

**THE NEXT
FALLING
EMPIRE**

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**Outskirts Press, Inc.
Denver, Colorado**

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Outskirts Press, Inc.
<http://www.outskirtspress.com>

PB ISBN: 978-1-4327-2801-4
HB ISBN: 978-1-4327-2809-0

Library of Congress Control Number: 2008930729

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



Real and Big Solutions

The United States: Once it was the nation most loved for its democracy, freedom of speech, prosperity, fairness, and generosity; most admired for its military might, technological advances, and its manufactured goods. It was the one nation almost everyone loved to hate out of envy, the nation they aspired to be a part of but couldn't. Those who were able couldn't join it fast enough.

Nowadays, it seems like the tides have changed. Things are different now. We have become the most hated nation; we have lost everything that we stood for, as well as how people perceived us to be.

How sad. We are on the verge of becoming another empire that peaked and fell if we do not take action now.

Most empires—such as the Greek, Roman, Persian, Ottoman, and Soviet Union—fell because of very basic and simple reasons. They grew so big, so powerful, so rich, and so greedy, and they thought they were so invincible, indestructible, and untouchable, that leaders lost touch with their own people and the countries they occupied. They became so spoiled they forgot to govern; they were busy believing what they wanted to believe, ignored reality, and lost perspective. They fell.

Let's take a few moments and see where we are heading, why, and most importantly: what can we do to avoid this fall.

It may be very difficult for any of us to accept the fact that we, the people of this great nation, are heading towards becoming the fastest-falling empire in history! We have guided ourselves towards losing everything our country used to be. Many nations despise us, jobs have left us, our health care system is broken, Social Security does not provide the security it once did, our borders do not protect us, our educators cannot educate, our families have shrunk, we have no energy policy, we are ruining the environment, and our schools are infested with sex, drugs, and carelessness. We have redefined our military's job, most of us have no retirement plans, immigration is politicized, poverty has increased, democracy is no longer democracy, elections have become a joke, taxes have become confusing even to those who devise them, our prisons are overcrowded, our patriotism is in question, and our sense of sacrifice has lost its luster.

With this book we will explore the problems, define them, identify their cause, and offer very practical solutions.

We will address the following:

Health care

Education

Immigration

Foreign policy

Terrorism

Family structure

Democracy

Economy

Taxation

Energy

Defense

Social Security

There is a lot of bickering as to which plan is best for solving many of the ills that exist in our country. So far no one side has won or brought to the table a solution that will be beneficial for all without creating anger, discomfort, and an outright fight over some petty benefits on account of the people.

The problem starts from when we are born and unfortunately it does not end even after we die. We will explain:

We have become a nation of complainers. Many of us are brought up in broken families; many are not. Yet parents rarely have time anymore to spend time with their children for proper upbringing, disciplining, teaching, educating, guiding, advising, mentoring, and so forth. This has made communication with our children very direct, short, and offensive. Add to that the number of “no”s we bombard our children with, and it has created a negative atmosphere in and around the house, which has made our children rebel against their parents. The saga continues against their teachers. Children nowadays go to school to pass the grade, not to learn. Teachers have lost respect, and have been stripped of many of their disciplining powers because of lawsuits, accusations, lack of funding, and loss of interest in “true” teaching. Most teachers see teaching as another job, a source of income, unlike before, when teaching was an art. Back then teaching was for the personal satisfaction of the teacher, who felt they were educating and helping society. They used to teach etiquette, respect for others, and prepare the student for the world. For this, children rebel against the teachers also. When thrust into real life, they begin revolting against their employer. They view them as these rich people who do nothing yet make more money than them; they ignore all the sacrifices made by employers

in time, money, and risks they have taken to provide the very job they were aspiring to get. Then our society revolts against the very government they elected to office. We often forget our system of governing was built on the basis of government of the people, by the people, for the people. We see our government as this body that is there to screw us one way or another.

All these changes have their reasons, of course; parents have failed their children due to circumstances of their own creation. Teachers have failed their students for reasons our society has brought upon them, employers for sometimes unfair treatment of their employees, and government because of bureaucracy, partisanship, special interests and so on.

Health Care

Health care has become synonymous with nightmare in this great country of ours. All because we started something and we do not know how to finish it. There are so many reasons why our health care system has become the joke of the century. Politics, litigation, greed, fraud, abuse, mismanagement, and insurance lobbying are some of the things we will discuss.

A great country such as the United States should be the leader in providing proper health care to its citizens and be an example to the rest of the world, yet we lag in this department. There have been books written, documentaries made, discussions and arguments held (private and public). Candidates make promises, but we have not gotten anywhere yet. We still have over 50 million uninsured; it is the biggest expense for the government, employers, and households.

Politics: The two major parties, Republican and Democrat, have fought over what program to adopt and which lobbyist

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to satisfy for decades now. Some want universal health care, some private health care; others do not care. Everyone has a proposal. No one has a way to pay for it or the guts to push for it. It has become nothing but rhetoric, a bone thrown to the public to show they are doing something about it.

Litigation: A sue-happy country where we have more lawyers than doctors and nurses, we tend to sue anybody for anything every chance we get to score the big money. It is true and a requirement that doctors should do a good job, and they should be liable for mistakes they make. But we sue for the littlest things and expect large sums of money in return. In most cases, doctors and hospitals find it more feasible to settle for large sums of money rather than go to court, due to the length of time and extra costs involved besides the hours and hours of time these doctors have to be absent from their practice to attend court. This has caused outrageous amounts of money that insurance companies charge doctors and hospitals for liability, malpractice, and so forth. We have to set fines and assign dollar amounts for each type of damage these doctors cause and be done with it. Why should your middle finger be worth more than mine? They do the same job. Unless you have proof that your middle finger is used for something other than the normal functions and it is essential for you to have that finger because you rely on it for your livelihood. In that case, we should pay you for training to use one of the other fingers to do the same job as the lost finger.

Greed: Unfortunately, greed has two solid legs in this health care business. Most of us are greedy. Everyone wants to make the most money. Insurance companies want to make more money, hospitals and doctors want to make

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more money, and even the patients want to make more money. Some patients even look forward to some doctor making a mistake so they make more money.

Fraud: a direct result of greed. It is amazing to meet billing secretaries who work seven days a week, ten to twelve hours a day preparing bills for one doctor to be sent to insurance companies as claims. Let us assume a doctor works nine straight hours a day, five days a week. He is supposed to spend fifteen minutes on a patient. That makes for four patients an hour. That adds up to thirty-six patients a day, 180 patients a week. These billing secretaries are printing hundreds of bills a week for this one doctor. This is due to a broken system where one insurance company has no way of knowing how many patients this doctor sees, and how many times for the same thing in a certain period. So the doctor can bill fifty to sixty visits to this insurance company, and another set to another, and another to another. Most doctors are billing insurance companies for patients they have not even seen. Sometimes they send bills where the patient has passed away some time ago, yet they get paid for those services. Yes, insurance companies send some verification to patients for them to complete and return randomly, but how many patients are really taking the time to return that envelope? Or better yet, how can the patient return that envelope if he is already dead?

Fraud, unfortunately, is not limited to the doctors. To no surprise patients are committing fraud—not all, but too many. There are an untold number of fraudulent activities by patients. Some even go as far as using one's Medicare for another person. Some pharmacies use it for medication patients do not even need or use. Medical-supply stores furnish people's homes, offer clothes and TVs, radios and

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so forth and charge it to Medicare and Medicaid.

These are all costs that the insurance companies end up paying for and ultimately charge us.

Mismanagement: The system is mismanaged top to bottom. Too much paperwork is involved, which consumes a lot of time from the doctor, the secretaries and, yes, the billing department. Ours is a country with all the technological advances, and yet we have not come up with a system where one card can carry each patient's medical information usable by any insurance company, while increasing security and privacy. A patient could be assigned a personal identification number, and fingerprint readers could be employed to identify the right patient. If the likes of Visa and MasterCard can do it, why can't the government or the insurance companies coordinate and offer this and charge the cost of the card to the companies? One input will be enough to bring a patient's records up to date, cut overhead and in turn reduce expenses and cost. Having one processing center will enable us to monitor how many patients are seen by one doctor at a time, and will again result in a reduction in cost, expenses, and fraud. As with any credit card, until the consumer has swiped his card at the vendor's place of business and received authorization, the vendor cannot charge that card for services they did not provide and get authorized.

We need the doctors and hospitals, and we have to protect them and cut their costs so we can have decent service at a low cost both for us and them. Fraud committing doctors and patients are not only costing us, but they are also costing the more honorable ones, too.

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Insurance lobby: All lobbyists should be banned. The name lobbyist has become a very dreadful name. We should, however, have insurance and other industry professionals included in our government alongside representatives who are knowledgeable in these same important consumer industries since Congress is not.

Once centralized, many of the problems will be solved. The system can trigger a red flag if a questionable number of patients are seen by a single doctor. Duplicate charges will be eliminated in patient billing, pharmaceutical orders, and medical supply deliveries.

How to Pay for Health Care

Whether we like it or not, want to or not, we are all paying for it one way or another. It is better at least to take control of it and have all of us pay for it in a fair way.

In the taxation portion of this book, we will relieve employers from the responsibility of paying for health care and pass the savings along to all employees through an 8 percent pay raise across the board.

Since we have given a raise of 8 percent, cut the taxes, and simplified life, the general public will have more cash on hand. We have to calculate what health care costs are per county. Each county will divide health care expenses by sales, including food, and come up with the ratio, adding this to the sales tax counties charge. This way everyone is participating in paying for health care. It may not be proportionate to individuals, but it will be proportionate to amounts spent per individual, since the higher income

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earner spends more on higher-cost products such as expensive cars, clothing, and other luxury items. Monies collected for health care should be used to purchase insurance. The county should act or put in place an independent committee to oversee the health care issues and act as any corporation by negotiating and bargaining with insurance companies and providers for the best services and prices. In this way, we maintain the competition between insurance companies. The county offers basic services and hospitalization with minimum co-pay through the insurance companies. Also, they can negotiate for other programs and offer these to the public. Anyone who chooses can pay an additional premium for more services, such as a preferred provider organization (PPO) and out-of-contract services, just like employees in many corporations do. The universal card specifies which service and co-pays the client has chosen. This way everyone is covered; the rich are paying a little more through the higher priced purchases on the high end, and the poor pay according to their status; however, they all pay equally on a percentage basis. If that would create a problem, we can refine it and make it such that any household with an annual income over \$150,000 (for a family), or \$75,000 (for an individual) qualifies for the PPO version automatically and calculations are made accordingly for the state health care expense. This way neither the poor nor the rich will complain about fairness.

As for collecting the sales tax, it has become a challenge for counties. The sales tax has its own problems. It is another instance where fraudulent activity is costing the counties billions of dollars, which could be used to help in the funding of this health care proposal. The counties do not have the necessary resources to control and monitor the sales-tax fraud because of the enormous number of busi-

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nesses under their jurisdiction.

Most of us do not pay as much attention to how a cashier is punching the numbers on most of the products we buy, especially at the corner store or a mom and pop shop that we often frequent. If we did, we would notice many of the following when shopping: When you purchase a can of soda, a bottle of beer, or a pack of cigarettes, the cashier usually will punch in the total cost plus tax as one number instead of punching the cost and the register charging the tax to get the total purchase price. For example, if a can of soda is priced at 55 cents and the tax is 5 cents, the cashier will punch in a straight 60 cents as if it is a non-taxable purchase. It has also happened that many store owners keep the cash register open and skip punching in the entire sale; that helps them cheat the IRS on income tax and the counties on sales tax. Five cents for you and me probably does not mean much, but when these stores have hundreds of clients a day—and nowadays the smallest item costs at least 50 cents—the sales tax adds up to a pretty decent amount and it is not too far-fetched to assume that this will add up to billions of dollars that neither the IRS nor the counties will collect.

There are thousands and thousands of small businesses who sell taxable merchandise and quite a large number of them have found this loophole to cheat on their income taxes and sales taxes. This is costing the federal government, the state government, and the counties hundreds of billions of dollars.

Due to the large number of small businesses operated by individuals or small partnerships, it has become impossible for any government agency to monitor this practice. Yes,

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inspections are made on a random basis but the magnitude of the problem is such that the majority escapes getting caught.

However, there is a perfectly effective way of controlling this and collecting those billions without as many inspectors. It is simple yet effective. We have used this method very effectively with gasoline sales, and we can borrow the same system to collect the sales taxes in advance from the wholesalers who add the sales tax on the cost of goods. This will allow the government inspectors to inspect a much smaller number of businesses (the wholesalers) instead of millions of small business owners. This will also provide a pretty good idea of how much business each small business is doing and help the government figure out their real income.

It does not take much to recover these monies, balance the budget, and pay for health care.

The Benefits:

1. All Americans will be covered under this program.
2. There will be no need to raise taxes; it will be funded by recovering monies that are owed to the government but are not collected due to fraud.
3. Insurance companies will remain intact and compete for business; insurance costs will be reduced due to elimination of many fraudulent activities by patients, doctors, and pharmacies.

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4. Insurance companies will have an additional 35 to 50 million clients, and many of them are young.
5. It will even cover our veterans and provide a better service. This, in turn, will take that responsibility away from Veterans Affairs and cut on expenses and bureaucracy.
6. There will be no need for Medicare or Medicaid. It will save the government money.

Education

It is no secret that our education system *sucks*, for lack of a better word. We all know education starts at home, but a home that is broken, lacking a parent (or sometimes both because they have to work one, two, or sometimes three jobs to make ends meet), is a place where parents have a very hard time even to find the time to spend with their children to educate them. This problem is exacerbated when those children start attending school. Teachers find themselves having to do much more than expected when they have to babysit instead of teach. So education takes a back seat to babysitting. Teachers begin not to care as much about educating since every move they make, every word they say, and any disciplinary action they take is under extreme scrutiny and subject to possible lawsuits. Teachers are forced to take the easy way out and turn a blind eye so long as children in their classes pass and they get paid their salaries. How sad!

Although logic dictates we start at home to fix the problem, this is the exception to the rule simply because it is too late

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for this generation; we cannot change the existing home and the family structure at this time. We have to start at the school. But for the next generation—if we have taken the necessary actions—we should start at home to prevent perpetuating the current problem.

