



Not willing to settle, nor should you

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I had a stroke about a year ago, and the doctors who worked on me said it would probably take a year to get back to normal. I'm not sure what constitutes normal, but for the most part I'm doing pretty well, I think. I'm back to work, getting ready to start my 44th year in business. I still have some trouble speaking and swallowing, and my balance isn't what it used to be, and I spend a lot of time (when I'm out of earshot of anyone) enunciating "chocolate milk truck" repeatedly, in an effort to strengthen the damaged muscles that affect my speaking and swallowing capabilities.

But all in all, I'm not complaining. Some of the doctors I used to see every day, I don't see at all anymore, and the ones I do see I don't see as often. I'm taking 4 pills a day, down from the wheelbarrow full I was taking a year ago. And I know a lot of people who have had strokes that are a lot worse off than me. But on the other hand, there are a lot of people who have had a stroke, and people who haven't, that are a lot better off than me.

I realize everything is relative, but no matter where we are on the health scale, I don't think there is anything wrong with aspiring to improve. I feel the same way about politics.

I hear a lot of people defending our current president by claiming he's not as bad as his predecessor was, or as bad as his opponent would have been if she had won. While I wouldn't argue either way, I'm not sure we want to choose our president based on the criteria of "He or she not as bad as he or she could be." And I don't believe we should be satisfied with a president just because they aren't as bad as the last one or the next one. We'd be a lot better off as a nation if we expected our leaders to follow their oath to obey the Constitution, compared to what we expect of them now.

And speaking of nations, the citizens of the United States take a lot of pride in being the "Land of the Free", and certainly we enjoy freedoms that a lot of people in the world don't. But we aren't the freest nation in the world, and according to the Human Freedom Index, published by the CATO Institute, we're dangerously close to slipping from the top 25. Based on a study of personal, civil, and economic freedom, the United States has fallen from 16th place in 2008, to 19th place in 2013, to our current standing as the 23rd freest country in the world.

While people might disagree on what exactly constitutes personal, civil, and economic freedom, it's hard to argue with the fact that most people can't name three things that government in this country doesn't tax or regulate.

I suppose we could be satisfied that we are more free than 172 countries in the world, but that is the kind of thinking that will keep us satisfied when we are more free than 171 countries in the world. Or 170.

Our goal should be to be not only the freest nation in the world, but the freest nation with the freest people ever.

I'm not willing to settle for 23rd, any more than I'm willing to settle for 2nd.

I hope you aren't either.