

THINK, TAKE COURAGE, CARE
By Gregory P. Hawkins

"They cut desire into short lengths
And fed it to the hungry fires of courage.
Long after, when the flames had died,
Molten gold gleamed in the ashes.
They gathered it into bruised palms
And handed it to their children
And their children's children forever."
CVilate Raile

We are the beneficiaries of the vision and wisdom of those who sacrificed to establish and preserve this nation. America continues to be the most consequential nation on earth.

The American Dream – the free pursuit of individual dreams without unjust constraints in an atmosphere of peace and stability – is the "molten gold" given us through the sacrifice of others. This is our heritage.

Such a unique and promising heritage, like anything of value, must be nurtured and protected. At times the price has been blood but at the very least the price is reasoned, courageous participation. Nevertheless, we have seen the unprecedented spread of apathy.

Many are uninvolved and indifferent. They live in a "nirvana" of unconsciousness. They maximize the pleasures of a relatively easy life in a mature, rich and mostly unconstrained society. They make us vulnerable to those not so apathetic. (Paraphrasing Vaclav Klaus, former Prime Minister of The Czech Republic)

The underlying cause seems to be a growing lack of confidence and belief. While we have enjoyed the fruits of the American Dream, we have been fed a steady diet of form over substance C not just politically but in everything from advertising to entertainment, from services promised to goods delivered. The result is that many exhaust their time, energy and means in personal pursuits to the exclusion of larger causes because they doubt the realness of anything else.

Few believe political movements or politicians are worth the effort to support, either because they believe today's problems are too entrenched to fix or because they believe those holding office are merely seeking their own interest and use whatever rhetoric or sleight-of-hand is necessary to maintain power. More and more citizens simply do not care because they do not believe. More and more don't even bother to vote, let alone get informed or venture out of their comfort zone to participate. They respond, "Why should I? It won't make any difference anyway."

Today's professional politicians expect this response. They, in fact, believe so much in the people's apathy that they spend millions of dollars to beguile with sound bites and multimedia rhetoric while avoiding substance. This is painful when considering the "bruised palms" of those who gave us – and those who preserved for us – this nation. The most powerful remedy for such exploitation is to believe you can make a difference.

Believe so much that you will look beyond sound bites to understand the issues. Believe so much that you will participate in ways you have felt you should but have failed to do. Believe so much that you care enough to seek out good people and to support them.

It may be true that one person overcoming apathy through belief and action won't change anything. No one really knows how far the effects of their individual actions will carry. But the molten gold given us by the blood and sacrifice of so many is worth the effort.

It is not really relevant whether or not your participation makes a difference. It is relevant whether or not you try. It may be that the question isn't really, "Will we consent" but "Will I consent to the loss of our heritage by my own apathy, fear or ignorance, or will I do something?"

In the words of Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe:
What you have as heritage
Take now as task;
For thus you will make it your own.