



blue heron
holdings, LLC

www.BlueHeron8.com

USA PO Box 301374, Austin, TX 78703 | Tel 1-512-565-4909 | Fax 1-512-828-6138

CHINA 500 Xiangyang S Road, Ste 304, Shanghai 200031 | Tel 86-138-1780-5491 | Fax 86-21-6466-9879
Room 515/517 Resource Plaza, No. 151 Zhongguancun North Road, Haidian District, Beijing 100080
Tel 86-10-5887-6336 | Fax 86-10-5887-6338

BLUE SKIES OVER WASHINGTON: THE BASIS OF PROSPERITY

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In watching the inauguration ceremony of Barack Obama today, some key themes on rebuilding a prosperous and sustainable America (my words, not the President's) became apparent. That these themes—if you believe in their veracity—could apply just as well to building a sustainable China, and indeed a sustainable world, is a given...so I present them here.

The question to ask is—how to turn these core tenets into actions? *If* (a big if?) these themes of national greatness and sustainability are fairly universal, then the biggest differences show up in how the tenets are manifested and applied.

It is not unlike an organization's struggle to use those great mission and vision statements created during a posh executive retreat. Most for-profit companies ultimately have similar goals. The difference is in *HOW* those high-level goals and themes are turned into something that is commonly understood and believed; that makes sense in the near- and longer-term future; that can be converted into individual activities and responsibilities; that can be measured, controlled and improved upon.

With [today's inauguration speech](#), the process of communicating this plan to revive America looks like it has begun.

1. Rely on core values for unity, strength, and purpose. These values are interwoven with **freedom**, meaning the RESPONSIBILITY to act—not freedom as in “I am entitled”; **pluralism**, meaning freedom and justice for all—including those with whom we disagree; and **pragmatism**, meaning we must endure and do what needs to be done in line with our values—regardless of how difficult this may be.
2. Act together: united we stand, divided we fall. America endures because of, and is defined by its people—not its “high officers.” The role of government is to harness the power of the people; not to restrain. The nation as a whole is bigger than the sum of its individual ambitions.
3. Using humility, integrity and compassion we can increase the common good. This means [getting more because “the pie” is getting bigger; not because we took someone else's piece](#). This also necessitates looking at the role of “world leader” in a different way.
4. Greatness is earned. The inaugural speech argued that we are judged on what we build, not what we destroy. Creating fear is antithetical to creating greatness; [we can do more with enduring alliances and convictions that with tanks and missiles](#).



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5. Greatness requires courage to “[walk into that which we cannot see](#).” Embody the spirit of service; find meaning in something greater than yourself. This may mean doing something because it is right, even though the outcome is uncertain.
6. Have gratitude for those who came before us, and sacrificed to make this nation what it is. Equally, as citizens, we have the responsibility to serve in continuing to make this nation great. This means addressing current problems for the common good, and not based on “narrow interests.” Obama referred to this as the “price and promise of citizenship”. Another strike against entitlement!

These thoughts are drawn from a combination of the Obama inaugural speech, the inaugural benediction of Rev. Lowery, and the inaugural poem presented by Elizabeth Alexander, among other inspirations.

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