

AMERICA: A NEW DIRECTION

Fortune is a god and rules men's lives. —Aeschylus

CAPITALIST AMERICA ON A HINGE—The night is darkest before dawn and dawn is not coming anytime soon. The beacon of light that shines from Liberty Island's shore is dimming fast. We are living in a challenging era, the worse since the Great Depression. The spirit of capitalism lays shattered behind the glass doors of Wall Street and Main Street as investment banks, corporations, and small businesses come tumbling down. The earthshaking colossal collapse of corporate America is felt worldwide. From the Americas to Europe and Asia, citizens of the world hold their breath and brace for the worst. And the worst continues to unfold.

On a blustery and icy day, the twenty-sixth day of January 2009, the economy of Iceland collapsed. On that same day, over 30,000 American workers lost their jobs. Pfizer, IBM, Intel, GM, Motorola, Boeing, Starbucks, Home Depot, and many more all handed pink slips to their fear stricken employees. "Clear out your desk and go home," the employees were told. When the day was done, some headed home to break the bad news to their family. Others headed straight to the bar to kill the pain. Some wandered the streets not knowing what to do next. Such is the state in America. We are living in a time when a man froze to death in his own home behind an ice glazed window because he could not afford to pay his heating bills. We are living in an era when a man took his own life after he gunned down his wife and five children because he was laid off. We are living in a land where thousands walk the icy streets homeless, where countless homes are taped up, locked and unoccupied. This is the spirit of capitalism at work, capitalism at its worst. With the hammer of a judge's gavel, doors are pried open, and clothes and furniture are thrown out of houses for thugs to pick through while law abiding citizens diligently remain at work so that they can sweat up a dollar more to pay their looming bills.

We are a nation of excess. Those who have indulged in too much and those who have too little try to emulate those who have too much, at the cost of piling up credit card debt. The rich have big houses, big cars, big corporations, and big egos. The poor have big hearts, big ambitions, and big dreams. Everyone wants to reach for the sky with a quick fix. "I am going to be rich," a man said to himself as he quickly scratched off a five-dollar lottery ticket with his dirt-filled fingernail, only to discover a disappointing loss. Determined to overcome all odds, he pulled out another five-dollar bill from his pocket, riddled with holes, and handed it to the cashier behind the gas station counter. Such is the state of America.

With the economic meltdown of 2008, the spidery veins of giant corporations are showing their ugliness, like the varicose veins of an aging man or woman. Will capitalism survive, or will it give way to other economic laws? In the darkest hours of this nation's life when nothing functions, will revolution rise up? One can argue that no such revolution can possibly take place given the manner in which we have handled our trying past. But the dynamic nature of history states otherwise: The law of dynamic equilibrium will always push back and recalibrate to reestablish balance.

Nature's constant flux has caused the tectonic shift of the earth for millions of years. Along with this shift came changes in landmass, plants and animal species. Old landmasses vanished and new ones emerged, and old species disappeared and new ones arose. Many of these changes came into being without much help from man. But now that man has a say in matters, we have to ask ourselves the big question, "What percentage of our destructiveness and unwillingness to compromise for the better will cause the force of equilibrium to push back?" The dynamic nature of the universe never seems to grow old. There once was a super continent, and now there are seven smaller ones. There once were larger than life dinosaurs and now there are elephants and whales.

Capitalism, it seems, has given in to avarice, the third deadly sin, which has forced the law of equilibrium to push back to reestablish balance to an imbalance. How we endure this force will determine our survival in this sliding economy. Will we stick our heels into the ground to resist balance, eventually being pushed off the cliff, or will we adapt to new thinking, new laws?



RICHARD QUAN
Managing Editor