

**THE DESCENT IN DECENCY AND DEMOCRACY - ATTEMPTING TO UNDERSTAND THE  
OTHER SIDE**

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For the CHIT CHAT CLUB

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I HAVE SPENT THE LAST 50+ YEARS INVOLVED IN NATIONAL POLITICS WORKING ON OR RUNNING CAMPAIGNS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE AISLE, ALWAYS ON A NON-REMUNERATION BASIS. AS I AGE, I FIND MYSELF BEING MORE REALISTIC AS TO WHAT CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED. PUSHING FOR COMPROMISE BOTH IN THE POLITICAL ARENA AS WELL AS IN MY EVERYDAY LIFE. I COMPROMISE MORE WITH MY WIFE OF 50+ YEARS AND TRY TO UNDERSTAND THE POLITICAL STANCES FROM THOSE WHO DIFFER FROM ME AND WHO, AT AGE 35, I MIGHT HAVE WALKED AWAY FROM. I WAS BROUGHT UP IN THE LAND OF LINCOLN, BORN AND EDUCATED IN CHICAGO, CUTTING MY POLITICAL ACTION TEETH AGAINST MAYOR DALEY'S CHICAGO POLITICS, A RECIPIENT OF SOME OF HIS CHICANERY OF "TEACHING ME" ON THE LOSING SIDE OF ELECTIONS. I NOW TRY TO EMULATE LINCOLNESQUE IDEALS, EMPATHY AND PHILOSOPHY IN MY INVOLVEMENT WITH POLITICAL THOUGHT ALTHOUGH MUST ADMIT ---HAVE NOT FORGOTTEN MAYOR DALEY'S LESSONS AND MAYBE, JUST MAYBE, I HAVE EMPLOYED SOME OF MR. DALEY'S STEALTH VOTING STRATEGIES IN ELECTIONS IN WHICH I HAVE BEEN INVOLVED.

SINCE THE ELECTION OF 2008 I HAVE BECOME QUITE CONCERNED WITH THE LOSS OF DECENCY WITHIN THE POLITICAL ARENA AND HOW THAT HAS AFFECTED THE DESCENT OF DEMOCRACY. I AM MORE THAN A BIT PERTURBED AT WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO OUR SOCIETY AND AS I THOUGHT ABOUT THE DESCENT OF DECENCY, TRIED TO FIGURE OUT HOW I COULD BE INVOLVED IN REVERSING THIS MALAISE. THIS IS NOT THE FIRST TIME IN OUR HISTORY THIS HAS OCCURRED, AND I WONDERED HOW IN THE PAST THE RETURN TO AN ACCEPTABLE NORMAL CIVIL SOCIETY HAD COME ABOUT. AS A PRODUCT OF THE LAND OF LINCOLN- I DID MATRICULATE TO THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI, IN A BORDER STATE, WHERE IN A CLASS ON THE ORIGIN OF THE CIVIL WAR, A PROFESSOR OF MINE, EDUCATED IN THE STATE OF VIRGINIA, OPENED MY EYES TO AT LEAST INVESTIGATING "THE OTHER SIDE." SOMETIME IN MID 2021 JUST AS I STARTED PREPARING THIS ESSAY, A NEW BIOGRAPHY ON JOHN C. CALHOUN, WRITTEN BY STEVEN PINKER, RECEIVED POSITIVE

REVIEWS FROM BOTH THE WALL STREET JOURNAL AND THE NEW YORK TIMES. OVER THE YEARS MY TAKE ON CALHOUN STOOD FOR EVERYTHING I DID NOT, JUST LIKE THE 40% PRESENT DAY ELECTORATE WITH WHOM I DO NOT AGREE. I FELT READING THIS BIOGRAPHY WOULD GIVE ME INSIGHT INTO HOW THOSE WE DISAGREE WITH, ACQUIRE A PHILOSOPHY THAT IS AN ANATHEMA TO OUR OWN. WHEN I FINISHED READING ABOUT MR. CALHOUN, I KNEW I HAD A GENESIS OF A PAPER, AND THE PERIOD CALHOUN REPRESENTED AS A LEADING FIGURE WOULD BE JUST ONE OF THREE OR FOUR PERIODS TO COVER IN WHICH OUR COUNTRY WENT THROUGH THE CATHARSIS OF DESCENT OF DECENCY AND LOSS OF DEMOCRACY.

WITHOUT QUESTION THE YEARS LEADING UP TO OUR CIVIL WAR, FROM POST WAR OF 1812 UNTIL LINCOLN'S ELECTION IN 1860, WAS A FRIGHTFUL PERIOD IN WHICH OUR COUNTRY WAS FILLED WITH NEGATIVE DISCOURSE – DISCOURSE THAT MAKES TODAY'S DYSFUNCTION LOOK PALE IN COMPARISON TO THAT PERIOD. AND AGAIN, WITHOUT QUESTION, ONE OF THE LEADING PROPONENTS OF OUR COUNTRY'S' DYSFUNCTION DURING THAT TIME PERIOD WAS JOHN C CALHOUN- A SOUTH CAROLINIAN- YALE GRADUATE- STEEPED IN THE TRADITION OF GREEK AND LATIN LANGUAGE AND HISTORY, A LONG SERVING SENATOR- SEC OF STATE, SEC OF THE INTERIOR, A VICE PRESIDENT UNDER TWO PRESIDENTS FROM TWO DIFFERENT PARTIES, A SLAVE HOLDER AND THE LEADING ADVOCATE OF "THE SOUTHERN WAY OF LIFE. " A CONSUMMATE VERBAL JOUSTER, HOLDING HIS OWN AGAINST THE LIKES OF HENRY CLAY AND DANIEL WEBSTER IN SPEECH AFTER SPEECH IN THE SENATE; FIGHTING FOR THE SOUTH'S WAY OF LIFE, INCLUDING THE CONTINUANCE OF SLAVERY, PUSHING FOR THE EXTENSION OF SLAVERY INTO NEW TERRITORIES, FIGHTING THE NORTHERN INDUSTRIAL STATES PRIMARY AIM OF PROTECTING NORTHERN INDUSTRY AT THE EXPENSE OF SOUTHERN EXPORTS. YET THROUGHOUT MOST OF HIS CAREER, HE WAS AN ADVOCATE OF HOLDING THE COUNTRY TOGETHER. HE WAS UNYIELDING IN HIS NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE NORTHERN STATES RE SLAVERY, FOUGHT TO THE END OF HIS LIFE FOR THIS STAIN IN OUR HISTORY, BUT STILL HELD THE RESPECT OF HIS ADVERSARIES. AFTER FINISHING THE CALHOUN BIOGRAPHY, I WAS NO MORE CONVINCED HE WAS A GOOD MAN. HOWEVER, I THINK WAS ABLE TO UNDERSTAND WHERE MY SOUTHERN EDUCATED PROFESSOR CAME FROM- AND WHY THOSE WHO TODAY DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSE MY POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY SEEM UNBENDING. I TRIED TO TRANSFER THE REASONING FROM 1840 TO TODAY'S 'FEET IN STONE" 40% PHILOSOPHY.

