

Chapter Fourteen — Progress Happens In Stages — And

Backlashes Can Happen

We have made significant progress as a nation relative to a number of areas of intergroup interactions and gender related culture and legal expectations.

That progress has often been painful, but it has been consistent — and it has followed some very consistent reaction patterns in each of the areas where progress has been made.

We have made major progress, for example, in integrating our military for both minorities and women. That progress was a process, not an event.

We made some progress in integrating our military in World War I, for example. We made significantly more progress in integrating our military by World War II.

We had highly integrated fighting units by the Korean War. Our forces in Vietnam were probably the most racially integrated fighters in the world at that point in world history.

Progress on areas of integration has been both consistent and constant for our military and each stage of progress was built on the progress that had been achieved in the prior stage.

Our military is now very much integrated. An increasing number of our most senior officers now have been from our minority soldiers — up to the point where we have had an African American Chief of the Joint Chiefs of Staff who ran the entire Pentagon and where the Commander in Chief for the entire country is now African American.

Progress Sometimes Happens in Stages

That significant level of progress for our military has been gradual and incremental, but it has been absolutely consistent over time.

It has been consistent and it has continuously improved over time because we deliberately built each of the new rules and expectations in each stage requiring additional non-discrimination in those settings into our relevant laws and regulations for that time frame and then we both enforced and reinforced those laws and regulations.

A famous American politician once said — “You can’t regulate morality.” He was wrong. Sometimes the only way of both creating and sustaining morality in a setting is to regulate it.

The patterns of acceptance in this country that we have seen for key areas of growing enlightenment and more inclusive behaviors relative to basic issues of racial and ethnic discrimination have been fairly consistent.

We Integrated Sports In Stages

Sports are a good example of that sometimes painful pattern of continuous improvement relative to those issues. We once had only white professional baseball players. The sport was completely segregated in the initial days of the professional league. It was entirely White at that point.

Then a courageous team owner and a brave courageous athlete broke the color barrier in that particular sport and triggered a set of events that ended up integrating baseball.

That integration of baseball did not happen overnight. It began with the one key step needed to break that barrier. Then the people who took that first step needed to persevere against the backlashes that occurred relative to that first step.

Backlashes very clearly did happen. They needed to be withstood by the relevant parties. Those first steps became the anchor for the next set of stages — and ultimately all teams were integrates. The consequences, over time, were that the progress that was made by the first step of integrating the

first team was amplified and solidified by the steps that followed with all of the teams.

Anger Becomes Resistance and Evolves to Acceptance

The us/them resistance pattern that happened for that particular area of progress was exactly what generally happens when our us/them instincts are triggered and when behavior change is implemented in any area of society that is relevant to that particular package of instincts.

Integrating baseball was initially very difficult. Hatred happened in some settings. Intense anger happened in far too many settings.

Individual team member reactions to integration of their team varied significantly — from some people on the team who immediately accepted their new teammate as a fellow human being who personally shared their love for that particular sport to other, more negative people on the team whose personal value set and beliefs made them extremely unhappy and very angry that they now had to be part of an integrated team with a minority team member.

Over time, across the entire team, resistance faded — but the resistance was fierce initially in many ways and all of that anger and resistance took time to be resolved.

Similar patterns happened on other teams as they also integrated their players — with less resistance in other sites.

The negative energy level that was initially triggered with a number of people about the integration of baseball didn't die out immediately. But as people in that era learned a new paradigm that said sports could and should be integrated and as people learned that integration could be good both for that sport and for the people who loved that sport — then the expectations changed.

People who support teams very much want their teams to win. Adding a minority star player generally improved the chance of a team winning. That improved chances of winning helped activate team loyalty instincts for many fans of each team that helped them overcome other sets of us/them instinctive reactions.

Being a fan trumped being a bigot for many people. New expectations were created.

Unhappiness is Triggered by Unmet Expectations

Unmet expectations can make people very unhappy.

A high percentage of unhappiness for many people in any setting is based on either their unmet expectations or on their sense of violated

expectations. The most skillful leaders in a wide variety of settings know that to be true and skilled leaders often work hard to manage expectations.

