

Rim Top Ramblings

By Beth Shelly



Distrust and unity

Distrust in government leaders and institutions, big business and mainstream media is not new. It has been brewing for years.

We were misled by President Lyndon B. Johnson about the number of armed forces in Viet Nam and the Gulf of Tonkin incident. We were misled by President Richard Nixon ("I am not a crook!"), President Ronald Reagan about the Iran-Contra Affair, H.W. Bush ("Read my lips. No new taxes"), President Bill Clinton ("I did not have sex with that woman"), President George W. Bush about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and President Barack Obama ("If you like your health-care plan, you can keep it").

Somehow, we moved on. Democracy remained intact.

In the face of what is becoming known as The Big Lie, President Trump's claim of massive voter fraud in the 2020 election, 75 percent of Republicans do not think that Biden won the election legitimately, compared to 1 percent of Democrats and 36 percent of independents.

That is according to a CNN poll, released on Sunday and conducted by SSRS between January 9 and 14, after the Jan. 6 raid on the U.S. Capitol. A recent Washington Post-ABC News poll put widespread belief in a rigged election at one out of every three Americans despite no evidence to support that view. The count for Republicans was two in three thinking the election was rigged.

The CNN poll revealed that 75 percent of Republicans surveyed said they have little or no confidence that elections in America today reflect the will of the people and 57 percent of

them say they are not at all confident in U.S. election results.

So where does that leave us? That is certainly not a cornerstone for unity.

What is baffling is how much trust Trump has engendered among his supporters, some of whom trust so firmly that he is God-sent. Others are QAnon devotees who believe Trump is a messianic savior battling the forces of a government "deep state" that worships Satan and traffics children, Jose A. Del Real wrote in a Jan. 18 Washington Post editorial.

He has registered more than 30,000 false or misleading statements during his term in office, his support has been more for the wealthy than the poor, he has shown more deference to our adversaries than our allies, he has demeaned anyone in his way, supported white supremacists over racial inequities, separated refugee children from their parents, had a lame response to a global pandemic and the distribution of vaccines, and, as a side, cost Americans more than \$141 million on his golf excursions.

None of that is very Christ-like, but somehow the belief in him has been impenetrable by facts and logic.

"What's unique about Donald Trump is that he took advantage of this widespread distrust of government and media to say everyone is lying to you except for me. We have never had a president so devoted to spreading disinformation and trying to overturn an election, University of California at Davis historian told the Washington Post.

The unfounded belief in widespread election fraud is a symptom of a broader openness to conspiratorial thinking that is born of human psychology,

according to Kathleen Hall Jamieson, director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania.

She is quoted in Del Real's editorial as saying, "People want to believe information that already aligns with their world view, and when presented with it, they often do not give it rigorous scrutiny." People can be primed to believe false information simply by hearing it repeated several times, she added.

New York Times opinion columnist David Brooks wrote this past weekend, "One core feature of Trumpism is that it forces you to betray every other commitment you might have: to the truth, moral character, the Sermon on the Mount, conservative principles, the Constitution."

But there is some division in theological circles, he notes. "In defeat, some people are finally not willing to sacrifice all else on Trump's altar.

"The split we are seeing is not theological or philosophical. It's a division between those who have become detached from reality and those, however right wing, are still in the real world," He continued.

Therein might be some hope for a semblance of unity. Despite the messages that Biden will bring us to a Communist state, he is actually more of a center leftist among Democrats. There are some Like Sen. Bernie Sanders who will push for more progressiveness, but the democratic process that has survived the past four years will hopefully temper the extremes to better serve all Americans.

Some seem to be panicking about news that Bill Gates is now the largest holder of agricultural land in the United States, even believing he will cause us to lose electricity. That is a hard one to believe, but in these times of conspiracy theories ...

Gates' portfolio comprises about 242,000 acres of farmland and nearly 27,000 acres of other land across 19 states, according to The Land

CALHAN SCHOOL CONVERSATIONS

By David Slothower, Superintendent, Calhan School District

As 2020 came to a close, I spoke of my gratitude for our society's "re-awakening" surrounding the importance of being together. Our society was becoming more and more reliant on technology, and less engaged in social interactions.

Our students gain real-world experience with every aspect of our car dealership. Our ag students are welding, they are working with livestock and crops and building their leadership skills.

At every turn, we are finding safe