

Chapter Fourteen — Peace In Our Time

We are poised on the cusp of major success as a people and as a country. If we do all of the things that we need to do to make this country as inclusive as it needs to be, I believe that we will succeed at multiple levels and that we can and will be a country at Peace with itself in every key setting and every key way.

We need to do several very right things to make that happen.

We need to help every child — beginning by setting up brain exercise programs for all children from all groups from birth on — taking full advantage for each child of those first biologically critical years in each child's life when brain exercise strengthens brains.

We need to have our police departments, legal systems, and government programs all earning the trust of every group in every community. We need to eliminate discrimination in our hiring practices and in our school settings. We are making major progress in those areas now — and we need that progress to continue and accelerate.

Knowledge is power.

We all need to know and understand how much our lives are affected by our instinctive thought processes and behaviors.

We particularly all need to understand our extremely persuasive and powerful instincts to divide the world into us and them and to then act in very different ways relative to each “Us” and relative to each “Them.”

The patterns are clear, but too they are too often entirely invisible to us — and we each need to know exactly what those patterns are and how they influence our thoughts, our behaviors, and our lives.

We need to understand what those patterns are for each of us.

When someone is an “us,” we are protective, supportive, and inclusive. When someone is a “Them” we are divisive, distrustful, and even damaging in a number of ways that are specific to the settings we are in and specific to the “Them” who we perceive to exist in each setting.

We tend to have high ethical standards that apply to our interactions with us. We tend to suspend ethics and we tend to feel no guilt doing unethical and even damaging things to “Them.”

We ethnically cleanse “Them,” discriminate against them, and even — in truly primal settings — enslave “them.”

Each of us is influenced at very important levels in our thoughts, perceptions, and behaviors by whether we perceive someone else to be an us or perceive someone else to be a them.

We can't get rid of our basic instincts. We can, however, take very deliberate steps to expand our sense of who we include as "us" and to reduce the activation of our sense that other people are "Them."

We Can Use Our Cultures As Tools For Better Behaviors

We can use our cultures as tools for that process. Our cultures tend to be the tools that are used by our instincts to achieve their basic instinctive goals.

We need to change that interaction and sequence and flip it around so that we can very deliberately and intentionally use our cultures as tools to activate our more positive instincts and to channel our best instincts in more inclusive ways.

Instead of having our intellect design cultures that simply, directly, and unconsciously serve the primal goals of our instincts, we need to have our intellects make value based choices as individuals and groups to do enlightened and positive things on behalf of all people — and we need our intellects to put in place both beliefs and cultural expectations that activate

and focus our best and most positive instincts in enlightened and positive ways.

We Can Anchor Our Sense Of Us On Core Beliefs

All of that is possible to do. We need to begin that entire process with a set of core beliefs that we all share and then we need to anchor our future interactions as a people on those core values.

We need to be united by our core beliefs, and not divided by our ethnicity, race, culture, or by any other divisive category or type of intergroup differentiation.

I have been on a long journey of extended learning for nearly three decades that has led me to that set of conclusions. I have seen people be saints — and do loving, caring, and heroic things in the service of each other — and I have seen people sin and do evil things to one another with no sense of remorse, regret, or guilt at any level.

We are all far too capable of both sets of behaviors.

We all need to understand how wonderful and desirably one set of those behaviors can be — and we need to understand how damaging, disgusting, destructive, divisive, and evil other sets of those behaviors can be

— and we need to very intentionally and knowingly steer ourselves collectively to the wonderful and loving behaviors.

People may disagree with being that direct and blunt about our situation and about our basic nature as people — but the evidence points to the conclusion that we can all be saints and we are all also very susceptible to being sinners.

Rather than feeling bad about that dichotomy, we need to proactively manage that functional reality and we need to simply make the sinning sets of behavior irrelevant and out of context for our collective and individual lives.

If we put ourselves in the position where we can truly be an inclusive meritocracy as a country, committed to win/win outcomes for all parts and components of our values-based and highly inclusive American “Us,” then we can involve and invoke the best behaviors that stem from our best and most positive packages of instincts and we can truly achieve Peace In Our Time.

