

Trump and Core Values

9/29/2017

I recently had the unpleasant experience of talking with an ardent Trump supporter who raised some important questions, but did so in a way that was offensive and inappropriate—in fact, I felt bullied and shut down. The conversation did, however, enable me to articulate my objections to Trump and his administration, whose agenda is so contrary to the core values of the graduate school where I teach, and indeed, so contrary to the core values of American democracy. Those values are, in brief:

- 1. Multicultural Diversity**
- 2. Equal Rights and Respect for Women**
- 3. Responsibility to Care for the Earth**
- 4. The Humanities and Liberal Arts in America**
- 5. Civility and Respect for Others**

1. Multicultural Diversity

Valuing multicultural diversity means that we at Pacifica support, and indeed celebrate, the many ethnic, racial, religious backgrounds that Americans come from, and which greatly enrich our nation—which from the start has been a nation of immigrants, many fleeing from wars, poverty, racism, and religious conflicts. The ancestry in my extended family is composed of such immigrants: a Mother-in-Law who was a Hungarian Jew displaced by the Nazis in World War 2, and who found refuge in America, along with her daughter—both of whom, however, had to suffer the anti-Semitic, xenophobic racism of the South. I personally am descended from people from Holland, Scotland, Ireland, and Germany, who came here as far back as the 17th century, and who were also struggling to escape poverty, wars, and religious controversies in their home countries. I know they would have been terrified and appalled by the sight of men carrying assault weapons with Nazi tattoos through the streets of Charlottesville, and equally alarmed by Trump's

vacillating and confusing response to the event, initially failing to explicitly condemn the so-called “White Supremacist” Nazis who initiated the violence there.

2. Equal Rights and Respect for Women

My graduate institute supports, encourages, and celebrates equal rights for women, and, above all, respectful treatment, free of the kind of macho sexism and abusive vulgarity which seems to be part of Trump’s psychology. An aspect of that support is acceptance of differences in gender identity and sexual orientation. It was both alarming—and indeed ironic—to hear Trump object to gays and cross-gender individuals serving in the military. The closest he has come to such service is dressing up in a fancy uniform never sullied by the blood and mud of the kind of battles my father fought during the War. He too would have been appalled by the Nazi supremacists carrying weapons through the streets of Charlottesville. This is not the America he fought for, and for which his friends died.

3. Responsibility to Care for the Earth

Tending the environment, and protecting all the beautiful people of so many cultures, all the animals and plants of the earth, is critical to Pacifica’s concern for “Anima Mundi,” the soul of the world. Appointing Pruitt—a staunch critic of climate change, and a flunky of the oil companies, who has systematically deconstructed the EPA by taking all information about climate change and science off its website, cutting funding for such research, and in compliance with agendas to reopen the coal mines, remove restrictions on carbon emissions for cars and factories, and reverse the Clean Air and Water acts—is about as cynical an appointment as one can imagine. Along with Trump’s threat to void our agreement with the Paris Accord—which puts no additional financial obligations on Americans—is also distressing. Trump’s denial of climate change science, and aggressive campaign against environmentalists, will have long-term, irreversible consequences for the planet, and may well be devastating for our children and grandchildren.

4. The Humanities and Liberal Arts in America.

I have been in higher education, teaching a liberal arts and humanities curriculum for all of my professional life (some 37 years now). I can't imagine a life with the joy of the literature, music, dance, and the arts which have so animated my life and the lives of so many Americans, who have benefitted from the initiatives of the National Endowment for the Arts, and other such groups, which Trump has threatened to do away with, including for God's sake PBS—the only independent channel on TV that makes substantial offerings to these fields of creative expression. To witness the arts counsels resigning and Trump neglecting to attend the annual Lincoln Center awards was painful, however characteristic it was of his apparent lack of education and culture.

5. Civility, Honesty, and Respect for Others

Finally, there is the matter of civility, dignity, honesty, and moral integrity, all of which we expect of such a powerful role model as President of the United States. Trump's *modus operandi* seems to be to bully, threaten, fire, and intimidate anyone who disagrees with him or crosses his path (witness his attacks on Sessions and Kelly, both of whom had never been so humiliated during all their many years of service, and both of whom seem to have considered resignation).

And then, there are the lies, so many of them that my email service cannot forward articles documenting them. This is without doubt the most mendacious President we have ever had, a pathological liar in fact, who seems not able to utter a single tweet without a lie in it:

https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/06/23/opinion/trumps-lies.html?mcubz=1&_r=0

And then there is the matter of Trump's relationship with Russia. In principle, there is nothing wrong or illegal in his having had decades of business deals with Russia. But in fact, when those financial connections become a conflict of interest, with the result that Russian money can drive political policy making in America, and apparently interfere

with the electoral processes of a democracy, there is trouble—indeed, potentially treasonous trouble, compounded by the obstruction of justice that may be connected to firing Comey, and impeding the present inquiry of the FBI into Trump’s dealings with Russia—which his lawyers may or may not decide to comply with. And there is the matter of the emoluments clauses in the Constitution which put Trump on very thin ice with regards to his and his family’s business ties with the Russians, and the large profits he reaps from the Trump Hotels, particularly the one in Washington.

This relationship with Russia has been documented, and is not “fake news”:

<http://billmoyers.com/story/trump-russia-timeline/>

And so, for what it’s worth, that’s where I stand on these issues. I don’t anticipate much disciplined, well-informed debate about them, and I am sorry to have to confess how bullied and humiliated I felt after the recent tirade I endured by attempting to speak candidly with a Trump admirer. I sincerely hope, however, that when people talk about these issues with others who have legitimate concerns about the direction our country is taking, that they will do so with more deliberation and civility. Otherwise, they are just fueling the fires that Trump seems so fond of lighting. As we say in Jungian circles, there is hope that the extreme tension between opposites will generate a Third position, which we call the Transcendent Function. It is a way of unification for the psyche, of recognizing that it is not a matter of “Republicans” vs. “Democrats,” or “Liberals” vs. “Conservatives.” We are all Americans, and that we are planetary citizens, and need urgently to attend to the soul of the world.