

The dangers of self-censorship

Growing up, I'm sure that one of your more compassionate relatives told you, "If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all." Well, God bless him or her for that, and while that was probably the right thing to say for the time, times have changed. No one bothers to count to ten anymore before giving you both barrels. Total annihilation is the aim of the political fascist who can't seem to keep his vile comments about your sincere beliefs to himself. His colostomy bag of pent-up anger about Donald Trump or those awful moronic conservatives runneth over.

I hasten to add that I'm not talking about our more moderate friends who are perfectly willing to discuss issues and not personalities with you without exploding. Rather, it's those hyper-partisan ideological crazies who are growing more agitated with each passing day I'm referring to. You know them. They're everywhere: at small intimate dinner parties, at large banquets, even in church. You're just chatting with a friend about the problems at the southern border when someone from the next table overhears your conversation. She leans over and says, "If we didn't have a numbskull for a President, we might not be making enemies everywhere," and then swiftly goes back to her goulash. THAT is what's known as a *drive-by attack* and it's happening with increasing frequency.

These political ninjas must all go the same school to learn their craft much like the terrorists of the seventies from the non-aligned countries that all went to Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow (now called the People's Friendship University of Russia). Wherever they go, they all seem to be saying the same thing to us conservatives...SHUT UP! True, some of us do provoke them by talking too loudly or maybe it's our "I love America" buttons and MAGA hats that does it, but that is our right, isn't it? Of course it is, but to Lefties that is the red flag that riles them up so they dig in their hooves and snort wildly as they charge towards us, horns first.

Social intercourse aint what it used to be. Times were when people could disagree without pulling out a weapon, even if that weapon was barbed words. We chilled, walked away or got ourselves another drink. Now one of us gets bloodied if we dare to stand our ground. Have Americans just gotten more aggressive, indignant and intolerant or do we just disagree on everything? I think it's all of them. We no longer give anyone the benefit of the doubt. Our college students need 'safe spaces' while we, their parents, avoid attending events where there could be people with widely differing views. The only place we dare talk politics is to the TV set or to ourselves (much to the displeasure of our spouses). I'm convinced that this self-censorship is THE most destructive element in our society today. While I'm not advocating for a return to the pre-PC times when we made Polish jokes or laughed at Archie Bunker's ethnic appellations, I'm simply saying that sometimes what we don't say can get us in more trouble than what we do say.

Case in point. You're part of a group that is discussing something controversial. A person makes an outlandish generalization. You think about countering it with a simple, "How do you know that, for sure?" But, you don't. You let it pass and it's not because your wife elbowed you in the ribs, either. You chose to avoid conflict. Your therapist would be sooo proud, but later, on the way home in the car you say to your spouse, "I should have said something, anything, to stop that jerk." (I forgot to mention, that 'jerk' is your best friend, and if you can't speak truth to best friends, than to whom can you?) I think that regret is a prohibitively high price to pay for self-censorship. I'm willing to concede that as we get older, we tend to choose our battles more carefully. Maybe it's because we hear the clock ticking away the seconds of our lives louder and louder, or it could be that we've actually realized there are more important things in life than being right all the time. That said, we should not subordinate our principles out of fear of conflict. There are many ways to disagree with people without a midnight trip to the ER for myocardial infarction. Why not think of some that might work for you? Breathe deeply.

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