

These Times Are Indeed Trying Our Souls

Another school shooting devastatingly taking the lives of three innocent children and three servant adults has once again left America emotionally reeling.

In times such as this, we question the viability of our society and the continuity of our national culture. We ponder the antithesis of this reality, and seek futilely an alternative outcome.

We reflect on actions not taken by accusation. We are hopeful that solutions untried will render this an isolated incident. We fear an environment wherein safety is an illusory dream. We question all that we cannot control.

Thomas Paine published "The American Crisis" pamphlet in December of 1776 in an attempt to rally support and morale for the American Revolutionary War when General Washington's troops had suffered repeated defeats. The winter of 1776 was beyond brutal. The elements were bad enough. The volunteer army was losing hope that anything could be done by mankind to successfully support a moral cause.

And so America nationally questions our cause and purpose today. In the face of irrational evil, can anything be done by a society to ensure the safety of our children and the selfless leaders who serve them?

Gun reform laws will be debated. The presence of weapons on America's streets is too pervasive. However, a person can qualify to buy a weapon and later become psychologically unfit to possess a firearm. Identifying individual behavioral risk is difficult. Professionals are leery of reporting confidential information of a client.

The tenets of red flag laws, when exercised, are difficult to immediately determine in a timely manner. Further, individuals do have constitutional rights of due process in defending allegations and analysis.

The best thing any society can do in times of stress is to network as citizens looking out for each other. In the volition of caring, we provide support for undeclared or sensitive needs of our family and neighbors. We find nurturing and binding cords by networking in our churches, civic organizations, through mentoring programs and charitable services. Respecting the humility of providing physical and emotional reinforcement without any measure of judgment is the cornerstone of the moral foundation of a stable society.

Thomas Paine's words echo today responding to the turbulence of events for which we have no immediate answer or optimism for future redemption.

"These are the times that try men's souls; the summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph."

The murder of our children is a heinous crime, unrelatable to a decent soul. The tyranny that Americans faced in 1776 is tantamount to the monstrous evil of one deranged individual. Paine's words could be amended, and therein, as relevant today as when written:

Evil, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the challenge, the more glorious the triumph.

- ❑ Mental illness may be the emerging malady leading to America's crisis today. Only through commitment to shared values of decency, morality and virtue will we be able to

triumph. The first step and each such succeeding step must be taken in faith that good will overcome evil, and that mankind can successfully support a moral cause.

Now is the time for grieving. We each grieve in our own way. As we mourn, be ever mindful...

That only through unconditional love for one another can we achieve moral solutions. {eo}

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