

## The Reason for reason

"Logic, not legends. Coherence [sic], not contradictions. This is our promise; this is the reason for REASON."—*from the first issue, May 1968*

IN A COUNTRY that prides itself on stories of humble origins, **reason** has an especially good tale to tell. In the *annus mirabilis* (or *horribilis*, take your pick) of 1968, we came into being as a typo-ridden mimeographed publication, the brainchild of a disgruntled Boston University student named Lanny Friedlander. He was outraged equally by the demonstrators who disrupted his classes and the increasingly repressive measures used by the authorities to contain such protests.

Showing he was definitely not your average *soixante-huitard*, Friedlander penned essays such as "Animal Farm 1970," in which he averred, "We are trapped in the middle of a street war between two breeds of pigs, the police and the New Left." Illustrating the story was a wonderfully bizarre, crudely rendered drawing of a man who was part truncheon-wielding cop and part Molotov cocktail-tossing radical. That's hardly the sort of take on campus riots you would have seen in the pages of *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, *National Review*, or *Ramparts*.

From its start, **reason** has provided a uniquely libertarian alternative to conventional right-wing and left-wing perspectives on politics and culture. As the magazine of "Free Minds and Free Markets," we champion a world of expanding choice—in lifestyles, identities, goods, work arrangements, and more—and explore the institutions, policies, and attitudes necessary for such a world. We are happy warriors against busybodies, elites, and gatekeepers who insist on how other people should live their lives. Often described as socially liberal and fiscally conservative, **reason** must be the only publica-

tion to have won praise from both Rush Limbaugh (he's called us "a good, good magazine"—and we're pretty sure it wasn't just the OxyContin talking) and the ACLU (President Nadine Strossen has hailed us as a "valued ally" and a "passionate defender of free speech"). As the *Columbus Dispatch* has put it, **reason** "manages to offend leftists with its defense of biotechnology, free trade and school choice, even as it appalls conservatives by supporting gay marriage, open immigration and drug legalization."

In the early '70s, Friedlander sold the magazine to three contributors, Robert W. Poole Jr., Tibor Machan, and Manuel Klausner, and **reason** was published out of Poole's Santa Barbara, California, garage for several years. Eventually, **reason** moved into actual offices, first in Santa Barbara and then, in 1986, Los Angeles. We now reside in cyberspace as much as anywhere: I edit the magazine from Ohio; **reason's** publisher lives in Connecticut; our art director is in Arizona; our Web editor is in San Francisco; and most of our staff is scattered around the greater Washington, D.C., area.

Since its early days, **reason** has grown in readership and stature. Each issue now goes out to close to 60,000 readers, and **reason online** pulls about 675,000 visits per month. We've been a finalist for a handful of National Magazine Awards and, last year, we were a finalist for an Utne



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Independent Press Award for our political coverage and a Western Publications Association "Maggie" Award in the "politics and social issues" category. Earlier this year, the *Chicago Tribune* ranked us at number 21 in their list of "The 50 Best Magazines," writing, "This magazine does everything well: culture, politics, religion, philosophy."

This anniversary issue encapsulates *reason's* past and its future. In "35 Years of *reason*: A history in excerpts" (page 32), you'll get a sense of how *reason* and the pressing issues of the day have changed since 1968. Many of the topics that once animated the magazine's pages—the Vietnam War, the draft, the Cold War—thankfully have been swept into the ash heap of history. It's almost quaint to read about Richard Nixon's autocratic wage and price controls or "Gorbomania," the fleeting, oversized adulation of a "genius" statesman whose lasting contribution to humanity was unwittingly dismantling the Soviet Union.

Other things haven't changed all that much. In 1972, for example, *reason* reported on "The New Biology," cutting-edge developments that promised to extend and enrich human lives if we could only "circumvent the recalcitrance of an antiquated culture." Today's hyperbolic fears about cloning, stem-cell research, and similar biomedical technologies testify that our society hasn't become all that less recalcitrant. In the wake of Watergate-inspired campaign finance laws, *reason* wrote that "all of these proposals would deny fundamental rights of individuals, increase the politicians' control of elections and do nothing to eliminate the root causes of Watergate." That's an apt critique of

the newest campaign finance law, which is currently (and one hopes successfully) being challenged in the Supreme Court on First Amendment grounds.