FAME AND INFAMY COULD BE ATTACHED TO CALHOUN THROUGHOUT HIS LIFE. EDUCATED AT YALE- WHERE, FOR CERTAIN, HE WAS PRESENT AT LECTURES Demeaned THE INSTITUTION OF SLAVERY, THOUGH AT THIS TIME SLAVERY STILL EXISTED IN CONNECTICUT. HE WAS ELECTED TO CONGRESS IN 1810, PLAYED AN IMPORTANT PART IN THE WAR OF 1812, SERVED AS SECRETARY OF WAR FOR PRESIDENT MONROE THEN VICE PRESIDENT UNDER TWO PRESIDENTS FROM TWO DIFFERENT PARTIES. HIS LEGACY: PROTECTING THE SOUTH STATES' RIGHTS; THE RIGHT OF NULLIFICATION: THE RIGHT OF EVERY SIGNIFICANT INTEREST IN A SOCIETY TO PROTECT VETO POWER IN ANY LEGISLATIVE PROCESS. HE BELIEVED IN THE INSTITUTION OF SLAVERY AS A POSITIVE GOOD AND BECAME THE FOREMOST ADVOCATE OF THE RIGHT TO CARRY SLAVERY INTO DEVELOPING TERRITORIES WHICH HE FELT WOULD BE THE MAJOR IMPETUS IN HOLDING THE COUNTRY TOGETHER. CALHOUN'S AIM WAS TO SAVE THE COUNTRY WHEN IN FACT HIS THEORIES LAID GROUNDWORK FOR SOUTHERN SECESSION A DECADE AFTER HIS DEATH. THE STRATEGY OF COMPROMISE OR ONE CAN SAY HIS PHILOSOPHY, LED TO CALHOUN'S MOST FAMOUS CONTRIBUTION TO POLITICAL THEORY, THE CONCURRENT MAJORITY, THE IDEA THAT "SIGNIFICANT INTERESTS IN SOCIETY SHOULD HAVE THE POWER TO PROTECT THEMSELVES THROUGH LEGISLATIVE VETO WHICH SHOULD BE PASSED BY CONSENSUS RATHER THAN BY MAJORITY". AS I TRIED TO BUY OFF ON HIS NULLIFICATION PHILOSOPHY, PUTTING MYSELF IN HIS SHOES, BUT THEY DIDN'T FIT!

A SUMMATION OF HIS PHILOSOPHY WAS CLEARLY PROPERTY RIGHTS AND NOT THE CONSIDERATION OF HUMANITY. CALHOUN WORKED WITHIN THE SYSTEM THAT CAME DOWN FIRMLY ON THE SIDE OF SLAVEHOLDERS. ACCORDING TO PINKER'S BIOGRAPHY, ALL OF CALHOUN'S NORTHERN EDUCATION DID NOT CHANGE THE CONCLUSION; CALHOUN WAS ALWAYS AFTER SOMETHING THAT TRUMPED MORALITY: LASTING FAME!!! HE HAD AN INTENSE DESIRE FOR DISTINCTION, WHICH HE ACCOMPLISHED. I THINK I CAN SAFELY SAY AMBITION WITHOUT VIRTUE IS A DANGER TO OURSELVES AS WELL AS THOSE THEY SAY WE REPRESENT. AND ITS UGLY HEAD EXITS TODAY IN 2022.

LINCOLN'S ELECTION OF 1860 WAS A SEMINAL EVENT IN OUR COUNTRY'S HISTORY ULTIMATELY LEADING ELEVEN STATES TO LEAVE THE UNION AND FORM THE CONFEDERACY. IF WE LISTEN TO THE PRESENT-DAY TALKING HEADS, WE HEAR THERE "HAS NEVER BEEN A TIME LIKE THE PRESENT WITH REGARD TO THE LOSS OF

DEMOCRACY": BUT THERE WAS. A LOSS OF 500,000 CITIZENS, PHYSICAL DEVASTATION TO MUCH OF THE SOUTH, A REBUILDING OF THE COUNTRY THAT STILL SHOWS CRACKS IN OUR COUNTRY'S" MORAL COMPASS AND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS THAT VIRTUALLY MADE US A ONE-PARTY COUNTRY FOR CLOSE TO 50 YEARS. A CONTINUANCE OF THAT FISSURE STILL EXISTS TODAY ALTHOUGH NO LONGER A ONE-PARTY HOLD ON THE PRESIDENCY. I WANT TO QUOTE LINCOLN'S SECRETARY OF STATE, WILLIAM SEWARD, WITH REGARDS TO THE DESCENT OF DEMOCRACY DURING THE PERIOD OF THE WAR. "THERE WAS ALWAYS JUST ENOUGH VIRTUE IN THIS REPUBLIC TO SAVE IT, SOMETIMES WITHOUT MUCH TO SPARE." BUT WE HELD TOGETHER! I KNOW THIS MIGHT SOUND DISINGENUOUS, BUT THE CIVIL WAR SHOWS HOW AMERICAN DEMOCRACY WORKED EVEN IN THE ONE OF THE WORST IF NOT THE WORST TIME IN OUR HISTORY.

