

"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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Where are you from?

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The other day a friend and I were talking about immigration. He immigrated to the United States, is an American citizen but never refers to himself as a something-American, a hyphenated-American; he is just an American. My great-grandfather emigrated from Prussia in 1852. And like my friend, I don't consider myself a Prussian-American; I am just an American.

My friend says people occasionally ask him where he is from, the question suggesting to him that they think he is a hyphenated-American with divided loyalties. Perhaps his mild accent or foreign sounding name prompts the question. But might I be asked where I am from if my last name were Gerbeling or if I had a German accent?

Several years ago, prompted by his pronounced English accent, I asked a cab driver in Los Angeles where he was from. As I asked, I realized how easily the question could suggest I thought he was a hyphenated-American.

His answer, like my friend's, was to tell me about the United States, "his" country, and how much he loved it. His response made me realize he was not a hyphenated-American, rather just another American like my friend and I.

Maybe there are other reasons, more important reasons to ask someone where he or she is from. Perhaps values and attitudes about America are better reasons to prompt the question than accents and surnames.

Although these two men are from different countries, as they

described the United States I realized they were no longer "from" those countries, they are now Americans and they are from America. And to their credit, both men loved the United States without losing love or respect for their heritage, their homeland.

As we discussed America, neither of them said anything about wanting a welfare government, neither said anything about wanting government programs offering "free" money. The cab driver came to America with nothing, dreamed of and built a cab company with several cabs, along with starting a limousine service. My friend came to America for the safety it offers, securing an education, now well educated . . . and safe.

Both men are grateful for America's freedoms and opportunities, not wanting government guarantees, government subsidies or government help. Think about it, aren't these real American values, values our founding fathers risked all to give us? Don't these values define Americans and answer the question, "Where are you from?"

On the other hand, are there people who claim they are Americans but whose values are so un-American that we do need to ask them, "Where are you from?" Are there Americans who have lost their understanding of who we are? Are there Americans who no longer understand freedom and opportunity? Are there Americans who see a benevolent, near-aristocratic country or a socialist country as the ideal we should aspire to become?

Are there Americans who believe the welfare state should have been the founding fathers dream and their job is to make it so? Are there Americans who see government deciding what is best for us as the ideal? Are there Americans who think it's the government's job to solve all of our problems?

Who are these people who claim to be Americans with such seemingly un-American values? Who would dare to distort the dreams of the founding fathers and the United States Constitution? Who would dare to spoil the greatest and most successful national experiment in the history of the world?

The people with these values already have a national organization and are recruiting more followers daily. And like other fringe groups, they have their own geographic area where they meet to work on their agenda.

But this group is subtle; some of them live next-door to us, pretending to be like us and unwilling to openly admit their values that are contrary to the Constitution. And they carry out their subterfuge from within, quietly.

They call their group the United States Congress and we need to ask them, "Where are you from?"