

America's Conflict With Human Nature

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Joseph M. Bianchi

In America's present turmoil over police misconduct, and the riots and vehement protests that follow, the lost element seems to be the very heart of human nature.

Certainly, we would all like to believe that we are basically good; that all our intentions are benevolent, except when we are preyed upon by other people we believe are evil—and our back are to the wall. Otherwise, we see ourselves acting in an altruistic manner where all our intentions are pure and we are working toward the betterment of friends, family, neighbors—and even strangers.

But history and the daily news updates might tell us otherwise.

Prior to the turn of the 20th century, especially among people of faith, there was the idea that the world was turning into a new era of peace and prosperity. The 19th century even saw a multitude of utopian communities spring up hoping to accelerate the progress of men and women both intellectually and spiritually. It was a time of optimism and hope for humanity. The world was marching toward a new era of peace and prosperity—or so we thought.

And then came World War I—the “Great War.”

Millions died in a war that was inflamed by absurd alliances and the medieval idea of conquest. The death toll was enlarged by the Spanish flu that swept across Europe like a raging fire, making Covid-19 look like a mere annoyance.

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Yet it was called the "War to End All Wars":29
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By Joseph M. Bianchi
Naive? Certainly.
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How does all this relate to the current crisis in the US?

Quite simply, racism, hate, anger and policies that further marginalize minorities did not appear at the beginning of chattel slavery on the North American continent—it is rather at the heart of who we are as a people; as sentient human beings that have flaws. We must quickly add that these things did not emanate from a particular class or group, although many historians would like to think so.

The great dialectic of class warfare articulated by Marx must bow to the historical record of the millions killed under communism.

The oppressed became the oppressor.

It wasn't that long ago that Americans shared in common values. Many of these values came from people of faith. But even those who claimed no religion believed that these principles were needed to have a peaceful and ordered society.

Such is not the case today.

Today there are a garden variety of "values" jockeying for the hearts and minds of Americans.

Moreover, these values are not just intellectual exercises—they are being played out on the streets of our cities—most often in violent ways. Even innocent people who have no ax to grind have been victims.

Those tasked with protecting the populace—our mayors and governors—are either lying down on the job, or even encouraging the violence.

The very mechanism of American purpose and idea of justice, for all people, seems to be broken.

The question then becomes: how can we restore peace in our time and return to a spirit of dialog?

The key is to take the things that we indeed have in common, join that with our humanity, and see ourselves as flesh and blood beings with deep flaws—with a nature that is fallen.

Hopefully, even beginning to think like this will drive us all to the rational bargaining table. If not, what we are presently seeing will be the new look of the American landscape—regardless of party affiliation or ideology.

If evil flows out of the human heart, it follows that all Americans need to look deep into the mirror of

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human nature. Perhaps if we all do we will see our own weaknesses—and that could be the starting point of reconciliation.

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Joseph M Bianchi is an independent journalist and author based in Greenville, South Carolina. His work has appeared in major national and international publications.