THE PERIOD AFTER THE CIVIL WAR. CIRCA 1867 UP UNTIL THE BEGINNING OF WWI, AN ERA OF INTENSE IMMIGRATION- AND UNLIKE EARLY IMMIGRATION FROM PROTESTANT NORTHERN EUROPE, THE INFLUX EMANATED FROM IRELAND AND SOUTHERN AND EASTERN EUROPE- PREDOMINANTLY CATHOLIC AND SO-CALLED LOWER CLASS UNEDUCATED. VIOLENCE AGAINST THESE IMMIGRANTS INCLUDED PHYSICAL ATTACKS IN THE STREETS OF CITIES AND STATES PASSED LAWS PROHIBITING VOTING RIGHTS FOR NEW ENTRANTS INTO OUR COUNTRY. THE CHINESE EXCLUSION ACT OF 1892 BECAME THE FIRST SIGNIFICANT LAW RESTRICTING IMMIGRATION INTO OUR COUNTRY. BOYCOTTS OF IMMIGRANT OWNED BUSINESS AND UNWRITTEN EXCLUSION RULES INCLUDING MEMBERSHIP IN CONGRESS AS WELL AS OTHER PROTESTANT DOMINATED PROFESSIONS WAS NOT UNCOMMON. LET ME READ TO YOU THE FOLLOWING TREATISE: "THROUGHOUT THE CENTURY MEN OF THE STURDY STOCKS OF THE NORTH OF EUROPE HAD MADE UP THE MAINSTREAM OF FOREIGN BLOOD WHICH EVERY YEAR ADDED TO THE VITAL WORKING FORCE OF THIS COUNTRY. ---BUT NOW THERE COME FROM THE SOUTH OF ITALY AND MEN OF MEANER SORT OUT OF HUNGARY AND POLAND MEN OUT OF THE RANKS HOLD NEITHER SKILL NOR ENERGY NOR INITIATIVE OF QUICK INTELLIGENCE. WRITTEN IN 1902 BY A PRINCETON COLLEGE PROFESSOR, TEN YEARS LATER WOULD BECOME OUR 28TH PRESIDENT. YOU GET ONE GUESS AS TO WHO WAS THE AUTHOR! THE ENIGMA TO ME IS HOW COULD WILSON BE SUCH A FORWARD-THINKING INTERNATIONALIST AND AT THE SAME TIME A BACKWARD THINKING TRADITIONALIST WITH REGARDS TO DOMESTIC ISSUES.

UNEMPLOYMENT AND INDIVIDUAL MISERY EXISTED FOR AN EXCRUCIATING LENGTH OF TIME AND IT LED TO THE RISE OF UNIONISM- AND A REAL CLEAVAGE IN OUR SOCIETY. THE ECONOMIC DOWNSIDE HAD CAUSED THE FAILURE OF SEVERAL HUNDRED BANKS ACROSS THE COUNTRY AND THE THREAT OF INSURRECTION- NOT UNLIKE OUR OWN JAN 6TH EVENT- CULMINATED IN THE ECONOMIC BARONS, ROCKEFELLER, FRICK OTHERS, HIRING THEIR OWN PROTECTIVE FORCES. PINKERTON DETECTIVES FIRED ON STEEL MILL WORKERS KILLING SEVERAL AND, IN THE MIDWEST, THE PULLMAN STRIKE IN ILLINOIS WHERE 7 WORKERS WERE KILLED WHILE STRIKING, AND THE FAMOUS HAYMARKET MASSACRE IN CHICAGO WHERE CITIZENS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT BATTLED EACH OVER WORKERS RIGHTS CHANGES. UPTON SINCLAIR'S BOOK 'THE JUNGLE' PORTRAYED THE UNDER LIFE OF IMMIGRANT WORKERS LIVES IN THE CHICAGO STOCKYARD AND SLUM GHETTOS AND THE EMERGENCE OF OTHER AMERICAN WHAT WE MIGHT REFER TODAY AS LEFTIST WRITERS, THE RISE OF SOCIAL DO GOODERS, JANE ADAMS HULL HOUSE-THE BEGINNING OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT AND THE INTRODUCTION OF MINIMAL CITIZENRY LIFEBOATS PERMEATED MUCH OF THE SOCIETAL CHANGES. THIS PERIOD, POST-CIVIL WAR, AND PRE-WWI LED TO THE DIVISIVENESS THAT PERMEATED, AND I THINK STILL PERMEATES MUCH OF OUR COUNTRY'S SUBSEQUENT HISTORY. AND IT WAS THE BEGINNING OF A SEGMENT OF OUR POPULATIONS "WISHING TO BE HEARD" AND SOMETIMES IT WAS VERY LOUD. ASSASSINATION ATTEMPTS ON THREE PRESIDENTS FROM 1881 TO 1908, TWO OF THEM SUCCESSFUL MIGHT LEAD US TO BELIEVE ALL WAS NOT WELL. DURING THIS 30-YEAR PERIOD. IT TOOK THE COALESCING OF OUR ENTRY INTO WWI ALONG WITH A CHANGE IN THE GUARD AT THE TOP OF THE POLITICAL STRUCTURE IN THE WHITE HOUSE TO FINALLY BRING US BACK TO A BIT OF NORMALCY. BUT LET US REMEMBER-ESPECIALLY IN TODAY'S ATMOSPHERE- ANTI-IMMIGRANT FEELING IS THE MIDWIFE TO VIOLENCE. KNOWING OUR ESSAY SHOULD NOT GO BEYOND A 30-MINUTE LIMIT I HAD ORIGINALLY PLANNED TO JUMP TO THE COUNTRY'S INTERNAL STRIFE LEADING UP TO WWII AND THEN COVER PRESENT-DAY EVENTS AND HAD FINISHED MY FIRST DRAFT WHEN GEORGE HAMMOND MENTIONED TO ME HIS UPCOMING INTERVIEW WITH ADAM HOCHSCHILD. A WELL-KNOWN LOCAL AUTHOR, HOCHSCHILD'S BOOK "AMERICAN MIDNIGHT". THE GREAT WAR, A VIOLENT PEACE, AND DEMOCRACY'S FORGOTTEN CRISIS." HAD JUST BEEN RELEASED. THE GIST OF THE BOOK COVERS THE INTERNAL FISSURE THAT EXISTED IN OUR COUNTRY JUST PRIOR TO OUR ENTRANCE INTO WWI. QUOTING THE AUTHOR "NEVER WAS THIS RAW SIDE OF OUR NATION'S LIFE MORE RAVINGLY ON DISPLAY THAN FROM 1917 UNTIL 1921." BOTH

PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES IN THE 1920 ELECTION CAMPAIGNED ON MASS DEPORTATION OF IMMIGRANTS. DURING THESE FOUR YEARS BOTH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND STATE IMPRISONED HUNDREDS FOR WHAT THEY WROTE OR SAID WITH A COUNTRY WIDE ATTACK ON FREEDOM OF SPEECH. LOCAL VIGILANTE GROUPS ROAMED THE STREETS AND MILITARY TROOPS OCCUPIED AMERICAN CITIES OSTENSIBLY TO CONTROL RIOTING BUT ALSO TO PUT THE FIRM HAND OF GOVERNMENT CONTROL ON THE RISE OF UNIONS AS WELL AS LEFT WING JOURNALISM. WHEN THE COUNTRY ENTERED WWI, ANTI-GERMAN FEELINGS RAN HOT, GERMAN BOOKS WERE BANNED; THE TEACHING OF GERMAN LANGUAGE IN SCHOOLS WAS BANNED IN SEVERAL STATES. HYSTERIA AGAINST GERMANS BLENDED SEAMLESSLY WITH LONG STANDING ANTI ETHNIC FEELINGS. THE RED SCARE PERMEATED DURING THE WILSON AND HARDING ADMINISTRATIONS DRIVEN BY THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY'S FEAR OF THE EXPORT OF BOLSHEVISTIC UNREST THEN GAINING POPULARITY IN EUROPE AS WELL AS THE RISE OF OTHER INTERNAL WATCHDOGS INCLUDING THE FBI. PRESIDENT WOODROW WILSON, A VISIONARY INTERNATIONALIST WHO STAKED HIS POLITICAL FORTUNE ON THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS, A DEMOCRAT, PRESIDED OVER THIS ASSAULT ON CIVIL LIBERTIES HERE AT HOME, TURNING HIS FEDERAL ATTORNEY LOOSE, ARRESTING NORTH OF 3,000 ORDINARY CITIZENS AS WELL AS LEFT WING JOURNALISTS, CITING SUSPICION OF SYMPATHIZING WITH THE COMMUNIST COMMUNITY. THE LEADERSHIP OF OUR GOVERNMENT BECAME THE GODFATHER OF THE CRACKDOWN OF NORMAL CIVIL RIGHTS INCLUDING FREE SPEECH, FREEDOM THE PRESS AND TO AN EXTENT FREEDOM OF IMMIGRATION MOVEMENT. HOCHSCHILD'S THESIS; THE 1917 -1921 PERIOD OF UNREST PARALLELS TODAY'S DISFUNCTION.

ALTHOUGH MANY OF US HAVE GRAY HAIR, I AM NOT SURE WE REMEMBER THE LATE 1930'S AND THE YEARS 1940-41 - YEARS JUST PRIOR TO OUR ENTRANCE INTO WWII. A DEEP FISSURE EXISTED AMONGST THE GENERAL POPULATION AND IT RAISED ITS UGLY HEAD OVER THE ISSUE OF OUR PARTICIPATION IN THE THEN EUROPEAN CONFLICT. BUT THE UGLY HEAD WAS NOT LIMITED TO JUST THE PHYSICAL ENTRANCE INTO THE CONFLICT. THE COUNTRY HAD BEEN IN THE MIDST OF A DEPRESSION AND JUST 20 YEARS EARLIER, A DEVASTATING WORLD WAR. THE COUNTRY WAS SPLIT RIGHT DOWN THE MIDDLE WITH REGARDS TO TAKING AN ACTIVE PART IN HELPING EUROPE FEND OF THE NAZI ASSAULT AND MANY OF OUR LEADING POLITICAL AND CORPORATE LEADERS WERE AMBIVALENT IN ASSISTING WHAT THEY FELT WAS THE LOSING SIDE IN THE ONGOING EUROPEAN

