

Are Political Opponents People Too?

Perhaps it's because I was born just after the end of World War II when most Americans had sacrificed something or someone to preserve American democracy that I had an unpleasant reaction to Dominick Lombardi's latest commentary in the M-OT calling for "a standard of decorum and respect for our Democratic opponents." He called for a "spirit of cooperation... not the extreme partisanship that dominates the news cycles," warned us that "the rhetoric in this country has become dangerously polarizing," and just as I was warming up to him, chided "both Democrats and Republicans, including leaders like Joe Biden and Donald Trump," for "this divisive climate."

Perhaps it was the condescending tone as he lectured us that "...those on the other side (i.e., Democrats) are people too" that riled me. Maybe it was his channeling of Charlottesville, when Trump declared that there are "good" people on both sides, as he blamed Biden for a share of the dystopian mood that has settled over us since Trump became a politician. My post WWII upbringing can't accept "good" Nazis and "good" white supremacists equated with civil rights activists, feminists, environmentalists and other democratically oriented "woke" folk who fight for parity, the dignity of the working classes and the preservation of the planet. And try as I might, I can't recall Biden ever calling his political adversaries "vermin" who need to be "rooted out," or declaring that there was "no choice" but to imprison them. Nor do I remember Biden ever asserting that immigrants "poison the blood of America" (though each of us has roots in immigration including Trump through his own mother and two of his wives.) And popular as the ploy may be during Third Grade recess, I can't recollect Biden ever calling for unity by naming his critics "horse-face," "fat pig," "sleepy, creepy," "cacklin' copilot," and on and on. But I do recall Trump saying that political correctness "is a cancer eating away at the body politic," that Biden is "running a Gestapo administration" and that "America is a stupid country run by stupid people."

"America is a stupid country...?"

I agree with Dominick that "We can disagree passionately, but fear-mongering and demonizing opponents... is not the way to persuade the American public." So I am both astounded and annoyed insofar as fear mongering and demonizing has been Trump's, not Biden's, pattern all along. Anyone who has heard both candidates (and now Harris) speak knows that. Dominick and others may continue to tell us that our eyes, ears and brains are deceiving us "stupid people," but he is mistaken if he believes this tactic will gain his party many converts. As long as Trump continues to assert that "the threat from outside forces is far less sinister, dangerous and grave than the threat from within" and MAGA yes-men fail to clean their own house, citizens will see through their smokescreen and the Republican party will sadly continue to lose credibility and moral clarity. That the Party of Lincoln could so devolve is a shame.

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