

This Land is Your Land, This Land is My Land

This land is your land; this land is my land,
From California to the New York Island,
From the redwood forest to the gulfstream waters,
This land was made for you and me.

So went the words of an outspoken poet named Woody Guthrie. This was one of the themes of young Americans in the 1960s demanding they had an important voice in America, her politics, and the direction she was going. I recently returned from a meeting in North Carolina with two of my friends whom I can also say, are real life American heroes. Former Lieutenant Clebe McClary and former Sergeant Tim Lee. Notice I didn't say former Marines. Once a Marine, always a Marine. McClary lost his eye, his arm and thirty per cent use of his left arm while defending a hill in Viet Nam. To date Clebe has had thirty-nine surgeries trying to keep him together. Lee lost both legs and nearly his life, after stepping on a land mine in Viet Nam. Tim took the place as point man for one of his subordinates. Even today, he has life and death struggles to maintain health directly or indirectly because of wounds received. These heroes, more than many of their peers who stayed at home have earned the right to say, "this land is my land". They also have a unique Christian worldview they express while proudly wearing the uniform of their country. Is there any red blooded American who would dare deny them of their right to do so?

I was shocked to see the June 23 headlines in The Nation section of USA Today. It read: "Panel chastises Air Force Academy". The article discloses that Lt. General Roger Brady headed a task force to investigate seven incidents where some born-again Christian staff and cadets may have exercised discrimination against non-Christians. The panel surmised that the staff and cadets "reflect a lack of awareness and ignorance, not overt discrimination". Brady went on to say, "he didn't think any religious slurs were cases of intolerance, but rather "insensitivity" by individuals who "were well-intended, but wrong." Going on with the article Patrick O'Driscoll said, "The Air Force inquiry began last month after complaints that evangelical Christians wield so much influence at the 4,300- cadet school that anti-Semitism and other forms of religious harassment had become pervasive. An attachment to the report said Brig. General Johnny Weida, the academy's commandant of cadets and a born-again Christian, was cleared of six complaints about his on-campus activity of religion. The Air Force inspector general is still examining another complaint-whether Weida established a "communicative code" with born-again cadets that may have been designed to help proselytize non-Christian cadets". Weida said he only intended "to offer encouragement to those that relied upon their faith," not to exclude others." Academy football coach Fisher DeBerry also said in a statement that he "never intentionally set out to pressure, offend or upset anyone" with his own Christianity."

Representatives of the left wing "religious" world became unkind and livid with what I would call discriminate remarks against the Christian staff and students who speak out about their faith. I say this land is my land and your land. We may not always like what we hear but we better always remember that one of the things that made America great is our right to voice what we believe. Throughout the over two centuries our leaders also had the opportunity and they were even applauded for the words about the faith. A former West Point Cadet spoke out as late as the mid-fifties that the words we had often used should be inscribed upon our coinage, In God We Trust. He was not put down, nor was he accused of being insensitive. It did help that he had become president of the United States. Of course I refer to Dwight David Eisenhower.

There are three big reasons why we need to applaud and not dare rebuke these godly men who are not only brave on our fields of battle, but also brave in the classroom, locker room, and boardrooms of

some of our most famous institutions.

1. If we are dedicated to our belief- we must speak our conviction.

As Christians we have no option about whether we do or do not speak of our love to Christ and in turn make some kind of attempt to persuade men and women that are strangers to grace to join us in commitment of life to Christ. The Bible says: "Let the redeemed of the LORD say so..." (Psalm 107:2). In our Lord's final message to his disciples, which was fully intended to impact us as well, serves as a clarion call from above, in what has been titled the Great Commission: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

Let us leave the tactics of squelching the free expression of Christian values to Chairman Mao, Joseph Stalin, and Fidel Castro. Let it not be done in the land of Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison, Lincoln, T. Roosevelt, Reagan, and Bush. And even if we meet opposition we are to take the attitude of the disciples who were commanded not to speak in the name of Christ: "Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). Again, I remind you, we have no option.

2. The Constitutional rights of all Americans must be protected.

In America, we as taxpayers have paid to support so-called artists that defame and blaspheme the Christian faith. A Colorado professor has spoken publicly against our President and the War in Iraq in nothing less than treasonous terms and he still has his job in a school funded by taxpayers. Why we even supply incarcerated enemies of our country with copies of The Koran (at our expense, not theirs). By the way, these incarcerated prisoners of war have gained an average of five pounds each since their capture, so as a rule they can read their Koran in a fair amount of comfort, paid for by American taxpayers.

Let us cherish these precious words from the First Amendment of The United States Constitution: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

Many a person who fears not God will quickly assert the portion of The First Amendment which says, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion..." But they are deceitful in their diatribes when they refuse to acknowledge the rest of the sentence, "...or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..." If we will protect other religions and (in my opinion) some traitors at the expense of hard working taxpayers, then please do not try to silence the witness of honest men and women who speak their Christian beliefs at a place where taxpayers are again represented, i.e. The United States Air Force Academy! Let us be fair; it is their land too!

3. We should recognize the direct correlation of blessing associated with spiritually awakened leadership.

We are committing national suicide when we cut off spiritual renewal amongst our leadership and the true and living God. Our leaders and future leaders in peace and war are often to be found at our Army, Naval, Air Force, and Coast Guard Academies. Of all places where belief, trust, and reliance upon God should be encouraged, it should be here! You cannot divorce the direct correlation of God's blessing upon national leadership that honors God or His curse upon those nations that turn their back on Him. Hear the words of the prophet Azariah who was speaking for God when he encountered King Asa: "And he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you" (II Chronicles 15:2). King David said, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God" (Psalm 9:17). Again the Bible speaks of King Uzziah: "And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God: and as long as he

sought the LORD, God made him to prosper" (II Chronicles 26:5).

This land is your land; this land is my land! May God help us to hold spiritual ground in these perilous days.

- Pastor Pope -

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