

Let's Talk Racism

Or bigotry or hate – for me, they're all the same.

I'm white. Never thought of myself as white – which is a very white thing to do. Some would call that a white privilege, the lack of awareness ... the lack of need to be aware ... of one's skin color.

I was always **very** aware of my Irish roots, my Irish heritage. But Irish-ness isn't a color, not a skin color. And, sure, some wear green hair, drink green beer, act the fool, especially around St. Patrick's Day, but that, in my book, is best termed harmless bunk ... still bunk, but harmless.

But, see, Irish-ness has no color, no skin color. If you had to assign it one, it would be white, but we never felt a need to assign it a color.

Some years back, my wife and I went to New York City. We had lived in St. Louis a long time, and there were plenty of people of color there, but we tended to live in our own geographic pockets, a non-legal but no less obvious segregation.

There, in New York, we found a reasonably inexpensive hotel in Astoria. And, praise the lord for subways, had no problem getting around, but did have one incredibly obvious realization.

New York City was brown. We talked about it, then, while in New York, more after we returned to St. Louis. It was that obvious – the browning of America.

We didn't realize at the time – it didn't even occur to us – that this was an urban phenomenon. Rural Missouri was as white as new-driven snow

That realization, when we had it - just now, frankly - is what I think gave rise to Trump and all his traitorous, psychopathic, criminal thoughts, words and deeds.

Well, to be honest, not **all** of those things. He always was a psychopath, full twisted, self-centered notions. I think that's why he can declare he's not a racist.

He's 100% sick in the head, and always has been. Life has always, and still is, wholly about himself. He doesn't give a rat's posterior about anyone or anything else. Ergo, he can't be a racist. There are no races, other than himself. But, this is a diversion.

And in that realization, that rural America was snow white, we, my wife and I, talked about our own growing up. Our own experiences of it all – Racism, Bigotry, Hate. The trifecta of demented dung which colors Republicanism so angry-faced, stick-it-to-you red today.

You see, she grew up on the family farm in rural Alabama. I grew up in apartments in the city of St. Louis. And here's a first kicker – I was raised Catholic. She was raised to think Catholics were scum. Well, maybe not scum – but there surely was something wrong with them.

Which reminded me of my family's first realization that anti-Catholicism was a heart-felt belief held by many whites, at least.

Tidewater Virginia, Virginia Beach, to be exact. My dad was posted at Norfolk during the Korean War. We rented a house in Virginia Beach. Nothing fancy, but nice. Nice neighbors with kids our own age (3-5 and 5-7). We played together. Attended parties together. Climbed the fig tree in our back yard. Dunked for apples around Halloween.

Until, that is, one day, when our neighbors' mom and dad asked my mom and dad where we went each Sunday morning.

Mary Queen of Peace, of course, my parents replied. And that was it. No more playing together. No parties. No hello, goodbye, saying hi. Nothing, ever again.

So, yea, religion was a big Maginot Line ... but far from the only one.

My mom picked me up from pre-school one day, Mrs. Barclay's Private School. On our walk home, a black man, walking up the sidewalk toward us, stopped, then stepped out into the street, presumably to let us pass.

I was 3 or 4 years old at the time. What the hell! I turned to my mom and said, 'What's he doing? Why is he doing that?' And my mom – I didn't know why – jerked my arm nearly out of its socket (I exaggerate, I'm sure) and told me to hush in no uncertain terms. And that was it.

It was rule, I suppose. Or a common understanding. Or god knows what ... In retrospect, much akin to why we Catholics were such dirt ... we just were ... and black folks were in the same category, or a similar category of undesireables.

You see, my wife, growing up, was told black folks were all dirty. Lazy, dirty and uneducated. Of course, those were the days of separate but equal. Black kids couldn't go to schools where white kids went. Ergo – separate.

And those black schools – no books, supplies, no certified teachers, run-down shacks for facilities. Ergo – equal. Utter bunk!

Now, this is 2022. My wife and I are both still alive. Old, yea, but very much alive. And this is the world we grew up in. And I can't help but to say this:

To those folks who want to talk about making America great again - MAGA is the pinnacle of utter and complete BUNK!