

Irreconcilable differences

There are certain taboo words that journalists and commentators avoid using when speaking of the state of our union. Two of them are 'civil war' along with action words like 'fight back'. Instead, we drone on about civility and the 'old days' when legislators would castigate each other in public and then share a bourbon and a cigar after work. I'm not willing to totally deny that those things actually happened, but I do question that they happened in large numbers or very often. It's just a narrative (real or imagined) that we use to contrast today's modern legislative warfare with yesterday's civility.

If it DID happen then I would not label it a case of gentlemanly civility but rather one of utter hypocrisy. Good friends should be able to be good friends, openly, in all situations and arch enemies shouldn't pretend to have their opposite number's best interests at heart. If we're looking for villains these days we needn't look any further than our Congressional Representatives for proof of pretense. The victims are, of course, we the people and the TRUTH.

Defenders of the Congressional Kabuki Theatre would say, "But that's how the game is played. Representatives must attack each other or their constituents will be upset. And think of the media! What would they do without a little daily blood-letting brought to their readers, listeners and viewers courtesy of overpaid and underworked elected officials?" My answer would be, "Why not try truth-telling for a change? What have we got to lose? It might even be BETTER for the media's ratings."

Such a novel approach will never be tried or succeed of course. Washington thrives on intrigue and the eternal battle between good and evil, using taxpayer money. It's like professional wrestling - scene set to keep us on the edge of our seats relying on our suspension of belief that the whole thing ISN'T choreographed.

Fact is our elected officials actually believe that their demeanor and compoirtment is what their constituents want and that motivates them to keep the vitriol flowing. After all, they contend, "What if we actually told the general public the truth about how we use a huge chunk of our time in getting re-elected shortly after we've just been elected? Wouldn't they be resentful of voting for us? And what about all that lobbyist bait thrown our way? That would certainly alienate some voters if they realized how we're beholden to the 'K Street crowd'. And if they found out that the special interest groups are actually writing the bills we introduce? Think of the stink that would raise! Nosiree. It's better to keep them in the dark like mushrooms while we do the people's business.

If Congress were the worst of our problems, I would say that there might be solutions we could implement (like term limits, for example). Unfortunately, they and our national politics are merely a reflection of the deep ideological divide that has gripped our nation for decades and has eaten away at our ability to put (and keep) things like our differences of personal opinion in the proper perspective. These days, everything is political and no amount of bourbon and branch water will reverse the detour we've been on. The 'good neighbor' fence that we used to talk over in suburbia has become an impenetrable fortification that separates us from one another. Our families are split down the middle and cannot come together for even a traditional Thanksgiving Dinner without slapping on Kevlar vests.

When we travel to school board meetings we must first navigate a gauntlet of protestors that have gathered outside, split into two camps - one in favor of teaching little Johnny and Suzie that there is such a thing as 'personal choice gender' or 'gender fluidity' while a second group is raising Cain against brainwashing the little urchins on the insidious 'critical race theory' that aims to convince the White ones that they are guilty of all manner and form of social ills because they were born White!

We've lost our equilibrium and are unable to conduct serious discussions about race in America without the Left accusing the Right of being 'culturally insensitive' or outright bigoted if simple facts are cited. An example is the discussion of White police violence on Blacks. The Left and so-called 'Black rights' groups like Black Lives Matter and the Southern Poverty Law Center would have us believe that like the debt clock, the Black victim-at-the-hands-of-White-police-clock is ticking away at breakneck speed when in fact only 15 Blacks were shot to death by White policemen last year, this in a country of over 300 million people with a Black population of 13%.

It's now impossible to speak about America's racial attitudes without the shrill voices taking over the conversation. Sad that it's come to that as we have much to talk about, but free speech is rapidly becoming an endangered species in modern America. I suppose we could look to physics and the three laws of mass for the answers. In the first law, an object will not change its motion unless a force acts on it. In the second law, the force on an object is equal to its mass times its acceleration. In the third law, when two objects interact, they apply forces to each other of equal magnitude and opposite direction.

Another law worth remembering is that of the 'tipping point.'

The tipping point is defined as the moment of critical mass, the threshold, and the boiling point. It is the point when everyday things reach epidemic proportions. It is an unexpected property of all kinds of things, and we must accept that if we are to recognize and diagnose epidemic change. I would contend that we have reached critical mass and that drastic change is on the way. This change will not come in the form of an armed revolution nor will it look like the events of January 6th at the Capitol Building in Washington, DC. It will be a ground swell of vocal protests - a broad-based public backlash - emanating from many different divergent groups all at once. It will appear organized, but in fact it is not (though that's what the government will have you believe like the narrative they continue to push about the 'Proud Boys' and QAnon being responsible for the pre-planned 'insurrection').

What we are seeing now is a series of 'inflection points' on a wide variety of social and cultural issues which used to be chalked off to simple disagreements of opinion. (An inflection point is a point on a smooth plane curve at which the curvature changes its sign or a 'normal' situation becomes abnormal.) These points are really trip wires that have been triggered, unleashing new disruptive actions (as opposed to rhetoric which we've all come to accept as part of a linear process for social change). They can be upsetting to those holding power as they are a direct assault on the status quo, but for those who can afford to stand back and watch them play out they are the harbingers of sometimes significant change that can move nations and the power centers that fund and support them.

Some examples of those inflection points can be found occurring in issues like climate change, illegal immigration, gender identification, abortion, traditional marriage, free speech clamp downs, political correctness issues, government surveillance, elections and voting rights, education curricula and many more. Like warring couples in a dysfunctional marriage, we Americans have 'irreconcilable differences' that prevent us from living together. Instead, we live in a neurotic, emotionally-disturbing environment that is subject to radical changes every two-to-four years of political cycles. No amount of therapy is going to help because the problems are too deep and have been left to fester for too long. America is like adolescents that don't know what they want to be when they grow up. It's a simple diagnosis and a common ailment most parents go through with teenagers until some important event (like a personal crisis) intervenes and turns growing pains into growing scars.

Knowing what the problem is, however, does not solve it. I'm afraid that we will have to allow the critical mass that has been building up for decades within our society to run its course until we are able to see beyond the horizon of our interminable in-fighting and realize that we cannot destroy the village in order to save it.

This will take steely determination much like the 'Greatest Generation' showed when it was faced with a World War. Do Americans have the moral courage to admit we took the wrong turn, reverse course and then find our way back home after so many years in denial? The inflection points tell us that there may only be one more rest stop before we run out of road.

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