

BOOKS

The dream is still alive: Authors propose how to fix what ails America



BY BROOKE KENNY
STAFF WRITER

Potomac businessman Frank Islam's new book isn't just meant to offer information; it's meant as a call to action.

Islam teamed up with his business associates George Muñoz and Ed Crego to write "Renewing the American Dream, A Citizen's Guide for Restoring Our Competitive Advantage."

"We are in a war for the future of America and the American Dream," Islam says. "Winning that war is not someone else's job. It's our job."

The authors begin the book with what they call "A Citizen's Call to Arms," in which they ask readers to do their part in renewing the American Dream.



CHRIS ROSS/THE GAZETTE

Frank Islam and his business associates have published a book that attempts to enlist Americans to participate in reversing the nation's decline.

"In this book," they write, "we make the case that America's decline is real and could be permanent. The purpose of this book is to enlist your participation in reversing that decline."

"Renewing the American Dream" outlines why and how the U.S. needs to reduce the deficit and debt, rebuild the middle class, reintroduce manufacturing, support small business and renew civic engagement. It is filled not just with detailed assessments of where the country is, but with concrete recommendations for how to make lasting improvement. Among

the many recommendations are implementing health care plans they think make sense for small businesses, creating a jobs program to boost employment opportunities in manufacturing and construction, and redesigning the curricula of public policy and business schools.

The three authors collaborated on the concept for the book and spent about a year writing it. This is the first book for both Islam and Muñoz; Crego has penned a number of business books.

"In early 2009, as we looked at the gridlock and polarization in D.C. and the inertia in the business communi-

ty, we came to the conclusion that the American Dream was at risk and that we as citizens who had lived the dream had the responsibility to speak out," Islam explains.

They researched by talking to both average citizens and experts. They also sought out books, articles and online resources that addressed the topics they wanted to cover.

Islam, Muñoz and Crego met several times in person to hammer out the scope of the book and to decide what topics to include. They then collaborated online with the writing.

Islam, Muñoz and Crego have an impressive amount of business experience among them. Islam founded and subsequently sold the information technology consulting firm QSS

Group and now leads his own investment group. Muñoz served as the assistant secretary and chief financial officer of the U.S. Treasury Department during the Clinton administration and is the former president and CEO of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation. Ed Crego is a management consultant who has worked with such companies as John Deere and Motorola.

The intended audience for the book is what the author's call the "21st Century Citizen." This, Islam says, is someone who is independent, informed and involved.

It was important to keep the book non-partisan, he points out. Rather than focus on a particular ideology, they sought to provide a plan of action based solely on a detailed examination of facts.

"We also had a large group of advance readers from all along the political spectrum," Islam notes. "They provided us with feedback that

helped us to be impartial in the presentation of our analysis, arguments and insights."

Although Islam says the American Dream can mean many things, the authors used a particular definition for the book.

"It is the opportunity to be the best that you can be and to be rewarded and recognized for accomplishing

that," he says. "We should stress that it's an 'opportunity,' not a 'guarantee.'"

"Renewing the American Dream, A Citizen's Guide for Restoring Our Competitive Advantage" is available for purchase at major online booksellers and through the visiting www.renewingtheamericandream.net.