

Quote: *Here's to the crazy ones, the misfits, the rebels, the troublemakers, the round pegs in the square holes...the ones who see things differently - they're not fond of rules... You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them, but the only thing you can't do is ignore them because they change things... they push the human race forward, and while some may see them as the crazy ones, we see genius, because the ones who are crazy enough to think that they can change the world, are the ones who do.* - Steve Jobs

My name is Michael Gerard Lasher. I was the youngest of seven children in a Catholic family from Long Island, born in December 1967—the first in my family who wasn't a baby boomer. As a Generation Xer (born between 1964-1984), I believe our greatest contributions to society are yet to unfold. Now in our more mature years, with our children becoming increasingly independent and our careers established or behind us, I believe that we owe it to our country and our kids to make use of our more-developed potential to positively influence our society and its leadership. The six fantastic kids I am proud to have raised are now all well-balanced adults, my small company in Munich is in good hands and conveying the Same Boat Message became my new primary mission in early 2025, after about 7 years of contemplation, research and preparation, including writing the essence of the book and its concepts piecemeal in the form of “brainstorming notes”.

One morning before school in 1976, the year of America's bicentennial, I noted an advertisement for a writing competition regarding the Founding Fathers on the back of a box of Cheerios. I asked my mother what she thought about it, and her reply introduced me to Roger Sherman, a distant relative of ours. Her maiden name was Sherman, and our ancestor, Roger was the only Founding Father to have signed all four of the Great Documents and the author of the Great Compromise, which established the structure of Congress and played a significant role in the framing of the Constitution. I was impressed.

That same day I informed my fourth-grade teacher that I was related to one of the Founding Fathers and a few weeks later I was marching in the fourth of July parade down Broadway in Hicksville dressed as a colonist in knickers, a blouse-like shirt and a three-cornered hat while holding a banner that declared me a "Descendant of Roger Sherman."

Back then we had a set of books on American history with color photographs in our home. I recall how the imagery in the band covering the Revolutionary War conjured a feeling within me that felt inspirational. Two of those images were, predictably, Washington's Crossing of the Delaware (Emanuel Lewtze, 1851) and The Spirit of '76 (Archibald Willard, 1876). Something about them instilled a sense of veneration within me for what the Founding Fathers had achieved.

Almost 50 years later, in the 250th year of our great republic, I write this preface just days after the heinous assassination of Charlie Kirk on September 10th, 2025. I have been living in Munich, Germany since 1993, where my company, the well-known Mike's Bike Tours, celebrated its 30th anniversary in May of 2025. Thanks to the relative success of this small company and the outstanding support from my loyal and beloved staff, I have been able to pursue my inspiration to join the fray of the cold civil war which threatens our nation's prosperity, stability and future. Why? Because that love of country and my reverence for the sacrifices of those men in the spirit of '76 never left me, despite living in Germany for the past 33 years. While my formal education includes a bachelor's degree from CUNY Baruch, my credentials for writing on this subject come from countless hours of independent study over the past decade as well as my Same Boat Project in 2024, a research trip from Austin to Boston (and back) whereby I interviewed nearly 100 Americans about their views on the political divide leading up to the general election. Excerpts of the documentary can be seen at www.TheSameBoat.com. I composed this book for the common citizen, particularly those who are confused and concerned about our nation's current state of affairs and would like to be better informed and part of a potential solution. Anyone interested in more regarding my *curriculum vitae* can visit www.MichaelLasher.com

After 2016, a flood of disinformation began forging hardened belief systems resistant to opposing viewpoints, creating intellectual laziness and a "labeling without listening" mentality. Politically driven media coverage fueled anti-Trump sentiment while calling his supporters racists, fascists, and cult members became a new normal - rhetoric that has arguably contributed to political violence, with (too!) many on the left finding it "at least somewhat justified." Charlie Kirk's tragic murder in September 2025 underscored how urgent our need for political healing has become. The vast majority of us—regardless of political affiliation—wish he was still among us, and that shared sentiment is a powerful place from which to begin bridging our divide.

I was always relatively interested in politics, but beyond reading Time magazine weekly until I grew weary with how slanted it became, I never spent much time on the subject. That changed for me, along with countless millions of Americans, beginning in 2016 when Donald Trump's candidacy kicked off an unprecedented political drama that unfolded into what recent evidence has clearly confirmed was one of the most consequential scandals in American history—a coordinated campaign that captivated and divided the nation. A brother of mine and I wound up on opposite ends of this newly forged political divide and to this day have not been able to establish any agreement about Trump or the events of the past decade. Rather than continue fruitless debates, I conceived this book as a summary argument for Trump supporters to share with those who have little to no understanding of our reasoning. It enables us to give something substantial to family members or friends with whom we cannot discuss politics productively yet would greatly appreciate being understood rather than dismissed as members of a cult, or worse. It offers a concise overview of the multiple reasons behind our position, with the intention to expand our Common Knowledge, establish more Common Ground, and foster future dialogue.

Unless politics is our profession or passion, most of us haven't invested the time to really "know our stuff" when it comes to controversial political issues. This shared time constraint is a major reason why I chose the 'same boat' metaphor for this book's title, as we are all navigating the same confusing climate with limited time in a fog of vastly contradictory information. More often than not, most of us base our opinions on the information that our chosen sources present us, and rarely, if ever, invest enough time to get the full picture and details on almost all the stories that emerge in the incessant news cycle.

