

SATYA - TRUTHFUL IN THOUGHT, SPEECH & ACTI

Democracy and socialism have nothing in common but one word, equality. But notice the difference: while democracy seeks equality in liberty, socialism seeks equality in restraint and servitude.

Alexis de Tocqueville

Truly, it is in darkness that one finds the light, so when we are in sorrow, then this light is nearest of all to us.

Meister Eckhart

Facts are many, but the truth is one.

Rabindranath Tagore



News Blues**by Paula Hulet**

I keep hoping the news headlines would change. I keep hoping for positive news. But listening to the news is still depressing. For me the news speaks of increased violence and aggression on all levels – in the words used, in the actions taken, in the reactions to words and actions, and in the thought processes and educational focus of so many within this country and throughout the world. Seems there is a move to squelch individuality, differing opinions, and the right to voice those opinions across the world. I find myself stymied, saddened, and amazed at the level of depravity we humans are willing to sink to.

Not normally a pessimist, I can't help but have the feeling that democracy is under attack and will become passe. The demand for conformity in thought, looks, and actions seems to be growing exponentially. Considers some of these takes from current events:

- Don't speak out against a government about a lackluster covid response out of fear of reprisals by the government. This is happening in Nicaragua and in India.
- In the Gaza strip it doesn't matter if a community has existed for over 50 years but is now being forced to move because others are claiming the land due to some law that entitles Israelis to do so at the expense of Palestinians.
- The Taliban are bombing girl schools in Afghanistan.
- Russia is jockeying to expand its sphere of influence through coercion and the flexing of its military muscle.
- In the US lawmakers and citizens have become so partisan it is not acceptable to think beyond the limits of one's party line unless you want to face reprisals or condemnation.
- And as to those conspiracy theories – why do we insist on living a lie? Why can't we get beyond the 2020 election? The move to restrict voter access in various states is just a sign of fear of losing control.
- Think of the many in this country who are still fretting over the vaccine out of fear – fear of too much government involvement – I'm healthy and don't need it; fear of too little government scrutiny – it all happened too fast; and fear that the vaccine is actually a medium to track individual activities – as if we are being tracked through cell-phone and internet usage. Plus, how is a microchip supposed to fit through that tiny needle?
- The continued lack of transparency when it comes to the law and the enforcement of the law, by police departments, District Attorneys, and the courts. How we continue to treat people of color as less than.
- I'm sure you can add to this list – both of activities in the US and abroad.

Thinking about democracy, I could not help but turn to the words of the 19th century philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville. While his comments on American democracy were based on life in the mid 1800's they seem very applicable today. A few for you to chew on.

- *I know of no country in which there is so little independence of mind and real freedom of discussion as in America.* – There really has been little change in the truth of this statement except we are more influenced by social media and other single-minded media outlets.
- *The surface of American society is covered with a layer of democratic paint, but from time to time one can see the old aristocratic colors breaking through.* - We are a country where too few have much and too many have little. Corporations have more power than most citizens.
- *The health of a democratic society may be measured by the quality of functions performed by private citizens.* - Fortunately, there are lots of people working for the greater good. At the same time there are many working for the preservation of the status quo. It is up to each one of us to speak up, to be heard, as we work to change the direction of this country.

We are so overdue for a change, positive, life giving change for all people. Such changes do not rise out of fear of what we will lose as individuals but out of joy for what we can gain as a nation as we care and support the wellbeing of all those that call this country home.

As to where we go from here – I have to hang on to hope. Hope comes as we see people working together to make small, and in some cases, large inroads of positive change in our communities. Hope comes in the way we speak up about what is happening in our communities, including writing to our elected officials, voting, encouraging others to vote, and supporting the many programs that help those whose needs are not being met. Hope comes when people gather to learn about those things we were not taught in school, those ways of life that seem so foreign to our own.

Hope comes in the morning. Or as Rabindranath Tagore says, “Faith (hope) is the bird that feels the light when the dawn is still dark.” It is important for us, as Peacebuilders, to be like the birds, feeling the light even though dawn seems far away.

