

Newsweek

Bandow: Put Harriet Tubman on the \$20

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Washington's latest symbolic battle is looming. America's money celebrates its early political leaders, white males all. There's now a campaign to add a woman. A recent poll named antislavery activist Harriet Tubman the favorite, ahead First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt.

Of course, it wouldn't be the first time that a woman appeared on America's money. Suffragette Susan B. Anthony and Native American Sacagawea graced ill-fated dollar coins which were little used and quickly forgotten.

The Treasury Department is authorized to choose figures for America's money. President Barack Obama indicated his interest in showcasing more women, encouraging feminist groups to rev up their political engines.

Republican legislators should take up the challenge and introduce a resolution urging the Treasury to add Tubman. There's nothing sacred about the present currency line-up. After all, America was created by many more people than presidents and other politicians.

Indeed, replacing Andrew Jackson makes a certain sense since he resolutely opposed a federal central bank. He likely would be horrified if he returned and found his visage gracing paper money for a system far more malign than the Bank of the United States, which he battled ferociously and ultimately killed.

Moreover, Tubman would be a great choice to replace him. She was born between 1820 and 1822 in Maryland to slave parents. Tubman was hired out and often beaten. She suffered permanent harm but her strong Christian faith helped sustain her. After her owner's death in 1849, which led his widow to begin selling their slaves, she escaped through the Underground Railroad to Philadelphia.

However, a year later she returned to Maryland to rescue her niece and the latter's two children, beginning a career of leading slaves to freedom. She was daring and creative; her plans were sophisticated. Although she trusted God she also saw value in arming herself.

Among the 70 or so slaves she saved were her three brothers. She also helped instruct scores of other escapees. She directed her last rescue in December 1860.

Tubman also was an active abolitionist and lecturer, friendly with New York Senator William Seward. She aided John Brown, though she played no direct role in his raid on Harper's Ferry. During the Civil War she pressed abolition on the Lincoln administration.

With greater effect she aided slave refugees, served as a nurse, and acted as a scout for the federal army. Long after the war she aided the cause of women's suffrage, working with Susan Anthony, among others. Despite manifold health problems she lived past 90, dying in 1913.

It's an incredible legacy.

Tubman fought enormous injustice and promoted human liberty. She advocated genuine equality of opportunity, allowing women to vote, rather than the sort of PC notions of equality popular today. She exhibited courage in fighting and breaking unjust laws. Never did she wait for bureaucrats, politicians, judges, lawyers, and others to act. Instead, she acted to rescue the oppressed.

In short, she represented the common women and men across the country who contributed much to make America. Tubman represented the many that battled against the great injustice, slavery. Until that practice ended America could not be considered either truly good or free.

Equally important, putting Tubman on America's money would make no political statement. Eleanor Roosevelt was a woman of the left who gained attention more from the reflected glory of her husband than her own efforts. For President Obama to place her face on a banknote would look like an attempt to gain partisan advantage. Not so using Tubman's image.

America's current currency gallery is not sacrosanct. Andrew Jackson has had a fine run on the \$20 bill. It's time to give someone else a chance. Why *not* Harriet Tubman?

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