Our children are our future. We need to prepare them for all aspects of life while they are growing up, not throw them in the field of life with no knowledge on how to live it. Life is not about who is doing who, which drug will support which mood, or a home that feels empty. It is not about pinning a dollar on a horse's tail and running after it to get it. Life should be enjoyable, happy, satisfying, fulfilling. Simply put, it should be worth living.

We need to change the way we teach. Many of our children do not even know how to balance a checkbook—even those who graduate college. Many of them do not know how to save let alone how to invest, or how to apply for a job, or how to keep one. Many of them do not know what their major will be, what profession they want to be in. It is a shame for a capitalistic country to have its population ignorant of what capitalism is all about! It is a shame for a country built on values to neglect teaching its own children any of them. It is a shame for a country that offers so many opportunities to anyone in the world, yet our children are deprived of them. It is a shame for a country with such advanced technology only to expose its children to video games of violence rather than gadgets with educational value.

We need to teach our children how to earn, how to save, how to spend, how to invest, and how to live.

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Communication

Lack of communication with our children has become the norm. There are many reasons why this is so: our busy schedules to secure a decent living, our mood swings brought on by events, and in many instances shame of the lifestyle we have brought upon ourselves.

We are the busiest nation on earth. One parent is not enough to support a family with one job; both parents can only sustain a simple life. Our jobs and traffic jams are so stressful that when we get home we just want to eat, watch TV, relax a few minutes and hit the bed. No one has taught us how to raise children and we do not have the time to read all those books that try to teach us how. Even if we do read them they are more Platonic than realistic. Times have changed in such a short span of time that the generation gap is shrinking day by day; what we knew yesterday or what we did yesterday has become old school today. Many of us in one way or another feel guilty and ashamed, or avoid discussing our lives and the difficulties we are facing because we have done things we regret that have put us in a situation where we cannot provide for our children the way we pictured growing up. None of this helps us raise our children the right way, or prepare them for real life, or prevent them from making the same mistakes we made.

We have to put in the extra effort to make time for them, explain things to them by trying to be their friends, and be understanding of their needs. All of us were children before we grew up to be parents. All of us have gone through many of the problems our children are facing today. If only we tried to put ourselves into their shoes—to think back to when we

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were their age and how we would want our parents to handle things—we could achieve a lot. Life is not peachy, and the children today are not the same children of the past; they know things, they hear things, they analyze things, they discuss them and form their own conclusions. They know when we are not telling them the truth and they know when we are hiding things from them. Just because they do not say anything does not mean they do not understand what is happening. But when we avoid talking to them they are talking to a classmate or a friend who himself is under the same conditions. So it has become a situation where the blind are leading the blind instead of learning the right way: the truth. If we explain to them what bills are, why we have to work all these jobs, why we fell into this situation (lack of education, careless sex, drugs, or hanging around the wrong crowd), and we give them the consequences of such activity, they would learn not to do the same. But if we do not communicate with them they will think that it is normal, they will not expect anything better, they will not learn, and they will not try. We have to learn to accept our mistakes and explain to our children what mistakes we made to have ended up where we are, and guide them to what they have to avoid, and what they have to pursue, who they should be with and who they should not.

Exposure

We also need to take them on trips and/or expose them to screen factories, hospitals, labs, professional facilities, and technical schools. (Not every child is capable of becoming a doctor, a lawyer, or an engineer, and not everyone earning a decent living needs to be one of those three; every individual has his/her own character, passion, and interests.) This will

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allow our children to learn what is out there and which opportunity will grab their attention and interest. In that way, they can decide which job, what profession, what type of musical instrument, or what type of art they are interested in pursuing. They have to be exposed to know what it is they love and want to do in life. After all, doing what you love is more productive than doing what you have to do.

School Schedule

We need to change school hours from the current schedule of 8 a.m. to 2 or 3 p.m., to a longer day of 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. This will be for the three shifts that I'll explain below.

7-8 a.m.: Exercise, nutrition education, financial education and some kind of exposure to musical instruments.

8-9 a.m.: Study.

9 a.m. to noon: classes; noon to 1 p.m.: lunch

1-3 p.m.: Classes.

3-4 p.m.: Exercise, nutrition education, financial education and musical instrument class.

4-5 p.m.: Study.

Children can be dropped off a maximum of thirty minutes before school.

Children can be picked up a maximum of thirty minutes after school.

The purpose of this is the following:

1. It will make our students healthy and fit and fight obesity. In addition, they will be financially savvy.

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2. It will make our students do their homework.
3. It will cut traffic congestion.
4. It will save on gasoline consumption.
5. It will reduce gas emissions.
6. It will save time.

The first two are obvious. The remaining four are due to some changes in our working behavior. If we change some of our hours of operating in the following manner we will arrive at those results.

First, we divide the workforce into three schedules. The workday is to be changed to eight hours per day, which will include one-half hour for a lunch break.

- A. Construction and manufacturing workers start their day at 7 a.m. and finish at 3 p.m.
- B. Corporate offices start work at 8 a.m., finish at 4 p.m.
- C. Remaining businesses start at 9 a.m. and finish at 5 p.m.

Children of the first shift start school at 7 a.m. and finish at 3 p.m.

Children of second shift start school at 8 a.m. and finish at 4 p.m.

Children of third shift start at 9 a.m. and finish at 5 p.m.

This schedule change of our workforce will result in very favorable consequences.

The way to pay for the additional hours schools would be

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open under this plan is simple: parents have to participate in the expenses the schools incur. Any parent who is employed has the added expense of babysitting their children due to the odd hours of schooling, which in most cases creates unwanted situations. For example, currently if parents are working a 9 to 5 job they have to take their children to school before 8 a.m., sit in traffic to get to their jobs at 9 a.m., and one parent has to make arrangements to get to school by 3 p.m. to pick up the children. Then they have to take them home and return to work, waste that hour or so in gas and time, then leave work at 5 p.m. to get stuck in traffic and arrive home around 6 or 6:30 p.m. If they choose to avoid this and they can afford to hire a babysitter and pay him or her an hourly pay and so forth, it can add up pretty fast. If we pay the school for that additional teacher and maintenance, collectively it will not cost as much and we can do our jobs with peace of mind that: 1) We do not have to time everything around the school hours, or worry where our children are after school, and 2) Our children will get the exercise they need and their homework done as well. It is all a matter of getting used to for the first couple weeks. The benefits will definitely outweigh the cost.

Another problem with our school system is that they have become infested with sex, drugs, and carelessness. More than half of our students live in a broken family structure; most of them are living in a single-parent home or with grandparents, and this has created a situation where that single parent is forced, in many instances, to retain two or more jobs to make ends meet. They have absolutely no time to spend with their children, neither to enjoy parenthood, nor to educate and discipline their children. The children living with their grandparents experience an enormous generation gap where neither one understands each other,

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nor do they have respect for each other's needs. This is a very tough place to be for both parties. Almost all children in this situation are not happy with it and no one is there to teach them any lessons. Parents just do not have the time and the teachers do not think it is their responsibility. These lessons include topics such as irresponsible sex, carelessness, and lack of guidance (which is in many cases the main cause of single parenthood in the first place, unless there has been an unfortunate mishap such as the passing of the spouse or partner, disability, or a nasty divorce). These lessons are being ignored. We need to teach our children all about sex at a very early age; the theory that children shouldn't hear or learn about sex until they are in high school is old school. Most children not only are learning, but they are also exercising the act much earlier than that. No guidance in that matter is only creating situations where children are getting pregnant at an early age, or they are choosing partners just for the act itself and not thinking or knowing what the consequences may be. Parents should put their egos aside and come forward with the real reason why they are a single parent or divorced. Parents should explain to their children dependency on anything is not healthy, whether it is dependency on drugs or a spouse's income. We never know what life will throw at us. You may have the perfect spouse but one unfortunate accident, a disability or death, can change a life very fast. If we do not do that, we are creating a worse generation than ours and they will do even worse for the next generation.

Sex and drugs: The common belief is that life is easier or more fun with the enhancement of drugs, even though most people will not even remember being high on them. Hence, the drug use in our schools has become such a commonplace that it has even reached our elementary schools. So

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now we have sex and drugs in our schools yet not enough education. It is a deadly combination, even for an adult.

Lack of education, carelessness, along with more interest in sex and drugs in our schools have made our students near the bottom in the world in obtaining general knowledge. Our children today know more about sexual positions and types of drugs than they know about our country, government, history, geography, or anything that has to do with general knowledge that will prepare them for the real world.

As if this is not enough, majority of parents cannot wait for their children to turn eighteen for them to leave home and vice versa. What an age to add to the burden of a child who, if he or she made it through high school, will now go to college, have to deal with rent, utilities, car, insurance, college tuition, dating, and fun.

A Typical Scenario

A high school graduate at eighteen years of age, who we consider an adult and is thrown into the real world, has the following monthly obligations: (Example is for Los Angeles. Figures may vary for different cities and from college to college.)

Rent	\$900.00	Average single-unit apartment
Car payment	\$200.00	If we want a car that runs
Insurance	\$150.00	
Fuel	\$100.00	
Food	\$250.00	

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Clothing	\$100.00	
Pleasure	\$100.00	
Health insurance	\$275.00	If not employed, and not covered under parent's plan
Subtotal	\$2,075.00	Living expenses
College tuition	\$2,000.00	@ min. \$24,000 annual tuition for a decent university
Books	\$150.00	Average \$1,800 annually
Total	\$4,225.00	Monthly expenses based on a conservative budget

Now, we threw this child out with no education of how to apply for a job, how to earn money, how to save money, how to balance a checkbook. If by accident he or she had an unplanned child or two during high school or junior high, add some alimony, palimony, or child's expenses on top of all that. How does he or she manage?

With these credentials, if this child finds a job, he or she will get paid minimum wage or close to it. Let's be generous and say \$10 per hour. He or she will make \$1,733.33 a month before tax, which will net approximately \$1,500 per month after taxes.

This child is in the hole \$4,225 minus \$1,500, or \$2,725 per month.

This means that if this child has a full-time job and a full-time schedule at college, he/she will owe \$130,800 at the time of graduation. And if he/she does not have a job, he/she will owe \$202,800 at the end of four years in college.

Supposing he/she obtains a bachelor's degree in four

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years—and the average salary for a recent college graduate is around \$30,000 (before taxes) per year—then it will take this child at least ten years to pay off this debt.

Add to this the biggest burden we are putting on these children, the ever-growing Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid expenses due to the baby boom generation. These children will have no chance in hell of raising a decent family or living a normal life.

It is our duty and responsibility to find solutions for all these problems. We must change the curriculum and prepare our children for the real world. We already have discussed the new hours. We must also change the curriculum to introduce our children to many realities of life. Many do not know how money is earned, what are bills for, why a parent is complaining about bills, about work, about life. We keep trying to hide the reality from them, thinking we are helping them. In fact we are doing the opposite. We are raising them to be ignorant, and when we throw them out there in real life, they are confused. How much do you think your children know about a mortgage, a car payment, why we have them, why we need to pay them on time, and why we have to work for that money? Most children think when you need money you go ask Dad or Mom. We have to start teaching them at an early age.

We have to start discouraging our children from watching TV programs that are not educational; programs that show violence, speeding cars; programs that make heroes of people who kill in the name of the law, or drive outrageous cars at outrageous speeds. Likewise, we must discourage them from playing those video games with similar content. We are not saying stop them totally, but stop concentrating on them.

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Instead, maybe we make video games that teach them something about life, something about how to make money, save and spend it, how to manage their finances, how to research for the perfect job or profession. A simple explanation of the potential of what they will be losing by not graduating on time, or what graduating a year later will cost them, is a huge incentive for them to change course. For example, if we explain to a child that after graduating with a master's degree they will be making \$100,000 a year—give or take a few thousand—and that not graduating translates into losing \$100,000, they will have an incentive to finish on time or earlier. But if the child thinks, 'What's the big deal,' and calculates his loss at the current income of \$7 an hour he is making, the loss is not big enough to justify the extra effort. The loss is relatively small so there is no incentive for him.

We need to push our children to play educational games such as Monopoly (which teaches you how to have money, make purchases, and become either rich or bankrupt based on your own decisions), and not games where children are learning how to kill or how to hunt for sex.

One of the major changes that may help in more ways than one is for the government to establish a mandatory nine-month training program through the National Guard during the first year of college. The students may have the choice of serving in the National Guard, hospitals, fire or police department, or the armed forces. This will give our children many advantages. They will become disciplined, learn how to handle crises, become cleared of drugs, be taught responsibility, and serve the country. They will be ready in case of any emergency; they will learn what to do during a disaster. They will be the savior, not just a victim. They will be there, instead of waiting for FEMA to arrive.

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We have many unnecessary requirements for a child to graduate college, which delay graduation, in some cases, for years. Requirements such as electives, which everyone knows are there just to waste time. Example: A language elective, or exercise elective, or for that matter any elective has no value, since students are choosing the one that is easier to do, and later on they forget what they learned. Learning a language one hour a week is not practical during a semester. By the time they learn the alphabet of the language the semester is out.

By registering for National Guard service they will learn many important things. This will eliminate the need to have many people on the government payroll, and the government can in turn use these funds to help our children with their tuition. (We will discuss in detail in the national security section of this book.)

Uniforms

Almost any country, rich or poor, developed or developing, has adopted the use of uniforms in the schools. In the U.S., however, that is not the case—except in some private schools or very few public schools. Parents and schools have objected to it for reasons that I cannot find any justification. Some parents think it is an additional expense since children grow out of them fast, some think it is demeaning, and some think it causes loss of the child's identity.

But the truth is if uniforms are demeaning, then doctors, nurses, police, firemen, priests, judges, etc., should not wear them either. On the contrary, uniforms command respect. What we wear has an unbelievable influence on how

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we act. A person wearing a tie and a suit acts differently than a person wearing a pair of torn jeans. A woman wearing a dress acts more reserved and is deemed much less attainable than a woman who is wearing inviting attire. A person wearing a uniform acts as if he or she belongs to something, in this case school, which is an honorable thing; people generally respect people who attend school.

Now, some people say uniforms cost a lot. To that end, schools must make sure that the price for these uniforms are reasonable and try not to benefit from the uniform code's enforcement. Schools should negotiate with the manufacturers for the best price for volume. All a student needs is two sets of the uniforms, instead of this competition we have created within our schools as to who is wearing what, which designer sneakers, or blouses, skirts or pants. That atmosphere is also opening the door for some to wear unfit outfits costing much more than the uniforms do. The benefits of uniforms outweigh the tiny sacrifices on the part of both students and parents. You might find yourselves surprised at the outcome; it may even deter unwanted characters around the schools.

