

If you don't regularly receive my reports, request a free subscription at steve_bakke@comcast.net !
Visit my website at <http://www.myslantonthings.com> !

Put America's "melting pot" back to work!

Steve Bakke  May 1, 2025



We've lost something! Recall the de facto American motto, "E Pluribus Unum," translated from Latin as "one from many." It conveys the ideal of America developing like a "melting pot." That is to say, it's made up of people from diverse backgrounds and ethnicities, living peacefully and developing its own collective identity and culture.

Several years ago I recall commenting about Americans who feared anything that "smacked of" nationalism, such as yearning for a national identity. For some, "world citizenship" took priority over U.S. citizenship. Some of that is still found today.

Sadly, modern America suffers from bitterness and disagreements. We've been polarized into extremes of gratitude vs. grievance. We observe ever fewer examples of ethnicities living peacefully together while maintaining unity and pride of national identity.

Have our American culture and national identity become extinct, or are they just hiding? Do Americans still take pride in those characteristics? For any culture to exist, I believe there must be a level of philosophical consistency and moral standards. But moral absolutes and standards have fallen out of favor as we trend toward "situation ethics" and often defer to individual moral choices.

Far too many Americans discount the importance of citizenship. The idea that citizens and legal residents should be held accountable for having a minimum level of civic responsibility has diminished. Whether citizens, or "wannabes," our Constitution should be embraced, institutions respected, and laws complied with. Those seem to be reasonable expectations.

Assimilation happens when immigrants encounter and react to a new set of experiences and challenges. It's the process by which "newcomers" make the necessary adjustments. It's the melting pot at work. This process is difficult but necessary for newcomers to survive, and hopefully thrive, in a new environment.

Newcomers aren't expected to imitate other Americans. They don't have to give up their religion. Assimilation isn't a means of subordinating newcomers to existing citizens. And it's not the same as "acculturation" whereby traditions, heritage and religion disappear as if there's been some sort of conquest.

Unfortunately, there are factors that have diminished the success of our melting pot process. For decades, conservative pundit Dennis Prager has bemoaned watching E Pluribus Unum being replaced by the concept of "multiculturalism." Unfortunately, many reformers

have come to believe the motto, “one from many,” is equivalent to promoting multiculturalism. But America’s version of multiculturalism has evolved into something far different. Historian Chuck Chalberg expressed a similar observation: “A multiethnic society is a blessing; a multicultural one is doomed.” So, what is it that Prager’s and Chalberg take exception to?

Rather than operating as an ethnic melting pot, America’s multiculturalism encourages economic and social isolation. This emphasis on separateness reinforces mistrust and fear. We tend to focus on differences rather than “common ground,” leading to polarization and de facto segregation.

Many believe our society is becoming more inclusive. But our polarized population is evidence that isn’t the case. We sort ourselves into groups, such as race, ethnicity, language, class, gender identity, sexuality, etc. The resulting uneasy separateness is an impediment to developing or maintaining a cultural identity. Our polarization works to prevent the melting pot process celebrated by our motto, E Pluribus Unum.

Our once sincere pursuit of being a more inclusive, multiethnic society has evolved into a divisive form of multiculturalism characterized by identity politics. We’ve evolved away from being a multiethnic society whereby people from diverse backgrounds often celebrated, and sometimes shared, ethnic traditions. It’s become harder to find an Italian community enjoying an “Irish Fair”, Mexican Festival, Oriental Food Fair, or Native American artifact show.

What happened to diminish this unifying activity? Perhaps to preserve the intended multicultural separateness, a new sin of “cultural appropriation” was imagined and labeled “politically incorrect.” Too often, the joy of celebrating inclusivity by showing appreciation for, and sometimes sharing traditions of another group or ethnicity, has been discouraged.

These new “off limit” behaviors involve sharing traditions, customs, food, dance steps, hair styles, fashion, language or music. Opponents of these activities began accusing those participating of exploitation or at least disrespect for the other groups or ethnicities. This reinforced the developing mistrust and grievance.

We have lost something important. We must do the hard work necessary to eliminate America’s artificial structural divisiveness by putting the old-fashioned melting pot back to work.

This article has been about multiculturalism working against our melting pot process. Stay tuned for further discussion of how the well-intended “diversified, equity and inclusion” (DEI) efforts have been destroyed by other misguided and destructive “woke” imaginings.