

Capitol Gains

by C.Yurick © 2002 Prosanity World Cafe

Washington, D.C. The very name invokes a spectrum of strong emotions from patriotic pride to contempt and distrust. A river of images floods our collective American consciousness: John F. Kennedy's funeral procession, Martin Luther King proclaiming "I have a dream", Vietnam War protests on The Mall, countless presidential inaugurations, Bill Clinton wagging a defiant finger at rabid journalists obsessed with his sexual escapades.

Let me tell you about the Washington I experienced during a recent visit as seen through the bright eyes of a relative newcomer. For a few days, I lifted the heavy, cynical veil through which I normally view the world, to see more deeply into the potential of things.

Standing atop the Lincoln Memorial, I witnessed a city of noble principles captured in white marble, a place where material objects give solid form to mankind's loftiest aspirations. The Capitol dome, an immense crown of freedom and democracy gleams majestically, while the Washington Monument stands like a giant milepost marking civilization's furthest advancement. I climbed the steps of the Supreme Court at the slow, reverent pace intended by its architects, and felt the weight of the awesome decisions made there. The courtroom itself seems to absorb sound, commanding an end to noisy debate so that sober deliberation may make even the scales of justice. The air is electrically charged in Washington. Nowhere else are the colors red, white and blue so vibrant.

The Nation's Capital in its splendor is an expression of the strongest fibers of the American soul; liberty, justice, timeless truth. We all know that in reality, Washington, and for that matter America does not quite live up to these ideals. We know that corruption infects our political system, though this is nothing new in human history. Corrupt figures come and go and come again, but in the final analysis, the system works. Dare I say that there are some decent, honest individuals with the title "Senator" or "Representative", and theirs is a noble profession. It is a little too easy and fashionable to become jaded about government, an attitude that is often complacency disguised as legitimate protest.

I challenge any cynic to visit Arlington Cemetery and remain unmoved. To visit Capitol Hill without the slightest tingle of excitement. To travel through the District of Columbia from Georgetown to the ghettos and fail to feel concern about the economic disparity in our country. For Washington is both majestic and depraved. An odd mingling of darkness and light like most human creations.

I encourage all those who are able to visit this place to do so, as a pilgrimage of

sorts. It may be the first visit, or the one hundred and first. Go when you have time to walk, experience, and silently reflect. We each come away with something different, but also with something the same.