



Obama's speech built on framework

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The Wall Street Journal column by Roger Pilon of the Cato Institute about President Barack Obama's commencement address at Ohio State University is like George W. Bush's library. That is, it had no nonfiction section.

Obama spoke on citizenship, which is not based in religion, race, class or gender, according to our Lockean Constitution of 1789, telling the graduates that our Founding Fathers trusted individual citizens with "awesome authority."

Yet, Pilon said, "Actually, the Founders distrusted us at least in our collective capacity." Our Founders gave John Locke the task of taking the edge off politics that allowed European Christians to constantly wage wars of religion. He did a great job. Our Founders, especially the deistic Protestant leaders, didn't trust the clergy, and with good reasons.

Obama took that insight to lengths the Founders might not have imagined because they provided the framework by which all individuals, who consent as individuals and not as Christians or any other collective, would eventually be liberated from the inessential baggage of race, class, gender and religious beliefs, including women and gays.

Obama's speech might have "perplexed the Founders" because many owned slaves, for example, as did three of our presidents, but none owned an M-16.

Pilon incorrectly claims that Obama told the graduates that "their ambition is the problem." Rubbish. We, however, do live in a world of scarcity.

Finally, our Founders created a world they neither wanted or expected (Gordon Wood). In fact, those who lived long enough into the 19th century to experience its full democratic force were deeply disillusioned.

Our remarkable group of Founders contributed to their own demise by giving us the Declaration and Constitution. Women are still struggling and gays are still denied their civil rights, but this framework is the answer for all. It's a matter of time.