

★ **opinion**

OUR PURPOSE

To actively influence and impact a better quality of life in Middle Tennessee

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TENNESSEE VOICES

We can make America great again

MING WANG

During this presidential primary season, there has been much talk about how to make America strong again.

Indeed, we do have a huge task at hand. Our mounting national debt is weakening our nation, and whoever becomes president must reverse negative trade with other countries, or else we will not be able to generate the necessary funds to invest in what is most needed in this country — creating more jobs and improving health care and education.

But how can we create positive foreign trade — that is, exporting more than we are importing? Will we be able to do that by bullying and antagonizing other nations, and isolating ourselves in the process?

Or shouldn't we instead focus on improving ourselves and learning to work better with others, recognizing

that the world is a much different place now than it was decades ago with regard to increasing interdependent economies among nations?

America can truly regain strength and leadership in the world today by setting an example — not of narrow-mindedness, imposition and isolationism, but of self-improvement, compassion, understanding and collaboration.

For example, China is the world's second-largest economy and our biggest creditor. Two trillion dollars of our \$20 trillion national debt is owed to China. We have a whopping \$350 billion annual trade deficit (the difference between exporting and importing) with China.

In today's world, a company cannot survive if it cannot sell its products. What is the first step in selling? It is to study and understand our customers. This has been the primary objective in recent years for the Tennessee Chinese Chamber of Commerce and the Tennessee American-Chinese Chamber of Commerce. Our mission is to help educate Tennessee businesses about Chi-

na's history, culture, economic needs and people so we can more effectively sell to China. Tennessee is actually doing reasonably well in this area, compared with other states. Tennessee sells \$2 billion of products to China annually, ranking us in the top 10 among all the states. However, we still have a long way to go, since we are purchasing \$20 billion of goods from China annually.

It is true that part of the reason for our trade deficit with China is that China has lower wages (although they have increased dramatically in recent years), and that China does not allow the United States to have full access to its domestic markets because it wants to allow some of its industries to grow and mature before it exposes them wholly to international competition. This is actually a developmental strategy emerging economies often take.

At the same time, China is indeed slowly opening its markets more and more, giving American companies more opportunities every year to expand their market share in China.

Though it is true that we have lost

some low-end jobs, what we really should be focusing on instead are our high-end products, such as high tech, business and financial infrastructure and expertise, and art and entertainment products. We need to improve the skill level of our workforce, invest in new technologies, improve the quality of our products and services, and create innovative tax structures such as FAIRtax to lower the cost of our goods.

So let's start doing the right thing now: stop blaming others for our problems, and instead focus on improving ourselves, the quality and competitiveness of our products, and on learning more about other nations, who they are and what they need.

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