

ROTARY DISTRICT 5440 NEWSLETTER FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACEBUILDING
NOVEMBER 2022 NUMBER 58

ELECTIONS AND SUSTAINABLE PEACEBUILDING

William Timpson, Lloyd Thomas and Bob Meroney
Fort Collins Rotary Club

In these newsletters Rotarians invite contributions and ideas, suggestions, and possibilities for our efforts to educate others about addressing the pressing issues of the day with intelligence, compassion, and a commitment to the greater good of humanity and the earth, i.e., nonviolent conflict resolution, improved communication and cooperation, successful negotiation and mediation. We also want to encourage the critical and creative thinking that can help individuals and communities move through obstacles and difficulties in more sustainable ways, i.e., with the interconnected health of all peoples, their economies, and their environments.

Sustainable Peacebuilding Fellowship

Wed. Nov. 2 from 1:15-2:15 MT

Lincoln Center, 417 W. Magnolia Street, Fort Collins, CO 80521

ELECTIONS AND SUSTAINABLE PEACEBUILDING
MOVING AHEAD ON COMPLEX ISSUES LIKE MEDICARE FOR ALL

RICH SHANNON

City Government (22 years)

Real Estate Development (18 years)

Mindfulness Meditation Advocate (17 years)

Carol Cochran, owner of Horse and Dragon Brewing Company and **Susan Kirkpatrick**, former owner of Savory Spice, will also share their thoughts from the perspective of small business owners.

All are invited. Please share this newsletter with a friend or colleague.



The Korean War devastated the cities in the South. Yet, through their resilience and resolve, the Korean people have shown the fastest emergence from this level of poverty of any nation on earth in the last 60 years.



Reflecting their intent to cross the divide, this statue in Seoul depicts two brothers from two sides of the war united again.



The Graduate Institute of Peace Studies, a branch campus of Kyung Hee University in Seoul, South Korea has earned recognition from the United Nations and UNESCO for its commitment to peace education and for promoting a new vision for global civil society.

The Great Irony: Why Conservatives Should Be Leading the Campaign for Improved Medicare for All
By Rich Shannon

I have always felt strongly about these important values held by conservatives:

1. Individual freedom
2. Personal responsibility
3. Families should do all they can to support themselves before looking to government programs
4. The importance of marriage in our society
5. Programs that promote greater efficiency and less waste
6. A market driven economy with good financial incentives has served our country very well
7. Small businesses are the backbone of our community

That is why I am so frustrated that we continue to embrace a patchwork of health care financing systems that undermine all these values.

History has shown us that major social change (women's right to vote, creation of Medicare to help seniors, the Civil Rights Act, etc.) happens when the demands from the grassroots convince Congress that something is fundamentally wrong, that a basic sense of fairness is being violated. History also tells us that major social change is always opposed by those who are benefiting financially and/or politically from the current system. Opposition is in the form of a campaign of FUD (fear, uncertainty and doubt).

T. R. Reid, in his book, *The Healing of America*, offers a starting point for a meaningful discussion. We keep going in circles when discussing health care reform because we, as a society, have not answered the most important question, "What is the morally correct thing to do?" Once we answer that question, we are more than capable of working out the details.

How do we blend a values-based need for change with a constructive discussion about the details, how to best accomplish that change? We must all be willing to let go of the stories in our head and approach the topic from the perspective of "open and curious" instead of "closed and fearful?" This will be necessary if we are going to address legitimate questions and concerns and not have the discussion sidetracked by FUD.

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MONEY, VALUES AND MENTAL HEALTH

Lloyd Thomas, Ph.D. is a longstanding member of the Fort Collins Rotary Club, a licensed psychologist, and a life coach with a long history of writing regular columns. He can be reached at ljtdat@aol.com

During these past few months of 2022, the topic of "mental health" has appeared in many social and news media. It has become a political and electoral topic as well. After working as a clinical psychologist in the area of mental health for 40+ years, I have learned there is a critical connection between one's mental health, one's value system and money. Thus, the title of this brief essay.

