

# *A Corner of the World*



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## Viam Inveniam Aut Faciam

In coining the phrase, “You are all a lost generation,” American writer and poet Gertrude Stein sought to both describe and define her fellow American intellectuals -- writers, poets, and artists -- who had fled the United States shortly after World War I in search of a bohemian lifestyle in 1920s Paris, France.

Disillusioned by the brutality of the war, as well as America’s increasing conservatism and materialism, these American expatriates spent their youthful idealism searching for the true meaning of life, creating in the process revolutionary works of art and literature.

## **"You are all a lost generation."**

— Gertrude Stein, American writer and poet  
(February 3, 1874 – July 27, 1946)

Like the members of Gertrude Stein’s “Lost Generation” -- Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Wilder, Pound, Anderson, Dos Passos, et. al. -- every new American generation seems to embrace this term as an expression of its own disillusionment with current American values and conditions.

Yet, in January 2010, the idea of being part of a *Lost Generation* resonates with every American worker who has either lost their life savings, is struggling to find a job, to feed their family, or scrambling just to keep a roof over their heads, even as the people most responsible for America’s current economic depression -- the Wall Street bankers -- use low-cost taxpayer money to generate record-breaking profits and dole out huge bonuses to their top employees.

Where did we Americans go so wrong? How did “We the people” allow ourselves to become part of America’s Lost Generation?

“Ask Not What Your Country Can Do  
For You, Ask What You Can Do For  
Your Country.”

When President John Kennedy exhorted young Americans to get involved in their government, it was a sign to many that government alone could solve any and every problem we faced. All we had to do is roll up our sleeves and get involved. Oh, how naïve we all were back then.

**Back then?**

***Mia culpa.***

Yes, I too answered the Kennedy call, and spent my final undergraduate semester as a member of a Washington D.C. Study Program. Like most of the participants, I had dreams of imprinting my own youthful expression onto meaningful legislation. My naiveté and youthful ideals were quickly extinguished, however, as I encountered the lust for money and power that still flows so openly on Capitol Hill. Young volunteers are to be *seen*, not heard, as one senior staffer so tactfully put it. The whole experience turned my stomach, and left me with a deep aversion to politics and politicians.

The Road Not Taken  
-- Poem by Robert Frost

So, I decided to decline my acceptance into the graduate public administration program at Syracuse University's Maxwell School, and instead spent four years traveling between the Middle East and Central America with the U.S. Air Force. I followed that up with a quick twelve years as an electronics repair supervisor with the General Electric Company, and several more years with an Internet startup company that sponsored internships for local college students. In my spare time, I helped weatherize the homes of senior citizens, developed a

property tax assistance program for Central New York homeowners, and volunteered a few hours a week helping out at an inner city after-school program. Like Barack Obama, I, too, became a community organizer of sorts, just without all the politics. I'm still a registered independent, by the way.

A Little Child Shall Lead  
Them

-- Isaiah II:1-10

My travel through this life has left me with two great understandings. First, it has given me educated knowledge of real poverty and human desperation, both of which I saw close up during my time in Central America, the Middle East, and my volunteer work with the children of Syracuse's inner city. Second, it has proved to me that the youthful American ideals that I had pushed into the background of my life *do* have real meaning and purpose after all. Just not in Washington D.C., Albany New York, Sacramento, California, or any other state capital or government entity in America as one would expect. No, the true, unadulterated, *virgin* ideals of America live only in the hearts and minds of the young and the young-at-heart. For those true ideals to be alive within our American society, or any democratic society for that matter, they

must be put to work and given an opportunity to evolve.

Life, Liberty and  
the Pursuit of Happiness

Every American school child learns about these basic, unalienable rights identified in our nation's Declaration of Independence. What isn't taught is that human beings have many more *intrinsic* unalienable rights than just these three. Unalienable rights such as the right to have enough good food, clean water, clean air, and suitable shelter not just to survive but to thrive and to contribute to the society in which they live. Human beings also have the unalienable right to choose whom they love, whom they marry, as well as the unalienable right *to have and to be a part of a human family*. Indeed, they have *every* intrinsic unalienable right endowed by their creator.

