

The Danville News
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"Call it Out"
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When soccer referees call a foul, the referee can award a yellow card for intentionally harmful infractions or a red card for nasty play. If a red card is issued, the player is sent off. Imagine walking around town with yellow and red cards in your pocket flashing them at misbehavior. What satisfaction! Sent off!

Referees stick their necks out. Upset fans yell at you. Most prefer being timorous when faced with bad behavior. Friends, do call it out. Does it mean you must be annoying when telling kids that skateboarding on church steps is rude or reprimanding foul language or criticizing vulgar displays? There are reasonable and respectful ways of calling out wrong actions, even in a society, writes Lynne Truss, where criticism often is taken as aggression. Truss warns that you shouldn't be surprised if you're accused by the nuisance maker for being intolerant, when the nuisance maker is the intolerant one. Those who lack an inner censor invariably invite external controls, then they attack when boundaries are attempted. Sound familiar? Boorish jerks deserve to be told to shut up.

Can we be obnoxious and vindictive when calling out others? Sure. It's a favorite past-time. How? Don't consider why you feel outraged enough to stomp and shout. Speak in accusatory "You" statements rather than "I" statements. Do humiliate them. Target the person rather than expose the act. Don't practice what you demand of others.

The danger arrives when silence permits rudeness to fester. Incivility and evil too. Goebbels counted on the Germans to be cowed into silence, then into obedience, soon enough into idolatrous cheering. Predictably, Hitler, Mussolini, Putin's minority control eventually did more than intimidate dissenters who dared speak out, they eliminated them. No voices remained to say: "No."

If you're going to get angry at God, society, or someone, make sure you're angry over something worthwhile.

Mark Twain's story, "The Mysterious Stranger," takes place in old Europe. Witch-hunting is trendy. Power-greedy men accuse a lady of witchcraft, fomenting fear. The mob chases her, lynches her. A boy joins the crowd in throwing stones at the corpse. He's ashamed of himself, mostly for being too afraid not to join the rabid villagers. Mob rule happens casually.

The Mysterious Stranger laughs at how the boy feels. "I know your race. It is made up of sheep. It is governed by minorities, seldom or never by majorities. It suppresses its feelings and its beliefs and follows the handful that makes the most noise. Sometimes the noisy handful is right, sometimes wrong; but no matter, the crowd follows it. The vast majority of the race, whether savage or civilized, are secretly kind-hearted and shrink from inflicting pain, but in the presence of the aggressive and pitiless minority they don't dare to assert themselves. I know that ninety-nine out of a hundred of your race were strongly against the killing of witches when that foolishness was first agitated by a handful of pious lunatics in the long ago. And I know that even to-day, after ages of transmitted prejudice and silly teaching, only one person in twenty puts any real heart into the harrying of a witch. Yet apparently everybody hates witches and wants them killed."

Sound familiar? Only mysterious wags would laugh at how MAGA republicans chant minority litanies about women's rights, civil rights, voting rights, climate, guns, economy, foreign policy, yet expect the masses to echo the bleating flock, It ain't even conservatize, hardly right. Do sheep realize they're on the menu? Whenever any extremist minority seeks to enforce their anti-republic , anti-freedom will by aggressive cruelty, dishonesty, dehumanization, are we lemming or lion? People baa and grunt about how politics is broken. False. The folks who use the machinery are broken. Broken extremists don't deserve sheep. Call it out, roar, make sensible noise, lest real witch-hunts begin.

On Memorial Day, May 30, 1922, the Lincoln Memorial was dedicated. 36 marble columns support the Memorial, one for each state at the time of Lincoln's assassination. 36 states, including those who shouldered rifle to destroy the Union and shred the Constitution. They didn't. They couldn't.

This Memorial witnesses to us how Lincoln believed in the idealism and goodness of his countrymen. He understood their anguish, their pettiness, their failings because he understood his own. He maintained a confidence, proved by dread sacrifice, that the people will achieve this nation's Constitutional reality of equality, freedom, democracy, achieving a government by the people, not of the states, not for a clanging minority.