CONFLICT. AND ONE OF THOSE LEADERS WAS ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR MEN IN THIS COUNTRY, CHARLES LINDBERGH. WHICH BRINGS US TO THE RISE OF THE AMERICA FIRST, AN ORGANIZATION FORMED BY MANY SOCIETAL LEADERS INCLUDING LINDBERGH, HENRY FORD, GENERAL ROBERT WOOD CEO OF SEARS ROEBUCK, SEVERAL SENATORS FROM BOTH PARTIES, AND EDITORS FROM DAILY NEWSPAPERS FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY. OTHERS, NOT AS WELL KNOWN IN THE LATE 1930'S, WOULD RISE TO THE FOREFRONT YEARS LATER. KINGMAN BREWSTER, JOHN F KENNEDY, GERALD FORD, ARTHUR VANDENBERG; ALL SUBSCRIBED TO THE NONINTERVENTION OF OUR COUNTRY PRIOR TO AND THROUGH THE 1940 ELECTION. THAT ELECTION PITTED FDR AND WENDEL WILLKIE AGAINST EACH OTHER AND THE NUMBER ONE ISSUE IN THE ELECTION WAS OUR ASSISTANCE TO FRANCE AND BRITAIN AS WELL AS THE POSSIBILITY OF DIRECT INTERVENTION IN THE EUROPEAN CONFLICT. CONCURRENTLY, THE RISE OF ISOLATIONISM IN THIS PERIOD PARALLELED THE INCREASE IN ANTISEMITIC AND ANTI-IMMIGRATION FRINGE GROUPS IN THE COUNTRY. SCAPEGOATISM TENDS TO RAISE ITS UGLY HEAD DURING TIMES OF STRIFE AND THE ADVENT OF THE DEPRESSION IN THE 30'S ALONG WITH THE SPLIT IN THE COUNTRY AS TO OUR ENTRANCE INTO A EUROPEAN- NON-AMERICAN CONFLICT FOSTERED MUCH OF THIS GROWTH OF EXTREMISTS. CHARLES COUGHLIN, A CLOSE ALLY OF HENRY FORD, A RABBLE-ROUSING CATHOLIC PRIEST FROM DETROIT, IN A WEEKLY BROADCAST WITH LISTENERS ESTIMATED AT 40 MILLION AND A CLOSE ALLY OF HENRY FORD REGULARLY DELIVERED ANTIGOVERNMENT -ANTI WALL STREET DIATRIBES INCLUDING THE DENUNCIATION OF ANTI-CHRISTIAN CONSPIRACY OF JEWS, COMMUNISTS, FDR, AND THE BRITISH DURING THE 1940 CAMPAIGN. COUGHLIN MADE A NUMBER OF ATTACKS AGAINST THE PRESIDENT, PRAISED THE NAZI PERSECUTION OF JEWS AND SPOKE APPROVINGLY OF HITLER AND MUSSOLINI. REMEMBER I SAID HE HAD A LISTENING AUDIENCE OF 40 MILLION -AND NOT JUST ONCE BUT WEEKLY, AND THIS WAS WHEN OUR COUNTRY HAD A TOTAL POPULATION OF APPROXIMATE 130 MILLION! ATTACKS ON THE STREET AGAINST IMMIGRANTS, JEWS, OTHER MINORITIES AND VANDALISM AND DESTRUCTION OF MINORITY OWNED STORES IN MANY OF OUR LARGER CITIES MIRROR RECENT TODAY'S ATTACKS AGAINST ASIANS AND OTHER NONWHITE CITIZENS.

IN THIS PAPER IT IS NOT MY INTENTION TO FIND FAULT WITH LEADING FIGURES FROM THE AMERICA FIRST ISOLATIONISTS. WHAT I AM ENDEAVORING TO SHOW IS OUR COUNTRY HAS GONE THROUGH THE CATHARSIS OF SPLIT PERSONALITY BEFORE

AND "OTHER SIDE LEADERSHIP", AND ALTHOUGH NOT TO MY LIKING, HAS BEEN LED BY PERSONALITIES WHOSE BIOGRAPHY WOULD NOT HAVE OFFERED THEM A SEAT AT MY BREAKFAST TABLE I STILL FELT IT WAS NECESSARY FOR ME TO UNDERSTAND WHENCE IT CAME IN THEIR THOUGHT PROCESS. THE COUNTRIES TEMPERATURE FOR ENTRY INTO WWII WAS SOMEWHERE AROUND 50/50- NO WHERE NEAR 98.6! IN WWI WE HAD LOST OVER 50,000 SERVICE MEN IN JUST 18 MONTHS. WE HAD JUST COME THROUGH A DECADE LONG DEPRESSION AND PEOPLE WERE FINALLY GETTING BACK ON THEIR FEET. AND THE IDEA OF "GOING BACK OVER' WITH THE ADDITION OF A CONSCRIPTION BILL IN 1940, SPLITTING FAMILIES AGAIN WAS AN ANATHEMA TO MANY. SO, I UNDERSTAND THE TREPIDATION BUT WHAT IS DIFFICULT FOR ME TO ACCEPT WAS THE RISE OF THE EXTREME RIGHT'S ANTI ETHNIC PHILOSOPHY. LINDBERG HAD BEEN FETED BY THE GERMAN MILITARY FOR YEARS, AND AFTER THE KIDNAPPING OF THEIR CHILD THE FAMILY MOVED TO ENGLAND TO GET OUT OF THE GLARE OF THE NEWS. HIS EUROPEAN DOMICILE LED HIM TO BECOME ENAMORED WITH THE STRENGTH OF THE GERMAN MILITARY AND WHAT HE SAW AS A WEAKNESS IN BRITISH PREPAREDNESS. WITHOUT QUESTION MUCH OF THE RISE OF THE RIGHT WING HAD TO DO WITH AN ANIMOSITY TOWARDS ROOSEVELT AND HIS POLITICAL LEFTWARDS MOVEMENT FROM 1932 THROUGH THE END OF THE DECADE. SEVERAL OF THE LEADERS MENTIONED ABOVE HAD SUPPORTED FDR IN HIS INITIAL RUN, BUT BY THE END OF THE 1930'S AND HIS 1940 THIRD RUN, MANY OF HIS BACKERS HAD LEFT HIM AND GRAVITATED TOWARDS THESE EXTREMISTS. ALONG WITH THIS GROUP INURED SOME OF THE ROOSEVELT CLAN. ALICE ROOSEVELT AND THEODORE ROOSEVELT JR., A LONG-TIME ISOLATIONIST, WERE VEHEMENTLY AGAINST THEIR COUSIN BUT PART OF THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN FAMILY JEALOUSY.

LET ME READ TO YOU THE FOLLOWING QUOTE: "THERE IS SOMETHING VERY OMINOUS THAT HAS BEEN FORMING WITHIN THE REPUBLICAN PARTY BETWEEN THE EXTREME REACTIONARY ARM OF THE PARTY WHICH HAS FED TO THE EXTREME RADICAL DEVELOPMENT IN THIS COUNTRY. THEY CALL THEMSELVES AMERICANS BUT WOULD BE WILLING TO DESTROY AMERICA AND OUR DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA JUST TO WIN ELECTIONS." 2002? -NO. SPOKEN BY WENDEL WILKIE DURING THE HEATED 1940 ELECTION.

