

Thoreau's belief in government

[Experience](#), [Belief](#)



Thoreau's "Resistance to Civil Government" is the conformation of his desire for a free thinking nation that knows right from wrong and is willing to fight for what they believe in. But while these ideals are true and good in moderation, they can be made wrong if followed to the extreme. I believe that while Thoreau was a great writer with great ideas, a lot of what he believed was a little too over the top. Americans, by inalienable right, have the freedom to speak their opinions without fear of persecution. It is this amendment that has led the country through some of its greatest movements and has supported its best causes.

Henry Thoreau was very fond of the freedom of speech, and made this quite clear by his many essays regarding the government. However, as he says in "Resistance", the power of speech is not enough. One must "do" something in order to get what they want. In Thoreau's case, this consisted of living alone in the woods, not paying taxes and rotting in jail for a night. While it is often said that actions speak louder than words, I believe that a well written speech can do a lot more good than a halfcocked action.

For, Thoreau's achievement did not come from spending a night in jail, but from using the experience symbolically in a published work. Had he not written about it, no one would have known, and the statement would not have been made. Thoreau seems to have thought himself above his fellow Americans in intelligence, despite his claims to the contrary. His seclusion from his neighbors so that he could meditate on his own, his constant use of words like "ignorant" to describe his countrymen, and his refusal to pay his taxes for "a society that he has not joined" all show of his arrogant nature.

Thoreau tried to save face by visiting his neighbors once in a while in order to appear sociable, and he claimed that he was okay with paying taxes for the institutions that he took part in. But if I had been Thoreau's neighbor, I would have been offended by his visits, knowing that he comes only to patronize and bombard me with his superior knowledge. I also feel that such a man of the people, as Thoreau claimed to be, should be more than willing to support a tax for an institution he freely chose not to be a part of if only to support his fellow man who does not feel the same way.

"Resistance" is full of Thoreau's ideals and beliefs, and while they may seem solid on the surface, they are backed by the arrogant views of a man that believes his opinion is best. Just because Thoreau's ideas work for him, do not mean that they would work for all of America. And even though he spins his words in such a pretty and convincing way, I personally can find better ways to make a difference than sitting, uselessly, behind bars.