

FOREWORD

PILGRIM, n. A traveler that is taken seriously. A Pilgrim Father was one who, leaving Europe in 1620 because not permitted to sing psalms through his nose, followed it to Massachusetts, where he could personate God according to the dictates of his conscience.

– Ambrose Bierce, Devil’s Dictionary

Massachusetts is a special place.

At the most personal level, our memories of growing up, falling in love, raising our children, and laying loved ones to rest are all grounded here. But that can be said of most places, we suppose. Massachusetts is also a place of profound community, with the wrongly but often mocked town meeting and local control traditions and our particular bloodsport of choice: politics.

But, as Ambrose Bierce’s quote suggests, perhaps what sets the commonwealth apart are its overinflated senses of self — as true in literary figures like Emerson and Thoreau, as it is in the global aspirations of our do-gooders. That’s not necessarily a criticism. In fact, it is largely a positive attribute: Massachusetts’s very air is aspirational. From our start, we have longed for a leadership role in the country and the world. We are where the “shot heard round the world” was unburdened from a musket. We aim to be the City on a Hill, crusaders for the abolition of slavery and equal rights for

women, we know Dorothy Dix's deep desire to right wrongs and protect the weak.

Yes, we sometimes veer into self-righteousness and willful ignorance of the free will of others. That's who we are.

Embrace it. After all, we are among the wealthiest and healthiest places on earth, well-educated, blessed with ocean, mountains, rivers and farms. It's a great place, we would choose no other.

So why a book that, whatever else it says, is calling for big fixes in education, healthcare, governmental operations and how we attract businesses and jobs?

Because we face one big problem that neither right nor left seems capable of addressing: We are no longer a place where a practical pilgrim can put his or her oar away, plow a field and rise socially and economically in a way that upholds our original promise. Our culture and institutions, inspired by social and economic freedom, mobility, or as some call it "the right to rise," risk decline without preservation of these basic freedoms.

In 2012, President Obama noted that:

"This country of ours has more wealth than any nation, but that's not what makes us rich. We have the most powerful military on Earth, but that's not what makes us strong. Our universities and our culture are the envy of the world, but that's not what keeps the world coming to our shores.

Instead, it is that American spirit — that American promise — that pushes us forward even when the path is uncertain; that binds us together in spite of our differences; that makes us fix our eye not on what is seen, but what is unseen, that better place around the bend."

That is what this book is about. The American spirit, as interpreted in Massachusetts' special (sometimes ornery and blustering) way. We may curse the winters, but we wouldn't live anywhere else.

But Massachusetts is not yet all that it can be, and that it must be.

To say it plainly, we live in a state that is increasingly stratified in its opportunities and bifurcated geographically into the Greater Boston area which is grafted onto cities on the South Coast, in the Merrimack Valley, and in central and western Massachusetts, that too often are left out of the American promise.

In the following pages, you will find effective ways to address that stratification, focusing on what we see as the four paths to increasing social mobility and economic freedom:

1. World-class, liberal arts-informed educational options
2. Accessible and affordable healthcare
3. Governments that are effective but not intrusive on our freedoms, and
4. The freedom to create your own livelihood or the opportunity to have the dignity of a job

We look forward to discussing and engaging community groups, business leaders and the media on these key issues. That is Pioneer's most basic role: To steer the public debate away from the usual fad of the month and towards a robust conversation about social and economic freedom.

In the Spirit of Massachusetts, we believe that if we can identify solutions here, the commonwealth will be better positioned to play its historic role of leading the conversation in the rest of the country, which exhibits the same or worse signs of stratification.

– *James Stergios & Mary Connaughton*