

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS (with apologies to Lewis Carroll)

If it weren't so serious and potentially applicable to our entire population, the debacle that we're watching in the Alabama Senatorial election would be a work of fiction or a TV show. The actors in the episode are straight out of a screenplay amped up for dramatic effect and could never happen in real life.

The problem is, it IS happening in real life, and the effects of how the drama plays out will affect the futures of millions of Americans.

At the core of this part of the drama we have a religious xenophobe with child-molestation proclivities, the hypocrisy of which we have not seen on the public stage in years, if ever. His supporters are tunnel-visioned, and I have to wonder if they would drink the Jim Jones KoolAid if he asked them to.

He's running for the United States Senate, whose current members are tying themselves in knots trying to figure out how to prevent this extremist outlier from breaching their hallowed halls in Washington. He has a good chance of winning, in spite of the ever-increasing number of women claiming that he sexually harassed or fondled them.

This aspect of the Senatorial race is but a facet of a greater problem that has arisen from the social swamp recently. That's the spate of sexual harassment claims being levied against high-profile men in a variety of professions.

U.S. Presidents, movie actors and producers, legislators, corporate executives and an amazing array of men are being accused of sexism and outright assault of women in their employ or sphere of influence. We as a society have turned a blind eye to this phenomenon for generations, stemming back to our white patriarchal roots as a society.

We have to remember that women were chattel in this country until the early part of the twentieth century. They had no right to vote, divorce was a stigma that was not condoned, and the man of the household was lord and master - he could do no domestic wrong, even in the court of law. In many cases, women were considered lower on the social scale than black men until more than half-a-century following the Civil War. They were to be kept "barefoot and pregnant" and cater to every whim of their breadwinner. Their domain was the house and kitchen, and the care of children was their highest concern.

Even with women's rights becoming theoretically equal a century ago, the actuality of achieving the practical application of them has been slow to come to reality. Given the statistics of the corporate workplace, very few women hold positions of power in the hierarchy of the business

world, and those that do are forced to be just as chauvinistic as the men they have to deal with to get to those positions (sometimes worse).

Since the men hold the social advantage even to this day, it's not hard to visualize their sense of power carrying over to polygamous sexuality in the workplace. And when you couple that with a subordinate's fear of losing a promotion or the job itself if they don't submit, the atmosphere of acquiescence can be pervasive. And that same atmosphere makes sure that most of the victims never talk about or report the assaults on both their bodies and their psyches.

And now, that era of male superiority is attempting a comeback. White males have felt that they were losing their grip on their positions in society for a few decades now, but the last election gave voice to their rage and feelings of frustration. They are attempting a resurgence and would take us back to the social era when "men were men, and women knew their place."

But there are a few glimmers of light in this social gloom. More and more women are speaking up about their encounters and exposing their perpetrators to the light of publicity. The gamut of prominent men that have lost jobs, careers and status recently is actually amazing, considering the situation as it has been for centuries.

I have to believe that the 'genie is out of the bottle' and is refusing (finally) to go back into confinement. Breaking the glass ceiling and changing the entire society for the better is now a distinct possibility if we don't allow this last gasp of white male superiority to surface and take hold in any reasonable manner.