The best way of managing unhappiness in many situations is often to carefully manage people's expectations. Unhappiness in any setting is often anchored in unmet expectations for people in that setting.

We have now changed our expectations about our athletic teams and sports. The American gymnastics team at the Olympics is almost always a truly impressive and inspirational array and mix of ethnicities and races.

We Americans who cheer for our team barely notice that diversity in favor of labeling that entire team as American and as "us." That pattern of supporting diverse teams has been true in other sports as well.

We now have highly integrated professional sports for every category of sports and people simply consider that to be the new normal.

We Have Extensively Integrated The Entertainment Industry

We also have made great progress in integrating our entertainment industry. Our very extensive entertainment business in this country is clearly now highly integrated at almost all functional levels.

We clearly have some subsets of our music and entertainment business that have strong ethnic or racial concentrations, but our overall

entertainment business is inclusive and it functions as a meritocracy — with the talent of each performer clearly having a major impact on each performer's success.

That particular category of integration has been very good economically for a number of minority entertainers in this country who are currently being well paid for their efforts.

That level of inclusion for our music and our arts has also been good for everyone in our American culture because we can all now very easily and consistently see many people from another race or from a different ethnicity who are clearly talented, engaging, attractive, likeable, and interesting people.

When we are personally fans of a person from another ethnicity or another race, it's harder to maintain a sense of generic stereotypical dislike for that person's ethnicity or race.

Because we have extended the American Dream in our entertainment would to be inclusive of all groups of people, we now have some of the best music and art in the world.

We all very clearly benefit from the inclusion of so many cultures, races, and ethnicities in the artistic process of this country. Our diversity in those creative areas is one of our great strengths and assets as a country.

Homosexuality Can Trigger Us/Them Reactions

We do have some areas where we need to make significantly more progress.

One area where the more negative aspects of our us/them instincts has been repeatedly activated in ways that have caused major discrimination, distrust, damage, and significant anger has been homosexuality and issues of gender preference.

Some of the behavior patterns and thought processes that have been directed in too many settings and too many ways against gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people have clearly followed many of the very clear and most negative paths of our more primal us/them values, thought processes, and behaviors.

In worst-case settings, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender Americans have been very deliberately and very consciously persecuted, oppressed, physically attacked, damaged, and discriminated against in

multiple ways. Some people have been killed for being homosexual. Others have had their lives ruined.

The negative and damaging treatment of gay, lesbian, and transgender people has a long and consistent worldwide pattern of very damaging and negative us/them behaviors. Again, that intergroup behavior is not unique to our country. People in many countries even today can be persecuted, imprisoned, and damaged for being homosexual. People in some countries can be executed. Being homosexual is illegal today in too many settings and people are being damaged as a result.

We, as a nation, are currently making significant progress on those issues in this country. It used to be illegal to be homosexual in this country. Those laws are gone. We are now much more enlightened in this country on many of those issues, but we are far from having eliminated those problems.

The progress in this country has been steady — with decreasing levels of perceived and stereotyped dehumanization for people who are gay.

Some of the more negative responses of the rest of the American population to homosexual Americans have clearly been softened by the appearance of very likeable, enjoyable, witty, warm, and extremely human gay characters on some of our on-going TV shows.

Our us/them sets of instinctive reactions have clearly been highly relevant to that situation.

Television Shows Have “Humanized” Gay Characters

That is another area where our diversity success has been enhanced by our creative forces. Several popular TV shows have clearly helped humanize the perception of gay and lesbian people by showing gay and lesbian people in their shows to be likeable, interesting, and very human people — clearly part of the American “Us.”

When any group of people is stereotyped and when any group is perceptually dehumanized, instinctive behaviors make it easy to be negative about those people. It can be far too easy to extend blind prejudice at us/them levels based on uninformed categorical group dislike targeted against that specific set of people.

