

“How classy.”  
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“Blue Ribbon”  
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She’s a teacher. She wants what’s best for her students. She’s a track coach. She wants what’s best for her athletes. In a recent conversation she mentioned how she hadn’t expected how she might face what other coaches are facing. How do school sports today address transgendered athletes? I’m confused by the subject, even uncertain if I can define the word, ‘transgendered.’ Is it a subjective preference? A native instinct? Does it mean anatomical alteration? Are there pro’s and con’s to the participation of transgendered athletes, such as the transgendered male swimming against female swimmers? Should a third classification be raced? What’s fair? What about scholarships?

We both agreed that niggling catcalls about being ‘woke’ or ‘anti-woke’ (whatever such jargon means) misses the whole point. What we agreed on is how people rush to their ‘woke’ corners (whatever such jargon means) eager to come out taunting, judging, and attacking without doing their homework. We deserve (I hope) far more than soundbites, soap operas, and smears.

Dad counseled: “If you can’t say anything nice about someone, don’t say anything at all.” This explains why Judge Jackson held her tongue when Cruz, Hawley, Blackburn, Cotton, and Graham embarrassed themselves along with the United States at her hearing. Considering how judicial hearings have been conducted, orchestrated, for decades, let’s banish television cameras. Getting rid of cell phones and social media would help too. We’re becoming eager lemmings, evident in one Gubernatorial candidate’s rude, crude campaign advertisement where “Let’s go Brandon,” is chanted throughout the whole commercial. How classy. When legislators fantasize over vulgar partisan scores rather than doing their job, we’d prefer Blue Ribbon Panels to resolve serious issues. Lord, help America whenever moral and spiritual geldings get in charge.

Complex problems require complex solutions. Systemic dilemmas require systemic remedies. Hard issues deserve hard study and harder questions. It’s how we approach church conflicts. We ask the conflicted participants to define the conflict, to agree to how the conflict arose, to a timeline, to facts. It’s similar to how you resolve ethical problems, such as those Geisinger faces daily. ‘Disentangling’ is my term for it. Knotty problems must be disentangled by asking questions so you can begin to discern what to do – who’s involved, what happened, what’s at stake, which principles are at play? If you ask intelligent questions, intelligent directions become apparent.

Teacher and I both realized we need to do our homework on this transgendered issue. We need to gather facts, to admit to what we don’t know, to listen and learn. It’s freeing, refreshing, and healthy to realize you don’t always have to have an opinion. Must you voice an opinion on everything, especially when you haven’t taken the time or made the effort to study the issue? We both felt there’s scant critical thinking today. There’s plenty of opinions, viewpoints, posturing, finger-pointing. But where’s the thoughtful, intelligent, disinterested debate? PBS? Youtube? Or -- hint, hint – could we discuss and debate issues locally by listening to local experts. I like experts, the best and the brightest. I may be an expert on conducting funerals; when it comes to fixing my garbage disposal I need a smart plumber.

Is anybody else interested in local panels to address hot topics of the day: transgendered, gun control, immigration, inflation? I'd rather listen to people who know what they're talking about than those who only have their opinions, oft un-informed or ill-informed. Hi-ho Silver, let's ride our hobby horses! No, let's not for a change. Let's get educated. Imagine if our School District sponsored such panels. What a fitting way for the School District to engage the community, parents as well as the rest of us. We adults probably could learn from the school's forensic team.

Here's a thought. Because our local school board values reviewing how our schools can practice excellence rather than mediocrity, how often have they consulted their own experts? Who? I refer to the incredibly talented students who graduated from Danville. When was the last time we took time to ask them, listen to them, learn from them?

Can America survive as a democratic republic lacking two commitments? First is the commitment to defend and fight for human and civil rights. Second is the commitment to intelligent discussion and debate. Listening. Learning. Enlarging your understanding by hearing what insights and experiences others have to offer. This is a key reason why we have public schools and why Ben Franklin insisted on public libraries. Democracy depends on literate and informed citizens.