

The Loss of Civility and the Failure of Pluralism

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There has been an incoherence developing over recent years in the media-confused, left-leaning segment of the North American population. Whoopi Goldberg's now-famous meltdown during her talk-show interview with Judge Jeanine Pirro (live on the set of *The View*)¹ is just one glaring example of the failure of our culture to maintain civil discourse while intelligently discussing policies. Even family members can be divided by crude partisan politics which give no credit to opposing points of view.

In Canada, the challenges to the polite resolution of problems are also increasing. Name-calling across the floor of the House is on the rise and accusatory phrases and labels can be heard daily in the media as they report and opine on the issues of the day. Social media is not immune and may in fact be leading this trend. With the semi-anonymity available to Facebook and Twitter users, profanity-laced comments and in-your-face insults have become deplorably acceptable. It's easier to throw out witty and disparaging remarks than to win an argument with logic and facts.

One of the trending markers of this self-approving stage-rage is simply the increased tendency of both guests and hosts on the talk shows to "talk over" each other as they try to make their points. This used to be called interrupting and was generally considered rude and boorish. In polite company in days past, each person used to be allowed to state his or her case and then others would have the opportunity to attempt to show why that theory was inaccurate or incomplete. In fact, there was a time when friends could "talk things over" instead of "talking over" by raising the volume and drowning out the voices of those with whom they disagreed.

Rudeness and violence are becoming the norm in many movies and video games. Gratuitous violence and put-downs have set the tone. Competitive talent shows like "Shark Tank", "American Idol" and "Survivor" are poor examples to young people, and professional "wrestling" (glorified violence and prideful boasting) is even worse. Contact sports like football often seem to degenerate into trash-talking and "unsportsmanlike conduct".

A loss of civility in any context is sad. In the political realm—if left unchecked—it can only lead to mayhem, chaos, tyranny or civil war. In order for a civil society to function, there must be civility: rules by which all participants agree to abide. One may not expect one's own opinion to be respected if one does not allow others to fully express theirs. You may be fully convinced that you are right but if you can only win the argument by silencing your opponent, you may have deepened the rift of misunderstanding without coming to agreement.

In the first televised leaders' debate, during the long and painful Canadian federal election of 2015, Justin Trudeau, now our Prime Minister, repeatedly interrupted then-PM Stephen Harper. As is so often the case, the moderator allowed the interruptions instead of ensuring that each leader had the opportunity to properly respond to questions and challenges. I was disgusted by the spectacle and could hardly believe the talking heads who generally indicated their opinion that Mr. Trudeau had "won the debate."

Since when does being rude win plaudits? How can a lack of politeness earn respect? Yet it seems that the voting public accepted their conclusion: might makes right; bullying wins; he who speaks loudest and fastest overcomes the one with something to say.

That's not what we teach our children. That's not how we ourselves learn to resolve disputes. In Canada today, the cultural schism between the so-called left and right is fast becoming impenetrable to reason. Facts are discounted as irrelevant. Blind support for one's cause or one's party has become more important than the sifting of truth. The silencing of dissent is a dangerous prelude to persecution. Already, people like Linda Gibbons and Mary Wagner are going to jail for peaceful protest against the killing of the innocent. Social activists like Bill Whatcott are being arrested for creative but peaceful protest against the gender agenda juggernaut. Professor Jordan Peterson faces the intimidation and silencing tactics of outraged political correctness activists for refusing to be neutered by their demands. Organizations which refuse to sing from Justin Trudeau's social justice song sheet are denied government funding which is now being given even to terrorist-affiliated groups.² Social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook, once extolled as the levelling factor in news and opinion, are now restricting access and distribution to massage public opinion according to the leftist views of their boards.

The hidden thread connecting this sequence of repressive measures is that secular, leftist journalists and politicians think of themselves as broad-minded, tolerant, free-thinkers. They have long accused the right of censorship and narrow thinking. They profess that they themselves want all ideas, all religions, all forms of government, all gender orientations, etc. to live together in blissful harmony. They recognize that the Christian religion identifies only one God and only one Saviour. They object to this . . . but in their hostile and vindictive efforts to silence the Christian voice, the pro-life voice, the free speech voice, they decree ironically that there is only one way (their way) and Christianity is wrong, pro-lifers are wrong, free speech advocates are wrong. By denying us a place at the discussion table, they have denied their own pluralistic assertions.

It's time for common sense. It's time to admit that all ideas—while worthy of being heard—are not equal. It's impossible to both serve the sterile god of atheism and the living God who created all things and who gives us life and breath. The Christian Heritage Party recognizes that we live in a society composed of people of equal value—many of whom think and behave differently from us and from each other. We respect their right to do so but we do not delude ourselves that all lifestyles, all religions, or all political systems are equal. We are willing to discuss these differences and to explain why we believe a Christian world view produces a more compassionate society and government. If you share our convictions, please join the Christian Heritage Party.³ If you disagree, let's talk!

Footnotes

¹ www.foxnews.com/entertainment/2018/07/20/judge-jeanine-pirro-whoopi-goldberg-dispute-from-view-spills-into-second-day.html

² torontosun.com/opinion/columnists/malcolm-controversial-islamic-groups-receive-canada-summer-jobs-grants

³ www.chp.ca/get-involved

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