're effective at that now, in making me seem like some kind of a kook for even mentioning it. So I think we've got to give the devil's their due. I mean, they're awfully good at this, as far as propagandizing is concerned. And we've got a big road to overcome that.

But there are people that are open to it. I mean, there are some people that react when I say things like, what is the chart have to look like before you stop saying the lockdowns are working, before you stop saying, "Stay home, save lives"? The chart says it's not saving lives, so why are you still repeating that? And some people are open to it. But an awful lot are not.

**SIEMON:** One of the things they seem to do, and they're great at doing, is you're this or that. You're either pro-life or you're not. You're either pro-mask or you're anti-mask. You're either pro-vax or you're anti-vax. They don't let you talk about anything in between: the logical stuff, the information, the science, the facts, anything like that. You're either for it, or you're against it. You either are for wearing a mask, which means you love people and want to see them live, or you're against wearing a mask and you want people to die. And that's how they tend to put the propaganda out there and paint the picture: for or against, everything. That's

where they come. For war or against war. You can't have any conversation in between anything like that. You can't talk about the Constitution. You can't talk about what's right or wrong. It's either you're for it or you're against it.

**MULLEN:** I think a lot of this — Trump did a lot of that. I mean, not that he did it on purpose. But let's face it. Everybody here, the three of us, libertarians understand that the libertarians that supported Trump basically thought, well, he's a little bit better. We certainly don't agree with him on everything, but he's like a hand grenade. You know, let's pull the pin, throw him in there, and see what happens. And I think he has so traumatized the left that they everything is either Trump or not Trump. Like if I say something to the effect of Sweden and — or let's say the latest one that you shared, Tom — Florida and California's charts don't seem to support the idea that staying home saves lives. Look at the charts. All of a sudden, I'm a Trump guy. What? How did he get into this? Oh, because at one point Trump pushed back on closing everything down, so now it must just be that if you don't agree with everything Anthony Fauci says, you must agree with everything Trump says. We've gotten into that dynamic, and that's another kind of monkey wrench into anyone trying to preach our message.

**WOODS:** Yeah, absolutely agreed with that. Let's go back to your song, because the concept of the invisible hand is one that the other side likes to ridicule, because they think the invisible hand means that we think all problems are automatically solved. They don't really know what the term means, and they just brush us aside dismissively if the concept is so much as raised. So can you elaborate on it?

**MULLEN:** Yeah, I mean, what I hear from a lot of people of goodwill, if I talk about the invisible hand concept, is I really like some of the things you say, but I just don't trust those corporations to do the right thing. And that tells me, well, you're still not getting it, because we don't need to trust them to, in quotes, "do the right thing," because to most people, doing the right thing means setting aside your own interests to do some kind of charitable thing for somebody else. And what history shows, whether we like it or not, is that the people who are pursuing their own interests exclusively have done far more good for society as a whole, even for poor people, than anybody who's ever been trying to do it. Now, Adam Smith wrote basically what I just said far more eloquently 200-and-however-many years ago, and it's something that it just never sinks in.

And I know Walter Block has a theory that he's been working on with academic people about, well, maybe we're just genetically coded for statism, and there might be something to that. We just have this hard coding that we have to overcome with reason, and not everyone's willing to do that work. But I tried to get it in as simple of terms, and I think there's a line in the song, it says, "There's no such thing as a common good," and I was hoping that would just hit people who just assume that *common good* is something that exists that everybody agrees with. And maybe it would just get them to think: well, what does he mean? What does he mean that people won't be left behind if we don't set our interests aside and help them? So I think the best thing that could happen with the song is that people go and find Adam Smith, and I'd really rather they found Karl Menger, but *invisible hand* is a lot easier to rhyme with than subjective theory of values.

**WOODS:** [laughing]

**SIEMON:** I think when it comes to try and explain freedom to people and the free market, you always get the *what if* or *what about*, those kind of arguments. And we're all used to it. The

three of us are used to it. When you talk about a market that doesn't have all these government regulations, you get the, *Well, who's going to protect you from this, or who's going to protect you from that?* And when you try to remind them of Enron and Goldman Sachs and down the line of all these things, where government protection is supposed to be in place to stop that stuff and it still happens, you have to say, look, freedom doesn't stop the bad people from happening. Freedom just allows the good people to operate without coercion, without bribery, without all the things that come with the government intervention in it. And it's just amazing to watch how they don't necessarily get it or understand it.

And I think, I'm hoping through music, which touches a lot of people, that that's one way to maybe, as Tom said, that line about the common good, maybe people will start thinking that. Because I hear it even amongst the people I walk around with where they say, *Well, it's best for the common good.* And I want to be like, *Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. Do you even know what you're saying? Do you know what the common good is or isn't?* And so yeah, I think that's what you have to deal with when you're promoting freedom, as you guys both know, is the, *Well, what about the bad people? How does the free market stop the bad people?* And I think obviously they don't get that you, the consumer, you get to stop the bad people. You don't have to run to the government. You don't have to beg a politician to stop it. They'll get bribed anyways, and they won't stop it. So you, your spending power, your desire not to or to purchase that product will dictate that.

**WOODS:** Well, Tom, I'm going to give you the final word as we wrap up today. Of course, I'm going to encourage people to check out the song, "Invisible Hand" by Tom Mullen. I'll link to it along with the video at [TomWoods.com/1794](http://TomWoods.com/1794)

**MULLEN:** Yeah, I want to thank you for having Bryan and I on, Tom. I appreciate it very much. And everybody can go to [SkepticSongs.com](http://SkepticSongs.com) for any of the other music I'm doing. We may be doing another video that has some of a freedom orientation to it sometime in the future. And please share the video. The more shares, likes, and comments it gets, the more attention it gets on YouTube and the more people hear the message. And it's a message we really need to hear right now, because none of our political parties seem to be preaching it.

**WOODS:** Well, indeed. Indeed so. Again, the link is [TomWoods.com/1794](http://TomWoods.com/1794). Go check that out. So Tom and Bryan, thanks so much for being with us.

**SIEMON:** Thank you.

**MULLEN:** Thank you, Tom.