As for the loss of identity, wouldn't you prefer your child to be identified as a scholar, a student who is trying to get an education for a better future, instead of being identified as a gangster, a druggie, a junky, or a slut? We have to be honest with ourselves. Hiding behind political correctness when we know what is right and what is wrong is costing the children, not us, and it should be stopped.

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Laws, Regulation, and Tax Codes

We already have established that we are a nation that likes complicating things: We have so many laws, regulation, and tax codes that they could all fill up libraries. We also have so many loopholes that neutralize many of them. Yet we do not teach any of it to our children; many of the adults do not know them. In many instances we do not even need them. It will probably require a lifetime to just read them, let alone understand and apply them.

If we were to challenge any lawyer, judge, or government official they would probably have a hard time knowing most of it even exists. If we were to challenge any tax man, or an IRS agent to recite all the codes, they would have difficulty. The question arises: Do we need this many laws, regulations, and tax codes especially if we have loopholes in place? How are we to expect anyone to know them all if we do not teach them? And doesn't that make it easier to break one or more of them at one time or another? Breaking the law if you don't know it is easy, but breaking it and having a good and expensive lawyer—and getting out of trouble—is even easier. Don't you think something is wrong here?

Any bill the Congress passes (when and if they do), consists of thousands of pages. Doesn't it make you happy that lately they are not passing any new ones? Do we really need so many of them?

We need to simplify everything and teach our children.

Immigration

Immigration has become the most controversial issue in our country and a problem no one has a solution for—and few seem even to want to find a solution, either. It has become a political football tossed from one interest to another. Everyone wants to talk about it, but no one does anything about it because it is a very costly topic, both politically and monetarily.

We tend to forget that this country became this country by immigrants. Of course, we have many laws and regulations carefully crafted to handle the country's immigration policies, but they are so complicated and so difficult to understand that they have become impossible to implement.

In this country we have the tendency to complicate things while there are much simpler and more effective ways to do things to get better, faster, and sounder results.

Legal immigration is a good thing and we need it. Unfortunately, even legal immigration is not properly managed.

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We, as a country, should be very happy that people want to immigrate to and not emigrate from. It only proves how envious the rest of the world is for what we offer, be it freedom, opportunities, wealth, or a potential future. Unfortunately the rest of the world values what we have here more than our own people. Most immigrants come to this country to build a future unattainable in their own countries due to political situations, lack of resources, inhumane conditions, unfair treatment, mismanagement of governments, and corruption, among other things. They see our country as their hope to become somebody, a place where they have a voice, a safe haven where they are free to move around and be who they are, to test and prove their abilities, to be proud to belong to a nation where they are not persecuted for an idea they might have.

Many of them come here after enduring many sacrifices in their countries. Some eat one meal less a day for years to save enough money to afford the fees and transportation; many study harder than anyone to have a degree and to be counted for something. Many of them maneuver around bullets and bombshells risking their lives just to get to the airport or the seashore to escape their countries due to political turmoil, civil wars, war, or dictatorships. But, unfortunately, many of us here do not know how life is in those countries; people so desperately want to leave, to appreciate our country and their efforts for wanting to come here.

Of course, there are immigrants who come here for other reasons that are not so noble.

It is our privilege and duty to carefully pick and choose who we want as our guests and who is more worthy to adopt as our own after a trial period. For this, we need to

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have a very simple yet effective immigration policy.

It is interesting and also ironic for our leaders to criticize some countries for not being able to control their borders and restrict certain types of people from crossing them. They criticize a country such as Syria—with precious few resources to control a border hundreds of miles long with Iraq—for not being able to stop well-trained military people from crossing the border of a centuries-old enemy. Or they criticize Iran, for the same reasons. But our borders are breached every day—and with all the might and resources we have—by common simple workers after earning their daily bread, and who hail from a neighboring country with which we have good relations, economic ties, and treaties.

If we were to compare the length of the borders and the terrain of Syria and Iran with Iraq, and the border between the U.S. and Mexico, we would find that the border with Mexico should be much easier to control than the border between those other countries. Yet, we don't see this in practice.

We need to balance our immigration policy between the needs of talent in this country from all over the world, and national security. Our immigration policy has to be carefully drafted and implemented with simplicity.

It is simple: For countries that do not border us, immigrants must come through airports, seaports, our embassies, and consulates. We can have openings for immigrants whose talents our country needs. By cooperating and researching with our corporations, businesses, schools, and universities we can easily identify who we need and how many and issue visas accordingly. Having a quota every year just for

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the sake of having it is not good enough; that's like having to hire a certain number of people just for the sake of hiring them. And filling a quota is not healthy for any business. A country is like a big corporation, and the hiring should be effective, productive, and beneficial for all parties.

For countries that border us, the same should apply but we need to control our borders. That is simple too. Both countries on our borders are supposed to be considered friendly and we have many treaties and businesses with each other. But we are handling it very poorly. To solve the immigration problem we have to start with the existing non-legal immigrants and work our way up.

It is a reality that there are millions of illegal immigrants in our country; it is also a reality that it is not practical to deport each and every one of them, both for economic and political reasons. Therefore, the most common-sense solution will be to find a way to legalize them, penalize them, and accept them as part of our society. Whether we like it or not, they have become part of our society and we have been living with them for many years now.

A mass deportation will create many unwanted consequences. Removing millions from the country will create a huge vacuum that may cause economic and social consequences that the country is not equipped to handle. We will have jobs lost, apartment buildings vacated, families disrupted, political nightmares, etc.

We have to start legalizing them but we have to be careful which ones we are legalizing.

First and foremost, we have to eliminate those who are li-

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abilities to this country.

1. All convicted felons should be deported to their countries of origin. Americans should not be asked to pay \$16,000-\$32,000 per year per felon to keep them alive and fed. They broke the law coming here; they broke the law living here.
2. All immigrants who have two or more misdemeanors should be warned that they will be deported if they commit a new misdemeanor.
3. All others who are employed by anyone should begin the process of legalization immediately. Both employers and workers must come forward within a month of the passage of legislation, or be fined triple the amount of the fees.
4. The fee structure per person should be the following: \$1,000 for processing the application, \$5,000 per family breadwinner for illegally entering the country, and \$2,500 for their respective spouse. No need to leave the country.

These fines should be shared between employer and employee, and distributed over a period of five years, e.g., fifty cents per hour by employer and fifty cents per hour by employee should be deducted from their paycheck and directly deposited into the U.S. Treasury. This is due to the employer benefiting from their illegal employment.

Income received by the applicant immigrants should be taxed as a legal immigrant or U.S. citizen from the day of the application.

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5. Any employer who does not come forward with his/her illegal employees will be fined \$10,000 per such individual under his/her employ, to be paid on the spot.
6. People who are here illegally, not employed, and dependant on government help such as SSI, Medicare, Medi-Cal, food stamps, and any other kind of government assistance due to their lack of knowledge, talent, or being simply lazy, should be encouraged to learn a trade. In addition, they should learn the language to enable them to be fully and gainfully employed. Government should allow them a total of one year to achieve such a goal and proof of effort is absolutely necessary. If proof is not provided, they must be given three months to leave the country.
7. All people who come here simply to benefit from the softness of the American heart (to collect Social Security and other benefits) and are liabilities to the country must be reexamined and action will be taken accordingly. Example: There are many who come here and deplete our treasury due to a failing system. There is an anecdote where a foreigner asks a relative residing in the U.S., especially from communist countries, what to bring when they come to America. The relative answers: "Bring two elders and a disabled person along with underage children and you'll live like a king," meaning the two elders will get SSI and medical coverage for free, the disabled will get disability, the applicant will get paid to look after the disabled person, and get paid as a provider for looking after the elderly. In addition,

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the children will get a certain amount every month and they will qualify for food stamps and all other benefits. Add to that Section 8 housing assistance for rent. This family will cost our government or taxpayers anywhere from \$7,000-\$10,000 a month and live much more comfortably than the U.S. citizen who is working his/her butt off and unable to make half as much or live half as comfortably. Add to that \$75 a day for four days a week for daycare for each elderly. Just do the math. This is simply unfair.

As if this is not enough, the attitude of family members who could not make it to this country and who are left behind is amazing to hear about. Not only is the family now residing in the U.S. living comfortably, but the families left behind also feel and express themselves by the following: "We have a cow in America and we will milk it as much as we can." The sad part is that while they live off of the relatives' U.S. income, they not only do not work for a living, they also look at the U.S. government as a sucker. They live like there is no tomorrow and they attend parties most Americans cannot afford.

It is nice to be nice, but being nice to people who are simply taking advantage of our kindness and being laughed at on top of it is not a very nice feeling.

8. We spend billions of tax dollars every year in manpower, technology, arms, etc., to protect our borders, yet millions cross without detection. The ones we do capture we document and send back, and they just come back the following day from another entry point. Our homeland security is not securing

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our borders.

The following may cut into the heart of this problem with great results. Every person crossing the border illegally who is caught must pay a fine of \$500 within three days of capture for the first offense, \$1,000 for second offense and \$5,000 for the third offense. If the captured cannot pay this fine within three days, he/she must pay it by working for our government in the public works, such as streets and other infrastructure jobs at a rate of \$1 per hour until the fine is paid in full.

This will automatically stop at least 50 percent of the people trying to cross the border, because of fear of getting caught and having to come up with the fine.

The number of people captured and fines collected will pay the majority of the expenses incurred to guard our borders.

9. We must demand cooperation from neighboring countries' governments in providing us with information on people crossing our borders.
10. In return for this cooperation, we encourage our factories to invest in the neighboring countries to open opportunities for their people, giving them tax incentives both by our government and theirs. These manufacturing jobs should be in such goods that the U.S. imports from other countries such as China, India, or so forth.
11. Homeland security is a department that should be dismantled along with FEMA. Both should be replaced by the National Guard.

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12. Sophisticated technology, although important, has not been as effective as it is proving to be. A ten- to fifteen-foot wall may be somewhat effective but may not do the job; however, a simple lineup of phony moveable patrol cars made of plastic boards with flashing lights powered by solar energy strategically situated on the border and visible from a distance, and mixed with actual patrol cars, will accomplish more. Details of which can be carved for maximum effectiveness. This will have the exact same effect as having a dummy highway patrol car on the freeway shoulder. In that case, speeders who notice the car from a distance will slow down until they get close enough to really find out if the car is real or a dummy, but it has already served the purpose of slowing down the speeders and made the freeways safer. Noticing these border cars, whether real or dummy, will slow them down if not stop them—after all, getting caught will be costly.

13. English is a must. Do not look at it as the language of the country you hate, but look at it as the language every country is using for business. It is not America's language; it has become the language of choice for international communication. Keeping and using your mother language is encouraged; however, learning and speaking English to enhance your chances of advancement is beneficial for all.

Legalization fees paid by existing illegal immigrants could add up to \$30 to \$60 billion, depending on how many illegal immigrants are in the country. Legalizing them will empower the government to collect all the taxes a legal immigrant or a citizen pays. That could add up to another

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\$30 to \$60 billion easily and this would be annual income for the government. The fees for crossing the border illegally will bring in another few billion dollars annually. If we add up all the monies that could be collected or recovered from these changes, it would generate a considerable amount to help secure our borders.

Foreign Policy

Foreign policies generally are designed to help protect a country's national interests, national security, ideological goals, and economic prosperity. The preferred path to achieving a successful policy is the peaceful cooperation of the nations involved. The other is war.

A country such as ours, rich with natural resources, separated by oceans from immediate threats, bordering fairly quiet neighbors, is in the unique position to find the very peaceful, civil way of benefiting from a sound foreign policy. We used to do that until we started forcing our ideologies on other governments.

Foreign policy is as important to a country as water is for fish. To achieve the best results the foreign minister of a country must be very savvy, delicate, diplomatic, patient, calculating, understanding, smart, and know how to walk the fine line between the two cultures without offending the other, or imposing an ideology. Also, a foreign minister who has embarked on arbitration between two or more

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countries must be impartial with no bias and no preconditions in negotiations. A referee cannot be considered credible if he has already decided who the winner will be before the game has started.

Lately, we have managed to alienate most countries due to our imperialist ambitions, false information, ideological impositions, biased negotiations, made-up intelligence, and double standards.

First and foremost, we have to accept the fact that we are not the only smart nation on earth and that other nations are not stupid, as we tend to think, no matter how depressed they may be economically. What we do and say and how we act or react is under strict scrutiny—more so in those countries by their people than in ours. All people in all countries are more involved in our politics than our own citizens. They discuss it at school, at work, at home, and anywhere there is a gathering of more than two people. Unlike in our society, where the topics of conversations center on who is dating whom, football, baseball, basketball, which beer or drug is better, and some discussion about work or school. Anything we say or do in the international arena is discussed, analyzed, and opinions are formed on a daily, even hourly basis in all the countries but our own. For this reason, our foreign minister has to take this into consideration and be very careful as to what message he/she is sending to the world.

IRAQ

Saddam Hussein: It is true that he was not the greatest ruler in the world and we probably had to seek his demise, but he

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was an important leader in keeping the balance of power in the region and for a while we were helping him do that. We got rid of him in the old fashion way, the uncivilized way; a way used by the likes of Timor Lank and Genghis Khan—by hanging him, literally.

We made up intelligence, we accused him of things that were not true, we said we were there to help the Iraqi people, we said he is helping the terrorists, and we said this will bring stability in the region. We said we'll go in and get out, we said a lot of things, but what we really did is lie to the American people and the international community. We abolished their military, we destroyed their infrastructure, we killed sons, fathers, brothers and innocent bystanders, we created a mess in the region, emboldened Iran and insurgency, invited in Al Qaeda; we divided the country. We swayed from the main objective; we put the country's neighbors in an awkward situation. We didn't have a plan before, during, or after we went there. We totally ignored the fact that Iraq is located in the middle of kingdoms, emirates, and autocracies and we started preaching democracy, elections, freedom of speech, and human rights. We directly or indirectly threatened their existence. Expecting these kingdoms, emirates, and autocracies to support us is a miscalculation beyond imagination. That's like asking them to help us put an end to their rule. We are a democracy and our politicians, from the president on down, fight with everything they have to keep their seats: imagine losing your throne!

