

# Give Me Your Tired

by David A. Dorn

I'm tired. Spending 14 hours in the air going from Athens, Greece, to Frankfurt, Germany, and back home to Phoenix in one day made me very tired. While standing in line at the U.S. Customs Bureau checkpoint, I thought about the words that are inscribed on the Statue of Liberty, the symbol of freedom not only in America but beyond its borders as well. *Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.*

I was one of those tired. Fortunately, I was not one of the poor, despite the fact that 50 percent of my income is extorted every year. But I felt like I couldn't really breathe free, as Emma Lazarus proclaimed. Let me contrast arriving in the United States with arriving in Europe.

When I landed in Germany for a stopover, and then in Athens on the first leg of my trip, there was no customs line to stand in. There was no check of my passport or anything. Last year when I flew into Madrid and Amsterdam, the same thing happened. *Come on in and give me your dollars, your guilders, your drachmas, your Deutsche marks, or your Visa debit card. We don't care. Just spend money.*

During my three-hour layover in Germany I had enough time to reflect on the fact that not too many years ago there was a wall between East and West Berlin. The people in

East Berlin could not leave without much difficulty, and it was difficult too for those who wanted to enter East Berlin.

The East German communists did not want tourists coming in and spending their money freely, since if that happened their citizen-slaves would begin to know what capitalism is about. Of course, since most of the shelves were bare, there wasn't much to buy anyway. But in the absence of a wall, it's likely that entrepreneurs would have developed businesses to provide goods and services that the tourists wanted. They would earn money and perhaps want to buy their own goods and services. Certainly the collectivist state would not like that, since it was the provider and owner of all.

The state of course didn't want its citizen-slaves to see too much of freedom on the outside, otherwise they would want more of it for themselves, and many of them would not come back. As it was, many defected if the chance arose, and many more were shot trying to escape the tyranny behind the wall.

The wall may have come down in Berlin, but walls have been erected in the United States of America. The wall caused lines to form when over 300 passengers from our Airbus landed in Phoenix to be shuffled through the barriers manned by the bureaucrats.

There were two lines, one of which I stood in for about 15 minutes. I guess I'm lucky, since last year I had to wait about 30 minutes. Some may say 30 minutes is not too

---

David Dorn ([david@dornagency.com](mailto:david@dornagency.com)) owns an independent insurance agency in Arizona.

long to wait to “protect our borders.” But don’t the other countries I visited care about who comes in to their countries? Obviously not.

The other line was for non-U.S. citizens, and it seemed to be moving much slower. There were about six clerks to screen the whole plane, which wasn’t enough for the job, assuming that the job was necessary in the first place.

After getting to the Customs clerk’s window, my passport was scanned into a machine. For what purpose they never told me. Breathe free? Not yet. After getting my luggage I then had to present my form #6059B to the next bureaucrat. The Customs Declaration form #6059B had been given to me on the plane prior to landing.

The front of form #6059B asks 14 questions in all, and the first eight ask things such as name, address, flight number, and even your birth date. I guess they want to send you a card every year.

Question 9 asks what other countries you visited. There is room for only four countries on the form. I have to admit that last summer I visited five, but only listed four. I took a brief side trip to Belgium to eat a waffle and didn’t stay very long, so I took a chance. I’m probably admitting to a felony, but I’m hoping the statute of limitations will run out soon.

Question 10 asks the purpose of the trip, with blocks for “business” and “personal.” They say it’s okay to check one or both. Why do they want to know? Could it be they share this form with the IRS?

Question 11 asks whether you’re bringing in fruits, plants, meat, food, soil, birds, snails, other live animals, wildlife products, or farm products, and if you visited a farm or ranch outside the United States. I answered no and told two more lies. I smuggled a bag of pretzel snacks off the plane, and I later discovered I had some pigeon poop from Athens lodged in the sole of my sneaker. Sounds like wildlife products to me.

Question 12 asks if you are carrying currency or monetary instruments over \$10,000. I know they are serious about this question, since a friend of a friend spent time

in jail for having over \$10,000 in traveler’s checks between himself and his girlfriend that he neglected to declare. I could honestly answer no.