We Need To Make Morally Enlightened Choices And That
Can Be Done

It will not be easy. We will need to make intellectually, morally, and ethically enlightened choices about what we believe and about how we will decide to behave and to interact with one another.

I have been looking at our interactions in a wide variety of settings for a couple of decades. There are grounds for being encouraged.

I have seen people do wonderful and loving things for one another in a wide range of settings across the planet. Loving and wonderful things can happen — but we need to avoid the seductive primal temptations and the insidious emotional pull of our most destructive us/them emotions and beliefs in order to make those loving things happen.

It is far too easy to be drawn into the seductive attraction of negative intergroup energy — hating our enemy with collective negative energy and feeling right acting in groups, teams, and even mobs in emotionally mutually reinforcing ways to damage whoever we perceive to be “them” when those most negative intergroup instincts are activated and in gear.

We should never underestimate the seductive power of those very primal instinctive emotions and thought processes. We should not only not underestimate them — we should very consciously and very intentionally

make sure that those seductive energies are never activated in our settings or in our lives.

We Are, At Our Best, Wonderful People

We are, at our best, wonderful people. We are, at our best, inclusive, accepting, and mutually supportive people.

We are, at our best, believers in the ability of each of us to be supportive of all of us.

Knowledge is power. Now that we know what the actual situation is relative to our instinctive behavior packages, we need to make choices about how we will each lead our lives and about how we will all interact with one another so that we can, in fact, all win.

I started my learning process about all of those intergroup interaction issues in that small, backwoods town in Northern Minnesota more than six decades ago. I saw some of the best behaviors that could exist in that town—and I also saw behaviors that were petty, cruel, and even evil for some of the interactions that occurred for people who lived in that setting.

I now have a sense of why we go down each of those paths. That particular sense of why is a source of power. Knowing why we act in those ways gives us the power of choice. We can each decide at an intellectual

level which path to choose for the future for ourselves and for the people we include in our “us.”

We Now Need Intellect To Shape Cultures And Steer Instincts

For far too long — back to the dawn of history — we have allowed our basic instincts to shape our cultures and we have allowed our cultures to shape our beliefs and our behaviors — often in negative ways.

We did not have a clue that our thoughts, values, and even emotions were being invisibly shaped by those factors and by those primal and embedded forces.

We have done some very good things under the influence of those forces and we have done some things that were not good to do — including acting in ways that triggered evil behaviors in our interactions with some people.

We have done some things that were clearly not the right things to do and we felt right in doing them, without knowing why they felt right or why they were our choices.

Now — with better understanding of how all of those factors influence our lives — we can make enlightened choices about what to do next.

We can rise above those most negative primal approaches and make better choices now. We can build on our new knowledge and we can choose to act in ethical, moral, enlightened, values-based ways to create the world that we should build for the benefit of us all.

We need to recognize the risks that we will inevitably face.

There will be challenging times ahead. That is a certainty. Problems will happen.

Economic issues, environmental issues, disease, drought, and other damaging external factors all have the potential to impose external crisis and to create very real problems that can create major challenges for us all that will have the ability to deeply divide us and cause us to do damaging things to one another in order to survive.

Those external factors will cause us to do damage to one another if we are not united and if we are not prepared to overcome each of those problems in ways that can cause us all to ultimately do well and to survive, prosper, and even thrive.

The future options and problems are fairly easy to discern and predict.

If we are not united when the full impact of our growing diversity reaches its logical consequences, then we will be divided at that point in

time — and that division will damage us all because we do not do well when we are divided into us and them in any setting. We need to be “us.”

If we are not united when economic setbacks or environmental crisis and setbacks affect us, we have the potential to divide into separate warring factors who sacrifice each other in order to protect our own group.

We also need to be an “us” to survive and thrive in the face of those crisis and challenges.

We need to be ”us” for the best chance of survival.

Peace in our Time. That is the path we need to be on.

I hope that my overall learning process and sets of life experiences has been informative and useful to you in making this set of issues more clearer — and I hope that we can all do now what we all need to do to create the future we all want to create.

It can be done.

We just need to very intentionally do it.