THE STRENGTH OF THE ISOLATIONIST GROUP WAS NOT A FRINGE OPERATION; AS LATE AS DECEMBER 1941 THERE WERE OVER 400 LOCAL CHAPTERS THROUGHOUT



THE COUNTRY, SOME OF THEM FRINGE BUT MOST INCLUDED NORMAL CITIZENRY. THE MULTITUDE OF MIDDLE-CLASS FAMILIES HAD JUST BEGUN TO RAISE THEIR EXISTENCE FROM THE ASHES OF A DEPRESSION, A RESURRECTION OF THE JOB MARKET, FUELED BY INDUSTRY FEEDING THE EUROPEAN EFFORT AS WELL AS FATHER COUGHLAN'S WEEKLY RADIO BROADCASTS; WE HAVE TO UNDERSTAND THAT IF 40 MILLION PEOPLE DID LISTEN TO HIS DIATRIBES ONE CAN UNDERSTAND THE SPLIT IN OUR COUNTRY IN 1940. ROOSEVELT WAS REELECTED, AND ONCE WE DID ENTER THE WAR A YEAR LATER, MANY OF THE LEADING ISOLATIONISTS CAME OVER TO THE SIDE OF PARTICIPATION IN THE CONFLICT INCLUDING WILKIE.

IN THE FIVE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS HELD SINCE 9-11 FOUR WERE DECIDED BY NOT MORE THAN THREE STATE ELECTORAL VOTES AND SINGLE DIGIT POPULAR VOTE OUTCOMES IN THE CONTESTED THREE STATES. ONLY BARACK OBAMA'S TWO ELECTIONS WERE CLEAR CUT WINNERS ACROSS SEVERAL DEMOGRAPHICS - GEOGRAPHICAL AS WELL AS CULTURAL. I WAS AN EARLY BACKER OF OBAMA -A CHICAGO GUY, THINKING HE HAD NO CHANCE EVEN IN THE DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY AGAINST HILLARY CLINTON- ONCE AGAIN MY KNOWLEDGE OF PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OUTCOMES SEEMS TO BE FLAWED! (I THOUGHT ADLAI STEVENSON WOULD BEAT EISENHOWER) HOWEVER, TODAY I FERVENTLY BELIEVE THE ELECTION OF A BLACK AMERICAN WAS ONE OF THE PRIMARY ISSUES THAT JUMP STARTED THE PRESENT-DAY MORAL SPLIT IN OUR COUNTRY. THE EMBERS WERE PRESENT PRIOR TO THE 2008 ELECTION BUT OBAMA'S ELECTION Poured GASOLINE ON THE FIRE. SEVERAL TIMES IT SHOWED ITS UGLY HEAD DURING HIS 8 YEARS AS PRESIDENT AND EXPLODED IN THE ELECTION OF 2016 OF DONALD TRUMP. TO BE FAIR, TRUMP'S 2016 OPPONENT RAN A WEAK CAMPAIGN, SOMETHING I TAKE PRIDE IN PREDICTING HAVING BEEN A FIRST-HAND WITNESS TO HILLARY'S POORLY RUN CAMPAIGN AGAINST OBAMA, IN 2007-2008. THE TIMING WAS ALSO RIPE -40 % OF THE VOTING POPULACE WAS WAITING FOR SOMEONE TO COME ALONG AND TAKE THE MANTEL OF THE FORGOTTEN POPULACE -THE ANTI-IMMIGRATION (A REPEAT OF THE 1880'S-1920'S) THE HATRED OF PEOPLE "NOT LOOKING LIKE THEM." THAT MARKETING TACT IS PRESENT TODAY IN THE MILLIONS OF DOLLARS SPENT ON TELEVISION TELLING VOTERS 'THEY ARE TAKING OVER OUR COUNTRY". EVERY DAY I HEAR 'THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT ELECTION IN OUR HISTORY'- FROM BOTH SIDES THE ANTI- THEY ARE DIFFERENT THAN WE ARE SIDE AND THE SIDE THAT IS FEARFUL OF DEMOCRACY DISAPPEARING IN OUR COUNTRY. BUT I AM ALSO HEARTENED BY CANDIDATES, YOUNGER THAN ME, MANY EX-MILITARY OR LOCAL EXPERIENCED OFFICIALS, ARE

RUNNING FOR THE RIGHT REASON AND I DO NOT MEAN EXTREME RIGHT OR LEFT. THOSE OF US IN THIS ROOM ARE OK. WE ARE OK! IT'S THE NEXT GENERATION THAT WILL HAVE TO HOLD TO A CONSTITUTION BIRTHED IN 1789, EVEN DIFFICULT THEN GETTING IT ENACTED WITH THE DISPARITY IN OUR COUNTRY' LATE 18TH CENTURY POPULACE. BUT IT HAS HELD - TOUGH TIMES BUT HELD.

ONE OF THE VIRTUES WE GET OUT OF PREPARING A PAPER FOR OUR GROUP IS THE PERSONAL EDIFICATION, THE INSTRUCTION OR IMPROVEMENT OF A PERSON'S MORALITY AND EDUCATION. IN MY CASE TRYING TO UNDERSTAND THE OTHER SIDE DESCENT INTO THE LOSS OF DEMOCRACY AND DECENCY. I NEEDED TO UNDERSTAND WHY IN TODAY'S VITRIOLIC ATMOSPHERE IS THE SEPARATION SO VISIBLE. WHAT LEADS TO THE OTHER SIDES THINKING? SO A BIT OF SCHRAM'S RULES!

YOU CANNOT LEGISLATE VIRTUE!

AMBITION WITHOUT VIRTUE MY FRIENDS IS A DANGER TO OURSELVES AS WELL AS THOSE THEY SAY WE REPRESENT

- WE NEED TO HEAR CHALLENGES THAT BIND US TOGETHER!!!
- BECAUSE WE HAVE A NUMBER OF ACADEMICS IN ATTENDANCE TONIGHT- WE NEED COLLEGES WHO CHALLENGE ASSUMPTIONS THAT BIND US TOGETHER.
- WE DEVALUE THE STATEMENTS OF OTHERS OUTSIDE OUR OWN GROUP. HOW DO WE CONTROL THIS.
- LET ME QUOTE OTHERS WHO YOU MIGHT HOLD IN HIGH REGARD WHEN TRYING TO UNDERSTAND THE OTHER SIDE
- JON MEECHEM
- A. IF DEMOCRACY WAS EASY EVERYONE WOULD BE DOING IT!
- B. IF WE FAIL AND I DON'T THINK WE WILL BUT IF DEMOCRACY FAILS- WHAT COMES NEXT?
- C. WHAT WORKS ARE ENGAGED CITIZENS AND PRINCIPLED LEADERS.
- MARK SHIELDS, WHO WE RECENTLY LOST, A LONG TIME PBS PUNDIT- A GRADUATE OF NOTRE DAME, MARINE VETERAN, WELL TO THE LEFT OF MANY IN OUR GENERATION SAID HE SOUGHT TO REMEMBER THAT "IN EVERY DISCUSSION THE PERSON ON THE OTHER SIDE PROBABLY LOVES THEIR COUNTRY AS MUCH AS YOU LOVE OUR COUNTRY; THAT THEY CARE ABOUT THEIR CHILDREN'S AND GRANDCHILDREN'S FUTURE AS MUCH AS YOU DO;

