America: Diversity in The Land of Opportunity and Innovation by Roman Kikta

Contributed by Roman Kikta
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The United States of America is the most diverse and successful nation on earth, an engine of liberty and prosperity. It is a nation founded on the opportunities that freedom represents to all who sail to its shores. Since time immemorial, America has been THE "promised land" – a Mecca for people of various nationalities, races and religions, and economic origins to come and become settlers. From east to west, north to south, it is unparallel in its resources, natural beauty, people, and most of all, its alchemic way of turning dreams its reality.

It’s said that immigrants are the truest Americans, because it is by choice, not birth that they are here. A quick glance will reveal that today's most successful high tech companies have been founded and headed by "immigrants". Eminent examples to name a few: Intel's co-founder & former CEO Andrew Grove was born in Hungary; from Taiwan, came Yahoo's founder Jerry Yang. From Russia, Sergey Brin, who co-founded Google, while AMD's CEO, Hector Ruiz hails from Mexico. Locally, here in Dallas, we find Krish Prabu, former COO of Alcatel, Sanjiv S. Sidhu, the founder of i2 Technologies, and George Brody, founder and chief technology officer for GlobeRanger Corp. all hail from India, while the University of Texas at Dallas' VP of Research and Graduate Education, Dr. Da Hsuan Feng grew up in Singapore. These individuals all chose to become Americans, I believe for the underlying reason that the genius of the United States is principally an environment that fosters innovation and creativity resulting in unrestricted opportunities, which coupled with the concerted action of a progressive, open-minded self-governing people, presents a fertile breeding ground for entrepreneurship. Like the tens of millions before them and millions after, they chose to become part of our progressive society pursuing the "American" dream grounded in success and prosperity.

My own personal history is the same as the countless individuals attracted by its abundance. My parents immigrated to the U.S. in the 1960s, not necessarily in search of the "American Dream" but more for the freedoms that America offers. They, as many before them, as well as those after them, have sacrificed much to be here and raise a family that appreciates their adopted home. We have all flourished in America and do not defer whatever shortcomings we experienced or have on the advantages that later immigrants or the children of more established Americans had over us. The world and the human race migrate and change. I had learned early on from my father that success comes from hard work, and not from discontentment at other people's successes.

The attribution to diligent work ethics is what drives some immigrants to success, constantly striving to improve the quality of life for themselves and family. As a venture capitalist involved in the high-tech sector, I understand the need for technology companies to secure skilled, experienced workers. Many of these come from other parts of the world bringing with them their skills, unique points of view and culture.

The issue of outsourcing, off shoring, and H-1B visas for skilled workers is controversial. As an American, I support creating and preserving jobs, all which contribute to America's and the global economy. I do also care about "American Innovation". We cannot become complacent and outsource "American Innovation" and "American Ingenuity" to other countries. Instead of trying to figure out how to beat Asia or Europe, we need to try to "beat ourselves" and help other nations to succeed. The improvement of economies in other parts of the world results in an improved quality of life and creates other large sellers markets for America.

For the U.S. to maintain its edge in technology innovation and job creation a huge mental shift in the American psyche is required -- we must think globally! Second, we must improve our academic infrastructure, especially by promoting scientific and engineering programs, beginning at the elementary school level. We need to bolster both academic research and development with a clearly defined path to commercialization. Academic institutions are chartered to educate and conduct research but should also contribute to economic development. We need to get wireless communications and computers with high-speed Internet access or broadband into every household. Readers would be dismayed to learn that Japan, Korea, Singapore, Finland, all have household penetrations greater than the U.S. Furthermore, China has twice as many cell phone users as the U.S.!

We need to support free-trade-after all, this is a global economy. It’s interesting that some of Genesis Campus' Richardson based companies' initial customers where outside of the U.S. Both government and industry should provide for an improved organized health care system that reduces the costs for both employers, and employees. This is a major concern for start-up companies and employees. We also need to design an achievable plan for lessening U.S. dependence on foreign energy sources. America must lead the effort for a secure world, providing for a long and prosperous quality of living. In the short term, we should eliminate restrictions on an immigration system (such as the H-1B visa) that places limitations on the high tech industry (and other professions) bringing in the best and the brightest foreign talent. We should replace it with "conditional green cards" permitting the high tech industry a short-term relief to the current shortage problems facing U.S. high-tech industries (as well as health care) that rely on skilled workers. These tax paying workers would provide the high tech industry with the urgent hires they need, and would serve to protect U.S. workers more than the current H-1B visa approach that is failing miserably.

America is indeed a great land of opportunity and the immigrants of the new "mobile" economy are no different from the

immigrants of the industrial revolution or the 20th century. Like the popular bumper sticker I see driving around Dallas: "I wasn't born in Texas, but I got here as fast as I could", this applies to lots of us, and we are all seeking to be part of and contribute to the American dream and success story.