But when that same group of people is perceived to clearly be very human and to have group members who are very likeable categories of “us,” then many of those barriers to intergroup understanding can diminish significantly. In the best of circumstances, we can each expand our personal sense of “us” to include that particular prior category of them as “us.”

When we see people from other groups of people to be very human and to be likeable in important ways, then we can clearly defuse some of the more negative levels of intergroup dislike and distrust that are triggered by a sense of those same people being “Them.”

Progress Rarely Happens Spontaneously

The functional levels of progress that are needed to eliminate the negative components of us/them behaviors for any set of intergroup issues rarely happens spontaneously.

Once those negative aspects of intergroup perceptions have been activated relative to any group of people, those negative instinctive reactions tend to be self-reinforcing and each negative intergroup set of reactions can take on a life and a momentum of their own.

We can only make progress in those areas where we recognize that those negative us/them delineations are in place and then take intentional steps to intervene in those perceptions in a positive way.

We need both enlightened behavior choices in those areas and we need laws to prevent some of the more negative patterns of intergroup behavior from happening. It is a good thing to make the negative and damaging behaviors illegal.

We also very clearly need people from each group to get to know people from other groups so that we can trigger our “us” instincts in an inclusive way to those people instead of just our activating our “Them” instincts when “They” are involved.

We need people from all groups to get to know people from other groups so that we can all relate to each other as a human “us.”

To achieve intergroup Peace and to create a more functional America for us all, we really do need to realize, understand, and personally feel that we are all part of a basic human us. Our music and our inclusive and highly diverse entertainment approaches can help significantly to create that inclusive sense of “us.”

Movies Are Heavily Influenced And Shaped By Basic Packages Of Instincts

Movies, in particular, can help us achieve those understandings. Movies are obviously heavily influenced by our basic package of instincts. Instincts very clearly tend to sculpt the scripts of movies. Many movies tend to be heavily focused on various kinds of instinctive behavior.

Many of the movies we like the most very clearly and very skillfully tend to play out and echo our favorite instinctive scripts. Movies very

consistently use instinctive archetypes for the bulk of their story lines. Heroes, villains, love, coupling, intergroup conflict, intergroup treachery, turf protection, and hierarchal ambitions are all clearly instinct sculpted movie script topics that people love because those topics activate instinctive responses, thought processes, and emotions.

Heroes, protecting our families, and resisting evil that is coming from some version of “them” are also very instinct based themes. Our movie screens — and many of our television shows — tend to tee up and reflect the equivalent of an ongoing seminar and outline of our basic purely instinctive thought processes.

We tend to like movies a lot that “feel right” instinctively.

There are a lot of “us/them” themes in our movies. That is not coincidental. We love us/them themes because they fit into our us/them instinctive reactions and thought processes.

Anytime an audience can be drawn in to relate to an “us” and to hate or fear a “Them,” the movies that create that draw are more likely to succeed.

Aliens Are The Ultimate “Them”

Relative to our most focused us/them instincts, the ultimate “Them” for us as humans is actually aliens from other planets. Us/Them movies that feature aliens from other planets as the villains tend to be extremely popular.

Those movies with aliens as the “Them” are popular. They tend to feel right to viewers because those movies vicariously trigger our us/them instinctive emotions in very clear ways — because aliens are so clearly a “Them.” Any movie that links us as a viewer to those sets of instincts has a high likelihood of energizing us and involving us at an instinctive and emotional level.

Most movies on any topic that follow well-worn plot patterns actually tend to follow patterns that are well worn because they are so heavily influenced by our instinctive emotions and by our instinctive behaviors.

The patterns are obvious.

In each of the various interstellar alien movies that are produced, we tend to have a human hero who epitomizes “us.” Heroes are also instinctively important to us. Every culture has its iconic hero stories. Every major culture on the planet has its heroes.

We have strong instincts to want heroes and we have strong instincts to support heroes.

In several very popular recent movies, the human hero who epitomizes the human us against the evil and non-human alien “Them” in each movie has been the same African American actor.

Will Smith seems to be the ultimate “us.”