Perhaps the most important continuity is *reason's* insistence that freedom is central to human flourishing. Despite the world's innumerable problems—from terrorism to war to AIDS—no one can deny that the past 35 years have seen incredible political, economic, and social progress. A higher percentage of human beings live under representative governments than ever before and the percentage of people living in poverty is declining worldwide. As important, as we put it in "35 Heroes of Freedom" (page 64), "the world we live in is dizzying in its variety, breathtaking in its riches, and wide-ranging in its options. Malcontents on the right and left...will admit this much: These days we've even got a greater choice of ways to be unhappy." Our list of heroes—certainly the only time that Margaret Thatcher, Madonna, Vaclav Havel, and Larry Flynt have all appeared in the same place—pays eclectic and irreverent tribute to "some of the people who have made the world a freer, better, more libertarian place by example, invention, or action."

And what of the future? In "The Smaller the Better" (page 44), Science Correspondent Ronald Bailey tells us of the latest developments in nanotechnology, "the manipulation of matter at the molecular and atomic level." Nanotech holds forth the possibility of inexhaustible food sources, clean-burning energy, perfectly compatible organ replacement, and much more. Yet even as it promises to create a world beyond scarcity, Bailey reports on a growing

call for an immediate, comprehensive, global moratorium that would strangle nanotech in the crib. "While there are grounds for caution," writes Bailey, "the tremendous promise of nanotechnology will never be realized if we allow fear to rule us and give in to those who insist upon zero risk as a condition of progress. The manageable hazards associated with nanotechnology are small compared to the danger posed by the burgeoning movement to stop its development until all objections have been satisfied."

"Poor Man's Hero" (page 56) is an interview with Johan Norberg, author of the invaluable *In Defense of Global Capitalism*. In a conversation that ranges from women's rights to Arab politics to the World Trade Organization, Norberg makes a compelling case that globalization is the best way for people in the developing world to escape not just poverty but other forms of stultifying repression and isolation. In the best *reason* tradition, he makes his toughest case against self-serving political hypocrisy. "We need to explain what's on the line," he pleads, "what the cost is to poor people in the least developed countries. People are *dying* because we in the West are unwilling to change and to actually live by the free market rhetoric we often spout."

The topics may be different from those that appeared in that first mimeographed issue—and lord knows our proofreading skills have improved a bit. But 35 years later, these things remain unchanged about *reason*: a commitment to free minds and free markets; to logic, not legends; and to coherence, not contradictions. ■

Nick Gillespie ([gillespie@reason.com](mailto:gillespie@reason.com)) is *reason's* editor-in-chief.





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Reason is published by the Reason Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit educational foundation. Contributions to the Reason Foundation are tax-deductible. Signed articles in Reason reflect the views of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the editors, the Reason Foundation, or its trustees; articles should not be construed as attempts to aid or hinder the passage of any bill before any legislative body. The claims and opinions set forth in paid advertisements published in this magazine are not necessarily those of the Reason Foundation, and the publisher takes no responsibility for any such claim or opinion.

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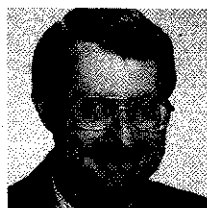
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RONALD BAILEY, Reason's science correspondent since 1998, has a dark secret in his past: He used to work for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission as an analyst. Back in the 1970s, he recalls, "they were 'deregulating' natural gas, so they had to triple the size of the agency." He soon turned to science journalism because he wanted to report on the ways people's lives were improved by the innovation that democracy and capitalism foster. In this issue, Bailey reports from the front lines of the battle over nanotechnology ("The Smaller the Better," page 44). Bailey is the author of *ECOSCAM: The False Prophets of Ecological Apocalypse* (St. Martin, 1993) and the editor of *Global Warming and Other Eco-Myths* (Prima Forum, 2002).

The son of a Little League coach, Associate Editor MATT WELCH was inspired to become a journalist by the snarky elegance of Bill James' *Baseball Abstract*, which he first read while waiting in line for World Series tickets. James is the most visible proponent of a new statistics-driven management theory called *sabermetrics*. So it's fitting that Welch takes on sabermetrics' critics in his review of Michael Lewis' *Moneyball* ("Balls," page 71), a chronicle of the method's embrace by the Oakland A's. Welch writes a fortnightly column for Canada's *National Post* and maintains a popular weblog at [mattwelch.com](http://mattwelch.com).

Although he doesn't have a byline in our 35th anniversary issue, no one has contributed more to the longevity and success of Reason over the years than Robert W. Poole Jr. In the early '70s, Poole and his partners, Tibor Machan and Manuel Klausner, bought the magazine when it was on the verge of bankruptcy. Due to Poole's tireless efforts, Reason grew from a garage operation in Santa Barbara to a national magazine based in Los Angeles. He's proud, he says, that Reason worked to avoid "in-group navel gazing," instead becoming a "champion of individualism and markets in the mainstream national debate." He currently serves as director of transportation studies at the Reason Public Policy Institute.