THAT THEY TREASURE THE TRUTH AS MUCH AS YOU DO; AND THAT YOU DON'T DEMONIZE SOMEBODY ON THE OTHER SIDE."

- THE GROUP WHO MIGHT FIND SHIELDS COMMENTS A BIT OUT OF WHACK WE MIGHT CALL MY SIDE'S.

- GEORGE WILL QUOTED DANIEL OKRENTS GUIDED TOUR THROUGH THE IMMIGRATION DEBATE A CENTURY AGO. 'THE GUARDED GATE: BIGOTRY, EUGENICS, AND THE LAW THAT KEPT TWO GENERATIONS OF JEWS, ITALIANS, AND OTHER EUROPEAN IMMIGRANTS OUT OF AMERICA, PROVIDES EVIDENCE OF THAT TODAY'S ARGUMENTS ARE COMPARATIVELY ENLIGHTENED" UNQUOTE. IN THE 1920'S RACIST THEORY SATURATED MAINSTREAM NEWSPAPERS (THE BOSTON HERALD - SHALL WE LET THESE INFERIOR RACES DILUTE CAPABLE YANKEE BLOOD) - WILL DOES ASK, "HOW DO WE LEARN FROM SOMEONE WE DISAGREE WITH."

- HENRY KISSINGER IN HIS TREATISE "THE SEARCH FOR EQUILIBRIUM." DIPLOMATIC EQUILIBRIUM IS ACCEPTANCE OF THE LEGITIMACY OF SOMETIMES OPPOSING VALUES. THERE CAN BE SITUATIONS WHERE COEXISTENCE OR EQUILIBRIUM IS MORALLY UNACCEPTABLE. USELESS TO DISCUSS. KISSINGER, AS AN EXAMPLE, TAKES PUTIN'S STATED SECURITY ISSUES SERIOUSLY - MEANING WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND HIS SIDE OF THE ISSUE.

- WHEN DISCUSSING WILSON'S LEAGUE OF NATIONS LOSS IN THE SENATE, JOHN MAYNARD KEYES, WHO HAD OBSERVED WILSON IN PARIS DURING THE NEGOTIATIONS OVER THE LEAGUE COMMENTED. "A MOMENT OFTEN ARRIVES WHEN SUBSTANTIAL VICTORY IS YOURS IF BY SOME SLIGHT APPEARANCE OF A CONCESSION YOU CAN SAVE THE FACE OF THE OPPOSITION. "

LET ME CLOSE WITH A VIGNETTE FROM A WOMAN RUNNING FOR CONGRESS IN MICHIGAN'S 7TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT. SOMEONE WHOM I HAVE KNOWN AND BACKED SINCE 2018.

IN EARLY 2018 OUR EX-AMBASSADOR TO BELGIUM, DENISE BAUER, A BAY AREA RESIDENT CALLED ME AND ASKED IF I WOULD MEET WITH A YOUNG WOMAN WHO WOULD BE RUNNING IN A VERY CONTESTED CONGRESSIONAL RACE IN MICHIGAN. I TOLD AMBASSADOR BAUER I DIDN'T WANT TO MEET ANYONE ANYMORE AFTER THE 2016 ELECTIONS. SHE SAID JOHN, I WORKED WITH ELISSA SLOTKIN WHILE I WAS THE

AMBASSADOR; SHE WAS WITH THE CIA AND WAS VERY EFFECTIVE IN REPRESENTING THE UNITED STATES IN QUELLING THE UNREST IN BELGIUM AND FRANCE. SHE ALSO SAID ELISSA SERVED UNDER BOTH THE BUSH AND OBAMA ADMINISTRATIONS. "JOHN, YOU STAY INVOLVED; YOU CAN'T ABROGATE YOUR RESPONSIBILITY" I AGREED TO MEET WITH SLOTKIN, ASKED HER SOME TOUGH QUESTIONS AND MS. SLOTKIN CAME BACK WITH DIRECT ANSWERS. ELISSA ANSWERED WITH NON-DC DANCING ANSWERS!! I AGREED TO SUPPORT HER AND THINK A COUPLE OF OUR CHIT CHAT MEMBERS HAVE MET HER EITHER VIA ZOOM OR IN PERSON. SHE WON HER 2018 AND 2020 ELECTIONS EACH BY LESS THAN 3%. SHE SITS IN THE ONLY DISTRICT IN THIS COUNTY AS A DEMOCRAT, THAT HAS BEEN CARRIED IN THE LAST THREE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS BY A REPUBLICAN - ROMNEY- AND TRUMP TWICE. WE HAVE HAD SEVERAL CONVERSATIONS AS TO HOW SHE CAN BE ELECTED DURING THESE POLARIZED TIMES AND FROM AN ELECTORATE THAT TEND TO VOTE FOR THE OTHER PARTY. SHE EXPLAINED ITS DOOR-TO-DOOR POLITICS AND IT IS MORE THAN JUST PARTY. ITS DEMOGRAPHICS THAT INCLUDE GENDER AND AGE. SHE REPRESENTS MICHIGAN STATE AND SHE HAS WORKED TO INCLUDE YOUNG COLLEGE STUDENTS IN HER CAMPAIGN WHOSE PARENTS MIGHT VOTE THE OPPOSITE WAY IN TAKING A SHOT AT WORKING IN HER GROUND GAME. AND THEY GET TURNED ON BY PARTICIPATION. SHE ALSO RELATES WHEN SHE PERSONALLY GOES DOOR TO DOOR, IF A MAN ANSWERS A GOOD CHANCE, HE SLAMS IT IN HER FACE. IF A WOMEN ANSWERS, THE WOMEN WILL SAY JUST A MOMENT, CLOSES THE DOOR AND WALKS OUT AND TELLS HER "MY HUSBAND DOESN'T NEED TO KNOW I AM SPEAKING WITH YOU." SOME OF THESE WOMEN WILL GO WORK IN HER ELECTION OFFICES MAKING CALLS AND THEY TELL THEIR HUSBANDS THEY HAVE JOINED AN ALL-WOMEN BOOK GROUP!!! WHAT I HAVE JUST RELATED TO YOU IS THE ABSOLUTE TRUTH. I ASKED HER TO GIVE ME AN ON THE GROUND EXPERIENCE AND HERE IS WHAT SHE RELATED.