In *Independence Day*, Will Smith saved us from horrible threatening interplanetary alien war ships and reptilian monsters. In the *Men in Black* movies, he saves us from multiple types of very evil aliens.

In *I-Robot*, Smith saved us from alien machines. In *I Am Legend*, he saved us from a set of dehumanized creatures that were killing mankind.

In *Collosus*, he saves us from a dehumanizing computer.

Will Smith has been the epitome of “us” in each of those movies. He saved “us” from some category of alien “Them” in each of those plot lines.

It speaks well for America that we collectively accept and embrace an African American hero as the ultimate hero who personally epitomizes the human “us” and then saves “us” as a species and a people in times of intergalactic conflict and in times of interspecies crisis.

We Can Use Our Movies To Create A Sense Of “Us”

We would benefit from using our movies even more effectively to help us generate a sense of “us” for America.

Chapter Nine dealt with our creative instincts and explains why we need creativity to help us understand who we are and what we do.

We need to use our creativity instincts for songs, art, television shows, and movies that help us trigger our instinctive sense of “us” for our country and our collective vision of America.

We also need to tell the story more clearly about both the progress we have made and the progress that we need to make now.

We Have Elected Minority Americans To Top Leadership Positions

We have made significant progress as a nation on intergroup issues since the days of slavery and Jim Crow laws. We have made significant progress since Martin Luther King gave his famous, wise, and brilliantly inclusive and insightful “I Have a Dream” speech. Anyone who has not read that speech or heard that speech should take the time to hear the message that is the heart and mind of that speech.

We have made some progress in the directions that were pointed to by Dr. King in that speech.

As the prior chapter of this book pointed out, minority elected officials used to be rare and non-existent in this country. We currently have elected people from many of our various ethnic and racial groups to office and we have done that in multiple settings.

We only had one Hispanic mayor of a major American city in a full century, and we now have multiple increasingly diverse cities where being Hispanic is clearly an electoral advantage for a candidate.

Our congressional seats are increasingly being filled by women and by members of various non-white groups of people.

We have minority mayors, minority governors, and our city councils and school boards in many communities are now reflecting the diversity of the communities they serve. That progress is real and it is good for our country.

We have one glaringly obvious and overwhelmingly relevant example and proof point for the intergroup progress we have made — the Presidency of the United States. President Obama is clear evidence that major and undeniable progress has been made relative to electing minority public officials since Reverend King gave his speech about his dream for America.

The Presidency of the United States is now held by an African American President. That reality was not on the radar screen when Rev. Martin Luther King gave his Dream speech and it was frankly not contemplated as a possibility when the first drafts of this book were written a couple of decades ago.

There was a brief time when General and Cabinet Minister Colin Powell, also African American, led in some key presidential polls — but General Powell declined to run for the office.

His leadership in those polls for a period of time was, all by itself, a major historical change relative to the status of African Americans in the context of senior leadership positions for the country.

Today, we have an African American President. He has a very foreign sounding name. He has been both elected and re-elected.

President Barack Obama has clearly made the point that we can have a functioning political meritocracy in this country, and he has proven beyond dispute or contention that an exceptionally skilled and extremely intelligent political leader from an American minority group can get elected to the highest office in the land.

Some People Love Having a Black President — and Some Hate

It Deeply

Our history was taken down a very different path with the election of Barack Obama as President.

The election of President Obama sent a clear message to minority Americans that it is possible to be in a minority position in this country and to succeed in a major way. He changed thinking at many levels in many areas about what was possible.

His support from our minority communities reached record levels in terms of the percentage of the vote given to a candidate by several subsets of our electorate. His election made many people happy at levels that were unprecedented.

At the same time, his election made some other people deeply unhappy and it made a number of people angry — some extremely angry.

Some people whose us/them instincts have been negatively triggered by the election of President Obama absolutely hate the fact that America now has a Black president.

There are people who want to restore America to a perceived prior level of “us” status who do not define and include President Obama to be in their definition of “us.”