Any nation so conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all human beings are created equal cannot *justly* deny any intrinsic unalienable right to either its own citizens, or to any other human being regardless of where they live, what they represent, or what they believe in. In the words of our nation's founders, "We hold these truths to be self-evident . . ."

Veritas Lux Mea

The Preamble To Our United States Constitution

*We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.*

It is under this simple doctrine of democracy that all the rest of our constitutional rights find their foundation. This, then, is the cornerstone of our American values and ideals. Without this simple proclamation, all that follows in the Bill of Rights and other amendments have no *lawful* reason or purpose.

It was in this simple preamble that our nation's founders sought to make clear their objectives. All of them had either experienced or seen the deprivation of unalienable human rights by government, and in this Constitution they sought to ensure that this new government they were establishing would have the proper checks and balances necessary to ensure *basic* unalienable human rights for all generations to come.

Our nation's founders also knew that the rights and responsibilities endowed within this document would have to remain flexible and adjustable to meet the unforeseen needs

of every future generation. Unforeseen needs like the abolition of slavery, universal suffrage, civil rights, the right to vote, term limits for elected federal officials, healthcare for every American, and, of course, the right of every American to marry whom they choose. That's why this simple preamble was so adamant in reserving the ultimate power to control, modify, or change any aspect of our government to the American people themselves.

The American Dream Redux

*So where did we Americans go so wrong?*

Simple. We haven't used our ultimate power to effect *real* change in our federal and state governments. Nor have we prevented our American-style free-market "Ponzi" system from usurping the basic rights, values, and intentions embedded in our Constitution. The dual scourges of 19th and 20th century greed and materialism have again reared their ugly heads, and "We the people" have failed to control the monied self-interest groups from gaining too much influence over our elections and our elected officials.

The American dream initiated in 1776 is now in danger of being lost, and no amount of legislation can fix the problem. That lesson was

made extremely clear by the recent Supreme Court ruling in Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission. The only way to remove undue influence at all levels of government is to first clean house, and then to enact term limits. If we want to save our American democracy, *we must fumigate first, and legislate second!*

Change We Can Believe In?

In January 2008, I had a short conversation regarding the upcoming Presidential campaign. My relative was adamant that Hillary would go on to win the Democratic nomination, and then sail on to become the first woman President of the United States. I firmly disagreed with her conclusion, certain that Barack Obama would win both the Democratic nomination and the Presidential election. I also believed that the Democrats would gain significant control of both Houses of Congress. *So much for my independent voter viewpoint.*

As we now know, my instincts were correct. Yet, my fervent expectation of new faces and fresh ideas in the Obama Administration went unfulfilled. We had a new President and many new Members of Congress and Senators, but Presidential appointments that reflected the same old, stale ideas and

thinking that had brought America to its economic knees in the first place. Not only would Barack Obama be a lame-duck President right from the start of his Presidency, his Administration would be unable to draw America's Excalibur sword from the stone.

### The Rape of The American Taxpayer

The battle for the White House and control of Congress was reengaged the day following the 2008 elections. Republican talk show hosts resumed their vitriolic attacks, and Democratic pundits countered with a steady stream of virulent rhetoric. The traditional Presidential honeymoon period was dispensed with as America's political combatants were already on the attack.

Meanwhile, more Americans were losing their jobs, State and federal budget deficits were skyrocketing, and home foreclosures were multiplying exponentially. America's poverty level grew to nearly 45 million, and dire forecasts projected that level to reach nearly 60 million by the end of 2010.

The stock market plummeted, recovered, then plummeted again as our President, Congress, and Federal Reserve began handing

over trillions of low-cost American taxpayer dollars to the too-big-to-fail banks. Just in time for them to reap record-breaking profits and to contemplate huge bonuses for their executives. After more than two hundred years of liberty and independence, the American people had finally been subjugated from within, and a new class of Royal bankers had been officially crowned by our political ruling class.