People, whether the Iraqis or other people around the world, are not dumb. We would be naïve to think that they are supporting us. They may be on the surface, but I wouldn't be surprised if they are looking after their own

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interests (like we are) behind closed doors and helping one or another group of insurgents to create chaos.

The terrorists or Iran or whoever is supporting the other side are spending \$2.70 per year per Iraqi to cause this big headache. We, on the other hand, are spending \$12,000 to \$13,000 on a conservative estimate per year per Iraqi, along with hundreds of lives, and thousands of injuries to our dear soldiers. We are spending in the neighborhood of \$150 to \$180 billion a year on the Iraq war when the entire Iraqi gross domestic product is approximately \$48.5 billion, (see <http://www.albawaba.com/en/countries/Iraq/214525>). World Bank data estimated Iraqi GDP growing by 15.4 percent for 2006, reaching ID71,188.8 billion (US\$48.5 billion).

This means every year we are spending three times or more of the entire country's GDP and we still do not have the results we want. It does not even look like we are close to concluding this war or our presence in Iraq.

Proposal

The president could offer \$15,000 per family in Iraq on the condition that they hand over their arms and hold elections in a month to form their governing body; they receive the funds if the government takes necessary actions to govern within a month of entering office. This money is to be held in an international trust fund and disbursed to the people by managers of this fund. No Americans should be members of this managing body. Iraqis would receive an initial \$5,000 when they register, surrender their arms, and sign a promissory note that they will obey by the terms of the agreement. The remainder \$10,000 is to be disbursed after

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they hold elections and the governing body is clarified. Once the governing body is in position, all our troops leave Iraq immediately. The new government's job will then become policing its own people. If Saddam Hussein could do it, so can the new leaders; after all he had trained police and military personnel. The international community then can only be responsible to monitor the borders so no arms enter the country. In addition to this gesture, a promise by the U.S. and other allies to invest in Iraq as soon as we see signs of stabilization would help to create jobs and opportunities. This is a one-time offer; it will cost us less than half of what it costs us in one year running the war—hundreds of billions of dollars with no end in sight and with no results, and an unknown number of casualties of American souls. Instead, this will be capitalism at its best, providing an opportunity for Iraq to prosper again. We can secure our oil needs and impress neighboring countries by showing that we are really there to help and any country on our side will benefit from our capitalism, democracy, and military capacity.

I believe dropping leaflets with this type of proposal will do much more than dropping bombs on people. After all, any good pen goes farther than any bomb. Instead of killing the people and expecting them to love us, we will be giving them hope, money, peace, and their country back. Their national pride will be restored, their livelihood will have a chance of normalcy, and a father will be able to work and provide for his family instead of bearing arms fighting or dying. No civil war has lasted less than several years in areas where people are more emotional than we are here in the U.S. We have to consider the cultural differences. We cannot keep igniting the fire of revenge and rage, yet at the same time offer a sprinkle of water and expect a good out-

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come. We have to give them something they can build upon so they can see hope within their reach. We have to show them that we are there to help them, not destroy them.

I am almost certain many will argue that we might start a precedent by offering this money to fix the problems in Iraq and it may create situations where other countries would want to do the same to get money too. That is not and should not be the case for the simple reason that Iraq's situation is unique. We created that problem; we went and destroyed their country under false pretenses. We knocked down their bridges, destroyed their roads, their infrastructure; we brought down their government. If we were smart enough to find a diplomatic solution we wouldn't be in this situation. We went about this whole thing in a totally amateurish and substandard way. We should have been more prepared and knowledgeable of the area. We should have known how that part of the world thinks, lives, and views things. We are so naïve in the U.S.; we have to stop thinking that everyone in the world should think like us, and that one day we can make them think like us. These countries are centuries old and have a certain mentality that cannot be changed overnight. We in the U.S. are relatively new, and our composition is a mixture of many different cultures each bringing a new flavor to it. We are still in the process of building a pure American culture; they already have theirs.

We have totally ignored what we have preached for years. Know your friend but know your enemies better or keep your friends close and your enemies closer. As far as I know, the best way of knowing someone is by associating with them, not by isolating them, imposing sanctions, keeping a distance, talking down to them, avoiding talking to

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them, dictating how they live their lives, or how to run their family affairs. We wouldn't want anyone to do that to us, so why are we expecting others to accept it when we do that to them? On the other hand, we also know your worst enemy is your best friend, and that is not because your best friend is your enemy now, but he will be if for some reason you part ways. He is the one who knows all your strengths and weaknesses and can use them against you. In conclusion, we have to establish relationships with any and all countries, understand them, and deal with them, live with them, trade with them, so we can learn more about them.

Iran

Iran is a totally different situation. First, we had Iran in check by having Saddam in Iraq—not that Saddam was the best person, but he did the job. Then we eliminated Saddam and created a very big vacuum. Now we are playing the same game hoping to eliminate Ahmadinejad. We have the tendency of looking down at leaders, governments, and regimes different from ours. We forget these people have their own cultures, beliefs, needs, constitutions, and ways of life. We also forget the fact that they have been exercising them for hundreds, if not thousands of years. It is understood we have to protect our national interests, but cannot force others to adopt our lifestyle, constitution, culture; their needs are definitely not the same as ours. So, for a successful foreign policy we need to understand their side, and find a middle ground where we can work together and secure both national interests. Aggression or unilateral actions haven't and will never make the other side happy, and it is only an invitation for confrontation. Confrontation and war was the old way of dealing with these issues be-

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tween countries before humans were civilized. Now that we claim to be a civilized nation, full of smart politicians, advanced technology, psychological and sociological experts, resorting to centuries-old method of dealing with other countries belittles us. Treating other countries' leaders as little children makes them more likely to revolt. The challenge for a civilized country is to be smart enough to find a civilized way to deal with other countries. "Negotiation" means sitting down and discussing the differences and finding a compromise that both parties can live with and be content with. You do not dictate the other side what to do even before you start talking.

Most of what was discussed above can apply for any country or nation. The notion that we are directing our tough stance to the **leaders** of those countries and not to the **people** is absolutely wrong. Any nation, as much as they hate their leaders, will stand behind them when an outsider disgraces them or calls them names; they will look at the attacker as the enemy. The best example is what happened recently: Mr. Bush's popularity was at its lowest when Mr. Chavez called him the devil. No matter how low our president's popularity was, there was no American who didn't hate Mr. Chavez for doing that to our president. Whether we like him or not, the leader of the country is the representative of that country and any attack on that leader is an attack on that country. Just because our leader is an elected official and theirs is not, does not mean their leader does not represent that country. It's pretty simple.

Iran used to be one of the closest allies to the US. Iranians, in general, love the United States. We supported the wrong guy and helped topple the Shah; another gross miscalculation of our intelligence. There was a time when Iranians

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were proud to be on the side of the U.S., but we gave them many reasons to change their attitude towards us. It is not a secret that we were helping Iraq against Iran and helping Iran against Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war. People are not that naïve. They know what games we were playing. Most countries know what each country is playing in the political arena and for what reason.

We keep accusing every country that does not have our so-called values in human rights, democracy, or terrorism-centered mentality, or that has the willingness to declare war against us or our allies. Let us analyze that for a moment. Which country in their right mind would want to really declare war against the USA? Any country, including Russia, China, Venezuela, Cuba, North Korea, and others, do not have either the resources or the funds or both to achieve such a goal. Their entire budgets combined do not add up to half the United States' budget. Their technology, especially military technology, does not even come close to the United States. That is, unless our government is smart enough to play along with their leaders, emboldening them by helping their people believe their leaders' rhetoric and injecting fear into the people.

What are we afraid of in talking with these guys? Are they better negotiators? Could it be they know more about us than we know about them? Are they trying to topple our regime? How many Al Qaeda members are there in Iran? Or, simply, do they want equal treatment by the U.S.? How many terrorist attacks have we seen conducted by Iranians or Iraqis for that matter?

If the wind is blowing through a window at the north side of the house, closing the window at the south side of the

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house does not help. If a terrorist act is committed by someone in Afghanistan, who is a Sunni, using Saudi men, then blaming an Iranian Shiite for supporting Al Qaeda for bringing down the U.S. in Iraq is amazing. What is more amazing is that our Congress, Senate, media, and population bought it. The question then arises: Isn't our leader doing the same thing as Ahmadinejad is doing, blaming some other country for things that a country has nothing to do with?

Negotiating with Iran, understanding what they want, lending a helping hand in building their nuclear plants for utility reasons with our technology and supervision, is more appealing and a more powerful message to the people than taking actions against them, causing them to rebel and resort to inferior technologies where the risk of unwanted accidents is higher. This rebellion will cause fanatics to want to change a noble cause into a political statement, a recruitment tool, and revenge by swaying a noble cause of building a plant to building a bomb.

We have to remember that we are not the only nuclear power in the world, and most other countries with nuclear capabilities have some friction with us already. One tiny push is enough for those countries to provide Iran and countries like Iran the material, technology, and experts just to work against the U.S. Why do we have to provoke them to do that?

A double-standard foreign policy is our main enemy. You cannot express delight and confirmation for one country such as Pakistan or India to build nuclear plants and justify it due to their need, and deny or actually threaten to bomb another country for wanting the same thing.

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China

China is a communist regime by ideology, but acts like a capitalist country in conducting business. Changing course for a big country like China is like changing the path of a huge ship. You cannot do it quickly because it will sink.

China has recently realized that it can use its enormous labor force to make a name for itself, and now they are realizing that capitalism is not a bad thing after all. Unfortunately, it is working against us.

Still, we have to applaud the fact that they have changed their ways, and we should be happy for them and recognize this change is benefiting us also in cheaper prices we are paying for goods. We have to be very careful how we handle it so it does not hurt us in the end.

There are many reasons why China is advancing; some are good and some are our fault. The good part is that they are utilizing their manpower more efficiently; they have become more open minded towards outsiders and trading partners; they are using their resources and are building their infrastructure; they are thinking like we used to think decades ago.

The bad part is that the U.S. and Europe have played a big part in this renaissance.

Many things contributed to jobs being lost to China—and to India, for that matter.

1. Greed: Our companies got greedy. They started building and manufacturing our goods so that they

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do not last more than a few years, hoping that in a few years we have to buy new ones and making the companies more money.

2. Tax: We tax our companies to the extreme making it hard for these companies to be profitable without raising prices.
3. Laws and regulations: We introduced many new laws and regulations to control businesses and companies, making it impossible to follow all of them.
4. Unions: we introduced worker unions to protect the worker, rightfully so, because of many abuses by businesses. But that also put a burden on the businesses.
5. Litigation: Everyone is ready, willing, and able to sue anyone they choose for any reason for a quick buck. Legal fees have become a major expense for businesses. So much so that some people pray for an accident to happen to them so they can sue the business and make fast money. How ironic.
6. Benefits: They have become recruiting tools; health benefits, 401Ks, workman's compensation insurance, vacation, etc.
7. Payroll: We practically pay the highest wages per employee and it is hardly enough to make ends meet due to a grave imbalance in income and expense.
8. Loss of sense of patriotism: We do not have the atti-

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tude of “buying American” anymore. Why? One, because we want to pay less, and two, because foreigners are making better products for the price. It used to be that we were proud to buy American-made goods. Now we are happy we find what we need made in China, India, or Taiwan.

9. Double standard: We keep preaching, demanding, and forcing many countries in the world to be democratic. We demand human rights from them. Yet when it comes to China we declare it the “most favored nation.”

All of the above had noble causes and reasons why they were brought about. However, we, being humans, managed to find a way to abuse all of them and make a mess for ourselves. Everything has gotten exaggerated. We are suing companies if we break a fingernail or lose a hair, and are demanding millions.

We have to remember that anytime there is a cost added to a business, that business will have to pass it along to its customers to remain in business. Add to it fraudulent claims in insurance, workman’s comp, cheating on time cards, theft, and now we have a big problem. We are the ones who ultimately end up paying for it.

China, on the other hand, does not have most of the hurdles we have put in place for us to be able to compete fairly; hence, the loss of jobs and factories.

China is a unique case that we need to be aware of. We need to study and carefully plan a strategy. It is becoming a force hard to compete or deal with. We do want all peo-

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ple to have the opportunity of advancing, improving, and prospering, but we do not want them to do so at our expense.

Let us take a step back and think about this. We think we are paying a couple dollars less for a Chinese-made product and are saving some money. In fact, these couple dollars are costing us much more. Here is how:

By buying Chinese, we and the Europeans and some other countries have made China's economy grow double digits year after year. Good for them. However, it is very bad for us. Let me explain:

China is growing richer; they are consuming much more than before. The people who used to eat one meal a day are now eating two. They used to eat mostly rice, now they are eating protein foods such as meats, chicken, and pork. This requires more wheat, corn, soy beans and so on to produce more meat, so the demand for these commodities has grown in multiples. The price of commodities has increased twofold; for some commodities, prices have increased three- or fourfold in just a few years. With the money they make, the Chinese are investing in their infrastructure, building roads, bridges, nuclear plants, schools, hospitals, towns, cities, residential and commercial buildings, manufacturing plants, office buildings, sewer systems, electric plants, railroads, airports and seaports; they are building everywhere. This has created a very high demand in all materials, including oil and gas as well as services. The high demand has caused the rise in price for materials such as copper, steel, iron, coal, aluminum, gold, silver, platinum, zinc, and much more.

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They can afford to drive more cars today and replace their bicycles to the tune of millions of additional cars on the roads per year; the demand for oil has increased, hence the rise in gas prices here. It is ironic; here we are forced to conserve energy, drive smaller cars, cut on food to afford the rising gas prices, while there they are moving up from bicycles to cars and SUVs. Nothing is wrong with conserving energy or driving smaller cars, but when others will advance and we go back, it does not make too much sense.

China is also building its military. The military needs armor, arms, tanks, fighter jets, engines, supplies, food and clothing, etc., all of which use more of the materials and all of the commodities.

All these affect us in the following way: When demand is high on all of the above, we Americans pay much more for food, energy, materials, and commodities. A house that used to cost \$70 a square foot to build is now costing us \$200 to \$300 a square foot. For example, if you were to build or buy a house of 1,500 square feet, on average a few years ago construction would cost \$105,000 ($1,500 \times \70). The same house to build today will cost you \$300,000 minimum to build ($1,500 \times \$200$). A gallon of gas that used to cost \$1.20 just a few years ago is costing us more than \$4 today. A gallon of milk used to be in the \$2 range, now it is \$4. The jobs that were here have moved there.

