

"Writing the truth
as I see it;
trying not to
offend
those who will
disagree."

The truth as I see it™

Idaho Common Sense™



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Why I came to America

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"Why did you come to America?" I asked my friend. "Why did I come to America?" he responded with tears in his eyes and a quiver in his voice. Why would a man leave his country, his heritage, the only home he knew? Why would a man leave his country with no guarantees of the life that lay ahead? Why would he move his family around the world to a foreign land, a foreign language, and start a new life? Moreover, why pick the United States over all other choices?

I suspected he came to the United States because of the many opportunities it offers. But, that was not his reason. Perhaps it was the many freedoms we have, the freedoms far too many Americans take for granted, and the rest of the world envies. But, those freedoms were not the reason either. What could possibly make a man want to change his entire life, everything he knows, and leave all that he calls home?

Moreover, what could The United States of America possibly offer? Watch the news, read the newspapers - most of the pundits agree we are a nation in significant disrepair. Too many believe we are past our zenith and in a state of demise. All those on the sidelines with far more self-recognized skill than those in the game would have us believe we have significant problems, perhaps irreparable problems.

Maybe my friend does not see what the naysayers see. Maybe my friend sees something in America, we have forgotten. Maybe he sees something we can no longer see from the perch of our spoiled lifestyle, a lifestyle the world envies. Perhaps he sees something we cannot because we have not experienced religious

persecution, not lived in a war-torn nation for generations, not seen people murdered simply for having the wrong opinion, not wondered day to day how long we would live. Maybe we are so pampered we can no longer comprehend that much of the world still lives in the same way our founding fathers came to America to escape! Maybe we simply do not want to know about the evils in the world and disrupt our sanitary lives.

Talking with my friend I recalled attending a medical meeting in Los Angeles and having a conversation with the cab driver during the ride from the airport. He was in his thirties and emigrated from South Africa when he was eighteen. He was now an American citizen, owned several cabs, and was preparing to start a limousine service. I asked him what he thought of his new country, his new home. He started crying. He said this was the most amazing, marvelous country in the world. He said there was no other country in the world where a person could start with nothing and become a success if they were willing to work hard.

Maybe we should take time to look at other countries and try to understand just how fortunate we are. Maybe we should visit Kosovo, as I did in the mid 1990s to set up an emergency room. Every road, every bridge, every government building, everything was destroyed - a result of the war. The cemeteries had graves with one headstone listing the father, mother, and all the children on the same stone because they were all murdered the same day. The 5-year-olds walked past live mine fields, the same mine fields their parents walked past when they went to school. Ask the Kosovars if they wished the

United States and others would have just minded their own business like many Sunday morning experts suggested. Before the war, they had homes, jobs, food, and money. Now they had nothing. Nevertheless, every single Kosovar I met expressed the same sentiment about their country's hard-fought independence, "We are free". The bombed homes, the empty stores, the food lines, and the lost jobs, nothing mattered - "We are free".

Have we become so insulated we have forgotten what is important? Are we so removed from the horrendous adversities in the world we are unable to appreciate all we have? Do we prefer not to know the Kosovos of the world exist?

"Why did I come to America" my friend said. "I came to America because when I leave my home every morning, I know with near certainty, I will return to see my wife and my children that night." In my country, when I left home in the morning my mother knew there was a possibility I would never return. "I would be willing to give up everything for this safety, this security!"

What is important? What should we value and appreciate? What really matters? The United States of America is history's greatest and most successful experiment. Never forget how wonderful we are. Never apologize for being an American. And always remember why my friend came to America.