

Equity is another word for everything to lose (or gain)

A few days ago I submitted an article on *ownership* to a national website. Thinking that I had made my point quite clearly, I was told it was too vague, so here's a clarification...

Ownership of anything is called equity. Equity is also called justice and fairness. That goes for our opinions, our Constitutional rights or our social and financial investments. Not every investment is equal to all the others, however, nor is every investment guaranteed protection from attacks. Society, government and other influencers like the free market of ideas regularly affect the value of those investments by virtue of their ideology, policies, people and their power.

Every citizen has equity (a stake) in the great American experiment at birth. While this equity - our individuality and the freedom to express that individuality - is a birthright, it has little or no legitimate value if it is not exercised. Like the stock market, our personal stake in our future is affected by a number of factors. While many of those lie outside our control, most of them can influence the value of our investment on a regular basis. This birthright *ownership* is an inheritance made possible through the sacrifices of other Americans who chose to put their reputations and lives on the line for us. We must be mindful that the sweat and blood invested by others is the most sacred form of inherited ownership and deserves our enduring respect when it comes to the exercise of our own.

Every homeowner understands the concept of equity. With every passing mortgage payment, ownership increases, but that regular increase depends on the stability of our predictions. Other factors affecting our investment are the salability of our property, the health and safety of our neighborhood and the general economy, not to mention our tax code. Equity's real value can also be affected by inflation or by a market that has bottomed-out. So, the bottom line is that ownership comes with a price. When we think of our social equity as our right of participation in decision-making, its value is totally dependent on our free, unfettered and frequent exercise of that participation. Equity absent participation is risky.

The wise investor watches his investments and weighs his options, carefully. He is fully engaged and always ready to reassess his current position and take appropriate action by buying more equity or selling it off. Our participation in the running of our country should be no different. To sit silently on the sidelines gains no purchase; it only empowers and emboldens those who would subvert or weaken our equity with policies that are antithetical to healthy across-the-board growth. America experienced a rebirth of its national spirit and pride under Donald Trump's "Make America great again" march for progress based on traditional American values. And while this is especially true for the majority of us that happen to be White and older, I would submit that this injection of *equity of spirit* extended to our country's minorities as well.

Unfortunately, hope can't move the mountains of latent dissatisfaction that rest on some citizens' shoulders, so the push for payback (reparations for slavery) became the solution to a social problem that many believed had been largely solved by landmark civil rights legislation and decades of racial bridge-building. Those gains were not enough for the hard-core activists who saw racism in everything and proceeded to use it as a wedge to achieve *equity* (government-sanctioned compensatory damages) for 13% of the population that weren't alive before the start of the 20th century. Victims of negligence and abusive, discriminatory, targeted policies deserve our empathy, but many of us also believe that the country has made great strides in dramatically changing the national consciousness and environment for successive generations of Black Americans. And that while the playing field is not completely level it is level enough for Blacks to succeed on an equal footing with everyone else. A recent Supreme Court ruling on the unconstitutionality of affirmative action admissions policies in America's colleges would seem to serve as proof that the time has come to concentrate on the individual rather than the race of the applicant.

The nature of ownership is change, and while we are all 'renters' on this planet and temporary stakeholders in our societies, that doesn't relieve us from the responsibility of treating our property as if it were our own.

Slavery has been over for 150 years. It is an indelible blemish on our history that will never go away. We cannot write a check to a few million descendants of slaves and call the case closed and go about our business. We can, however, provide more tangible ways for those millions of men and women to succeed. But before we do that, we must realize that there are other ethnic and racial groups in our country who have been wronged in the past and that they, too, deserve to be included in that quest for fairness and justice. Earned equity resulting from the equality of opportunity is a sound investment in America's future. When we realize that we are all owners, we might start acting like them.

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