So, if you do the math, saving a few dollars by buying Chinese is costing us in the thousands. We are ending up with the short end of the stick.

What we are technically doing is, instead of competing and

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finding ways to bring jobs back to our country, we are exporting them. We are giving China our money for them to lend it back to us and charge interest on our own money. This is not right.

We are giving them our jobs and money for them to build their military, which can easily be used against us or anyone in their region. We are getting weaker while they are getting wealthier and more powerful. We call most members of OPEC our enemies; the Chinese call them business partners. Imagine for a second what happens if there were to be a conflict between us and them. Most conflicts being for economic reasons, it is a very dangerous proposal. We have monies we owe them, we depend on imports from them, their military is getting stronger, and our so-called enemies are their friends. It is a very bad recipe for disaster.

We have to cut our taxes for businesses (proposal in taxation chapter), take care of health care (health care chapter) and insurance (insurance chapter), revise laws and regulations, reduce litigation, overhaul the unions, and think American.

The Middle East

The Middle East is perhaps the most delicate problem to solve according to every government involved in the region, including the U.S. To understand the problem in the Middle East we have to go back and see what created it. This is not an effort to judge any country; this is simply to explain what has happened, what the consequences of a promise have been and what the reality is. Through that, we can find a practical solution for the coexistence of the

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members in the region.

The problem arose with a promise. According to Wikipedia, the Balfour Declaration of 1917 was a classified formal statement of policy by the British government stating that the British government “view with favour” the establishment in Palestine of “a national home for the Jewish people” on the conditions that “nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine” or “the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.”

The declaration was made in a letter from Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour to Lord Rothschild (Walter Rothschild, 2nd Baron Rothschild), a leader of the British Jewish community, for transmission to the Zionist Federation, a private Zionist organization. The letter reflected the position of the British Cabinet, as agreed upon in a meeting on October 31, 1917. It further stated that the declaration is a sign of “sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations.”

The statement was issued through the efforts of Chaim Weizmann and Nahum Sokolow, the principal Zionist leaders based in London but, as they had asked for the reconstitution of Palestine as “the” Jewish national home, the Declaration fell short of Zionist expectations.[1]

The “Balfour Declaration” was later incorporated into the Sèvres peace treaty with Turkey and the Mandate for Palestine. The original document is kept at the British Library.

— en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balfour_Declaration,_1917

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Foreign Office,

November 2nd, 1917.

Dear Lord Rothschild,

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet

"His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country"

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Marc Boyajian', with a small heart symbol above the 'i' in 'Boyajian'.

These are the basis for the creation of Israel in Palestine. This was followed by the United States government's decision and declaration of the United States Recognition of the State of Israel. The U.S. Department of State provides a brief history of the events as follows:

On May 14, 1948, David Ben-Gurion, the head of the Jewish Agency, proclaimed the establishment of the State of Israel. U.S. President Harry S. Truman recognized the new nation on the same day.

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Although the United States supported the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which favored the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine, President Franklin D. Roosevelt had assured the Arabs in 1945 that the United States would not intervene without consulting both the Jews and the Arabs in that region. The British, who held a colonial mandate for Palestine until May 1948, opposed both the creation of a Jewish state and an Arab state in Palestine as well as unlimited immigration of Jewish refugees to the region. Great Britain wanted to preserve good relations with the Arabs to protect its vital political and economic interests in Palestine.

Soon after President Truman took office, he appointed several experts to study the Palestinian issue. In the summer of 1946, Truman established a special cabinet committee under the chairmanship of Dr. Henry F. Grady, an Assistant Secretary of State, who entered into negotiations with a parallel British committee to discuss the future of Palestine. In May 1946, Truman announced his approval of a recommendation to admit 100,000 displaced persons into Palestine and in October publicly declared his support for the creation of a Jewish state. Throughout 1947, the United Nations Special Commission on Palestine examined the Palestinian question and recommended the partition of Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state. On November 29, 1947 the United Nations adopted Resolution 181 (also known as the Partition Resolution) that would divide Great Britain's former Palestinian mandate into Jewish and Arab states in May 1948 when the British mandate was scheduled to end. Under the resolution, the area of religious significance surrounding Jerusalem would remain a *corpus separatum* under international control administered by the United Nations.

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Although the United States backed Resolution 181, the U.S. Department of State recommended the creation of a United Nations trusteeship with limits on Jewish immigration and a division of Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab provinces but not states. The State Department, concerned about the possibility of an increasing Soviet role in the Arab world and the potential for restriction by Arab oil producing nations of oil supplies to the United States, advised against U.S. intervention on behalf of the Jews. Later, as the date for British departure from Palestine drew near, the Department of State grew concerned about the possibility of an all-out war in Palestine as Arab states threatened to attack almost as soon as the UN passed the partition resolution.

Despite growing conflict between Palestinian Arabs and Palestinian Jews and despite the Department of State's endorsement of a trusteeship, Truman ultimately decided to recognize the state Israel.

—www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/cwr/97177.htm

To understand what this action has done to the people in the region, specifically to the Palestinians, a metaphor is in order. Technically what happened is the following:

Picture yourself living in your home with your family minding your own business; then some foreigner, because of his size and bullying capabilities, brings another family out of nowhere and places them in your home, and throws you and your family out in the backyard under a tent. Your life turns upside down in an instant, and you are rendered powerless because the bully disarmed you. Yet, at the same time he armed the new family, gave them all kinds of privileges, while stripping you of your right even to enter your

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home, except for a job that only the new family will provide. And you have to wait several hours to be strip searched going in and out of your home only to secure a few pennies to support your family with, a piece of bread and some water, and your children cannot go to school because the school was past your home, and there is no school in the tent they gave you. As if this is not enough, due to the tent being so small, part of your family had to be placed in the neighbor's backyard, completely cut off from you. You have no means of communicating with the rest of your family, children, parents, relatives or friends. All the amenities you once had are now awarded to the new family, while you are deprived of clean water, sewer, and even the most basic of services. The new family keeps on receiving the most advanced appliances, most sophisticated arms, and hard cash from the bully and his friends, when you have to rely on rain for drinking water. Your best defense armor is a few marbles or pieces of stones and an occasional gun. This keeps going on for sixty years. Some of your neighbors are good-hearted and donate some cash and other necessities once in a while, which the bully and friends criticize; other neighbors find it an opportunity for their propaganda and recruiting purposes. The rest of the world does not care—they find it a costly proposition to interfere and face up with a bully whose friend has now taken over and became a bigger bully than before.

If you were this displaced family, would you want to take your home back, have your children back to school, and have the freedom you enjoyed before they came? Would you want to provide your wife, children, and family a decent life, whatever life you were living, with your beliefs and the culture you were born in? Of course you would; who wouldn't?

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The home above was Palestine, the new family is the Israelis, the bully is Great Britain, the friends are the USA and the neighbors are the neighboring Arab countries.

This is exactly what happened to the Palestinians in their country; a Jewish state was created; 100,000 Jews were brought to the country initially; and most Palestinians were pushed out of their homes, some nearby, others to the neighboring countries such as Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. The influx of huge numbers of Palestinian refugees to these neighboring countries caused discomfort and a huge burden on their economies. Palestinians, in some cases, denied a home they once had in their country, were placed in camps, both in Palestine and the neighboring countries. They are still there. They have become people without a home.

The terms of the agreement were not kept. The number of Jews moving into the new state of Israel grew day by day. The British and the U.S. backed the new state with hard cash, technology, infrastructure, and a military, all while ignoring the needs and rights of the Palestinians. What most Palestinians and neighboring countries thought to be a temporary situation turned out to be a prolonged one.

This of course irritated everyone involved. In any conflict, any UN resolution the Palestinians were and are still faced with bias towards the Israelis, often times with the veto power held by the British and the U.S. at the United Nations.

It is naïve to think the problem can be solved by sending a secretary of state to visit countries in the region without offering a true solution for the Palestinian people, or by

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meeting with them and excluding Palestinian representatives.

Spending billions every year arming the Israelis to their teeth and issuing threats to the neighboring countries only complicates the matter. It provides more ammunition to the extremists—who are masters in playing with the emotions of the deprived Palestinians—to prove themselves worthy of something; hence, the strengthening of **terrorism** both in the region and around the world.

The solution is simple. Treat everyone equal. What we do for Israel we should do for the Palestinians: give them homes like you gave the Israelis (not the homes that are now in the Israelis' hands); help their infrastructure; give and allow the neighbors to give funds to build their businesses, homes, hospitals, and schools that were taken away from them. Drop the biased approach. They are as good a people as others are, they just do not want to be treated as sub-humans. You will find that they are the most appreciative, loyal, and hardworking people. It will eliminate the main reason fanatics have been able to recruit their young and make terrorists of them. Fanatics like bin Laden, and fanatical groups like Hamas or Hezbollah will not have a cause to fight for. Ahmadinejad cannot use Israel and the Palestinian cause to advertise himself.

Palestinians will feel they have a home, the freedom they used to enjoy to move around in their neighborhood, their children will get the education they need, and their sick will have hospitals to go to. A perfect example is what happened during the Israeli-Hezbollah conflict in Lebanon. As you know, many homes and businesses were destroyed in south Lebanon during this conflict, and many Palestinian

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lives were lost. Yet, the Palestinian people, instead of blaming Hezbollah for the destruction and loss of life, were very appreciative and remained loyal to them because throughout the years it was Hezbollah that supported them, providing hospitalization, schooling, and protection of their rights. And when the war ended, it was Hezbollah who coughed up hard cash to rebuild their homes and businesses without the bureaucracy we all experience in most countries.

The Palestinians in Palestine need homes, shelter, hospitals and schools. They used to have them—maybe not as advanced as you would think they were, but these basics were theirs and were taken away from them, with the Palestinian people left in camps and under tents, and with no means of earning a decent living or generating enough income to build their schools, hospitals, or businesses.

No one should expect Israel to be destroyed and returned to the Palestinians; everyone should be realistic and practical. But every Palestinian has the right to expect what is good for the Jews is also good for them. The West Bank and Gaza should enjoy the same attention, support, help, infrastructure, security, and freedom as the Jews were afforded. The Golan Heights, a once-strategic region bordering east of Israel that was lost to the Israelis in the 1967 war, should be returned to the Syrians. The Golan Heights could have been a very strategic location in the past, but with the technology today, the satellite advances, and all the help Israel receives from its friends, this area no longer has the value it once had.

It must be clear, however, that this is not to buy the Palestinians. They cannot be bought. This is to give them what was rightfully theirs and was taken away from them force-

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fully: their homes, businesses, schools, hospitals, dignity, and their freedom.

By doing so, we would look fair, caring, unbiased, and we would be considered friends. The neighboring countries will be relieved of their obligation. Syria will not have a reason to meddle in their affairs. By getting back the Golan Heights, the Syrians will claim victory, which is fine; it was their property anyway. The rest of the Arab world will be more than happy to pitch in for the reconstruction of a state for the Palestinians, because they will not have to deal with this big headache they have had for the past sixty years. A headache due to stubborn bullies and fanatics who have used this conflict for personal benefits.

Israel will be comforted and relieved from the threat of being shelled or stoned by rebelling Palestinians.

We are the ones preaching peace around the world, human rights for everyone; it is about time we open the doors for it to happen. After all, having a healthy, well-to-do neighbor only benefits you and the neighbor. You will not have a pest as a neighbor, even though in this case, the neighbor was there before the Israelis moved in.

Terrorism

Terrorism is an act that has probably existed since the beginning of time, but it has never been used and abused as much as it has in the past few years. Terrorism has many definitions, none of which seem to be pleasant to encounter. The site below has many of those definitions. For this book we will mention only two of them, one definition by the United Nations, and the other by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

For more definitions, visit www.pa-aware.org/what-is-terrorism/pdfs/B-2.pdf

United Nations:

“Any ... act intended to cause death or serious bodily injury to a civilian, or to any other person not taking an active part in the hostilities in a situation of armed conflict, when the purpose of such act, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population, or to compel a government or an international

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organization to do or to abstain from doing any act.”

Federal Bureau of Investigation:

“The unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government or civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives.”

Although terrorism has been practiced for many centuries, some say it dates back to the Greek era; it seems to have gained more momentum in the past few decades. More recently, with the September 11, 2001 attack by Al Qaeda, which claimed the lives of 2,998 innocent men and women (and whose victims included nationals from 80 different countries), it has gained more momentum and more attention from the world.

Terrorism has become a more effective tool used by many factions around the world, for many different political and ideological purposes.

The reasons for this surge and increasing importance of terrorism include the following:

1. Propaganda: The advancement of worldwide communications, the use of radio, television, satellites, cable newswires, ham radios, telephones, faxes, and the Internet give the terrorists more value than they had ever dreamed of. It is true that we need the media and we have the right to be informed; however, this right is coming at a very high cost. It is emboldening the terrorists; it is giving them something

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to brag about, and the ability to recruit more of them. The media has to do their job, but it has to be courteous, measure the sensitivity of the situation, and allow the government to weigh in the consequences of the propaganda its reporting of an event might generate, taking into consideration the national security implications and report accordingly or hold off on reporting. This is not censorship; it is common sense for the sake of saving innocent lives.

2. Emotional vs. Rational Response: the way we react to a terrorist act should not be emotional. Yes, it is tough to do, but it is a very dangerous thing to do. Emotional responses often lead to grave mistakes and become very costly both in lives and in funds. For example, September 11, 2001 was and remains a major tragedy for the United States. Thousands died, many were injured, businesses were destroyed, the stock market plummeted, and billions of dollars were lost. It was a sad day. The entire country mourned, we felt violated, threatened, and angry. We all wanted revenge. That is an immediate reaction which is driven by emotion. We started blaming the responsible group of sub-human terrorists for a masterful plan. We wanted to take action, we wanted to attack and capture their leader, bring him to justice and destroy his existence. All is good. However, let us analyze what happened. The media was having a field day. It was major news in each and every town, city, and country. All news and no-news channels were broadcasting the news, showing the destruction for months to come. We rushed to deploy our military to a foreign country without the proper training,

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armory, an entry plan, or an exit plan. We engaged in war with people we hardly knew; we killed innocent people and our own soldiers. And after so many years we still have not captured the main person we went after. As if that was not enough, we concocted another story and attacked another country where the mission has been changed more often than people change socks, and we have killed more people and lost more soldiers in death and injuries. We spent and are still spending taxpayers' money. And yes, we still do not have the Man. On the other hand, Al Qaeda received all that advertising for free; advertising for which our businesses have to pay billions of dollars to reach as many people as it was exposed to. It kept reminding us of the pain day after day. Many used it as a political tool to promote themselves. It made Al Qaeda a household name. Not only here in the United States, but all over the world. It made bin Laden a godly figure with the fanatics. Al Qaeda, once known only to a very few people, became an international force recruiting right and left due to the free propaganda it received.

