

CULTURAL MALAISE

Once upon a time-though we weren't perfect-we seemed to be a relatively well-knit society made up of immigrants and their progeny. Certainly the first to come here were required to support our laws and the Constitution, to learn English and be a part of the great melting pot. Former cultures were not banned but placed in the perspective of becoming American first. Religion of all sects was allowed yet Founding Fathers were enamored with Christian models. Unspoken, perhaps, yet most thought we were a Christian Nation. Time and circumstance has changed the fabric and tenor, what DeToqueville, that French visitor, saw....religious and political freedoms. The melting pot has new ingredients, new flavors and new behaviors. Absolute and Relative truths clash!

In their books, Robert Bork, Allan Bloom and Thomas Sowell speak of Western decline: Bork says its permissiveness, diversity, declining support for morality and religion. Religious revival, economic depression, an unending war, morals restoration - a panacea; Bloom says, "American democracy has played host to vulgarized Continental ideas of nihilism, despair and relativism disguised as tolerance." Conflicts of interest dominate culture in the short run but Conflicts of visions dominate culture historically, according to Sowell. Heavy, incisive stuff in the brew.

There is a perception that our culture is in disarray, a malaise of sorts, and mosaic of many patterns and problems: persistent inflows of illegals threatens to divide us into two peoples, two cultures, two languages; loyalty to America is suspect from the Mexican and the Muslim; Religious acceptance seems a one-way street; Some radio hosts seem to believe 'freedom of speech' includes defamation of character and eth-

*nic vulgarity; decorum and respect seem absent in Congress for each other and for the visiting lecturers in Academia...shades of teachers, students holding hands sitting on the floors in dissent over Vietnam; and the seeming absence of parental supervision and responsibility for the actions of their children. Assuming and accepting responsibility for their actions seems vacated when government officials go hunting. And an undeclared and never-ending war misnamed as a War against Terror when militant Islam is the enemy and objective...dividing the country when a time of cooperation is needed by the body politic.....
....Columbine woke us, subsequent antics of students gone awry reminded us, and the 'walking infestation of evil' Cho Seung-hui wrought our culture a horrendous blow. Too bad nobody stopped him and too bad nobody moved...."Instead of banning guns, maybe we should rethink 1960s dogma."... vintage Sowell.*

Cultural malaise is like an Eastwood movie: 'the good, bad and the ugly....

Even though I am so old, I squeak, I recall some absolutes that apply without a relative application: a military commander is responsible for what his troops do or don't do, accepting the credit as well as the blame. A parent is responsible for what his/her children do or don't do. Both scenarios require supervision and an assumption of responsibility. Commanders suffered for the MyLai tragedy in Vietnam. Parents of the Columbine killers suffered and should have been tried. Cho's family has an aura of guilt. Evidence existed in both cases and required premature action. One is reminded of the German lament: "We didn't know of the crematoriums and the execution of the Jews." They knew!

Our culture bends with the times and accepts; what of the Islam menace where culture and doctrine are part of their quest and fanaticism..Vigilance!

