

CHANGE IN FREEDOM



DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT & CHANGE

By Barry Cassidy

From liberal to libelous, from "Bonzo" to Birch idol, born again. Civil rights, women's rights, gay rights... it's all wrong. Call in the cavalry to disrupt this perception of freedom gone wild. God damn it, first one wants freedom, then the whole damn world wants freedom.

Nostalgia, that's what we want... The good ol' days when we gave 'em hell? When the buck stopped somewhere, and you could still buy something with it. To a time when movies were in black and white – and so was everything else.

– Gil Scott Heron – Lyrics from the song, "B – Movie"

I remember the lyrics to that song which came out after Reagan became President. It has taken some time, but it appears that we are at a stage when the whole damn world does want freedom. I guess that it is a good thing, but it also is somewhat divisive, as people seem to be taking sides as everyone wants to be equal.

In the United States we call it Identity Politics, where people feel that they are being discriminated against and want equality. One of the ways that people are attacking the problem is by looking to the past. Statues glorifying the Civil War generals in the south are being taken down because of public outcry. Slave owners back in the 1600s and 1700s are being called into question as if they are supposed to have lived by today's rules.

For those of you out there who are not familiar with history, black people (Negros at the time) were granted status as 3/5th of a man under the constitution. The only reason they got 3/5th status is because there were not enough white people in the south to give the correct numbers in the census to enable them to have a significant voice. So, they counted the slaves, and because they were black, they would not be the same as a white person count. The only reason that we imported slaves from Africa is by the time the white settlers in North America arrived,

most of the Indian population had died of small pox and the South American Indian Slave model would not work. Pretty outrageous, but that is the product of the times.

Slave trade was not even banned until 1808, and most of these conventions were the work of European colonial slave traders. I am sure there were some Arab slave traders but for purposes of this article, we will concentrate on the euro-centric ideal. Stuck in the mindset that people could be property, that line of euro-centric behavior persisted until 1965 with the passage of the Civil Rights Act. I remember going to Alabama once when I was little, around 1958, and seeing the segregated public bathrooms.

The economic system was based upon having the free labor, and although there may have been some nice slave owners, the majority of them were not nice and clung to the euro-centric traditions of the past. This was perpetuated by the Roger Taney Supreme Court, which consistently ruled to lessen the impact of black citizenship.

I also remember when women were more like June Cleaver from "Leave it to Beaver" and wore nice dresses around the house and dusted for hours, and then sweated and slaved over a hot stove so when the family arrived home, they had a nutritious dinner.

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There were no college-educated women except for a few smart women who were Doctors or Lawyers.

It appears that early on, before the establishment of Christianity, women and men could attend school together if they were able to attend at all. It was the establishment of the "University System" which sought to offer higher education where problems really started. Women were not allowed in the system because you had to be a "cleric" to attend... and we all know in the Catholic Church women cannot be clerics. So, generations and generations of women did not get advanced degrees. It was about the time that I went to college in the '60s that women started attending college in force. In the seventies that resulted in a labor glut and many people were unemployed and women were token hires.

Fast forward to today. Groups are forming all over the place to right the wrongs of institutional bigotry and ignorance. The reason that I am writing this article is yesterday in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* I read about "Represent PAC" which is a women's Political Action Committee (PAC) which has raised \$50,000 to help women get elected. I thought long and hard about the PAC, and came to the conclusion that really,

we should do away with all PACs.

I am of the belief that the more that we separate, the more that we will be separated. I was a Union Organizer in the deep south in the early '70s, trying to reverse some of the injustices toward black people in the workplace. One of the methods that were used was the company telling the white workers they did not want to associate and be part of a black majority organization or association. This is a classic oligarchical mechanism — divide and conquer.

It will only be when we get beyond race and gender in dealing with people that we will be able to get past the customs and folkways that we have had imposed upon ourselves in what is a patriarchal society. This system is also prevalent in other cultures and races. Women who carry the water on their head in Africa, or women who cannot drive a car in Saudi Arabia are products of this society. This has nothing to do with white men, but men in general. For the most part, it is not the man giving up his place as the leader of the country's oligarchy. It is more about changing the customs and the way we bring up children, the music we play which objectifies women, the rap music we listen to that glorifies dealing drugs and violence.

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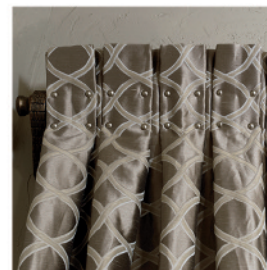


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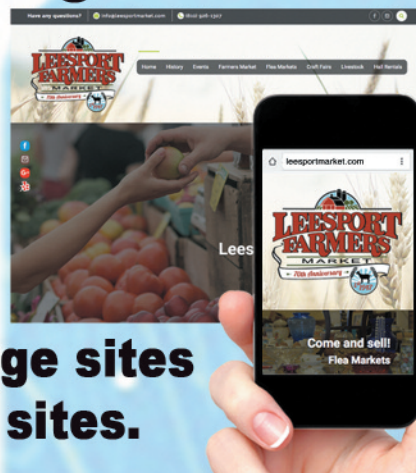


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My wife read me a vintage magazine article the other day about women douching with Lysol of all things. It was to make them feel "dainty". Although it seems ludicrous, it points to the role of women in society. Maybe the baby dolls reinforce motherhood, but do we really need gender roles? Give a girl a doll and give a boy a toy gun. Let's separate them early and tell them what their role is in society. Let's look down on a girl bringing a black boy home to meet her parents, but look at it as sowing wild oats when a white boy brings home a black girl... and she better look like Beyonce.

All of this must stop if we are ever to have a homogenous society. We need to quit separating ourselves and unite as a people. What stands in our way is the past and the way that culture has evolved. It is not our fault that we have these prejudices and predilections, as it is the process of society or "mankind."

I believe there should be open elections and forget about the parties that are controlled by a few ideologues who want to maximize control to keep themselves in power. We do not need lobbyists to tell our elected officials what we want. We need direct voting for people wanting to serve and make decisions. It is the system that needs to

be changed. If we continue the way that we are going, politics will be so fractured that we will never get change, and that is what people controlling the power want to happen, because the status quo is where it is at for these people.

Just look at the immigration issue. There cannot be any legislative action because, in reality, if someone is illegal, they have no rights and can be abused by the employer because of the leverage the employer holds. Who are they going to call if they don't get paid the correct amount? Can't call Ghost Busters 'cause that is a movie. The answer is no one. So, you have a shadow hanging over them.

Look at trade, you have a communist country in China that has wage slaves who work for pennies. How can the American worker compete? Yet people will complain that if there are fair trade tariffs, we will pay more for goods imported from China. What about the people living in squalor in order for your new Dior dress to be affordable?

It is they system not the people. Time to change the system.

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