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Is There anything to be Thankful For Today?

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As my favorite day of the year approaches, I am aware of how easily we could overlook Thanksgiving this year. What do we have to be thankful for today? Many express their discontent and dissatisfaction with everything from our history to their hysteria. Many, around the world, want to blow up everything and to kill people they do not know in order to protest their dissatisfaction with the way the world is going. Many want to express love for their “God” by hurting, killing or attacking those who have done nothing worse than being different.

Many who have every good thing this world has to offer choose to protest our past and the imperfection of our present. To the causal observer, these protestors do not appear to be doing anything constructive to remedy the injustices they protest, but they protest none-the-less.

Many, who have more rights than any people in the world, demand to have the right to be free of offense. They demand the right to never be offended but often choose offensiveness toward others as their means of demanding not to be offended themselves. As I observe this, I think, it is my responsibility not to be offensive as much as is possible, but NO ONE has the right to demand to never be offended. Many people are so preoccupied with what they want, that they cannot be grateful for what they have.

On many college campuses, students who have lived “the dream” and who attend colleges with financial support from their parents or from society demand that no one speak in opposition to what they want to believe. A “culture of tolerance” is promoted and advanced by the demand for the “legitimizing of intolerance”. Many are building their hope for future control of our country on the foundation of applauding and advancing intolerance, hatred and the idea that everyone is a victim of something and that freedom and personhood are only advanced by their discovering by what, and by whom the intolerant is a victim. These “intolerants” judge that whatever they don’t like in their life is an injustice and what they don’t like is someone’s fault, but never their own.

Entire countries have as their *raison d’etre* -- their “reason for being” -- the destruction of another country. Their principal policy is to advance their ideals by the destroying of the rights or the persons of others. And, many misguided souls think that the way to succeed in dealing with intolerance is by placating, capitulating and excusing this unacceptable behavior.

In the midst of this, I am nevertheless thankful for Christmas 1949. In 1949—1950, our family of four shared a two-bedroom house with another family. My father left home every Monday morning to return every Friday night. But, the thing for which I am most grateful is that he never didn't come home. I am grateful that for the first time we had an indoor bathroom and running water. For Christmas, my father bought the family a radio. We had never had one. We understood terms like "high cotton," "high on the hog," and we understood that we were "living the dream."

At five years of age, I started the first grade and I couldn't count, but my class mate who sat next to me could. Problem solved. In November, I turned six years old. My father was 28 years old. He was 21 when my brother was born and 22 when I joined the family. Although my mother and father are both gone, today, I am thankful for them. I am amazed that as young people themselves, they worked hard and provided for us. I remember that when I registered for high school for the first time, many of my friends went alone; my mother went with me. I thought how nice it would be if she were not with me, as if I were a child – I was 14 years old – I was a child. Today, needless to say, I would be grateful if she were with me.

In the summer of 1950, we moved to Natchitoches, Louisiana. We had our own home – well, it was a company house -- but it was new and we had electricity and an indoor bathroom. We were living "up town," though it was in the country. I would not get my first bicycle until I was 17 and a freshman in college (it was stolen the first day I had it) but we had horses. What difference did it make that they cost \$10 and that they did not come with saddles. They were horses.

Between ages 14-17, I would often go on 4-H trips to Baton Rouge, not realizing that just a few miles from where we stayed, there was a young girl growing up whom I would meet in 1962.

Fifteen years after we moved to Natchitoches, this pretty young woman and I would be married. I am thankful that I met her when she was only 19.

I am thankful for those years. We were not wealthy or prominent or extraordinary but that was no one's fault. We lived on a dirt road which in the dry times produced a great deal of dust. The best times were when the parish put oil on the road and there was less dust.

I remember when I got my first glasses; I was six years old and in the second grade at the Northwestern State College laboratory school in 1950. Learning was easier for me when I was able to see the black board. I remember being called "four eyes" and being told that I had "weak eyes." I never felt like a victim. I am thankful that I could see and that my parents provided healthcare for me. Busing was not a problem for us, as we all road the bus to school. I regret that our schools were segregated but time would solve that.

I remember when I returned from a summer in East Africa, my plane landed in New York. When I got off the plane, I saw the American Flag and I wept. I was so thankful for being an American. You can imagine how I respond to millionaire athletes who refuse to stand in respect for the flag. It is a fact that we treated American Indians badly, and that slavery was terrible but I recently saw the introduction of football team and 100% of the millionaire athletes were African American. They are honored, welcomed and treated royally. We cannot change our past, but we can change our future. Let us celebrate our progress and let us change our future.

Today, I am thankful that things have changed in America and I look forward to more change before I pass from this life, but as a Caucasian, I did not create nor support slavery, bigotry or prejudice.

Today, I am grateful for my country and my gratitude imbues me with a spirit of hope that our future will be better than our past. This is a good Thanksgiving day and we all have a great deal to be thankful for. At least on this day, I choose to focus on the good while hoping for and working for the change to make the “good” better.