

## One swallow does not a summer make

Political pundits and analysts are willing navel gazers. They're constantly talking about the 'long game' in politics, and after last night's upset election in Virginia they will certainly be posting stories that smack of one swallow not making a summer or words to that effect. Once again, we are reminded of our Greek friend, Aristotle, who presciently said: "One swallow does not make a summer, neither does one fine day; similarly one day or brief time of happiness does not make a person entirely happy."

A clever saying, for sure, but it's also a one sentence cautionary tale for Republicans, Conservatives and Independents that have been standing outside the Democrats' *power tent* looking in. While they must take some well-deserved celebration time, pop the cork on some Champagne and toast their guy's success in Virginia, they cannot drown the deeper sorrows that lie percolating in their psyches over Trump's loss in 2020. In short, headiness is deadly and causes a stubborn condition that many in politics suffer from - overconfidence - which, if left to dominate our decision-making, can lead to faulty strategizing and even complacency.

Democrats understand this trap and do a better job of avoiding it. While they retreat to their lairs to repair and lick their wounds, they don't wall themselves off from the reality that everybody can win and lose and that the long game demands getting back up on the horse (or in this case the elephant) that's thrown you. The Dems re-play the battle frame by frame in their minds, pouring over campaign ads, speeches, townhalls, voter interviews, and they do this TOGETHER, in groups that can provide support for everybody in the group. They don't act like jilted lovers nor do they take down the shotgun from above the door and go in search of the 'enemy.'

They do, however, go on the offensive, again...together, fanning out to the media with well-crafted emotionally-charged talking points that they deliver with conviction. And like the 'Terminator' they vow to be back. They don the patriot's cap and speak of the *greater challenge to America* that only they can satisfy; that the election (it makes no difference which one) was an anomaly and doesn't truly reflect the will of the *real* people. Few of them will blame themselves or their candidates because once admitting blame, one can never 'unadmit' it. While the bell may have tolled for them, they will say that it was really meant for *everyone* and that if given the opportunity next time around they will right the wrongs of a flawed election.

It must be said that Republicans are also not immune from the same temptation, but they tend to take defeat hard and mourn their losses longer, especially those that are ideological in nature. They take rejection personally and feel it like a stake has been driven through their hearts. They are momentarily paralyzed. They wonder how anybody (read: the Dems) could misread the threats to democracy, to traditional American values, to common sense or not see the dangers of voting for a closet socialist or an un-closeted one to the Republic. Republicans retreat to weep in solitude. And while their sorrow is not halved by sharing, they do, eventually, come together. At that point, they have purged themselves of their tears but they have also sent their anger on holiday whereas their Democrat counterparts USE their anger like a reserve gas tank to fuel their forward momentum.

Love hurts.

So do elections, especially those that occur when the country or the state are teetering on or mired in cultural or economic chaos. We allow our political analysts to pour over the candidates' campaigns and corpuses in a collective autopsy that is designed to ascertain the 'real' cause of death/defeat. They then offer up their conclusions in an unending stream of postulations that sometimes hit their mark but more often take us on a circular journey outside the political corral where the view is better and not tainted by the dirty little details of campaign missteps. The candidates, themselves, are another matter. Seldom will they admit their mistakes. It's better to deny or demur than to own up to a failed strategy or poor communication or, God forbid, a campaign built on a phony premise.

I do not know if the American way of conducting politics is a reflection of all politics the world over or if candidates, the parties, the electorate, the donors or the media all have pre-ordained parts to play. What I do know is that we have a duty to look at our victories and defeats through both the lens of the past and the present. Aristotle said it best: "The society that loses its grip on the past is in danger, for it produces men who know nothing but the present, and who are not aware that life had been, and could be, different from what it is."

We must continue to celebrate Election Day and the days immediately after not so much for the wins or the strategic triumphs, but more for the opportunity to make our voices heard. If we can manage to remember that perhaps we have earned the right to hold another one.

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