

## **26th Storyworth: How is Life Different Compared To When You Were A Child?**

Since it would be a little silly to not recognize that an adult has a lot more responsibilities than a child, I will instead address this in terms of my perceptions of how the world has changed, as if I were a similar adult back then vs today. In some respects it has changed very little – when I was a young child the Republicans were following an idiot named Joseph McCarthy. They are following an idiot named Donald Trump with even more devout stupidity today. And they make me ashamed to say that I am STILL a Republican, because their slathering over tRump’s lying and offensive approach to “leadership” has conned far too many at the Federal level, to the point I would not vote for someone for local Dog Catcher without a publicly sworn refutation of all that DJT stands for, since his congressional enablers seem so incapable of separating fact from his hyperbole.

At the same time, however, it should be recognized how many things are at least potentially better for the average person today than they were in the mid ‘50’s when I first started to have any awareness, and especially for certain demographics of our society. I am disappointed that we still have a far too evident subset of the populace who still treat others of that same populace as less than equal to themselves. But I am heartened that an enormous culture shift has occurred in all of race, creed and sexual orientation which has enabled many whose backgrounds have little in common with my own to nonetheless have those differences remain largely invisible to my eyes, and those of a large percentage of my fellow citizens. Baby steps they may be, but take enough of them and you’ll be surprised how far you can walk.

I grew up during the Eisenhower era, which it should be acknowledged was also the “Nixon waiting in the wings” era, too. My personal response in looking back as an adult is that Ike overlooked a LOT of issues he might have had the political capital to properly address, but not the courage. And THAT is a condemnation of the “American Exceptionalism” far too many of us have sold ourselves while sweeping realities which were evident even then under a rug. And when I look at the efforts to disenfranchise the political power of many of those who were poorly treated then because of the Republican fear of losing that power, I am sorry to admit my strong adherence to the basic tenets which once were the heart of that party; individual responsibility, small government, and personal liberty, because they somehow are equated with such rights denial for others.

That is NOT to suggest I think that every black person today should be given some freebie because their ancestors were held in bondage, but rather to assure that as much effort to provide them all the same opportunities I received are made; ie to provide them good examples and assist the aspirations of those willing to make the effort to reach for those aspirations. Not in the “everybody gets a participation trophy” sense, but in the “hand up vs hand out” sense of assistance for any who make the effort to rise above normality. MY parents were not well off, but they showed me a good example of self-improvement and the rewards such actions deserve to reap. And I believe the evidence supports the conclusion they were right in doing so.

So, while I support the belief that we as a society owe SOMETHING to those we deprived of even THAT, I have little patience for the idea that I “owe” anything to anyone not willing to accept that they accept a large portion of whatever is to become of their aspirations belongs to the person they look at every morning in a mirror, who along with whatever luck might befall them, have to make better choices than the masses if they hope to rise above those masses in ANY way.

I am well aware that I had opportunities which were not available to everyone. But I also know of many barriers I overcame by my own deferral of gratification, which might be perhaps the single biggest distinction between us. We ALL have ego needs, but those who can properly prioritize and choose to invest rather than to consume in the present should have reasonable expectation for better outcomes by comparison. The secret from a societal perspective is to set policies which can instill that perspective, when past examples of deprivation have seemed so cruelly independent of personal effort.

But enough of preaching whatever gospel – I have noted before and will forever acknowledge that I live in the best time for me. I merely think that I had SOMETHING to do with why that might be the case. I still use an XP computer, despite my being a talented computer user, and my smartphone is only JUST as smart as I need it to be without wasting my resources on gizmos whose sole value seems to be that their rev level is higher than the last one I owned. And I am far from unlikely to observe the reverse of that to be evident in so many who believe themselves to have been “deprived” in some way. In that respect I am a traditional Republican, because I believe in meritocracy over aristocracy.

The world of medicine, for example, shows how much has changed in so little time. Consider the development of and rollout for the Covid-19 vaccines vs the time it took to eradicate polio, just one example which was at the start of my life a very highly likely outcome for myself. And I contrast that reality with the “faith” basis for those anti-vaxxers who seem rather eager to accept inappropriate interpretations of data which is staring them in the face. I know that Nixon was not really the first per se, but he made it an art form to deceive the populace, and instill a reluctance to recognize that EVERYTHING involves SOME risks, but that NOTHING can be achieved without accepting risk and making the BEST decisions based on honest interpretation of data. So today we HAVE evolved techniques to have the Covid vaccines YEARS before we had any real right to expect them, and the ability for the most people to be aware of that fact, even as that sane technology has allowed the naysayers to spread disinformation to those gullible enough to refuse to ask pertinent questions themselves.

We have an “information age” because of the internet, yet it seems often to be more a MIS-information age because we don’t critically review that which comes to us at the speed of light, while the speed of our own recognition cannot possibly keep up. But somehow there are always those willing to manipulate that paradox to their own purposes, rather than making an honest effort to assure a “fool is NOT born every minute”. And THAT is what DJT spent more than the past 5 years trying to accomplish, and with almost scary success. Yet the immediate prior generation sacrificed HUGELY to rid the world of the kind of “divide and conquer” leadership we somehow have enabled to maintain power despite having LESS than ¼ the population support.

Cars, a subject dear to my personal heart, are better today than at ANY prior time. So are MOST things – we have improved their reliability, durability and cost favorably so more and more of us can reap their benefits, and the choice to partake of them. Look at the typical phone, TV, aircraft, or almost any appliance. Yet the evidence suggests that the talent for their operation might have reverted to half that of fifty years ago, if “Fail Army” videos are to be believed. I can only hope that it is only because we didn’t HAVE so many ways of capturing and disseminating that ignorance as we have today. But... you have to be kidding, right?!

So one downside to this progress seems to be an enormously short fuse on people’s responses, which suggests nothing so emphatic as a lack of thinking about things beforehand. And that seems to result in far too many gut reactions instead of thoughtful ones. That is a bad trend line, which is exacerbated by the efforts of what has seemed to become the “bible” for too many followers of DJT and his ilk; FOX News. And seems to have put the concept of “critical review” into woefully short supply.

But made the purveyors of that “news” the seeming “heroes” of those too stupid to realize they’ve been had on a global scale. Not a place I am arriving at with friendly face, I must confess ;-)

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