Electing President Obama clearly did not eliminate or end racism in this country and it did not prove at any level that we have now moved to a “post racism America.” His election does mean, however, that we can collectively make extremely important electoral decisions that are not rigidly defined by race and that racism may strongly influence many of us, but it does not dictate who we are and it does not determine who we choose to lead us.

His election shows that those basic instinct-linked barriers still exist and it also shows that those barriers can be at least situationally overcome.

Race is still very relevant to the electoral process — but in a different way than it was 20 or 50 years ago. A large number of the votes that were cast in each of those elections that he won went to the President because of his race. Some of the votes that were cast against him in each election were clearly cast against him because of his race.

His Race Had An Impact On Many Voters

His race was not the deciding factor for many of the votes cast, but it was the only relevant factor for some of the people who voted. Anyone who understands how our us/them instincts work can understand all three sets of voters and the decision processes they faced in that election.

Overall, the combined election outcome for those two elections tells the world and ourselves that we are a democratic nation. That outcome also makes it very clear that we do choose our leaders through an inclusive electoral process.

The people who hate The President for racial us/them reasons are one set of people who oppose him. He also has a number of people who clearly oppose him for purely ideological, political, and economic reasons.

As a country, we have a wide range of political views, and the people who hold those various views often hold them with deep conviction and great passion.

That set of differences can be a good thing. Creative solutions to problems can clearly emerge from the interactions that can happen in both policy settings and political dialogues between people with opposing points of view who work together to find solutions.

We are all smarter collectively than any of us are smart individually.

Groups of people with differing perspectives and differing insights on key issues can make each other smarter when there is a dialogue and a communication process for those key issues that is focused on mutual and collective learning.

Us/Them Instincts Can Also Trigger Lose/Lose Strategies and Goals

We can also find ourselves polarized and radically politicized when the people who hold different perspectives on various political and policy issues trigger very basic us/them perceptions of the relevant political groups in their own minds and then look at various inter-party discussions as being a way of dealing with and damaging the enemy rather than a way of learning from each other.

When we define the other political party in a setting at a very primal and fundamental level to be a “Them,” that definition of being a “Them” clearly can trigger very problematic and dysfunctional political interactions.

Our more negative instincts and our more negative intergroup thought processes then tend to shape and define the interactions and the intergroup situations that exist.

We all have a basic instinct triggered mental model to oppose everything that is done or said by anyone we perceive to be an enemy “Them” — so having the other political party perceived to be “them” can trigger a very dysfunctional, limiting, and often damaging set of behaviors by the people who hold that belief.

It can be a very real problem and very dysfunctional when people who hold different political views choose to directly look past their divergent political alignments and look past their basic philosophical disagreements and simply perceive the other party in their setting to be inherently wrong — inherently evil and inherently wrong.

That perception can activate a very negative us/them instinctive context for the interactions of those political people with the other people who hold the other deeply opposed political views.

Political Opponents Are Perceived To Be Evil — Not Wrong

In extreme cases of us/them instinct activation, the people who hold the other views are perceived to be evil — not just wrong. In the most negative instinct activation, the other political group is not seen to be people who are a subset of our larger us who simply have a different political perspective.

The other party can be perceived to be a “Them” who is making intentionally evil and sinful choices. When our worst us/them intergroup instincts are activated, the other party can be demonized and dehumanized — and the political environment that results from that demonization and dehumanization can deteriorate into hateful and spiteful interactions between the groups rather than having our political exchanges create a continuously improving governance process where people try in good faith to figure out collective solutions to societal issues and problems.

Dealing with an adversary or a competitor creates one set of beliefs and one set of emotions. Dealing with a mortal enemy and a deeply evil foe creates a very different set of beliefs, emotions, and behaviors.

To achieve success and best results from our governing processes in our communities and for our country, we need to have respectfully adversarial and intellectually competitive interactions between our opposing political views. We need to avoid having enemy based damaging interactions between good and evil as our functioning political paradigm.

Unfortunately, it is both possible and relatively easy to activate some of the very worst and most negative aspects of our us/them instincts in the context of our political alignments and disagreements.