In the capitalistic economy of the United States, the “success” of *any* endeavor or achievement is usually defined by how much money you make or have accumulated. Poor people are rarely considered to be “successful” in life. This definition is not confined to the U.S.

In a recent article in the *MJPSYCH BULLETIN* (Oct. 2020; 44(5): p. 193-196), Lee Knifton and Greig Inglis write: *This article examines the relationship between poverty and mental health problems. ... We highlight how mental health problems are related directly to poverty, which in turn underlies wider health inequalities. We then outline implications for psychiatry. They conclude: There is now increasing recognition that mental health problems form the greatest public health challenge of our time, and that the poor bear the greatest burden of mental illness.*²

Someone once said that “In Congress we have the best people money can buy.” Indeed, according to Karl Evers-Hillstrom, *...Political spending in the 2020 election totaled \$14.4 billion, more than doubling the total cost of the record-breaking 2016 election cycle. And ... according to OpenSecrets’ analysis of Federal Election Commission filings, OpenSecrets previously estimated that the 2020 election would cost around \$14 billion. The extraordinary spending figure makes the 2020 election the most expensive of all time by a large margin.* I guess in order for people to be elected to Congress, they cannot be poor. They *can* however be incompetent...even criminal.

As a culture, we seem to define you as “successful” by how much money you accumulate or already have, even if you inherited it. The average NFL coach salary is around \$6,692 million annually. For other coaches, the average is \$5.5 million. That is what we pay for football coaches to “win” in as many football games as possible... even if they are not “successful.”

Clearly, if I live below “the poverty line” I am very likely to be thought of as “unsuccessful.” Nevertheless, I have met and worked with people who were financially wealthy and very unhappy... even mentally unhealthy and feeling miserable. I have also met people who were “poor” and living a healthy and happy lifestyle. Their level of health and happiness was not at all related to how much money they had or were earning.

What you believe to be successful depends on what you value, ...your “value system.” In 1776, the authors of the Declaration of Independence clearly stated what their values were: *We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.— That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, —That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to affect their Safety and Happiness.*

The preamble to our Constitution reads: *We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, ensure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare [underlining mine], and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.*

As a clinician, I would invite you to seriously rethink what you value most highly...your health, your “Safety and Happiness,” the amount of joy you experience in your life, what you consider to be worthwhile, what overriding purpose you have for being alive, what value to bring to your relationships, how you spend the majority of your time, etcetera, etcetera etc. Perhaps thereafter, you more likely might enjoy being alive and human no matter how much money you make or have

accumulated.

SPEAK THE TRUTH AND NAME THE OPPRESSION

William Timpson, Ph.D. is Professor Emeritus at Colorado State University in its School of Education and a member of the Fort Collins Rotary Club. He can be reached at william.timpson@colostate.edu

In my 2019 book, *Learning Life's Lessons*, I wrote about elections in South Africa, how on November 11, 1962, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution condemning their racist apartheid policies and calling on all its members to end economic and military relations with the country. In effect from 1948 to 1993, apartheid, which comes from the Afrikaans word for “apartness,” was government-sanctioned racial segregation and political and economic discrimination against South Africa’s non-white majority. Among many injustices, blacks were forced to live in segregated areas and couldn’t enter whites-only neighborhoods unless they had a special pass. Although whites represented only a small fraction of the population, they held the vast majority of the country’s land and wealth.

Following the 1960 massacre of unarmed demonstrators at Sharpeville near Johannesburg, South Africa, in which 69 blacks were killed and over 180 were injured, the international movement to end apartheid grew rapidly. However, some in the international community argued that sanctions would disproportionately harm the Black majority while others noted how South Africa had been a vocal opponent of communism in a part of the world where Cold War competition was putting nations in one camp or the other. Nonetheless, opposition to apartheid within the U.N. grew, and in 1973 a U.N. resolution labeled apartheid a “crime against humanity.” In 1974, South Africa was suspended from the General Assembly.

