

On America, at Thanksgiving

I've gotten to know one of the van drivers who take flight crews from Seattle operations to the airport terminal. His name is Abel and he comes from Eritrea, a country in Africa that was once part of Ethiopia. I noticed him because he always had a college textbook in his bag. First, it was English. Then algebra. Recently it was calculus.

One evening, I was the only one in the van and I started asking him about his studies. He's attending a community college and plans to go to the University of Washington. Abel's father told him that the key to success was getting a good education. He first moved to Germany but found it difficult to advance in his studies because class space was limited and German citizens were given priority over foreign students. "I don't feel like I am discriminated against here in America. No one cares where I come from. I can take any class I want. I am going to be a pharmacist."

I left the van invigorated and uplifted. Abel is a modern-day version of my paternal grandfather Sebastian, who left Italy with the clothes on his back, a new bride and a dream of a better life. Then, as now, America remains a beacon, offering the world's best and brightest the opportunity to come here and see just how far they can go.

The wealth of a nation lies in the minds of its citizens, not in whatever natural resources exist underground. Our nation benefits when millions of free people use their human capital to improve their lives. Tomorrow's life changing discoveries and inventions are incubating today in the minds of people with the education and forethought to bring them to reality. Today, as it always has been, America remains the richest nation on earth.

After a year of economic and political stress and uncertainty, I would like to refocus our thinking a bit and reprint a poem that appeared in last November's issue -

America

By Ray Bradbury

We are the dream that other people dream.
The land where other people land
When late at night
They think on flight
And, flying, here arrive
Where we fools dumbly thrive ourselves.

Refuse to see
We be what all the world would like to be.
Because we hive within this scheme
The obvious dream is blind to us.
We do not mind the miracle we are,
So stop our mouths with curses.
While all the world rehearses
Coming here to stay.
We busily make plans to go away.

How dumb! newcomers cry, arrived from Chad.
You're mad! Iraqis shout.
We'd sell our souls if we could be you.
How come you cannot see the way we see you?
You tread a freedom forest as you please.
But, damn! you miss the forest for the trees.
Ten thousand wanderers a week
Engulf your shore,
You wonder what their shouting's for,
And why so glad?

Run warm those souls: America is bad?
Sit down, stare in their faces, see!
You be the hoped-for thing a hopeless world would be.
In tides of immigrants that this year flow
You still remain the beckoning hearth they'd know.
In midnight beds with blueprint, plan and scheme
You are the dream that other people dream.

Happy Thanksgiving.

Disclaimer - The information in this article is educational in nature and should not be considered as personal investment, tax or legal advice. Each reader must determine how the content of this newsletter should be applied to their investment portfolio. This newsletter is not a solicitation to sell investment advisory services where such an offer would not be legal. Investing in stocks and mutual funds involves risk and the potential loss of principal. Historical data is from sources believed to be reliable. Past performance is not a guarantee of future returns.