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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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Who are 'real' Americans?

July 20, 2009

"Our great modern Republic. May those who seek the blessings of its institutions and the protection of its flag remember the obligations they impose."

President Ulysses S. Grant said it well. It is a blessing to be an American, protected under its flag.

But who are the "real" Americans? I recently had occasion to ask myself this question. What is required to be an American? Is it citizenship? Is it being born in America, others remaining immigrant Americans? Are some races, some religions more American than others? How do we decide who the "real" Americans are?

Speaking English as a requisite to being American was put forth by President Theodore Roosevelt when he said, "Every immigrant who comes here should be required within 5 years to learn English or leave the country." Are "real" Americans not just citizens, but English speaking citizens? Nevertheless, I know citizens who speak English who I do not consider "real" Americans.

Perhaps "real" Americans must be in this country for generations before becoming "real" Americans. Nine generations ago, in the 1690s, Walter Bosley emigrated from England to Maryland. Four generations ago, in 1852, my great-grandfather Herman Gerbeling emigrated from Prussia.

Perhaps it's more than just the generations a family has been in

America. Perhaps it is more important to have the correct ancestry to be a "real" American. Maybe I am a "real" American because another ancestor, Edward Fuller, arrived in America on the Mayflower; his brother Samuel was the ship's physician. Or, maybe I am a "real" American because two of my Bosley ancestors fought in the Revolutionary War.

Even so, I know people I consider Americans who have not been here for generations, whose ancestors did not come over on the Mayflower, whose ancestors did not fight in the Revolutionary War. As I think about it, I know people who are first generation Americans I consider "real" Americans.

What if none of these attributes have anything to do with being a "real" American. What if birthplace, race, religion and lineage are all irrelevant?

Was 20th century novelist Sinclair Lewis on to something when he said, "Intellectually I know that America is no better than any other country; emotionally I know she is better than every other country."

Could being a "real" American be more about a state of mind? That makes some sense and goes along with one of our mottos, "E Pluribus Unum" (Out of Many, One). Are "real" Americans one people from many races, religions and countries of origin? Is being a "real" American, more than anything else,

about values, attitudes, loyalty to country and love of country?

"Real" Americans are Americans and nothing else. They see themselves as Americans first, everything else pales in comparison.

President Theodore Roosevelt summed up this sentiment saying, "There is no room in this country for hyphenated Americanism.... This is just as true of the man who puts 'native' before the hyphen as of the man who puts German or Irish or English or French before the hyphen. Americanism is a matter of the spirit and of the soul. Our allegiance must be purely to the United States. We must unsparingly condemn any man who holds any other allegiance. But if he is heartily and singly loyal to this Republic, then no matter where he was born, he is just as good an American as anyone else."

To better describe Americans we could modify Daniel Webster's famous quote, "I was born an American; I will live as an American; I shall die an American." It could say, "I will live as an American; I shall die an American; I am a 'real' American."

Being a "real" American is simpler than I thought. It is all about love of country, about respectfully giving our heart and soul to America.