We love the media and we are grateful for our freedom of speech and press. We respect their opinions and commentaries. But there should be a line that should never be crossed only when it comes to national security. Our leaders, instead of rushing to control the situation, calculate the consequences and request the media to use discretion, sensitivity, and patriotism, rush into making it a political football, and pursue agendas not so favorable to the nation.

We made heroes of people who were supposed to protect us

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and could not. We threw our military into a terrain we knew to be dangerous. The same one in which the Soviets had tried and lost. We still have not captured the Man. It is puzzling for a government that can tell what kind of cigarette someone is smoking by means of satellite technology, but cannot find a disabled person who moves around with a couple hundred bodyguards.

The better way to handle the situation would be the following:

Our armed forces should have been ordered to destroy the airplanes heading to the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and the White House. But since they failed to give the order, the terrorists were successful. The government's immediate action should have been contacting the news agencies and requesting them not to publicize the matter for a period of twenty-four to forty-eight hours. Allow them to report the incident on a casual basis and refrain from making it a race for ratings until the government has assessed the situation and calculated the consequences of announcing the news. Then provide a high-ranking administration official such as the president at a press conference declaring things are under control. This would have taken control of the people's fear, anger, and emotions.

A second press conference would be held after several hours assuring the public that the government is on top of it and will bring the responsible party to justice, and that the government has already taken necessary measures. Request the media to cooperate with the government not cause the public to panic. Don't give the terrorists more credit than they deserve and don't advertise their case for free.

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We, being the great nation with all the sophisticated equipment and technology, our tactical and Special Forces that we have trained, our covert operations specialists that the taxpayer has paid for, put them in charge of capturing the culprit especially since we knew who it was: a very well-known terrorist who has attacked us before. If our government, or anyone who has access to Google, can see who is standing at my front door from space and what color pants he is wearing, shouldn't our government be able to locate bin Laden? A person who we were supposed to be searching for ever since his 1998 U.S. embassy bombings in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; and Nairobi, Kenya; and who is on the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation's Ten Most Wanted Fugitives list.

We should have concentrated and committed as many of our Special Forces as possible to finding him, bringing him, trying him, and convicting him. We would have impressed the public, we would have denied Al Qaeda the free publicity, and we would have made an example of him to the rest of the terrorists. We would have weakened Al Qaeda and stripped it of its ability to further recruit new members. He wouldn't have been able to expand his base all over the world. After all, no one wants to be on the side of a loser. We would have been able to keep our troops safe at home. We wouldn't need to go to war in Afghanistan and Iraq. We would have saved face with the world. We wouldn't have our troops killed by the thousands, we wouldn't have our troops suffer unnecessary injuries, we wouldn't have our children come back with post-traumatic stress syndrome, we wouldn't have innocent citizens killed by the thousands, others displaced from their homes by the millions, and we wouldn't have Iran emboldened in the region. We wouldn't have to spend a trillion dollars of taxpayers'

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money, we wouldn't have lost our credibility with the world community, and we wouldn't have destroyed our economy.

All it would have taken was a few dozen or a few hundred of our Special Forces to do the job; that's why we call them Special Forces, that's why we train them, that's why we arm them with the best of the best equipment.

Dual Terrorism

We discussed terrorism as how many people have defined it. However, nowhere can we find the term Dual Terrorism and that is because it is new. It is twice as dangerous as your conventional terrorism. Let us explore.

Most terrorists direct their terrorism towards an enemy by assuring their own people, not by instilling fear in them. But when a leader of a country inculcates fear in his own people while threatening an enemy he is committing Dual Terrorism.

For example, when a leader of a country keeps repeating to his people that some group will come and kill you and your children, bomb your buildings, homes and businesses if we don't go after them, and he threatens that group and moves his military here and there in the name of national security, he is instilling fear in his people more than the terrorists have. It is Dual Terrorism. Trying to justify a war by repeatedly scaring your people, you are committing a form of terrorism yourself.

Ever since September 11, 2001, the American public has

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been bombarded with the words “national security,” “terrorism,” “bombing us,” “they’ll follow us here,” “they’re after us,” “your children are not safe,” “we have to fight them there,” “they may use some sort of weapon of mass destruction,” “sleeper cells of Al Qaeda in the U.S. may wake up and kill us.” Those and more phrases like them have been used by our leaders and repeated day after day by our media. The American public has become very fearful and uncomfortable. Our leaders have made us a fearful nation while threatening some real and some alleged terrorists around the world.

A government’s job is not to scare its people. A government’s job is to protect and serve its people, it is to comfort and provide for its people. It is the government’s responsibility to fulfill that job, not to sell it as a huge favor it is doing to the people and expect constant appreciation, gratitude, and payback.

Our government failed to protect its people by allowing civilian airplanes to enter a major city and destroy the World Trade Center. Our government failed to defend our own defense headquarters against a civilian plane attack. And our government is not serving us by scaring us every day that it may happen again. Our government should have prevented those terrorists from boarding those airplanes; it should have prevented them from coming that close to the buildings. Instead, it did nothing.

Our government, instead of taking responsibility for failing to defend us, used this as an opportunity to push for fear in its people, declare war, and portray its officials as heroes. We declared the mayor of New York “America’s Mayor,” a

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hero against terrorism. What is sad here is that the media for some reason went along with all this.

We have to be wary of terrorists and terrorism, but we have to scare them and fight them; not be scared ourselves and fight amongst us.

Family

The family structure in the U.S. has collapsed. More than half the families in the U.S. are single-parent families. The divorce rate is over 50 percent. It used to be divorce was due excessive drinking of a spouse, cheating by a spouse, or abusive behavior by the spouse; now the No. 1 reason for divorce is simply marriage. Even the two-parent families have enormous problems.

Single-Parent Families

There are many reasons why the number of single-parent families has increased. Some marriage failures are due to the passing of a spouse, others an unexpected disability of a spouse, but many are the result of irresponsible casual sex at an early age. Many of them who cannot provide for themselves engage in unprotected sex, sometimes, as a result of drinking, drugs, or simply because they can.

In cases where single parenthood is the result of a spouse's

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passing or divorce, life becomes miserable due to the necessity of and dependency on the spouse's income for survival, which when absent places a huge burden on the surviving spouse to raise the family.

In those cases where single parenthood is the result of casual sex at an early age, the problem is much bigger.

It is absolutely necessary for children to be taught about sex and its consequences at an earlier age, beginning in elementary schools and at home. Not only is it costing the taxpayer in raising these unexpected children, but it is also preventing us from protecting our youngsters from carrying a responsibility we ultimately know they cannot handle.

Many single parents have to work two, or sometimes even three jobs to afford their lifestyle. They have no time to raise their children properly; they do not even have the time or energy to enjoy life and have fun.

The divorcées have the same problem. Many of the divorces are happening because one partner rushed into marriage without carefully planning their lives and understanding their partner. Many are forced into marriage due to coming of age. Others are getting married because they have to for one reason or another; among them is a woman's biological clock, growing older, or because their culture requires them to before reaching a certain age.

Our society has changed. Most children have no father figure while they are growing up; many have too many father figures and are confused on whom to follow. Many children end up in foster care and transfer from one foster home to another because both parents have abandoned them.

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We need to educate our children as of yesterday on how to act and how not to act, how to behave and react, so the next generation does not repeat the same mistakes we are making today.

Two-Parent Families

Most married couples have to work to meet their financial obligations; hence there is no time even to talk with each other. The main ingredient for a successful marriage is communication, an honest, open, and sincere discussion. Couples are not doing that anymore. They either have no time, are busy with work brought home to satisfy their employer, or are fearful of saying something that may come back and haunt them in the future in case of divorce. So forth and so on.

The sense of sacrifice that a marriage requires has absolutely disappeared. Everyone wants to do what they please, everyone advises not to give in to the spouse's needs and wants; the famous quote is, "You don't have to take it."

No matter which type of a family the children of today belong to, they encounter many problems growing up. Most parents are not home to greet their children when they finish a school day. They are either left outside or are home alone. This is an invitation for them to do many things they are not supposed to do, such as having friends over, drinking, experimenting with sex, and belonging to dangerous cliques or gangs for power. There is no parental supervision or guidance, mentoring, or discipline.

In the past, the head of a household would work, the spouse

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was at home tending to the house chores, or if both parents were working, the grandparents were close by to look after the children. Now that there is no job stability, people are relocating from town to town, and working twice as hard as they used to before. Grandparents are too far away to look after the children; we have replaced them with babysitters, who are usually under twenty-one (to be generous).

The burden of raising a family has become such that we spend more time in traffic and at work, and when we finally make it home, we are so exhausted we only have time for a quick dinner, a little relaxation, and then sleep. We have neither mood nor energy to be involved in our children's lives and even each other's lives as husband and wife. This has resulted in many other consequences as well. Husbands and wives do not spend quality time together. Everything has become an obligation. We do not have time to notice our wives, compliment them, caress them, make love to them. Neither do they have the time or the mood for anything—sex in marriage has become a duty or a nonevent. This, in turn, has created another situation where we are the most fresh, alert, and hyper at work, because we have to be. We are exposed to many others who themselves are in the same shoes, not to mention those vultures who are always looking for a vulnerable victim. All of us are looking at work for the things we miss at home. Others are complimenting our wives, they are the ones having lunch with them, and they are the ones spending more time with them. And we are doing the same with other women and this is leading to unwanted situations, where the spouse has become secondary, children have become a burden, a path for divorce, as if it is the fault of the spouses. It is the fault of the changing society; life as we knew it has changed. We need to fix this to fix the problem of divorce in this coun-

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try. After all, even if they are divorced and marry the next person, a few months later they will be in the same situation they were in with the prior spouse. One compliment, one lunch will never replace a loving and caring spouse. It is best to communicate your problems, discuss your schedules, try to find time to spend together, if not at night then in the morning. A neighboring lady a long time ago had a philosophy that I didn't understand then because I was a little child; she used to say, "It is better to satisfy your husband before he goes to work in the morning, that way he is not hungry at work, and by the time he is hungry he will be back home to eat." I think it says a lot, especially since it does not take that long anyway.

It has become so unfortunate today to see young girls sell themselves so cheap that accidents are almost certain to happen. The reason for this is they seek the attention they do not get at home from a father who is probably missing, and a mother who is working several jobs to support the family. Or, both parents are consumed by work and are so tired by the time they are home, that they have no time for the children. These girls find the attention they need from the guys who are pretty much after only one thing at that age. They provide the girls with the attention they so desperately seek, provide them with the drugs that everyone keeps talking about, and the sexual experience other classmates keep bragging about. For this, we end up with children impregnated, failing at school, and without any decent future for them and their children.

One of the two major problems other than the ones mentioned above is the dollar (money). The other is job security.

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The root of the problem has more to do with money. What used to be a luxury has become a necessity nowadays. For this, the cost of living has increased dramatically. One person's income from one job is not enough anymore. It used to be that an employee had job security. Now there is no job stability. In the past, a person would work for a company for twenty years, put a 20 percent down payment on a house nearby, and at the end of his employment he would burn the mortgage, have secured a nice pension plan, and live a decent life. Now, we have to change jobs every few years because either the company goes under, jobs are exported to other countries, or new technology renders our knowledge or jobs useless. Today, we have to change jobs and relocate from our homes. We have to adjust to all these changes. The days of screwing the same screw in a car at a manufacturing plant for twenty years and securing a future is no longer available. Things are changing very quickly. We have to keep up with the advancement. We have to keep jobs here. We have to manage our time to make more of it available for our children, so we do not lose them.

What can we do? Believe it or not, this may be the easiest one to solve. First and foremost, family members need to sit down and discuss the situation. As mentioned before, communication is key. Each individual should feel very free and be honest in expressing their feelings, frustrations, needs and wants without worrying what the other may use or abuse later on. Set up a schedule to follow. Make sure that the family has a day in the week to spend together, share their experiences, problems, and happiness. Do not just bring up problems or complaints, appreciate each other's contributions to the family, and acknowledge their achievements and successes. Be positive and supportive. Conquer the negatives. The changes in work and school

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schedules suggested in the education section of the book allows for more time together. No matter how much work you bring home, make time for family. Thirty minutes to one hour a day goes a long way. You need a break anyway. Even while you are at work you are allowed that much time for a break. Do not look for a reason to argue, look for a reason to compromise. Marriage is serious business, and not every day is a wedding day. It comes with responsibilities, commitment, sacrifice, compromise, understanding, sharing, and caring, along with happiness and pride. It is like a basketball, football, or soccer team: All parties have to be team players, otherwise the team loses, the marriage collapses. Do not believe other people; most of them will be happier if they ruin your family, not help it. It takes two to tango. Work together not against each other, and remember that you chose your spouse because you knew he or she was the right one for you, unless you married under duress or in a hurry due to an unwanted situation.

There is nothing that compares to giving life to someone. However, none of us were given a choice in the matter. Neither a sperm nor an egg has the brain to make that choice. This means the parents, by their actions, create this life. We are not doing that new life a favor if we are not ready to provide for it. Becoming a parent is not just the sex act and the two minutes of pleasure we get from it. It is coupled with responsibilities. We have to make sure we will provide this new life food, shelter, education, wisdom, guidance, friendship, understanding, mentoring, and more. It is a twenty-five year commitment if we want to do it right. It requires many sacrifices: sleepless nights, constant attention, sex deprivation, driving them to school and back, and to friends for any occasion they may have. Parents also encounter the challenges that today's schools face, friends,

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gangs, drugs, and relationships. If we are not ready to handle and afford all these, we probably should not consider having them. We should not bring them to this world and leave them hungry, angry, depressed, and stressed.

Democracy

What a noble idea if only we knew how to use it and benefit from it. We all love what it stands for and we want the whole world to adopt this type of government. There is no argument that if we make it work it is possibly the best way by which the people are represented. But we don't.

