

Where Dreams Come True

July 2012

The United States of America is the model of united nations in action every day. We are a country that leads the world in cultural assimilation and compassion. Virtually all cultures of the world interact within our geography. From here all voices in the world are given consideration. Our country may be less a product of our history and more the result of human history.

In fourteen hundred and ninety-two, a Portuguese immigrant from Italy went searching for a new route to India. He stumbled upon something unexpected, the New World. It was an age of Imperialism and Columbus' misfortune appeared to hold a great abundance of fortune. The leaders of Europe rapidly came to stake their claim upon this newly discovered territory.

Over the next three centuries Europe's emissaries were sent to capture this prize. Their merchants brought slaves from Africa to help cultivate and harvest the bounty. They recruited and transplanted more of their native people to lay claim to, and tame this new land. Thus America's history began...as the land of opportunity.

Europe's elite possessed the ability to exploit this grand opportunity, yet their common man held little chance to rise above common. Seeking to leave a world controlled by the privileged class, in search of a better life, European common folk began a steady march to this new fertile ground. Columbus had set the example...“Believe your dreams, don't be afraid to take risk, and a richer life can be had.”

“What, then, is this new man, the American? They are a mixture of English, Scotch, Irish, French, Dutch, Germans, and Swedes. From this promiscuous breed, that race, now called Americans, have arisen.”, suggested the French-American farmer and writer Jean de Crevecoeur in the late 1700's. de Crevecoeur's “Letters From An American Farmer” fertilized the growth of the American homestead.

In the late 1700's a new republic emerged. The noble spirit of this country's leaders steered the land of opportunity towards the shores of liberty. Thus became the United States of America, rightly or not, often referred to the world over as “America”. Opportunity came first. Liberty followed. Together they still form the foundation to America's soul.

But even as opportunity and liberty gained hold, the new country carried a cultural affliction contradicting our founding principles, something we had swept under the rug in the quest for independence. At the cost of over six hundred thousand lives, our Civil War took its toll on almost every citizen of this country, yet the roots of our affliction started to wear away.

When gold was discovered in our western territories Asians began to arrive joining an existing lot of former Europeans, a growing throng from Latin America and the Africans brought in as slaves. Railroads proceeded to link east to west and telegraphs allowed ideas to pass a thousand miles within a day. The notions of liberty and opportunity further strengthened while natural resources fueled economic success. In the late 1800's, after four hundred years of history, a fledgling country began to mature.

"Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden

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door!" wrote Emma Lazarus in 1883. Three years later France presented us with the Statue of Liberty. By 1900, almost seventy-six million former Europeans, Africans, Asians and Latin Americans called the United States of America home. By now America had truly become the land of opportunity.

Growing economic prowess, ancestral ties and our principles brought this country to the doorstep of the First World War. After numerous imperialist incidents, Congress gave President Woodrow Wilson the power to wage war against Germany. The President declared it "an act of high principle and idealism...[and]...as a crusade to make the world safe for democracy."

Thus began our role as policeman for the world. We had achieved significant economic and cultural success. We were becoming a global power. With power came responsibility, something we may not have sought out so much as history thrust upon us.

A few years later, events in Germany, Russia and China snatched a sliver of the American Revolutionary idea, but none of the virtues. As totalitarianism spread its controlled society, more Europeans and Asians sought refuge in our ideals of liberty and opportunity. Talk and tolerance failed to stop totalitarian's spread, so once again we were called to arms. The overall casualties of World War II approximate sixty million people. We defeated the then axis of evil. We rebuilt their countries and today they are free.

We then took the initiative against the growth of Communism in Asia. It has often been suggested that we failed in Korea and lost the war in Vietnam. But maybe it was just battles lost, for today it seems our old opponent, China, honors us with emulation.

A silent but Cold War had also been spreading through numerous other nations in northern Europe. Here again, talk and tolerance failed to resolve conflict. Once again, action, the Cold War, turned that enemy around and now it seems they too seek to emulate us.

Hindsight surely influences our actions. It has taught America that virtue inspired action serves man well. Talk and tolerance solves few disagreements over principles and human rights.

Even within our own culture, it has been virtue inspired action that improves our lives. Few better American examples may be found than Rosa Parks. In 1955, Ms Parks refused to sit in the back of a Montgomery, Alabama city bus. This African American female planted the seed that Martin Luther King and many others after have tended and nurtured. Her action inspired African Americans to embrace becoming an American. Now African American heroes are All American heroes.

This seems the story for all but one culture in America. There is no question that within our national soul we must take full responsibility for the genocide and cultural enslavement of the Native American Indian. But looking back without looking forward will never move us forward. As became the case with African Americans, Native Americans may also need to take action for themselves. They need to find their own Rosa Parks. One day they surely will, and America will be all the better for it.

"Here is not merely a nation, but a nation of nations." wrote Walt Whitman in 1900.

Our country is the melting pot of values and aspirations from every corner of the world. Those values and aspiration emanate from the immigrant roots embedded in nearly every resident, the search for a

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better life. Together we are one country, but individually we are represented by every nation, every culture and every religion on this planet. We are a people that believe and know the world can be a better place, and we are not and should not be afraid to make it so.

Maybe it is that knowledge, that collective consciousness, which has pushed us forward. We do not just imagine. We do not just aspire. We know the world can be a better place. Our personal history has proved it. We acquired more freedom of thought, expression, action and economic opportunity than from where we came.

Success compels us to spread our influence. It is the human way. Yet we do not seek the same goals of previous Imperialism. We do not seek ownership of assets to exploit only for the benefit of our elite. We do not seek to enslave. We seek to liberate. All our former enemies are free. It deserves saying again, "All our former enemies are free".

Our Imperialism is meant to serve the spirit of our values. We desire to help the victims of power find their own salvation. Having planted the seeds of liberty and opportunity it has become our responsibility to now tend them. Human history compels us to stand firm in man's constant struggle between liberty and slavery. America should not be afraid to take virtue inspired action no matter how imprudent it may seem. It is our responsibility to the world because we are a product of the world.

Columbus was thought a fool to believe the world may be round. To gain our independence from England we faced the most powerful armed forces in the world. Dividing our country over slavery laid economic destruction at our feet. Few have been braver than Rosa Parks. Action taken to support our ideals of liberty and opportunity has been branded into the American hide.

A better existence inspired immigrants to America. They dreamed of improving their life. They refused to be patient in the face of oppression. Virtue inspired action made their world better.

Immigrants are the people who dream and "America" is the place where dreams come true. This is the character of the United States of America, where immigrants are likely the most pure American. Along with our independence, we should honor them every 4th of July, for we are them.



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