

SAID AND HEARD

I've finally figured out why I've been so depressed recently. Our situation here personally is anything but depressing ... financially we're ok, nothing major is affecting our lives, and we live in our own equivalent of the Garden of Eden and a gated community. There's nothing to be depressed about ... until I turn on the television, that is.

Both political sides are hammering away at each other with a vehemence that I've not seen in my lifetime. The politics has become coarser, meaner and aimed more for the jugular than I can remember. It's just plain ugly.

I lay this lowering of civility directly at the feet of Mr. Trump. I call him that because while I respect the office of the President, I have no respect for the man that currently occupies it.

He won the election somehow by appealing to the lowest factor in our social fabric, that of the anger and resentment contained within many of our citizens. These emotions have been simmering under the surface for generations, but primarily since the Civil War. It has seen eruptions at various times in response to events in the culture and fabric of the country that altered people's perceptions of their place and self-image within the society.

When Mr. Trump came along, he vowed to 'Make America Great Again.'

What disaffected white men heard was 'Make ME Great Again.' Coal miners thought they heard that they would get their jobs and self-respect back. Farmers thought they heard that they would see the return of the family farm and a way of life that they grew up with. Workers thought they heard that companies which had sent their manufacturing overseas would be forced to bring it back, and re-employ the workers that they had eliminated. Corporations thought they would see the return of the company of old that could bust unions with impunity, pay as little as could be done to their workers, and have virtual autonomy over their workplaces. In short, they all thought they saw a return to their version of the glory days of the Pre-Depression era of 1920's America. This was the 'Gilded Age' of the robber barons and white male supremacy.

Minorities, on the other hand, heard nothing of the kind. Blacks heard the echoes of Jim Crow and segregation heading their way through voter suppression and the lack of emphasis on civil rights. Hispanics heard a mantra of invective aimed at throwing them back across the border if undocumented, and if here legally, being classified

along with other minorities as something less than full-fledged citizens.

Women heard a man that bragged about his sexual prowess and openly boasted about exploits that were at the very least harassment, and at the worst, outright attempts at rape or sexual assault.

The LGBTQ community heard mixed messages that at one point touted that "I'm the best friend the LGBTQ community will ever have." They also saw a vice-presidential candidate (and later the actual vice-president) who was an avowed anti-LGBTQ advocate. Mike Pence, as governor of Indiana, tried to make the state very hostile to the community through a 'religious liberty' law. That would have made it OK for any business or individual to discriminate based on 'deeply held religious views (a definition that any third year law student could drive a truck through.)

But the dog whistles to the base were effective and Mr. Trump and Mr. Pence were elected. Since then he has populated his Executive Branch with a majority of cabinet officers that are not only anti-LGBTQ, but are openly committed to destroying the agencies and departments that they are charged with operating. They are repealing regulations on companies that have been built up over decades regarding worker safety, environmental regulations, and Department of Justice priorities.

The war on the LGBTQ community has seen the attempt at eliminating transgender members of the military, and rescinding the requirement that federal contractors not discriminate against LGBTQ employees in any way. More is to come, most of it out of sight and without fanfare.

Voting rights and voter suppression are no longer being fought by the Department of Justice, which allows states to implement voter ID requirements that disproportionately affect minority voters and prevent them from voting. 'Gerrymandering' of voting districts to insure racial or ethnic vote suppression will go unchallenged. Police departments are now free to violate their citizen's civil rights with impunity, since the DOJ will no longer promote or prosecute the so-called 'consent decrees' that forced law enforcement to alter its culture and treat ALL its citizens with dignity and respect.

All of what they thought they heard promoted the white, straight male's self-image and gave them the false hope of regaining their exalted status as head of the family, breadwinner, and controlling segment of the country.

Most, if not all, was a lie.

The coal jobs and manufacturing assembly line jobs are not coming back. If companies do bring their product creation back, much

of the rote work will be automated and the prized blue-collar employment opportunities of yore simply will not exist. The skills required for the workplace of the twenty-first century are technical and require some college-level training.

Changing the health care system will only aggravate the very voters that 'repeal and replace Obamacare' appealed to when millions are denied health insurance while millions more find that their new plans don't cover much and they wind up bankrupt anyway.

Tax reform will be shown to be a thinly-disguised way of providing massive tax cuts to the rich while gutting Medicare, Medicaid and eventually Social Security. The tax bills of middle-class Americans will be either static or increase.

In order to distract from all these domestic raids on the population, we'll probably be in a war with North Korea or Iran or both within six months. Thousands (if not millions) of South Koreans will be under attack and many of our military will come home to Dover AFB in coffins.

And all this to satisfy the egos of a minority of white males in the society. However, unless we find a way to allow all of us to get along, we're on the path to another Civil War; this one being fought with automatic weapons, tactical nukes and computers. Racism, sexism, and ethnic hatred will never be eliminated, but it can be controlled. All the 'isms' that always divide us are ingrained in our DNA. The 'green monkey' syndrome exists, and to deny it is to deny our very existence.

This may sound hypocritical, given my belief that multiculturalism doesn't work. But reality has a way of biting, and we've come too far down this path to not try to save it. This grand experiment of democracy can either succeed and be that "shining city on the hill", or it can fracture and become like the Balkan states of Eastern Europe ... weak and divided.

The choice is up to us. So is the end result.