
Renan and the American doctrine.



The French People have given two substantial gifts to the American People: The well known statue of Liberty in 1886 and the less known Renan Doctrine in 1888.

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By Jean H Charles

I have been fascinated by Ernest Renan and his doctrine of nation building. I suspect the United States, the best proponent of that concept does not know , it holds the key to salvation for this world by spreading and preaching its own journey to the philosophy of **shared vision of the future.**

I would like to share with the American public; some critical conceptual thoughts that, I believe, would help the United States rekindle an aura of good will all over the world.

It is clear to me that the two main forces in the universe that motivate people into action are **philosophy and religion.** We have seen in the past how the philosophical doctrine of Karl Marx had created havoc all over the world with a skewed conceptual framework of human interaction and motivation. We have seen also how Osama Bin Laden has perverted some minds in the Muslim religion to poison the brain of young men who did

not hesitate to kill some three thousand people in New York City with the false promise of a paradise full of virgin girls.

On the other side of the paradigm the Christian, the Jewish, the Buddhist and indeed the true Muslim doctrines with their values of compassion, humility and generosity motivate people to care for the unfortunate and give solace to the afflicted. I have made this introduction to arrive at the notion that the United States in its quest to help this world must clarify and define its own philosophical doctrine in simple and clear terms that can be understood by everybody.

The French people have given to the United States two substantial gifts. One of them is the well known Lady Liberty that sits in New York City's harbor as a beacon of freedom and hope for people coming from all over the world and the other, less known, is the **concept of nation as defined by the French historian Ernest Renan**. In looking at the history of the United States, it is clear that these United States hold the key to the best definition of the **concept of nation** as defined by Renan.

At a seminal conference in 1888 he said to create a nation you must meet three critical criteria

- 1- Your boundaries must be well defined and not in dispute
- 2- The people of that country must have a common knowledge of the past
- 3- And they must agree to have a shared vision of the future.

The United States with its boundaries from sea to shining sea have no territorial disputes with another country. Most Americans have a clear understanding of and appreciation for the Founding fathers such as George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. The United States, however, from its creation in 1776, it did not include the Black population in its vision of a nation. Abraham Lincoln went to war against the South to impose the notion in 1864 that Black men and Black women should be full fledged American citizens. Some 400,000 white men were sacrificed to arrive to the Black Emancipation. Yet we have to wait another century, until 1964 under the presidency of Lyndon Johnson with the sparks of Rosa Park and the advocacy and leadership of Martin Luther King Jr., to see the enforcement of the Civil Rights Law for the Black population.

The United States during the last forty years (1964-2004) have accomplished more than any other nations of the world (including the nations with a predominance of a black population) in practicing the concept of a shared vision of the future for and amongst all. Through laws, affirmative action and culture change, it has been possible for the young black male or female in the Union to aspire to become a Colin Powell or a Condoleezza Rice. The program of "no child left behind, church-based initiatives, and the stakeholders citizens have been conceived with the idea of expanding the concept of a shared vision for all.

So what is my point? I would suggest that some time in the near future, the President of the United States and / or the presidential candidates make a presentation Urbi and Orbi (from Washington to the World) explaining to the Universe that the United States, albeit a work in progress is “a beacon for those who hope and a compassionate home for the vulnerable, a place where every single citizen (black or new citizen from Afghanistan or Haiti) has the means to realize his dreams and his aspirations” to wit the Russian immigrant, former taxi driver who recently bought the most expansive home in New York City..

In comparison to other western countries such as France, Great Britain, Germany, Italy or Spain, we find that the welcome mat in the United States holds more promises once you get your citizenship. Access to education, good job opportunities, decent housing, and health care are offered to all, irrespective of the country of origin.

America is the country to emulate because we went into the painful and the laboring **process of creating a nation** not only in defeating the British but also in dismantling the racist concept of slavery of the South and in abolishing the Jim Crow policies and the racist attitudes of the past century. We are in Iraq to create a nation where the Shiites, the Sunnis and the Kurds can see themselves as legitimate members of the future of their country. We are in Afghanistan to help the Afghans to stop the concept of no allegiance to their own nation.

We want to urge all countries of the world to adopt and incorporate the principles of Ernest Renan that we, in the United States, have incorporated in our psyche and our ethos. We have been creating a more perfect union not through demagoguery or rhetoric but through a national budget that is sensitive to the plight of the minority and the needs of the majority.

Our message to the people of the World and to the governments is: America is not the eagle that seeks to conquer new lands. America is the living model for peace, prosperity and democracy because every year our national budget tries to create a more balanced shared vision of the future for all.

To the people of Europe, in particular France, Great Britain, Germany and Italy the recent riots in France of young Muslim men indicate the malaise of the non assimilation of the new immigrants, the door to education must be wide open for all in order to create a peaceful nation..

To the people of Latin America in general, Mexico, Peru and Bolivia in particular, to bring peace, prosperity and democracy, you must create a space for the indigenous Indian population in your national budget.

To the People of the Caribbean Islands in general, the country of Haiti in particular you must create an hospitable environment for the peasant population left behind for the past two hundred years, You must rise up to the challenge set by your forefathers: extend a

share of the wealth of the country to those brought directly from Africa with no issues and no lineage from France.

To the People of Africa in general, those from Zimbabwe, Congo, and Ivory Coast in particular the culture of tribalism within the same country must come to an end. All the children of a country must share and enjoy the abundant fruits and resources of that country, irrespective of the tribe they belong to.

To the people and governments of Asia, credit and honor should be given to the government of China and India for taking steps to extend the concept of a shared vision of the future to the country side. Indeed that policy has allowed some 800 million Chinese peasants to rise from squalor to middle class status.

This is the gift of America to the world; the United States have taken the concept of Renan and have adopted and perfected the idea to create a more peaceful and prosperous nation. We are urging the nations of the world to create a **true shared vision of the future** to create a better world for their own people. This might be our only salvation

With the hope that this essay will contribute to a better world.

Truly Yours
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P.S As a post sriptum, I also thought that the issue of immigration can be explained for the satisfaction of all in the light of the Renan Doctrine.

- 1- It is the province of a sovereign government to control its borders. It must know who enters and who leaves the country. Renan says that to be a true nation you must have no dispute in your borders and you must be able to control your frontiers.
- 2- The citizens of that country and those who are seeking citizenship must have a clear vision of the past. The government must ask those who want to become American Citizens to learn English and American History as well as to accustom themselves with the mores and the ethos of the American spirit.
- 3- - Once they become citizens they must have with the support of all the citizens, all the rights and all the privileges enjoyed not by second class citizens by first class citizens, full rights to good schools, good health care, decent housing and the pursuit of happiness

These are the roadmap for a new immigration policy that can be acceptable to all because it is based on the same principle of the shared vision of the future as laid down by Ernest Renan.

Happy American Independence Day!