

The Danville News
Robert John Andrews
June 20, 2024
"Delusion"
Word Count: 750

Smears, innuendo, calumny. Is that all you got? That's all I hear from your faction. Saying it's so doesn't make it so. "It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing" (Macbeth, Act 5, Scene 5). Your opponents give evidence for their criticisms, often quoting you along with those exploiting you.

Mouth ought connect with brain. You're your own worst enemy. Who's to blame? You. Why degrade others in your selfish schemes? Who's the cheater? So easy to jeer, vandalize. It's an old playbook, sketched out by Machiavelli, perfected by Goebbels, attempted by McCarthy, abetted by Cohn. Yet the bombast escalates: The justice system is rigged against me! America's rigged! Government is weaponized against me! It's a witch-hunt! If it is, it's the most elaborate web of conspiracies conceivable, bulldozing through our nation's system of check and balances, suborning tens of thousands of reputable officials into betraying both oath and character. Stop playing us for fools. Stop whining. Give facts. "Facts are stubborn things," John Adams quoted, reminding judge and jury, "and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passions, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence."

How rigged? Where weaponized? Who, what, when, where, how, why? You spew bile and blame, pouting and complaining, beating a hollow drum. Where's your evidence? When you are called upon to pull up big-boy pants and prove yourself, you huff and puff and play the injured victim, instigating malicious actions. This is boring and cowardly, indulgently negative. Shall we number your convicted henchmen, itemize your destructively anti-American policies? Here's another fitting Shakespeare quote, from Hamlet: "The lady doth protest too much, methinks" (Act 3, Scene 2).

Obviously, I don't mind throwing my own brickbats. It's a Jersey thing. Go ahead, try owning this liberal-conservative- pragmatic- reformed theologian. I give better than I get. I have facts, history, and Christianity on my side. You got Steve Bannon and Alex Jones. I probably won't convince you. With reasoned arguments maybe you could persuade me?

That you don't like it doesn't make it false. We are warned that it's easier for us to sin in crowds than as individuals. Hello Trumpism, our modern sounding brass and tinkling cymbal. Yes, I borrowed this line from I Corinthians 13, which wasn't written for weddings. Paul wrote it to a congregation feuding over who was a real Christian. Without selfless love, Paul writes, all gesticulations and postulations are noise. Even mine.

Corinth was famous for its brass works, their famous 'Corinthian Bronze.' Picture big shops and small artisans, hundreds of craftsmen hammering away in the marketplace, clanging and clanging, a cacophony of casting cooking pots, musical instruments, ladles. Earsplitting. "Who could hear let alone understand the tongues of men or even angels in such a deafening din?" asked a Bible scholar. What about the clanging cymbal? What does a cymbal do in an orchestra? It's attention getting. Cymbals never contribute to the melody. They're exclamation points, not the message itself. Paul also knew cymbals were used in pagan worship, accompanying frenzied ecstatic utterances.

How are those who nurse delusions and self-deceptions -- whether flat earth, anti-vaccination, schools turning kids gay, witch-hunt accusations -- healed? Delusion and self-deception indicate a futile ignorance we are responsible for producing because it fits a narrative our selfhood desires. The problem is, we worship our delusions.

Authentic improvement cannot happen by directly confronting or contradicting persons who hold contrary views. That becomes an assault on who they are. Like a recovering drunk, they need to come to terms individually, apart from the madding crowd, as to why their identity wants these views, just as I need to do my inner work to examine why I choose the beliefs I do, coming to terms with my own ignorance and sins. If you condemn me directly for my faults and errors, I'll stack barriers to protect myself or protest excuses to justify myself. Don't impose your views on me. Nor will I you. I can still love you without tolerating your views or actions.

One Christian philosopher advocated change through 'indirect communication.' Anger indicates fear. Why do you feel threatened? Upon what are you willing to bet your life and prosperity, future and hope? Upon which path are you willing to bet your grandchildren's lives, prosperity, future, and hope? Is the course you are on barren, futureless, noisy? Or loving, sensible? Do you need to choose a new path, a fruitful way?