Question 13 asks about commercial merchandise, which they define on the back of the form as essentially articles for sale. (There’s a “yes” box and a “no” box; you’re asked to “Check one box only.” Seems reasonable.)

And Question 14 asks you to list the value of all the foreign goods you’re bringing into the United States. The government charges a duty of 10 percent on the first \$1,000 over the \$400 exempted amount. They don’t say how much the duty is for greater amounts, but like the MasterCard commercial says, some things are priceless. Certainly the things I bought were.

Then you have to sign your name certifying that you read the tiny print on the back of the form and you are answering truthfully. The first sentence at the top of the back of the form warns in all capital letters: “ALL PASSENGER [sic] ARE SUBJECT TO FURTHER QUESTIONING AND THEIR PERSONS, BELONGINGS, AND CONVEYANCE ARE SUBJECT TO SEARCH. (19 CFR 162.3–162.8)” Nice way to be welcomed home.

Fortunately I skated through. The funniest thing on the back of the form is the Paperwork Reduction Act Notice. It says, “The estimated average burden associated with this collection of information is 3 minutes per respondent. . . .” What a bold-faced lie.

Remember I mentioned that your signature certifies that you read the notice on the reverse of the form? I read the tiny print in its entirety, and even with a master’s degree my best time was three-and-a-half minutes. Plus if I had to look up and read 19 CFR 162.3–162.8 that could have taken me hours.

Maybe I’m picky. But just like the huddled masses, I yearn to breathe free. I don’t like standing in government-mandated lines such as those encountered at Customs, and I don’t like filling out government forms under penalty of fines and/or imprisonment. Let me and all the others standing in line come freely into the United States and

engage in any peaceful transactions we please, just as the other countries did.

\* \* \*

This article was written before the events of September 11, 2001. Although not explicitly mentioned in the article, I advocate open borders. Certainly many things have changed since that fateful day, such as concerns about airplane safety, biological attacks, and war and peace around the world. One thing that has not changed for me is the issue of open borders.

I ask the advocate of closed borders, or perhaps one who is wavering on the issue, the following two questions: Assuming you want to close the borders, can you? And if you could completely close the borders, would you want to live in the United States?

Based on logistics alone, my answer to question number one is no. According to the *World Fact Book*, published by the Central Intelligence Agency, the coastline and border areas of the United States (including Alaska and Hawaii) add up to 32,172 kilometers, or about 19,000 miles. This perimeter is composed of 12,248 kilometers of land and 19,924 of water.

Certainly we have been unable to prevent many thousands of Mexicans from crossing illegally into the United States through a rel-

atively small portion of that area, even though this is the stated goal of our immigration authorities. I think it highly unlikely that our efforts along the Mexican border could be expanded to the rest of our borders and coastline. Even if they could, they would likely be as ineffective.

We have also had a concerted War on Some Drugs for the past 30-something years. Obviously our borders are like a sieve for bales of marijuana, which are as big as people. Other drugs, and those people who carry them, come in with relative impunity.

The closest thing to a truly closed border is the federal prison system. The prisons have thick concrete walls, barbed-wire fences, 24/7 surveillance by armed guards and video cameras, frisking of prisoners, and limited visitors under strict supervision. The administrators strongly desire to have a closed system. Yet stories abound about how prisoners can get almost any drug they want. If they can't keep those drugs out of the prisons, how could they keep them off our streets that are not as well patrolled?

Therefore I also answer no to my second question. Even if we could close all the borders, the country would resemble a federal prison. As long as I continue to breathe, I don't want to live in that environment. Do you? □

The apple icon 🍏 identifies articles that are appropriate for teaching students several major subjects—including economics, history, government, philosophy, and current issues.

We also provide sample lesson plans for these articles on our Web site [www.fee.org](http://www.fee.org) and in written form. Professors, teachers, and homeschooling parents need only to visit our Web site or request written lesson plans to take advantage of this unique service.