Bureaucracy and partisanship along with special interests have made it very difficult for the government to function efficiently. The two-party system has created a bitter attitude towards one another, pushing paper has replaced taking action, and special interest groups have bought their way into the system and decision-making.

One tiny little bill, through the time it is written, voted on and passed, grows into a political nightmare with strings attached to find itself vetoed in most cases and approved in others. It is understandable to study a bill from all angles and come up with the right one, but fighting over minor issues, unrelated attachments, letting valuable time slip away until a

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bill is passed takes away from the intended results. In some cases the issue the bill was supposed to be dealing with, has either solved itself, disappeared, or the delay has caused more damage than if the bill never came about.

Democracy: We pride ourselves for having a democratically elected government and rightfully so. It has given us an opportunity to be heard and to choose the person who will lead us, represent us, defend us, and look after our interests. It has also, unfortunately, created opportunities for those elected officials to pursue some personal agendas, submit to special interest groups, become consumed by partisan politics hungry for more power, and the shrewd among them have set themselves to become a permanent fixture in our governing body.

Some elected officials have been holding their seats for multiple terms. This is due to one or more of many factors: One, their good treatment of their constituents. Two, they come from big, rich, and powerful families who have the money to spend to be elected. Third, there are some who hold their seats because they are so powerful and intimidating that no one has been able to have either the guts or the resources to run against them.

The bottom line is that many in our democratic system have been there for years and decades. They practically are the equivalent of princes or kings —royalty of their regions. However, we do not call them autocracies, monarchies, or kingdoms. Here, we call them dynasties.

The only difference between these people and the others is that they are elected. We have to accept however, that a country governed by a good king, or an assigned ruler, is as

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good as a country governed by a democratically elected official. The good is good, and the bad is bad no matter how they came to power.

There are many examples of the good and the bad. We will not name names, but in the most recent history, there have been autocrats who have used and abused their people, solely benefitting from the wealth of their countries without sharing them with the people they govern. Others, and we are seeing more of them every day now, have a different view of governing. They are planning for the future, acknowledging that their resources are not limitless; they are investing in the future, offering free education and hospitalization. They are eliminating the tax burden on their citizens, reinforcing the infrastructure, inviting foreigners to invest in their countries, offering incentives to attract business and tourism, and employing thousands of foreigners to build the country from bottom up.

We used to make fun of many of these people by portraying them as dirty people in the desert, on a camel. Now that they have changed and the negative propaganda machine has lost its influence, they have been treated as business partners, as saviors of our economy, and with respect.

This proves that not all autocracy is the same; democracy is not the only way to achieve comfort for the people. What is important is who the ruler at the time is; whether it is an elected official or an heir to royalty. So this idea of pushing democracy by any means or at any cost does not make too much sense. It would be nice if the whole world was democratic, but we have to be realists in this life or we get nowhere.

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The key for our government to be successful is encouraging those rulers who are doing their countries well, and trying to educate those who are not. We have unlimited resources to explain, communicate, and encourage those leaders to become the leaders we expect them to be. Not by threatening them, or denying negotiations, but by directly communicating with them.

For democracy to work, a country should be readied, educated, and trained. Just asking for democracy and holding elections does not succeed. Perfect examples of that is former Yugoslavia. Once their famous leader was gone, the country was divided into many countries. People died and are still dying. They do not even know how to hold elections; factions are fighting against each other for power and control, and life has become a nightmare for many. Another example is the former Soviet Union. Once the union was dismantled there was chaos for all the union members. Just look at what is happening in Armenia, Chechnya, etc. These countries were not prepared for independence, they had no idea how regular democratic elections work, and many found this an opportunity to exert power and abuse the system. The people lost, the very few became very rich and are controlling their territories and governing them with another iron hand. In Iraq, we spent American lives, blood, and money to establish democracy and we all know what is happening there. With all the American might, know-how, supervision and almost seven years of trying, we are still struggling to bring peace and practice democracy in the country. Their resources are not utilized to their full potential, their infrastructure is destroyed, and the country has been pushed back at least fifty years. On the other hand, Russia and China, countries that are still run as autocracies but are adopting the new capitalist ways of

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conducting their affairs, are doing much better and are prospering. Russia produced much more millionaires than any other country, even the United States. China has become a money printing machine, and the entire country is experiencing 10 to 15 percent GDP growth every year. Many millionaires are created; all of us are flocking to them for our supplies.

This does not mean democracy is something we should not seek. It is the greatest thing a country can experience. But it is not something that can be achieved in a day, a year, or a decade. Hundreds, and (in some cases) thousands of years of a certain way of living cannot be changed overnight. It takes time, patience, planning, and understanding. It takes diplomacy, not armed forces; education, not guns; cooperation, not dictation; guidance, not occupation.

We have a very conflicting stance in the world. On one hand, we are pushing for democracy in some countries; on another, we are holding hands with a king, declaring a communist country as the most favored nation. This only proves the point that keeping the governments the likes of China and Saudi Arabia in power has been beneficial for our country. It proves that we can tolerate autocracy and monarchy and live happily. Instead of sending two different messages to the world and confusing both them and us, we have to find a common ground beneficial to all without prejudice and forcing something that is none of our business down the throats of the world.

The opening of the Declaration of Independence written by Thomas Jefferson in 1776, states as follows:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are

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created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.

We have to honor what we truly believe, not translate it in as many ways as it suits us.

Elections

Democracy of course is the gateway for people to have the ability to elect their leaders. But elections have also become problematic in our country. A presidential election today costs the taxpayer almost a billion dollars. The two-party system has limited people's ability to choose from a very few candidates. The media is preoccupied with the election process for over a year as if there is nothing else happening in the world. It is true they do mention some events such as an earthquake, or a tornado here and there. But the news is dominated by the elections and there is so much repetition of the same thing over and over again that it becomes boring, annoying, and in some instances repulsive.

Elections for congressional candidates, senators, governors, even city council members are a long process with limited candidates offered through the two parties. Being elected as an independent is close to impossible.

If elections were treated a little differently we probably

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would have a better government. After all, we elect these officials to serve, protect, manage the economy, and ultimately make the country a better place for its people. Simply put, the government is a large corporation. The president is the CEO. The cabinet members are the departmental managers, governors are regional managers, and mayors are store managers. The people are the stockholders.

Any candidate for any position must qualify for the job for which they are applying. With the age of technology this election process can be handled much more efficiency with much better results and less cost.

The candidate should prepare a detailed resume, a vision for the country if running for president, the state if running for governor, the city if running for mayor. He or she should prepare a plan of action, an estimated cost and a time frame, and a list of their key people that will be on their side to make it possible. And the candidate should post it on the Internet, on the major news media Web sites, on colleges and high school campuses. It can also be linked to major companies' Web sites for easy access to the people. The people then will have a period of time to make their voices heard through a voting system relying on an 800 number or the Internet. Many reality shows are capable of doing it successfully; the government should be able to as well. The top three will be announced the candidates. These candidates then will have to debate and the debate will be broadcast through the media on certain dates. Then, at election time, the people would have made up their minds as to who is the best person for the job.

The media will play an important role. Certainly they will

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verify each candidate's claim on their resumes and the resumes of their selected assistants past, present, and future, to expose and analyze them.

The media should cooperate. Candidates should not be charged for the debate or advertising. They can present the candidates' views with time devoted to each candidate according to the percentage of votes received during the process. That will eliminate the need for the public to donate millions of dollars for the election process.

Advertising for electing our leaders should not cost the public. Here is why. No media has charged or charges terrorists or bin Laden for advertising their acts and manifestos, and yet they keep presenting them to the public day after day for free. Those people who killed thousands of Americans, destroyed buildings, and caused us to go to a war that has cost almost a trillion dollars. Why should they charge the people who we will have as our leaders?

This will also eliminate that stupid negative campaigning that keeps popping up. Every candidate will be chosen by his or her merits.

The Economy

The economy of a country is its lifeline. A sound economy makes a sound country. The main reason for many wars, rebellions, riots, and uprisings in history has been due to economics. Countries either have gone to wars because their economic conditions did not support their day to day needs, or because they wanted to expand their fortunes. There are other reasons of course, such as ideological, reli-

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gious, or simply for ego.

Autocratic and monarchy-type governments manage their economies with total control. Usually they do not share the resources of the country with its civilians. They control import, export, products, income, and expenses of the country. Their people do not have much of a choice. People do not have the freedom to conduct their businesses as they please; most manufacturing is owned and operated by the government.

In a democratic country people have more freedom, more choices, more liberal laws and regulation, a more competitive atmosphere, more opportunities to test their potentials and capabilities. At least that is what we want to believe.

There was a time when the United States was a democratic, capitalistic country. However, that has been changing slowly and very painfully. And the people seem to have no control over matters.

How many of us are happy with the economy? Whatever happened to job stability and the American Dream? The economy is in recession, the jobs have moved to other countries, and our dreams have remained just dreams, or they have shattered.

We are exporting our talents, building our factories on foreign land, and borrowing against our main assets, our homes. We are borrowing from the same people we are handing our jobs to on a silver platter.

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Talent: There are many problems here.

First, our education system is so out of touch with the times that we really do not have a plan. We do not have systems set up in the schools to expose, explore, or encourage talents anymore. We have no studies to find out where the demand is and promote those jobs in school. Many of our children graduate high school and they still do not know what they will major in. College counselors most of the time consist of other students who themselves do not know what they are majoring in. Conducting a one-day job fair at high schools once a year is hardly enough for anyone, no matter how smart, to form an idea about a job or a profession. We have to encourage government, corporations, small businesses, hospitals, etc., to provide videotapes, seminars, and on-site trips, to give these students a taste of what's out there. For example, medical doctors and hospitals know there is a huge shortage in nurses and lab technicians, just to name a few. But no student knows details about these jobs. Most students think being a nurse means they have to change patients' diapers. They have no clue as to the types of nursing positions there are, or they know nothing about what a lab technician does. Nor do they know how rewarding they are to the medical profession. So everyone is aspiring to become a doctor, a lawyer, or an engineer, and if that fails they are choosing to major in business, philosophy, psychology, literature, etc.

The job distribution in this country is pathetic. We need to balance what is needed with what is available. We have many doing the same thing and many missing great opportunities, simply because we have not exposed them, explained to them the job descriptions and requirements, and what the payoff may be.

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Second, even if we find some real talent graduating in the right subject, our companies are so far behind in rewarding them properly. With the high competition for talents outside the U.S., many are leaving the country to find their fortune in other countries.

So we are exporting our good talent; we are short in many other areas, and crowded in most areas. Yet, we are open to importing people from other countries. Unfortunately, the majority of the people we are importing are more liabilities than assets, like the family we spoke about in the immigration portion of this book (where we pay for the SSI, welfare, Medicare, Medicaid, disability, food stamps and Section 8 assistance). We are importing dependents and exporting our talents.

Jobs: Where have all the jobs gone? Everyone knows the answer to this one, yet no one is doing anything about it. Corporations are profiting from cheap labor outside the United States, so it does not pay for them to seek a solution for it.

Our elected officials are busy securing another election, securing their seats, and jawboning us, telling us what we want to hear, but doing pretty much nothing—especially once they are elected.

The citizens have no idea what to do. There are no organizations looking after them. No one is asking the government or the corporations for accountability. The people are behaving like sheep, bowing their heads to be stripped of their rights, one hair at a time.

The once almighty country now depends on others for

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goods and services. What is unfortunate is that we are letting it happen.

We, the people, have to demand our corporations to build better-quality goods, our government to negotiate fairly with trading partners and carefully weighing all the consequences of such agreements. One case in point: China.

Unemployment insurance is a noble idea; but it needs improvement. Anyone who cannot find a job in two to three months, is either not looking in the right places, or committing fraud due to an agreement with the employer where they collect unemployment benefits while working for the same employer for less pay under the table, until those benefits end. Or, the type of job the unemployed was laid off from and is seeking again is no longer needed. Unemployment insurance would be more beneficial if instead of covering six months of insurance, it collected data on jobs that are in demand, and paid for training the unemployed for those high-demand jobs. It will be more helpful to train for jobs that there will be a demand for in twelve months rather than paying for jobs that have no demand. The balancing act should be performed for the sake of all. Job seekers today have to learn to be flexible, must be ready to learn new things, and explore other opportunities.

Another problem we have in this country is a real sense of understanding a situation and a collective effort to solve a problem. A perfect example would be the housing crisis of 2008.

There are many opinions on the housing crisis as to what happened, who is guilty, who should pay for it, and what should be done about it.

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Everyone seems to have a good argument and that's because almost everyone is to blame. Wall Street, investors, bankers, lenders, brokers, buyers, borrowers, government, the Federal Reserve, the U.S. Treasury and some in the media.

The government failed to do its job of protecting and serving. Wall Street, investors, bankers, lenders, and brokers saw the potential for money and became greedy. Buyers and borrowers followed their human instinct and wanted to have what their friends, families, and neighbors were having. The sellers wanted more, the buyers paid more, investors made more, and the bystanders, who did not need to buy or sell, lost more.

But there are instances and situations where blame is not how you play the game. There are certain steps to be followed, certain actions to be taken, for a situation not to turn into a disaster. A collective effort is needed. Here is an example:

Let us suppose your neighbor's house was set on fire by an arsonist. Even though we have a general idea who the arsonist may be, and the neighbor may have a few gallons of gasoline laying around carelessly, and the fire department (the government in this case) has taken a prolonged break and is having a picnic in the park, and the fire hydrant in the area has less pressure than needed—what would be the right thing to do? Go after the arsonist? Yelling at the neighbor for the gasoline? Going and carrying the firefighters on our shoulders and bringing them to work? Or suing the city for the lack of water in the hydrant? None of the above!

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One would think the right thing to do would be give the neighbor a hand and help put out the fire, so it does not spread to your house too and burn your house with it. Then go after the arsonist, the fire department, and the city for their role in the crisis.

No matter who caused the housing crisis, your neighbor going into foreclosure on their home is like the fire at your neighbor's house. If we do not stop it, it will engulf your house too, because your house will keep losing its value in the tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars. That's because the value of a house is determined by the value of houses sold in the neighborhood, and if the house next to you loses its value because of the foreclosure, your house value will be based on the value of that house. So by helping the foreclosed with a few dollars, you will help the value of your house by thousands of dollars—a return on an investment that doesn't happen often. Let's help the neighborhood then go after whoever we find guilty and punish them to the extent of the law.

