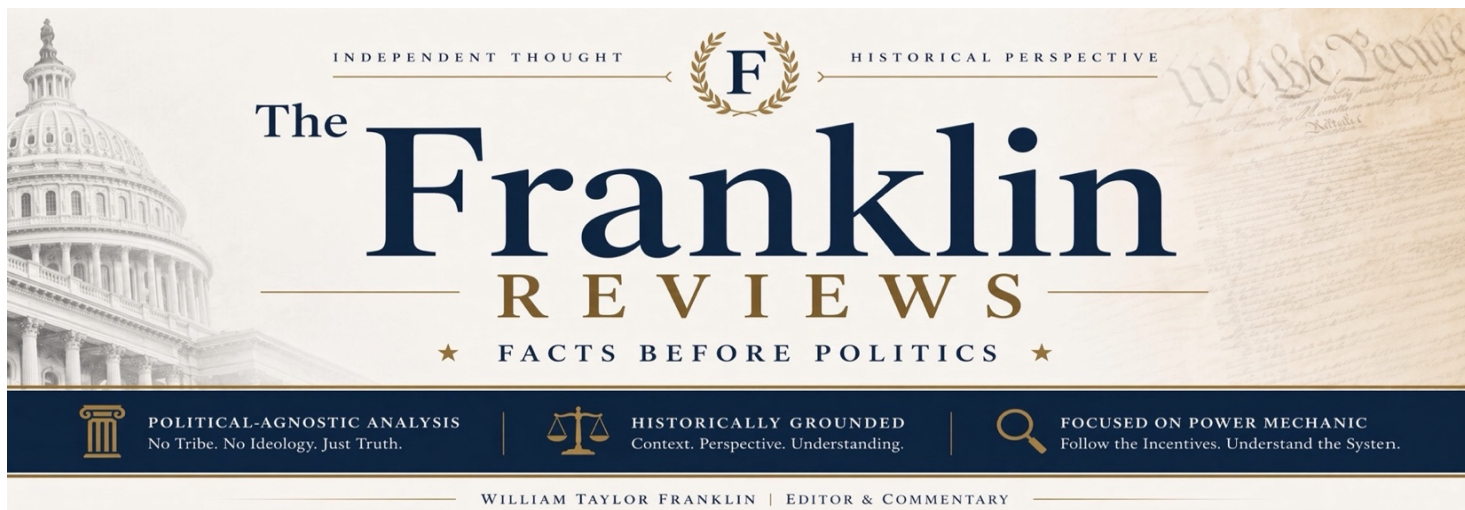




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Hope for America — at the Sheboygan County Fair

By William Taylor Franklin

I saw something at the Sheboygan County Fair that gave me genuine hope for the future of this country.

These kids standing in the ring are the recognized winners of the livestock judging — young men and women from 4-H and FFA who have spent countless hours feeding, caring for, training and showing their animals.

But what impressed me most wasn't what they accomplished in the ring.

It was what I heard outside of it.

“Yes, sir.”

“No, sir.”

“Thank you.”

“You’re welcome.”

“Thank you for supporting us.”

And something else struck me: in all the time I spent around these kids, I never heard a single swear word.

No entitlement. No attitude. No expectation that someone owed them something.

Instead, I saw handshakes. Respect. Gratitude. Responsibility. Hard work.

They supported each other. They congratulated each other — even when someone didn’t meet their objective. A ribbon didn’t have to be first place for the handshake and the “good job” to be real. They worked together keeping the barns orderly and doing whatever needed to be done. They weren’t told. They just knew.

These are kids who understand that animals have to be fed whether you feel like getting out of bed or not. They know ribbons aren’t given for showing up. They understand that success usually comes after the work, not before it. And they understand that the person next to you is part of the same effort, not just another competitor.

Somewhere behind every one of them is a family, a 4-H leader, an FFA advisor, a teacher, a farmer or a community that took the time to teach those lessons.

We hear an awful lot about what is wrong with the next generation.

Maybe we need to spend a little more time looking in places like this.

Great kids. Great families. Hard workers. Young Americans being raised with respect, responsibility and gratitude — and with the habit of showing up for each other without being asked.

Standing in that barn at the Sheboygan County Fair, looking at these kids, I couldn’t help but think: Our country’s future may be in much better hands than we’re being led to believe.



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