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O! Americans!

By D. H. LAWRENCE

Americans!

The word stands for something, carries its own patent, and its own obligation.

Americans are the people of America.

The destiny of America is in their hands.

The living America is in the hearts of Americans.

What the America of the future will be, we don't know.

What we know is, that the future America is a germ lying in the hearts of Americans, there and nowhere else.

Not in dollars, nor in banks, nor in syndicates, nor in Washington,

But a germ in the hearts of men and women, Americans.

We can't know what the future of America will be.

But the germ of that future is inside the American people, in their hearts.

It is their responsibility, their point of honour.

Politicians may be bad, industrial magnates may be at fault, Scandals may destroy man's faith in man:

And yet, there is a speck, a germ of American future in the heart of every intelligent American, whether he is politician or magnate or mere individual.

And for the sake of this nascent, unborn, as-yet-unknowable American future

There is, I believe, scarcely one intelligent American who will shirk, or fail in point of honour.

The old countries have a past, to be faithful to.

America still has only an unrevealed future.

And it is much more difficult to be true to an unborn future,
than to an accomplished past.

Tradition, tradition, tradition, it is easy enough to be faithful
to a tradition,

But to be faithful to something that has not yet come to pass,
that does not yet exist, save as a subtle, struggling germ in
individual hearts,

Not a mob thing, nor a mass thing, nor a class thing, nor
a hundred-per-cent thing

But a subtle, struggling little germ struggling half-unrealised
in individual hearts, and nowhere else,

That is a difficult thing to be faithful to.

Yet it is a point of honour.

And so, when the outside world calls upon America to act in
certain ways, perform certain sacrifices,

Why should Americans immediately acquiesce?

America will have to find her own way into the future,
the old lights won't show the way.

But if, taken at its very best, the title *American* is a
patent of nobility,

As it must be, taken at its very best,

Then *noblesse oblige*.

It is a point of honour.

And at the moment, there is an obligation.

It is the obligation of the citizens of this country towards the
aborigines of their country.

The American Indian lingers here, ward of the American
government.

Now make up your mind about him, he is not as we are.

He lingers on from an old, savage world, that still has its
treasures of consciousness, its subtle barbaric forms of
civilization.

He is, basically, a savage: it is a term of reproach, but also, it is *not* a term of reproach.

The American Indian is, basically, a savage.

But be careful how you destroy him.

Because he is so *absolutely* in your power, that, before God, you must be careful.

Noblesse oblige!

Be careful, before you destroy him.

Be careful how you turn him into a hundred-per-cent American.

He is the one thing that is aboriginally American.

Don't sentimentalize about him.

Realize.

Strictly—don't forget it—he is a savage who has, for the most part, long ago entered the Roman Catholic Church.

But strictly, he is a savage.

He is a savage with his own peculiar consciousness, his own peculiar customs and observances.

Don't sentimentalize his savage consciousness, customs and observances.

But be careful how you utterly quash them.

He is absolutely at your mercy.

He is the last of the originally American race.

You are Americans.

And *noblesse oblige*.

Turn the Poles, the Germans, the English, the Italians, the Russians,

Turn them into hundred-per-cent Americans.

What else have they come to this country for?

But the Indian never came.

It was you who came, Americans.

And before you put out the old savage light for ever, hesitate.

The Indian does no harm.

He is far too few to cause any apprehension in any direction.
Well then!

The Indian question has, worse luck, become a political question.

It has been made a cause for strife, a *casus belli*.

On your honour, Americans, what are you doing?

The Indian should never have been made a *casus belli*, between conflicting political parties, and contending interests.

Yet the clash has been started, the Indian is about to be finished off.

Today is Easter Sunday: Christ Risen! Two days ago was Good Friday: Christ Crucified!

On Good Friday the big white men of the Indian Bureau, and big white men from Washington drove out to the pueblo, summoned the old Indian men, and held a meeting behind closed doors.

Then the big men of the White Americans told the old American aborigines that it would be well if these old fathers abandoned their foolish, heathen dances and ceremonies, and tilled their land better, instead of wasting time:

That the boys must stay at school, not be kept away at seasons to prepare themselves and to partake in these useless practices of ceremonial:

That it would be far, far better for the Indian youth to grow up true, hundred-per-cent American, than to remain a dancing savage:

That the old dark fathers should not trust these artists and long-haired people who pretend to espouse their cause, because they, the artists and long-haired people, want to keep the Indian back, want to prevent his becoming a hundred-per-cent American; because they live on him. Artists and long-haired people, painting the Indian and

writing about the Indian, make their living off him, so naturally they want to keep him back, down, poor. If he were a hundred-per-cent American citizen, he would go out into the world and become as rich as anybody else, on the same terms with the white men, his brothers.

Furthermore the White big-men said to the old Indians That the Indians complained of being poor, of having short crops;

That the Indians wanted the White Man's Government to supply them with farm-implements, so they could have more food.

But why so!

The White Man's Government was under no obligation to give the

Indians one single thing, not one cent.

The Indians of the pueblos have land.

Let them lease their land to the American Government, as the Oklahoma Indians have done;

And in return the Government would supply them with excellent farm-machinery.

So, the speech in the pueblo, on Good Friday, behind closed doors.

And when the doors were opened, the White Men drove away.

And the old dark-faced men came out heavily, with a greater gloom than for many years,

Though their souls have been growing heavy for centuries.

What does it mean, they say!

That our boys must stay at school till they are eighteen, and not be allowed to absent themselves for ceremonies and ceremonial preparations?

Then our life is finished, our day is over completely.

Consummatum est!

Consummatum est! Oh God, and on Good Friday!
"It is finished!"

That we lease our lands and get reapers
and binders in exchange?
So, it is finished.

No, Americans, what about it?
The bit of land in question is a flea-bite, to this great nation.
Even if there were oil, copper, gold upon these bits of
reserved land, it were a flea-bite, to this great nation.

To make this bit of land, and water-rights, or oil or copper
or gold a cause for political action,
This is going beyond the bounds of present honour.

It is your test, Americans.
Can you leave the remnants of the old race on their own
ground,
To live their own life, fulfil their own ends in their own way?
Can you? Can you?

Decide whether you can, because it is a test before the ever-
lasting witnesses.

If you can, submit to it.
Submit to it, and let your American noblesse compel you
To draw a line around the Indians, beyond which line you
abstain from further interference.
That is all.
And that is a test of you.

Solve the Indian question finally.
Make it cease to be a political question for ever.
Remove the Indians forever from the hands of the
politicians.

Either make the Indian Bureau into a permanent office,
endowed with a sufficient endowment, and controlled by
men of science, competent anthropologists, historians, and
men of letters;

Or transfer the control to the American Institute of
Ethnology;

Do anything, but do something to draw this one delicate
line of non-interference.

It is a test, Americans.

~~But~~ if you cannot keep political, domineering hands off the
Indians,

Then destroy them, throw them out into the cities among the
negroes

As hundred-per-cent Americans, well-educated.

Do it.

Only know that, doing it, you fail in point of honour.

And damage once more the frail quick of the future America,
that is in you.