

Is it time now for a new social contract?

[Philosophy](#)



There are many suggestions for reform in government's relationship to the economy. As I had hinted in my earlier discourse, many of my recommendations deal with eliminating government's intervention in economic activity. Thus, there needs to be a creation of a free market economy, independent of government influence as a means to stimulate economic enterprise toward more productivity and to restore the economy to a strong position. However, given the long history of government involvement, it is highly unlikely that such action is possible.

I guess it is time for a new social contract. It seems that the policies and practices in the employment of relationships in America are no longer responsive to the needs of today's working families and society. There had been more emphasis on increased profits and productivity while the wages have remained the same, or worst, declined and stagnated for families. The irony is that people are working harder, but they do not belong among those who share in the gains from their efforts.

Only a small percentage of the population is privileged to have that benefit, adding to the increasing inequality. The families are affected by these changes and one wonders what he can do in the face of these economic changes. The implicit social contract that encompasses work such as loyalty and hard work are not necessarily rewarded with fair and increasing wages. This has been blotted out by a norm where employers give center stage to stock price and even short-term gains, which are often at the expense of the workers who work hard daily.

What we call the American Dream is usually the promise of riches and prosperity and a life that is well-lived. This has been the ideal ever since

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that ensures one success in life so long as he is willing to sacrifice everything to work for it. It has been such an illusion for many. Thus the American dream has become a driving and motivating force for millions of people who flock to the " Land of the Free" because they want to escape the poverty in their countries.

They think that their only option viable to them is to move to a country that promises them success, wealth, freedom from material prosperity. However, even though this is oftentimes true for the people who really do work hard for the dream, the American Dream must not be promoted as it is. The reason here is because it shifts the focus from the true values that count in the family to the material wealth and greed that entices people to come work in a land of opportunities which may otherwise not turn out to be so (The American Dream).

I remember Walt Whitman's poem I Hear America Singing where there is the sense of each one seeking his own personal niche in the land of promises as seen in the following lines:

" Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,
The day what belongs to the day--at night the party of young
fellows, robust, friendly,
Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs."

(I Hear America Singing).

It almost captures that desire as one reads the entire work and is very descriptive

that the future belongs to the young and those who are open to opportunities. For the people who leave their country of origin, there is a substantial tradeoff for embracing the American Dream. Behind the veil of power and comparative material wealth that is promised to every individual, there is a significant loss that one must encounter. And that loss is the loss of traditional culture. In the essay by MSNBC columnist Eric Liu, he states that during one of his dinner meals at a friend's house: "The more time I spent in their midst, the more I learned to be like them.

To make their everyday idioms and idiosyncrasies familiar. To possess them." This particular longing to assimilate all of the "everyday idioms and idiosyncrasies" of the American culture was brought about not by curiosity or a certain zeal for knowledge. This particular longing was fueled by negative emotions. This passion for learning the ropes of American culture was born out of the longing of the desire to fit in.

The American Dream may be able to provide a person the necessary wealth that one could only dream about in his native country but it also takes away the immaterial liberties that come from being rooted in a different culture. This is what is seen in Tony Went to the Bodega But He Didn't Buy Anything. Because the person sat at the doorway and saw people come and go, his being in that position depicted a life of leisure which one thinks could be achieved if he pursues the American Dream.

One does not know that there is an illusion to this since one may never attain this goal by just going to a place and hoping that one's station in life is guaranteed to be easy. The American Dream will always be a Utopian dream

until people realize that material wealth is not the only path for success and happiness. This is seen in the lines,

Tony went to the bodega, But he didn't buy anything: He sat by the doorway satisfied To watch la gente (people Island-brown as him). Crowd in and out, (Tony Went to the Bodega But He Didn't Buy Anything).

The American Dream promises people from all walks of life and all countries of origin that within this land, there is freedom from oppression, freedom from poverty and material wealth but for other people, it will only remain a dream for them. As Langston Hughes remarks, " I am the people, humble, hungry, mean--Hungry yet today despite the dream." There have been casualties during this fight for the American Dream. Several people have risked leaving their homelands in search of a bright future in the United States yet there are millions today on relief and people are still being persecuted and discriminated.

The land of the free is still a land of oppression and even though people would like to view it as a land of opportunity, it becomes more like a land of deception and false hopes. Hughes ends his poem with both a revelation of what America has come to be as well an exhortation to the people to make America what it should have been. He says: " The mountains and the endless plain--All, all the stretch of these great green states--And make America again! (Hughes, 1938).

Being optimistic about the dynamic forces of globalization and the practical applications of corporate social responsibilities sweeping multinational and large national organizations, I still believe that there is a balanced solution in

multinational's outsourcing of resources and less developed countries' mutual advantage from this economic relationship. It is the primary duty of the national governments to uphold their sovereignty and protect their natural resources, especially their human resource or labor from being corrupted by foreign companies.

They must uphold their constitution and by laws and promote more economic and bilateral policies to protect their people and resources at the same time harness their economic potential for the nation's own advantage, growth and development. They must dictate the terms for which their resources will be used, taking into consideration the growth and comparative advantage of their people and the extinction of their natural resources and habitat. The notion about hiring local managers and staff is preliminary. Of paramount importance is the question of how and in what terms they will allow the multinationals to exhaust their most important resources and capital.

In effect, the dream that once tugged at people's hearts never really existed in the first place. The dream that made people leave their homelands only remain a dream because there are people who still have not "made it" in America. There is something amiss in the ruckus that is about the American Dream. On one side, the American Dream remains a dream where the corruption and the apathy of people continues to prevent it from coming true while on the other side, the American Dream comes with too high a price. It asks for the individual's culture, it torments the person and convinces him into thinking that if you do not assimilate the American culture, you will never make it.

Given the importance of our work in our daily lives, our policies and institutions need to provide decent benefits and the opportunity to use one's abilities to the maximum. Consistent with our nation's democratic principles, all Americans must possess a freedom to voice out their opinions and be treated fairly. This just means that we value a balance between the interests of the employers and shareholders and the interests of the family.

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