

Community Comment
April 25th, 2014
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as edited
by me SP

A critical social contract!

There's been a lot in the news lately that could come under the heading of anarchy; or the concept of every man for himself. Another way of looking at it is I want what I want and the community be damned.

The American revolution was about community. Our founding Fathers and Mothers appreciated the difference between individual rights and the pulling together to make something greater than themselves. We have a Constitution and a Bill of Rights. From those we have a framework for laws that govern how we work together and how we keep our individual rights. We formed a different kind of society that depended on participation and representative self government. It may be self evident that all men are created equal but it took hard work, long hours, and real compromise to establish this society of ours.

Over the last two hundred plus years, we have worked out the details of this government. Through legislation and litigation, trial and error, a horrible civil war, and tremendous population growth, we have seen what works and what doesn't. We created fifty states that have a good deal of rights that are unique to their environment and social desires. We created a federal government that can do things that even the states can not do. Things like movement of individuals between states, like conducting business across state boundaries, things like National Parks and Forests and grasslands, things like an interstate highway system and other roads that allow free movement for any of us anywhere within our country.

They say the devil is in the details, ^{and it is} ~~On the one hand, this is certainly true~~ of self governance. The process is slow and conflicted. Solutions that are appropriate in one time period may not be in another. Solutions that worked for 3 million people may not be appropriate for 300 million people. So things change. But ~~if it is devilishly hard to do the details, the details are also where the miracles happen. I think it is true to say that we are seeking a more perfect union.~~ We had a lot to clean up from our founders; slavery was inherited and it took about 50 years and a civil war to end it. It took another 100 years to establish civil rights under the law. We are still working on making civil rights a reality.

World War Two and the decade that followed might be the best example of our best. We fought a war on two fronts that could have changed this entire planet for a long time. We prevailed along with our allies by sacrifice for the greater good, by working together as never before, by allowing our personal freedoms to be dialed back a bit to secure our future. After the war, we built a modern nation. ~~Before the civil war, most people lived and died within about 50 miles of where they were born; after the civil war, we moved about like never before.~~ Before World War Two, we had suffered the Great Depression. Many if not most people lost their jobs, their homes, their money, and their dignity. We

were slogging our way through it. After the War, we built a modern nation that is still the envy of the world. But we are losing ground. This rancher in Nevada represents the worst in us. We have rules for grazing rights on public land and there is a fee. By refusing to recognize the social contract that allows us to get along, he and his followers have dismissed the essence of our nation. With all our faults, we are a nation of laws, not selfish and childish anarchists. We left that in Europe many years ago.

This has been Sam Pennisi for community comment.