

THE BYSTANDER —★—

“Mr. Trump, Tear Down This Wall!”

Published in the Martinsburg *Journal*, February 26, 2017

What does “again” refer to, as in “Make America Great?” The 1890’s boom that created Robber Barons and Labor Unions? The 1920’s, after the First World War, or the Second One twenty years later, with our steel and aluminum manufacturing? The post-war era, when so many of our fathers had a chance to buy homes and go to college thanks to government entitlement programs known as the GI Bill and VA Home Loans? Or when the Civil Rights Movement cast off the last Jim Crow Laws through Supreme Court Decisions? Or the 60’s and 70’s, when so many refused to fight a war in Asia that was based on deceit, or got deferments for sore feet, or reported for service and became our Vietnam Veterans? Which time in our history is worth going back to now?

One thing those eras have in common is that we didn’t build a wall to make us great. Aside from our current barrier in Texas, we haven’t had any need for a wall, except one: the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC. Now, that’s what you call a Wall. There are names on that granite from many countries: I see a lot of Spanish names etched on it, along with Muslim and Arabic names. It’s a sad place, but still beautiful, and rather than keep people out, it invites them in. It exists because our government used the Domino Theory to stop people from crossing over a border in another country far, far away. The irony is that the boundary those people were trying to cross was the line that divided their own country of Vietnam into North and South.

Here in the US, we’ve built a lot of barriers of our own. The division between black and white is so high we can barely climb over it; the *glass ceiling* we don’t even know where it starts and ends, but we know it’s there. We install gates and security systems to keep us safe, but can’t keep out the polluted air and water we manufacture on a daily basis; the education system that rewards the children of wealthy parents. Tax laws that allow corporations to use pension systems based on the success of

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“Wall” Street for their workers’ retirement plans; prison cells that incarcerate over two million inmates, on average, per year. The highest wall of all is expensive medical care that so many people can’t afford, making injury and illness the number one cause of personal bankruptcy.

We may not be able to see these barriers, but we know that they exist. It’s one of the reasons why so many people were angry enough to have voted for a Billionaire Real Estate Developer who knows how to build Walls. If we invested as much time, attention and money on enforcing existing laws that forbid businesses from hiring, and *profiting* from, undocumented workers in our slaughterhouses, farm fields and kitchens, we could solve this issue without any concrete being poured.

So do we need a real wall? Our conflicts are internal, not the cause of an external invasion of refugees, immigrants, or ‘aliens’. Boxing ourselves in will not contain our frustration. We need to demolish barriers, not build them. Trumps’ wall, unlike ‘The Wall’ in Washington DC, will not represent a memorial to sacrifice.

Like the Berlin Wall, it will stand as a monument to failure.