After decades of strikes, sanctions and increasingly violent demonstrations, many apartheid laws were repealed over the next 30 years. Finally, in 1991, under President F.W. de Klerk, the South African government repealed all remaining apartheid laws and committed to writing a new constitution. In 1993, a multi-racial, multi-party transitional government was approved and, the next year, South Africa held its first fully free elections. Political activist Nelson Mandela, who spent 27 years in prison along with other anti-apartheid leaders after being convicted of treason, became South Africa’s new president.

In 1996, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), established by the new government, began an investigation into the violence and human rights violations that took place under the apartheid system between 1960 and 1994. The commission’s objective was not to punish people but to inspire South Africans to heal by dealing with its past in an open manner. People who committed crimes were allowed to confess and apply for amnesty.

Headed by 1984 Nobel Peace Prize winner Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the TRC listened to testimony from over 20,000 witnesses from all sides of the issue—victims and their families as well as perpetrators of violence. It released its report in 1998 and condemned all major political organizations—the apartheid government in addition to anti-apartheid forces such as the African National Congress—for contributing to the violence. Based on the TRC’s recommendations, the government began making reparation payments of approximately \$4,000 (U.S.) to individual victims of violence in 2003.

In my 2019 second edition of *147 Practical Tips for Teaching Diversity*, I wrote that although challenging, it is important to help students and others learn how to face injustice, past and present,

how to understand pain and suffering, what our ethical responsibilities are, and how healing can happen. The language and the concepts we use can have a powerful effect on learning, organizing what we read and hear into categories, while inspiring others to action as well. For example, in an argument for curriculum reform that supports sustainable peace and development at the University of Ngozi in Burundi, a church leader uses language in a new and provocative way when he calls for a “war against war” (Timpson, Ndura & Bangayimbaga, 2015).

As another example, Roe Bubar and Irene Vernon (2003) describe what they face when addressing the history of law and policies for Native Americans in the United States. “We focus on how Indian nations in this country never have been afforded the ability to assert their sovereignty in its fullest extent within the confines of the judicial system. ... In the face of this kind of (in)justice, it becomes a real challenge for us to get students to learn this history and to then empower them to think about the law in a more ethical and equitable manner” (p. 156). For instance, should we call Christopher Columbus an “explorer” or label him an “emissary” for European imperialists greedy for the resources of the new world or, given the resulting deaths of millions of Native peoples, judge him guilty of “war crimes” and “genocide”?

Here is a third example. Rose Kreston (2003) teaches about the terrible history that disabled people have suffered. “Society’s response to disability (as deviant) has ranged from such atrocities as infanticide and the holocaust (i.e., first groups for the Nazi gas chambers) to relatively benign habits of designing facilities with only one accessible restroom per floor or protesting group homes in neighborhoods. As a result, people with disabilities have experienced systematic oppression, discrimination, isolation, and devaluation from those who are non-disabled” (p. 171).

Each of us can help students and others identify problems, what “truths” need to be explored and what “oppressions” need to be identified. Use time in a debriefing session to assess the impact of this kind of discussion. Just how inspiring is it to publicly state what only a few radical types dare to say?

VIKING ECONOMICS

Facing problems during the world-wide economic depression of the 1930’s, the Scandinavian democratic nation of Scandinavia—Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark and Iceland—found a way forward that demonstrated their value in providing for the common good, relieving the suffering, and simultaneously inspiring everyone to contribute and cooperate in finding new ways forward. In his book, *Viking Economics: How the Scandinavians got it right—and how we can too* (Brooklyn, NY: Melville House Publishing), George Lakey (2016) describes how these nations did just that.

The “formula” for this would not be welfare without obligations. No, anyone receiving assistance would be expected to contribute in some way, to work or study. Because each nation already had in place a commitment to this tangible safety net, panic and desperation never arose. And because there was this commitment to the common good—for workers and their union representatives, for owners and managers, for community leaders and average citizens, for experts and government officials—everyone came to the negotiating table and everyone got to be heard. Cooperation, compassion, and intelligence ruled. More specifically, the health care, education, and child-care that the government provided allowed all workers the opportunities they needed to grow, move in new directions as needed and contribute their fair share to a better future. Accordingly, as Lakey tells this history, the Scandinavian workers became the happiest and most productive in the world.

