

## A thousand points of fright

In his inaugural address in 1989, George Herbert Walker Bush spoke of a desire to create "a thousand points of light." While many in the mainstream media ridiculed Bush' vision, the spirit of his words lingered on and even helped create an organization dedicated to that vision - the Thousand Points of Light Global Network ([www.pointsoflight.org](http://www.pointsoflight.org)). The organization's mission statement is: "The Points of Light mission is to inspire, equip and mobilize people to take action that changes the world. We envision a world in which everyone discovers the power to make a difference, creating healthy communities in vibrant, participatory societies."

I had the good fortune to spend a day with the former President two decades ago, and in one of those rare moments when he wasn't in motion meeting and greeting people in Singapore, I had the opportunity to discuss his philosophy of the power of giving back (to the country that gave him so much). He reiterated his fervent belief to me that "everybody has something of value they can contribute to America." Mr. Bush was no Pollyanna. He was a patriot and lived his own words throughout his long life. His service in government over many decades proved his own personal commitment to that belief which never wavered.

This encounter with '41' wasn't my first opportunity to see him action. My daughter and I met him in The Netherlands in 1985 when he was Vice-President. He inspired millions of people, both here and abroad with his service and his professional and personable demeanor. He wasn't a President for just Republicans. His was a Presidency for all of the people. Mr. Bush grew up in a time when bad-mouthing one's opponents said more about one's self rather than one's opponents. He went out of his way to avoid the cheap shot or the deftly-packaged innuendo. His were points of light, not bonfires of the vanities that author Tom Wolfe wrote about in his novel on the ambition, racism, social class, politics and greed of the 1980s. In short, George H.W. Bush was a class act and perhaps the last President of his kind that we will see for many decades to come particularly because our political waters have been so polluted by acrimony.

What we are experiencing today with our current President is the polar opposite of Mr. Bush' vision of America. Instead of a thousand points of light that lift us up to a higher plane where our view is clearer and more hopeful, we have been forced into a dark dead end of despair formed by a *thousand points of fright* endorsed by the current Commander-in-Chief and his party. These points of fright are designed and fabricated by people who do not share Mr. Bush' vision of America as a compassionate, inherently decent country offering opportunities for all of its citizens. These people call themselves 'Progressives,' but that political identifier is a perverted attempt to cloak themselves with a deceptively positive appellation that would lead us to believe that they support policies that would benefit all Americans. Theirs is an ideology of suspicion, of distrust, of an unwavering and misguided belief that the United States is inherently evil and unequal and is hegemonic and imperialistic in both its culture and economy. They have nothing in common with the 74 million plus of their fellow citizens who voted in 2020 to keep us on a path of shared prosperity.

Instead, they have chosen to further divide us along race, gender, age, ethnic, economic and cultural lines, injecting fear and loathing of anyone who has become wealthy or who has climbed the ladder of success...or who dares to question the Liberal orthodoxy. They have elected to play to our fears and to *tribalize* us away from an 'out of one, many America' belief that has stood us in good stead for over two centuries. Perhaps one of the most egregious moves they've made is to implement 'pariah politics' and use social segregation and separation as a way to consolidate their power and control over those of us who oppose or criticize them. The last two years of the Coronavirus pandemic have proven that they will stop at nothing to exercise complete control over Americans' right to choose to be vaccinated or not, to gather in groups or to worship together. Even as the country is emerging from the depths of the virus, they have redoubled their efforts to clamp down on the public, brow-beating businesses to force employees to be vaccinated or firing them.

They are now using their clout with Blue states' governors to mandate inoculations of young children or face a ban on physical attendance in schools. We have now reached the 'fail-safe' point and must make some tough choices about how we move forward. Our founders left us with a few fail-safe mechanisms in our Constitution that will help us mitigate losses due to a 'system failure.' One of those is elections; the others are more drastic. Whichever one we choose we must never allow our rights to become the victims of indifference to those who would abuse them.

*Stephan Helgesen is a retired career U.S. diplomat who lived and worked in 30 countries for 25 years during the Reagan, G.H.W. Bush, Clinton, and G.W. Bush Administrations. He is the author of twelve books, six of which are on American politics and has written over 1,200 articles on politics, economics and social trends. He operates a political news story aggregator website, [www.projectpushback.com](http://www.projectpushback.com). He can be reached at: [stephan@stephanhelgesen.com](mailto:stephan@stephanhelgesen.com)*