This book is an overview of where we've been, where we are, how we got here, and where we're headed. It outlines what would usually take dozens if not hundreds of hours to seek out and piece together from scratch, offering excellent value for time invested. This is not an academic work but a *guide*, historical review, and a manifesto for the Common Good—a roadmap where the 80-20 rule applies, helping Americans understand how and why we've become so divided without requiring 10-20 times as long to research the issue independently. Naturally, one book is far too small to cover each aspect of this important subject in depth, which is why I have included QR code links to selected sources and videos at www.thesameboat.com for readers interested in deeper dives on topics I have neither the space nor expertise to cover thoroughly here and at this point in my new career. *Note: these QR codes are not included in this advanced reader copy.*

My main premise is that Americans are not nearly as divided as the political drama since 2016 has made it seem, and that unprincipled politicians and the legacy media industrial complex are the primary culprits behind the unprecedented division and endless power struggle in our federal government. Most of us intuitively understand that much of the discord is illusory and magnified by social media influencers who generally only show their audiences that which makes their political opponents look worst while propping up their own narratives. This practice has distorted perceptions about what percentage of Americans are genuinely at odds with one another. What we lack most is Common Knowledge about what's actually happened in the recent past and Common Goals to aim towards together. Without significantly more of these two crucial elements America will certainly remain dangerously divided, yet I have seen little to nothing thus far conceived to address this challenge.

Many Trump supporters are already familiar with the issues I cover and will value having our arguments organized in one package that can be easily shared with others. Readers who are left of center or simply don't understand how Republicans could possibly support Trump will find that much of the material I address challenges their existing beliefs and assumptions. In any case, The Same Boat is intended to function as a lens to help *all* readers see both the bigger picture and its key details more clearly and it is my intention to only publish true and factual information.

Understanding the importance of a foundation in any structure naturally leads to concluding that re-examining ours is the logical starting place for healing our political divide. We could never master our challenges if the values of half the nation were diametrically opposed to those of the other. Though this can be debated, I propose that 90% of Americans overwhelmingly agree on what our fundamental principles and values should be. If this is true, we must re-emphasize this shared foundation, make these Common Principles and Values part of our Common Knowledge and establish vastly more Common Ground. Our Commons—Common Ground, Knowledge, Values, Interests, Goals, Principles, Virtue, Decency, and Sense—collectively make up our Relaunch Platform, the base from which to defeat our disease of division.

What we need is a unifying message essentially *everyone* can subscribe to. I hope to create something a large majority will rally around and recommend, offering potential to influence the quality of our leadership as much as possible, as soon as possible.

I sincerely encourage skeptical readers to persevere through sections challenging their assumptions, as the effort will certainly pay significant dividends in a better understanding of how we arrived here, why this book has merit, and enabling better-educated choices regarding their political alignment. Republicans will be better prepared to articulate our case for supporting Republican leadership, while Democrats and independents will find perspectives broadened whether they maintain their current affiliation or not. At a minimum, they'll realize that Trump supporters aren't crazy and that we have sound and solid arguments behind our decision to stay on the right side of the spectrum. In the end, I believe fair-minded readers will find The Same Boat Message sincere, written in good faith, and worth their time, whether they agree with my conclusions or not.

I am partisan—there's no point pretending otherwise. Much of this book defends the Trump supporter's position, worldview, and character. But ultimately, it's more about establishing the critical Common Knowledge and Common Ground we need by focusing on our Common Interests. Here's a test of objectivity: Would any Democrat be comfortable with one of their candidates being treated the way Trump was during his first term and thereafter? By any fair measure, the answer should be no for anyone who knows and understands what really went down between 2016 and 2021, which was unfair, un-American, and unacceptable by any objective standard. Making this a more prevalent part of our Common Knowledge is a crucial step toward healing the political divide. I ask all readers—regardless of their political leanings—to consider the information I've included objectively and to do their own research using the QR links to the corresponding pages at the same boat website for more detailed analysis before making their judgment. *(Again, these links were not yet prepared for this advanced edition)*

George Bernard Shaw noted that Democracy is a device ensuring we're governed no better than we deserve. Americans will continue having the leaders they "deserve" unless far more of us demand integrity from our elected officials and also improve our own game first. Communication and reaffirming what we have in common are fundamental elements of the antidote to heal the destructive polarization that permeates American society today, and we all have the choice to make a more positive contribution to the ongoing debate and be part of the solution, or not.

No one person or anything someone may profess can solve our protracted issues alone, but leadership that understands and emphasizes a unifying instead of a divisive message which speaks to citizens on *both* sides of the divide should not be too much to expect, should it? The Same Boat is an invitation, an introduction, and a tool toward that end. I hope it will resonate widely and prove to be a meaningful contribution toward helping America get back on more stable ground.

The controversial Trump era will soon pass. Trump was the catalyst for division, but not its sole cause. The cold civil war will most likely continue into 2028 and beyond—until enough of us recognize the power we can collectively muster to take back control over our ship through unifying action, inspired by Our Commons and The Same Boat Message.

I believe an America where The Same Boat message gains traction will be stronger than one where it fails. From experience, I know this is challenging—only a small percentage of those I reach will actually help advance it. I hope you'll choose to be part of that minority. If enough of us do, we can change the course of our ship, together.

Please visit and spread the word about The Same Boat message at www.TheSameBoat.com

Michael Lasher