### The Sound and The Fury

The American people have finally reached their boiling point, and the sound and the fury of their resolve is about to be unleashed. Yet, President Obama, the Congress, and the anointed Royal bankers remain oblivious to what is about to happen.

Change **IS** coming to America because the American people know their country *cannot* survive into the future with 95% of its wealth controlled by just 5% of its population. America's free-market "Ponzi" system requires significant structural change, and that change cannot be realized through legislation alone.

### The 2<sup>nd</sup> American Revolution

Unlike the 1st American Revolution, the 2nd American

Revolution will not be one of violence. Yet, it *will* be one of action.

The first shot fired is the "Move Your Money" Movement with angry American citizens withdrawing their bank deposits from the too-big-to-fail banks and moving them to local banks and credit unions. Labor Unions and business groups are also being encouraged to join this movement, and active protests and boycotts are being planned against those businesses that continue to support the too-big-to-fail banks.

The second shot is being fired by American voters who are reregistering themselves as independents to protest extremist control of both major political parties. A sudden reduction in voter registration levels should get the attention of both party leaderships and warn them that something more significant than a "Tea Party" protest is happening out here on Main Street.

Lastly, the *VOTE 'EM OUT!* Movement is also gaining traction with its objective of removing *every* political officeholder beginning in November 2010. Too many elected officials have made a career out of their *so-called* public service, becoming rich on the taxpayer's back. Even my own freshman Congressman, Democrat Dan Maffei, has raised over \$1 million for

his reelection campaign, and much of that in the few short weeks BEFORE he was sworn into office. I guess he intends to make that Congressional seat a career, nicely cushioned by all those plush taxpayer-funded benefits. Don't worry, though. Local *Vote 'Em Out* members already have him in their sights for November 2010.

### The *Local* Movement

Finally, there is the *Local* Movement whose members are being asked to work locally, to buy locally, and to get involved with and to support their local communities.

In the not-to-distant past, one of America's greatest strengths was the bond that existed between its families and the local communities in which they lived. Extended families of grandparents living in the same household as their children, and their children's children were the norm. Neighbors not only knew their neighbors, they helped each other out when they were in need. In modern America, family members are scattered all across the country, and most people barely know their neighbors' names. We drop our children off at day-care, and shuttle our senior citizens off to assisted living and retirement homes, further increasing this generational divide.

Where one wage-earner's income was sufficient to sustain

the average American family of four in 1920, families now require two, three, or more incomes just to cover their daily living expenses. Politicians and sociologists will argue that this is because of America's "materialistic" lifestyle. However, it is also due to the ever-increasing burden of government legislation enacted to effect social change and redistribute wealth.

Great social and economic change *has* come to America, and a substantial rise in living standards has occurred since the early 1900s. Yet, today America is collapsing beneath the weight of the cost of those changes and the negative effects of our free-market "Ponzi" system. Both have frayed the social fabric of America's families and the communities in which they live.

America must get its large debts and deficits under control before either of them bankrupt our country and steal our children's future. America must also move to reweave the social fabric of our families and our communities if we ever hope to reverse this economic meltdown, engage *real* economic and social change, and create long-lasting job opportunities for every American citizen.

You can help by supporting *Local* Movement efforts to create for-profit cooperatives owned solely by you and other working Americans. There will

be absolutely no government involvement, nor overbearing interest by the Royal bankers. Working Americans *can* build large cooperative business entities capable of competing with the likes of Wal-Mart, the Wall Street banks, and every other self-interested, mega-corporation that currently controls our everyday lives. Then, and only then, will working Americans have the financial power to wrest political control from the Royal bankers and the political ruling class.

### A POSSE AD ESSE

Joe DeBottis  
USTV Executive Producer

**Next time:** With almost 60 million Americans living below the poverty level, isn't it time we end American poverty?

Learn how a contemporary working "economic model" can jump-start real wealth redistribution and bring lasting structural change to America.