THE POLITICAL PROPAGANDA DESTROYS MENTAL HEALTH! IT DESTROYS PEACE.

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The United States has become a country with essentially endless political campaigns. The minute one election is over, the campaigning for the next begins. It is boring, corrosive, wasteful, and distracting.¹ In the 2020 election campaign spending reached a total of \$14.4 billion, more than double the total cost of the record-breaking 2016 presidential election cycle.²

Some campaign ads paint candidates in glowing terms, raving about their impressive accomplishments, and other attack-ads tear down the opponents' record and disparage their ethics. Misleading information has led to a frantic growth industry in fact-checking. Studies seem to show that positive ads encourage more people to turn out on Election Day, while negative ads slightly suppress turnout.³

The effects, however, are not impressive unless issues are very close. An increase in positive ads by 1% increased voter turnout by 0.03% but candidate vote share by only 0.016%. An increase in negative ads by 1% dropped voter turnout by only 0.007% but increased the supporting candidate vote share by 0.025%. It seems to be a human characteristic that even having seen 10 good reviews, it is the 1 negative review that sticks; hence, the preponderance of hateful negative political advertising.



¹ Gene Collier, [Four more weeks of political ads? Make it stop!](https://replica.seattletimes.com/infinity/article_popover_share.aspx?guid=97254873-0697-4791-b480-14859bbc4) Seattle Times: https://replica.seattletimes.com/infinity/article_popover_share.aspx?guid=97254873-0697-4791-b480-14859bbc4

² Karl Evers-Hillstrom, [Most expensive ever: 2020 election cost \\$14.4 billion](https://www.opensecrets.org/news/2021/02/2020-cycle-cost-14p4-billion-doubling-16/), Open Secrets, Feb 11, 2021, <https://www.opensecrets.org/news/2021/02/2020-cycle-cost-14p4-billion-doubling-16/>

³ Brett Gordon, [How Much Do Campaign Ads Matter?](https://insight.kellogg.northwestern.edu/article/how-much-do-campaign-ads-matter), Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University, Nov 1, 2021. <https://insight.kellogg.northwestern.edu/article/how-much-do-campaign-ads-matter>



Not every country is so burdened with long political campaign seasons:

- Whereas in the US in 2016 the 1st Candidate (Ted Cruz) announced his campaign 596 days before the election date; in the same year Joe Biden decided NOT to campaign 384 days before Election Day because *"it was too late for him to be competitive!"*
- In Canada, the minimum length is 36 days, but the longest was 74 days in 1926 (i.e., two months).
- In Mexico, the longest time allowed is 147 days.
- In Australia, the campaign must be a minimum of 33 days, but the longest ever was 11 weeks in 1910.
- In France, the official election campaign usually lasts no more than 2 weeks.
- In Japan, campaigning is only allowed for 12 days.
- In Singapore, the minimum length is 9 days, probably the shortest in the 21st century.
- In Israel, the electoral law relating to media coverage covers a time frame of 150 days before the election, and during the 30 days immediately before the election, no campaigning is permitted in cinemas or on television.

In the US, political wisdom suggests the candidate leading on Labor Day will win the presidential election in November. Nothing that happens in the last two months has much influence; hence, all those billions of dollars spent on political ads are just a waste.

The cartoon below suggests that long political campaigns are nothing new in the United States.



Frankly, I almost have to vote for him. I can't stand the expense of redecoration! (October 7, 1944)

Oh, for a system where no paid campaign media ads were allowed until say 60 days before Election Day!

PRIORITIES OF THE ROTARY FOUNDATION

See the RI website: <https://my.rotary.org/en/learning-reference/about-rotary/our-priorities>. You can find some of our past issues at the Rotary District 5440 website: <https://www.rotary5440.org/sitepage/peace-building-newsletters>.