

March 3, 2004

Dear Travis:

Thank you for your kind note regarding my presentation. I read yours and all the other comments that were forwarded to me by Mrs. Bryant. You and your classmates have the good fortune to be in a class taught by a teacher of her caliber. Make sure you take advantage of the opportunity.

I wanted to write this letter to say thanks for your question concerning the skate park. It is not often that I get the chance to discuss something that is interesting to young men and women but also affords the occasion to illustrate an even more important point. So let me begin.

I understand that you and many of your friends find skateboarding and skating to be a fun and enjoyable way to spend your time. I also understand that many property owners dislike the markings and outright damage done to their property when you conduct your activities. I include public property in this statement because someone, namely all of us, owns it. So here we have a dilemma, you (and many others) wish to participate in this activity while others take steps to prevent you from doing so. What you and your friends see as an aggravating unfair situation is, in reality, an exceptional opportunity for someone. There is absolutely no reason that the someone could not be Travis -----!

If you ever have the good fortune to study the free market system we enjoy in this country, you will quickly see that it is simply example after example of people turning problems into opportunity. John D. Rockefeller did it with Standard Oil, Sam Walton did it with Wal-Mart, Herman Hulman did it with Hulman & Co., and Travis ----- could do it with Skate-O-Rama!

There is a need, perhaps, for a place that would allow skateboarders to pursue their avocation. You have an interest, you have experience, you know what these skateboarder customers would want, you have a desire to see it provided, in short, YOU DA' MAN! If you have the intelligence, the ambition, the real desire, a little bit of a gambling spirit, then you might become the Bill Gates of the skateboarding world. Years ago, a young Bill Gates saw a need and tried to fill it. I think anyone would agree that he was successful in doing so.

But Councilman Cummins, I'd rather see the city build this skate park and run it, you say. Travis, please, you and your friends are falling into the trap that more and more Americans seem to be falling into and that is this: If I need something, whatever it might be, I'll turn to the government to provide it.

There is a better way. A way to provide everything you want, everything you need, efficiently, quickly, exactly how people want it. It goes by many names, the free market, capitalism, free enterprise system, and others. Adam Smith, in 1776, aptly named it the "invisible hand". I urge you and your classmates to spend some time this summer reading his book, "The Wealth of Nations". Take my word that it is not as boring as it sounds. I have also enclosed a small booklet that explains the wonders of this free market system titled "I, Pencil".

If after reading my letter and the enclosed booklet you still believe that the best course of action is to have the city build it and run it, I would urge you pursue that course of action. Perhaps we will talk again in that quest.

I thank you for your time. Please feel free to share my letter and thoughts with your classmates, your teacher, your folks, or anyone you so desire. Good luck to you.

Sincerely,

Ryan Cummins