

Vote for ME

2017 0214

I had a hard time selecting a proper title for this essay. I'm still not sure I really like it. There were several candidates: all unsuitable.

Here's the problem; um, not the problem with the title, but the problem with America. We've gone insane. Yep, I made up a new meaning for an old word by adding a hyphen. by In-sane I mean that our sanity is all focused inwardly. We had our warning. Not long ago someone with a wider audience than me named an entire generation The ME Generation. My mistake was thinking that the ME attitude was limited to a single generation.

Look around. Sure, we see a lot of people doing a lot of nice things for a lot of other people, but the numbers of giving people as a percentage of the population appears to be dropping. Why is this important? Why is it important enough to warrant addressing?

Take the standard American family. Once, family was the core unit of American society. Brothers stood with brothers, was the old saying. Moving up the community chain, neighborhoods stood with neighborhoods. Towns stood with towns. States stood with states. And if we ever do get invaded by Martians, Earthlings would be expected to stand with earthlings. That's how communities and nations are formed.

But if one member of the family always chooses to do what is best for him rather than what is best for the family, the whole thing falls apart. The lazy brother who never mows the grass because he's busy with his video game is no longer a member of the family. He has become an internal parasite, feeding upon the contributions of the other members of the family.

The best and most obvious evidence of our newfound self-preeminence can be witnessed on the American roads. We see people cutting into lanes on the exit ramp at the last second instead of getting in line like everyone else. We see people passing on the shoulder of the merge lane just to get three or four cars ahead in traffic. Motorcycles ride down the white stripe to get ahead. And, of course, we see people accelerate at the first hint of yellow in a traffic light. The way we drive is *me first* at it's worst. But, let's go back to the family.

When the family unit falls apart, especially if more and more people begin to put self-interest above family interest, the community will fall apart. People who live by self-interest don't care about the community, but will make a stink if something happens that hampers them personally: something that stands in the way of their self-interest. Just like the selfish driver who doesn't care about other people on the road, or their safety, the self-interested person somehow believes that his needs are more important than those of anyone else.

This theme is not new; Aesop addressed it around 600 B.C. His essay, known as a fable, included the universally familiar phrase: "United we stand, divided we fall. There's another one about how hard it is

to break a bundle of sticks and how easy it is to break the bundle one stick at a time. What's new, and what makes it worth our time to consider, is how it is affecting our nation.

It's one thing to opt out of society and think only of one's self, but it's quite another when that action becomes detrimental to the others, erodes the community, divides the nation, and destroys the American system of governance. When we cast a vote that will serve our self-interest and undermine the national interest, we are doing exactly that. When we choose to vote to eliminate a law solely because it adversely affects our income and without consideration of how that law contributes to our community, our state, and our nation, we are putting self-interest above all else. We are telling the world that what matters to us as individuals is more important than the survival of the nation.

When we vote for a candidate who promises US something that will cost OTHERS something, we are voting self-interest. We are In-sane.

"We are all here for each other, or we are here for no one."

© 2017, Thomas R. Cuba