Do Not Hate the Rich; Become One

It is very disturbing to see or hear the majority of people express hate towards the rich in our country, a country which is proud of its capitalism. It is often the topic of conversation when people find out that some relative, neighbor, an old classmate, or an old friend has become well-to-do, drives a nicer car, is living in a nice home, and owns his business. But the conversation is more of an accusation and criticism than an appreciation of that person's achievement. This is mostly due to jealousy.

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Most everyone wants to become rich. Unfortunately what they lack is the knowledge of how to do it; the willingness to research; the sacrifices it will take; the planning they need to do; the initiative to venture; the support their family, friends, schools, and government should provide. Most of all they lack the positive attitude. They usually succumb to the negative surrounding them.

They find it easier to make excuses to justify how the rich became that way. They make up stories, most of the time untrue, composed of accusations that they must be involved in selling drugs, committing fraud, stealing from the poor, prostituting, etc.

Yes, some drug dealers, pimps, and dishonest people become rich for a limited time until they are caught, but the whole rich community cannot be made up of those types only. There are the business owners who, besides putting up the capital, on average work a minimum of sixty- to eighty-hour weeks, worrying not only about the business expense and the family, but also about how to provide for their employees. Then there are the professionals, who have made many sacrifices, including countless sleepless nights studying to secure a degree to attain a respectable, well-paying position in a large company. There also are the creatively talented: writers, musicians, artists, etc., who will do everything they can to explore, improve, and market their talents with great humility under challenging conditions. These rich people have nothing to worry about breaking the law; their riches will continue as long as they are able to perform their duties, and with careful planning, will provide them with a very comfortable retirement.

Everyone can become rich. Stop talking and take some ac-

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tion! We are very blessed in this country to have so many public libraries that are free. There are many books we can read to learn the how to do anything, what to do, and what we need. We have to want to become rich and be prepared to do what it takes, instead of choosing the easy thing to do.

The poor are always busy talking about the rich and criticizing them, while the rich are busy expanding their riches.

Taxation

As mentioned before, we are a nation of complications. We tend to complicate almost everything. Our tax code is no exception, indeed it is the most complicated matter our government has concocted. It is hard to understand, harder to calculate, and confusing at best. Both average bread-earners and sophisticated corporations have difficulty understanding our tax system. The IRS is not any better in understanding and implementing the tax code of each taxpayer's filings either. We do not need the IRS, nor do we need the fear of messing up on our tax returns because either we or the IRS didn't understand a certain code. Living in fear of being audited or getting caught for an intentional or an unintentional mistake is not healthy. It is not healthy for the public to view the government as this vulture that is there either to get their money or punish them.

If we simplify our tax code we will not even need the IRS. The Treasury will be more than sufficient. To do this we need to identify the responsibilities of both the federal and state governments.

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The federal government should have the following responsibilities:

National Security: This should cover defense, intelligence, and the National Guard.

Defense: Every country needs a military to defend itself, but they do not need the military to police the world, or referee a civil war in a foreign country. We have to budget our military accordingly, and not commit our troops for years outside their home country. If we are found in the position that other countries need our military services, they should pay for it.

Intelligence: This is as important to a country as the blood in our veins. We need to train and equip our intelligence personnel with the most advanced technology.

The National Guard: Most of what FEMA and Homeland Security do can be handled and managed much better and with greater discipline by the National Guard, which, by the way, will be composed of a combination of professionally trained personnel and our high school graduates under the program mentioned in the education portion of this book. This will also save on the expense of running it.

Foreign policy: The main job of foreign policy should be establishing relationships with as many countries as possible, earning their respect, establishing rapport, encouraging investments, and enabling intelligence in an amiable atmosphere, without interfering in their internal governments.

U.S. Treasury: Protect the dollar, collect taxes, and disburse funds.

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Federal Reserve: Regulate banks and investment firms, monitor inflation and the economy.

FDA: Regulate the quality and effectiveness of food and drugs in our market.

Consumer products watchdog: Oversee the quality of goods sold to the American consumer.

Justice Department: Oversee and protect the Constitution of the U.S. Although the U.S. Constitution is the best ever written, we need to update many of the amendments to conform to the times.

Social Security: This is the biggest problem our next generation will face. The current management of it is inadequate and non-productive, and it has become a huge burden. It has become a collection firm. What we need to do with Social Security is form a committee made up of very capable investors, CEOs of companies such as Goldman Sachs, JP Morgan and so forth, to manage and invest those funds in sound investments under the supervision of the SEC and the Federal Reserve. The interest currently collected on those funds does not add up. If we are to encourage people to invest in IRAs, 401Ks and the like, we should follow the same idea with the help of those great people who have the experience and have been successful in managing money, because the government sure hasn't. We should recruit these committee members by offering them as much as a successful CEO is paid.

Departments to be eliminated: Homeland Security, FEMA, IRS, Education, Labor, Medicare, Medicaid, and Veterans Affairs.

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Homeland Security and FEMA, two departments have proven to be nothing but disasters, are an additional cost to the taxpayer that we can do without. They are mismanaged, unorganized, infected by bureaucracy, and basically good for nothing. The National Guard can do a more effective job in a more organized and disciplined way without spending more money or wasting more time.

The IRS must go. No need for this sophisticated, complicated, unnecessary, and voluminous tax system we all hate where everyone is confused and cannot do right no matter what degree they have. There are too many contradictory codes; it is very discriminatory, exhausting, threatening, and a fear-planting mechanism. Once the tax code is simplified, the job can be handled by simply depositing taxes collected in the U.S. Treasury.

Education: There is absolutely no need for the Department of Education. States can do the job and can do it better.

Labor: See above. The Federal Reserve should supervise the economy and Labor depends on the economy.

Medicare: What a waste of taxpayer money. This bureaucracy, created during a desperate time, is saddled with unnecessary management costs and fraud. But politicians are afraid to undo it. The new health care proposal in this book will totally eliminate the need for Medicare.

State government: States should have a full-blown government with all the necessary departments: insurance, real estate, justice, infrastructure, transportation, labor, etc.

County and city governments: These should encompass the

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following: building and safety, police, fire, water and power, trash, business licensing, records, and other obvious services. All of this should be paid for by property taxes, sales taxes, and licensing and permit fees.

Once we have identified and agreed upon which departments are necessary to keep on the federal and state level, where we have made certain that there are no duplicate services, we then can calculate what funds are needed for the federal government, and what funds are needed per state.

We calculate how much income the entire country has, and divide the expense over the income. The percentage arrived at will be our federal tax percentage charged; the same for state expenses and for each state to arrive at its subsequent ratio.

This will make for a flat income tax. Employers, business owners, and corporations deduct these taxes and deposit them directly into the accounts provided by the government.

All other taxes such as capital gains, inheritance, etc., should be gone—eliminated along with the allowed deductions for depreciation.

Businesses and companies stop providing employees any and all health care benefits. Instead, employers across the board give employees an 8 percent raise. This will allow the sales tax increase proposal I have argued for in the health care portion of this book, where everyone is covered and Medicare is rendered useless.

And as for Social Security, it is to continue to be paid; em-

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ployee and employer will pay their due share plus 1 percent additional each to bring Social Security to a balance. We must also remove caps on contributions.

This will encourage corporations, companies, and small businesses to invest and create jobs; it will provide the average employee more money in their pockets and a sense of pride. It will invite investors from all over the world.

Energy

We are the world's largest consumer of energy! We have more cars per household than any other country, we occupy more square footage per family than anywhere else in the world, we have more gadgets than any other nation and it all needs energy—whether it is oil, gas, or electricity. Yet our energy policy in this country literally stinks. Here is why:

1. Our foreign policy is based upon many poor judgments when it comes to dealing with the main oil-producing countries. We have alienated most Arab countries because of our bias and double standard. We are biased in the Arab-Israeli situation (we always side with Israel), placing preconditions even to negotiations; we try to ignore the history. Our mediation has always been for the benefit of the Israelis without regard to the Arab needs, wants, or the truth. We have always portrayed the Arabs as these dictators, terrorists, extremists. And to put the icing on the cake, we are always preaching, pushing,

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and sometimes forcing ourselves in the name of democracy, when we know they are monarchies. We are not supposed to meddle in other governments' affairs and deal with the situation with favoritism. If we are to mediate, we have to be a fair referee.

2. In Venezuela, we have irritated the people and the leadership so much that they call our president the devil. We keep forgetting that the whole world wants to be American if they can. But also we keep forgetting that even if a leader is looked upon as the devil, he is still the leader and he represents the entire country. No matter who the leader is insulting he is insulting the country. We have to earn the people's hearts by our good nature, propaganda, open communication, and by working with the country. If we can work with the most autocratic country such as China, and make them taste capitalism (causing a change in their economy by giving them a taste of the good life), we can handle Chavez and Venezuela. We can sit down and come to terms with its leader. After all, they want power and money and we have a lot to offer in that department. We can make him understand if he learns how to manage his country's resources and make his people happy and fed, he has a greater chance of having more of the money and power that all leaders live for.

3. In Russia, it's the same situation.

We cannot afford to make enemies with countries whose resources we need. We can negotiate and offer both sides of the dispute a good outcome beneficial to all parties with-

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out bias just by being fair, which we keep preaching anyway.

Another reason we have failed in the energy situation is that we want everyone else to dig, produce, and refine the oil in their countries, or build nuclear plants to generate energy. We do not want them built in our own backyards. Who is fooling who in this matter? If they build a nuclear plant in Canada or Mexico, any accident will have the same effect on us as if it were built in the U.S. The 1986 Chernobyl disaster is a good example in two ways. First, it had a design flaw, and was run by inadequately trained personnel without proper regard for safety (<http://www.world-nuclear.org/info/chernobyl/inf07.htm>). Second, although it was located in the Ukraine, the disaster affected most of Europe. I would think that we are the most advanced in technology and it would be safer and more productive for us to build these power plants and extend our technology to everyone in the world, which would result in a cleaner, greener environment. Isn't it more dangerous for someone to learn by trial and error in a lab, whether chemical, biological, or nuclear, and where an accident is more likely to happen, than learn from a proven safe method of producing something? What if an accident happens in Iran, North Korea, Syria, or anywhere in the world where they are trying to advance in nuclear technology? Wouldn't a nuclear accident in Iran affect Iraq, Jordan, Israel, Pakistan? Or in Syria affect Turkey, Lebanon, Greece, Italy and more? Doesn't a forbidden fruit taste better? Doesn't a forbidden act challenge humans to try harder to commit it? Aren't we pushing these countries to try harder, be more creative, more rebellious in obtaining this technology? Wouldn't we have more control if we were the ones who were supervising it, training them, and avoiding mishaps? Isn't it more dangerous to

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blow up a suspect plant with nuclear materials present to that country and countries surrounding it? Isn't it true you can attract more bees with honey than vinegar?

We have more oil, more natural gas, more sun, and more wind than any other country, yet we are behind in advancing in this area and are very dependent on other countries for our own energy needs.

Necessity is the mother of invention, and a good incentive is the mother of creativity. The oil companies are paying billions of dollars in taxes every year, yet those dollars are not used to research, develop, and produce more energy. We and the world need now and will continue to need more energy, hence the necessity. Now we need to find incentives. A good incentive would draw many of the smart people in this world like a magnet to come up with a solution: an alternative, maximum utilization, a better engine, a better way to save.

Proposal:

1. Establish a trust fund—\$5 billion would be ideal, funded by a big portion of taxes paid by the oil companies—to be attractive enough to draw the attention of individuals and companies from around the world. The fund will compensate for inventing, creating, designing, exploring, extracting any type of an engine, material, commodity, that produces more energy, saving more energy that may be used for generations to come. The goal would be to make a breakthrough within two years of the establishment of the trust fund.

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However, the fund should be managed by an independent and objective committee created to oversee the proposals. To avoid any overload of senseless proposals, there should be an established fee for submitting a proposal for review, which is to be forfeited if the proposal is a non-starter, has no basis, no merit, or is impractical.

2. Start building nuclear plants with absolute safety in mind.
3. Start extracting oil and natural gas from our resources.
4. Offer a huge reward for any legitimate solution for cleaner coal processing.
5. Get rid of the mania for corn-based ethanol.

My Plea

America, the greatest country on earth, the symbol of freedom, the provider of hope to the world, the preacher of equality, and the land of opportunity has caught a cold. We need to join hands and take action to cure it before it becomes a deadly pneumonia. Let us avert an unwanted disaster. Let us prove history wrong and show the world we are different and that we won't fall.

If you are a leader, I beg of you. If you are a follower, I order you. If you are a lover, do it for the love of your country. If you are a hater, do it because you hate where we are heading. If you are rich, do it so you can stay rich. If you are poor, do it so you become rich. If you are an elder, do it

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for the next generation. If you are young, do it for your future. If you are a snob, do it for your pride. If you are humble, do it to serve your country. If you are an employer, do it to keep your business. If you are an employee, do it to keep your job. If you are a teacher, do it to earn respect. If you are a student, learn how to be ready for life. If you are a parent, do it to guide your children in the right path. If you are a child, cry your eyes out until you are heard. Just do it! Do it to save our wonderful country from becoming *the next falling empire*.

Coming soon: The End Result:

The book will tackle many of the social issues our nation faces. It will analyze the problems, offer guidance and motivate our people to take action and make our society a little better.

Among the subjects it will discuss are: relationships, friendships, social life, marriage, parenthood, Finances and many more.

Here are a couple sample paragraphs:

How we begin something dictates what the end result will be. All of us wake up in the morning and pursue something; a job, a career, education, a dream, a vision, or sleep again. No matter what it is; we take the first step to achieve what we think will be the best result. None of us think that what we are doing or how we are proceeding may be the wrong thing or the wrong way, otherwise we wouldn't continue the same path. Unfortunately, there are not too many people around us to point our mistakes, guide us or even direct

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us. And most often if we are lucky enough to find that one person, who is kind enough, and caring enough to help us, we wonder “what’s in it for him”, “what are his motives”, or simply, we take him for granted and abuse the heck out of him and his good heart.

This book will try to give you the right first-step in many of life’s journeys, dreams, and successes. For those who do not have a mentor, a guide, a caring person to help, this will serve as that person, and since it’s a book, there is “nothing in it, for it”, and it can’t be taken for granted. To those nice persons who do mentor and help, thank you.

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