

A Nation Divided

by Bentley de Bardelaben

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Our country recently went through a “down to the wire, death match” between two long-suffering organizations. Only one team was awarded the highly coveted World Series prize trophy. Most of us, if not all, are aware that it was the Chicago Cubs. Kudos to them!

By the printing of this opinion piece, merely a week later, the opposing organizations engaged in their own “down to the wire, death match” for the nations’ highest elected office, President of the United States, will have been settled. One person will emerge as victorious. The other, defeated.

Unfortunately, “we the people” will probably not move past the end results with the relative ease that we saw the week prior in the sports arena. This presidential race has been the most contentious in recent memory. I understand that my comparison between sports rivals and political rivals is like comparing apples to oranges, but seeing the baseball season end is enough to make on long for the days when we, as a nation, could bounce back from a prickly election cycle the day after and find a way forward.

Unfortunately, those days may be long gone. We have become a nation divided. This election cycle has shown that many times over. There are probably political historians, pundits, and many others who might try to educate us as to when this change occurred. While that may be important in the long run, in the here and now, it is not. Having data will not be the balm we need to move forward with stakes as high as they are for many of us who feel as if we have been betrayed by public and private institutions.

African American poet, Langston Hughes, asks his readers an important question in his famous poem, “Dream Deferred.”

*“What happens to a dream deferred? Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore- And then run? Does it stink like rotten meat? Or crust and*

sugar over- like a syrupy sweet? Maybe it just sags like a heavy load. Or does it explode?"

While that poetic reference may seem melodramatic, it acutely covers our country's mood. (At least from where I find myself socially located in this conversation.) There is profound disillusionment in the households of many of the American electorate. Whether, or not, our feelings are based on actual or perceived occurrences, it has become reality within our common life together.

Martin Luther King, Jr. said in his "I Have a Dream" speech in August 1963 that [Whites] *"have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our [Blacks] destiny. And they have come to realize that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone. And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall always march ahead. We cannot turn back."* I agree, wholeheartedly.

Come Wednesday, November 9th, no matter which party leader is victorious, I pray that the losing candidate will be able to look beyond ego and party allegiance to offer their followers a message of unity and hope. Anything less could very well be the straw that breaks the proverbial camel's back within our great republic which is not what our founding leaders envisioned, nor my enslaved ancestors, as they fought so that we could be free to pursue a life, liberty, and happiness.

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