NOT LONG AFTER OUR DISTRICTS WERE REDRAWN, I WAS TOLD THAT THE ST. JOHNS MINT FESTIVAL IN CLINTON COUNTY WAS A CAN'T-MISS SUMMER EVENT. AND AFTER ATTENDING, IT CERTAINLY DID NOT DISAPPOINT. BUT THERE WAS ONE SPECIFIC INTERACTION FROM THAT DAY THAT I WANTED TO SHARE WITH YOU, THAT REFLECTS MY BELIEF THAT POLITICS DOESN'T NEED TO BE PERSONAL.

DURING A TOUR OF THE DOWNTOWN, I POPPED INTO A LOCAL COFFEE SHOP. IN TRUE MID-MICHIGAN FASHION, IT WAS LOCATED IN A REFURBISHED INDUSTRIAL PROPERTY THAT USED TO BE HOME TO A GRIST SAWMILL. I HAPPENED TO BE THERE AT THE SAME TIME AS A FORMER REPUBLICAN ELECTED OFFICIAL IN THE AREA. HE WALKED UP TO ME, INTRODUCED HIMSELF, AND ASKED IF HE COULD SHAKE MY HAND. **WE GOT TO CHATTING AND HE TOLD ME THAT WHILE HE'D NEVER VOTE FOR ME, HE RESPECTED ME AND MY WORK, AND THAT WE NEED TO GET BACK TO A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT PARTIES CAN WORK TOGETHER ON REAL ISSUES.** HE THEN INTRODUCED ME TO HIS FAMILY, ALL OF WHICH SHARED HIS POLITICAL VIEWS. THEY WERE ALL INCREDIBLY KIND, AND WE TALKED FOR QUITE A WHILE. LATER, HIS FAMILY STAFFED THE BOOTH NEXT TO OURS AT THE FESTIVAL, AND WHILE WE CERTAINLY DIDN'T AGREE ON THE ISSUES, EVERYONE WAS RESPECTFUL NEIGHBORS.

IT WAS AN INTERACTION THAT HAPPENS MORE THAN YOU'D THINK IN MY DISTRICT. AND IT'S HOW IT WAS FOREVER IN MICHIGAN POLITICS. EVEN GROWING UP, OUR ARGUMENTS WERE ALMOST ALWAYS ABOUT THINGS LIKE SPORTS, NOT POLITICS. IN THAT MOMENT OUR VERY DIFFERENT BELIEFS DIDN'T MATTER – WE WERE ALL JUST PEOPLE AT A COMMUNITY EVENT, GRABBING COFFEE FROM A GREAT LOCAL BUSINESS.

I KEEP THESE KINDS OF STORIES IN MIND WHENEVER I GET FRUSTRATED BY THE POLITICAL FIGHTS IN [D.C.](#) IT'S NICE TO KNOW THAT WHEN I COME HOME, THIS KIND OF CIVILITY IS WAITING FOR ME. **I REFUSE TO BELIEVE THAT WE CAN'T BE CIVIL TO EACH OTHER EVEN WHEN WE DISAGREE.** AND WHILE NATIONAL POLITICS SEEMS VERY FAR FROM NORMAL RIGHT NOW, I WILL NEVER ACCEPT IT AS NORMAL. I DON'T BELIEVE IN THAT, AND NEITHER DO THE PEOPLE OF MID-MICHIGAN. I WILL CLOSE TONIGHT WITH ELISSA'S HOPEFUL MESSAGE. SHE IS THE FUTURE OF OUR DEMOCRACY AND CAN WORK WITH AND UNDERSTAND THE OTHER SIDE. AND SHE IS UP FOR ELECTION TONIGHT. AS SOON AS I ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS, I WILL CALL INTO HER CAMPAIGN TO SEE

HOW SHE IS DOING AS WE ALL KNOW TONIGHT IS ELECTION NIGHT  
ACROSS THIS GREAT BUT DIVIDED COUNTRY.

\*DURING THE TIME I WAS COMPOSING THE INCREMENT ON THE  
CALHOUN PART OF THIS ESSAY GEORGE SENT US AN E MAIL REMINDING  
US OF THE UPDATED WEB SITE FOR THE CHIT CHAT CLUB. OUT OF  
CURIOSITY I OPENED IT AND NOTICED THAT ONE OF OUR EARLY  
MEMBERS, GORDON BLANDING PRESENTED A PAPER TO THE CHIT CHAT  
CLUB IN 1882, JUST 17 YEARS AFTER THE END OF THE CIVIL WAR. TITLED-  
LORD BYRON--AND JOHN C CALHOUN. I COULD NOT FIND THE PAPER,  
BUT INTERESTED IN RESEARCHING BLANDING, A MEMBER OF OUR CLUB  
IN THE 1880', WAS BORN AND RAISED IN SOUTH CAROLINA, THEREFORE  
DURING THE TIME OF SLAVERY AND HAD TO HAVE LIVED DURING THE  
CIVIL WAR HOWEVER BECAME A LEADING LIGHT IN THE LEGAL  
PROFESSION IN SAN FRANCISCO POST 1865. \*