

Think before you post; your career might depend on it

According to his position on giving to the poor, Benjamin Franklin is quoted as saying:



John D. Rossi

"I am for doing good to the poor, but ... I think the best way of doing good to the poor is not making them easy in poverty, but leading or driving them out of it.

"I observed ... that the more public provisions were made for the poor, the less they

provided for themselves, and of course became poorer. And, on the contrary, the less was done for them, the more they did for themselves, and became richer."

In other words, by making the poor uncomfortable or shamed in accepting charity, there will be fewer poor people.

In the old days, public shaming was part of the judicial process but was abolished in 1839. It is making a comeback in the judicial process, and there is a growing

trend of public shaming on the internet.

Virtual pitchfork-wielding mobs can destroy lives on the internet armed with only keyboards, mics, tablets and iPhones. The new angry crowd of pitchfork-carrying peasants has been replaced by cyber mobs.

SHAMING VS. JAIL TIME

Some may remember the notable case in Bedford County when a 56-year-old mother and her 35-year-old daughter, holding signs admitting to theft, stood outside the courthouse for 4½ hours in exchange for no jail time.

They held signs that read: "I stole from a 9-year-old girl on her birthday! Don't steal, or this could happen to you!"

This is an official and growing form of punishment for violation of criminal law, where the guilty party gets to choose public shaming in exchange for lower or no jail time.

It's a good alternative in this kind of situation.

CYBER MOB UNLEASHED

Something that doesn't get the same



A single tweet or post can unleash an outpouring of hate by the cyber mob.

publicity as identity theft but is potentially a bigger concern is public shaming on the internet.

Undeserving victims are publicly shamed for a single tweet or post which can unleash an outpouring of hate by the cyber mob. And that can ruin the lives of those who don't deserve the consequences or such punishment.

It is important for everyone who uses the internet and has ever seen or been part of a public shaming to be aware of its psychological and social effects.

DISCRETION FIRST

We are all inches from public shaming,

and that should be frightening. One careless statement, overheard by the wrong person, one thing taken out of context, and the cyber mob has the power to take over and forever ruin your life.

People have even been fired for badly worded, suggestive or misunderstood tweets or posts. Sure, it may have been wrong, but the punishment often is too harsh for the "crime."

The important lesson is to think twice before posting on the internet or tweeting a comment. If someone takes it the wrong way or you make a mistake, your life may be forever ruined by the cyber mobs.

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TAKING STOCK: Rebuild infrastructure, build your portfolio

Dear Mr. Berko: Here's a list of eight infrastructure stocks that my stockbroker recommended because she believes that President Donald Trump

will be spending trillions on much-needed infrastructure improvements. Please give me your thoughts on these issues, and I would also appreciate any investment thoughts you would have that would complement those my broker



Malcolm Berko

gave me. - LP, Kankakee, Ill.

Dear LP: Last month, engineering crews in California frantically rushed to make repairs to the Oroville Dam as more than 200,000 Left Coast residents were forced to evacuate the area. As the nation's 84,000 dams continue to deteriorate, a hugely growing number of folks living downstream from other "damns" are facing similar risk.

There are 594,000 bridges crossing highways, rivers, canyons and lakes. The American Road & Transportation Builders Association believes that half of those bridges must be repaired or replaced.

There are tens of thousands of miles of defective water pipelines requiring immediate attention, causing an estimated 240,000 water main breaks per year.

HEAVY LIFTING REQUIRED

According to The Huffington Post, our drinking water infrastructure needs more than \$1 trillion of fix-it-now money to prevent another Flint, Mich.-type drinking



Trillions of dollars are needed to rebuild the nation's infrastructure, possibly fueling a much higher Dow Jones industrial average.

water crisis. There are 1,237 contaminated city water sites, and thousands more will become evident next year.

Nationally, our stormwater sewer systems are glaringly inadequate. In St. Petersburg, Fla., the sewers frequently overflow. Meanwhile, the off-putting noxious odors stinking up the city are becoming commonplace in other municipalities across the nation. It's estimated that we need 18,600 miles of new sewer pipelines immediately.

There are more than 4 million miles' worth of rural and state highways crisscrossing the U.S., and 70 percent of those roads need serious surgery.

There are thousands of aging small airports, seaports, inland waterways, solid waste plants, power plants and mass transit systems that require attention and lots of money, and that translates to trillions of infrastructure dollars and possibly a much higher Dow Jones industrial average.

EIGHT ARE GREAT

Yes, you can buy Chicago Bridge & Iron (CBI-\$31), yielding 0.06 percent, Emerson Electric (EMR-\$60), which has a 3.1 percent yield, Fluor Corp. (FLR-\$55),

yielding 1.5 percent, Astec Industries (ASTE-\$63), with a 0.05 percent yield, Tetra Tech (TTEK-\$41), yielding 0.09 percent, and three stocks with no dividends - Great Lakes Dredge & Dock (GLDD-\$4.35), Cemex (CX-\$8.65) and McDermott International (MDR-\$6.75).

Those eight issues are good recommendations by your broker and appear to be superior to the recommendations of other so-called professionals.

This broker seems to have a good head attached to her neck, and I suspect that her recommended issues will perform well over the next couple of years.

However, I'd like to add an exchange-traded fund called SPDR S&P Regional Banking (KRE-\$57), which yields 1.4 percent.

BANKS ARE GOOD PICKS, TOO

Though the above stocks should participate in the rebuilding of our infrastructure, your good broker may have overlooked an obvious investment, and that's the banksters who run the nation's regional banks.

All that repair, rebuilding and replacement will require funding, and that funding will derive from regional banks, which

is why I recommend KRE, which owns a \$3.6 billion portfolio of 43 regional banks across the nation.

KRE owns stock in Regions Bank, BB&T, Fifth Third Bank, SunTrust Banks, Huntington Bancshares, PNC, M&T Bank, Zions Bank, Citizens Financial Group and others.

These are the banks that will open millions of new business and personal checking accounts and make myriad loans to municipalities, contractors and subcontractors to finance equipment, materials, tools, stuff and things to facilitate infrastructure repair.

HIGHER RATES, HIGHER REVENUES

KRE has no leverage and is considered a mid-cap value investment, and its active portfolio turns over about 86 percent a year.

Bank stocks should flourish this year and next, as the Federal Reserve will probably raise interest rates twice in 2017. This will give KRE's portfolio excellent maneuvering room to grow net income, open more new accounts, issue new credit cards and make new personal loans, including auto and truck loans - all at higher rates, which should grandly grow revenues and earnings.

My recommendation is to invest \$35,000 in the eight issues your broker recommended and invest the remaining \$35,000 in KRE. Investing in both strategies will give you the maximum return on that \$70,000 in the coming two to three years.

Florida-based Malcolm Berko regularly dispenses financial advice. You may address questions to him at P.O. Box 8303, Largo, FL 33775 or by email at mjberko@yahoo.com. Creators Syndicate Inc.