That instinct-activation can be particularly easy to do if we actually perceive the other party or its leadership to be an evil enemy and if we describe them in those terms to our own supporters and advocates.

Lose/Lose Strategies Can Result In Damaging Reciprocal

That kind of intentionally negative political process can deteriorate into a self-reinforcing and self-perpetuating cycle of dysfunctional and damaging political interactions — with the anger and the hatred from each group triggering equally instinctive anger and equally instinctive hatred and behaviors in the other group.

Reciprocity happens. We respond in kind to how we are treated. It can be very difficult for people in any setting where we recognize that the other party in the setting perceives us to be “Them” not to reciprocate mentally and emotionally and to perceive them to be “Them” in return.

That is a very seductive and self-reinforcing set of emotions and perceptions. Almost no one can rise above that reciprocity cycle of negative perceptions once those mutual perceptions are triggered and functional in any setting.

Seeing the other political group in any setting to be a “Them” can be dangerous, dysfunctional, and damaging because our us/them instincts cause us to believe that whoever we perceive and believe to be “Them” is evil.

We instinctively perceive “them” to be a deliberate and international threat to our “us.” We perceive “them” to be duplicitous and deceptive and we find it difficult or impossible to even believe anything they say.

We can trigger very strong needs and very strong desires to damage “them” and not just defeat “them” when those set of instincts are fully activated.

It is very hard when either group in a setting reaches that level of perceptions and anger for the other group to do anything other than also react in an echoing and rebounding splash of negative neurochemicals and reciprocal negative emotions.

Adding Religion To The Conflict Increases Intensity

Adding religion to the us/them mix that exists in any intergroup setting can create another level of intensity and significant complexity to the intergroup issues.

That is particularly true when the first level of differentiation between the conflicted groups is ethnic or tribal, but it holds true when the first level is purely political conflict as well.

It can be very bad and it can create major conflict and intergroup damage when our us/them instincts, values, and behaviors in any setting are triggered by intertribal or interethnic divisions and then religion is added to the reasons for conflict to happen.

Adding religion both to the definition of us and to the definition of them in any setting can add a perception of involvement by demonic forces and of pure metaphysical evil as a factor to the interactions — and that additional layer of intergroup conflict based on religious differences makes basic attempts at Peace in any setting with those sets of perceptions in place much more problematic.

Religion Can Trigger Us/Them Reactions As Well

Religion has not been discussed extensively in this book.

One of our great strengths as a nation has been our commitment to religious freedom. Where other countries have often mandated religious beliefs and alignments for their people, we have supported religion by

protecting its free practice and by making it illegal for the government to practice religion or require or ban religious behavior.

We have had some religion related problems. We have had multiple levels of religious prejudice and religious discrimination in a number of settings at various points in our past. Us/them triggers have been activated at several points in our history between various religious segments in this country.

Prejudice against Catholics or Mormons or Jews or against any of our other religious denominations in various ways has been an important part of our historical record. Local groups with religious affiliations have had those affiliations create a sense of us and them that has created some patterns of negative us/them intergroup behaviors when those perceptions are actualized.

Some very negative things have been done to some people in various settings in our country in the context of those issues.

So we have not been free of those levels of division or divisive behavior relative to religion.

We Have Managed Not To Have Religion Divide Us

We have managed, however, not to have religion divide us in this country in the same way that religion has triggered or fed division in other parts of the world. We actually have had religion divide us in some ways — but we have not had our religious divisions cause us to damage people or to draw blood in acts of violence or murder.

Other parts of the world have had multiple levels of very bloody intergroup behaviors that have had religion as a driving factor and that have caused people to feel right doing deeply damaging things to other people with a sense that they were divinely empowered to do those things.

It is unfortunate and very sad that religion too often divides people rather than unites people.

In an ideal situation, the religious leaders in any setting should and would be Peace loving people who can help lead us all to intergroup Peace and lead us all to a setting and a mindset where mutual benefit for all people is mutually pursued.

We need our religious leaders to be catalysts and conduits for Peace and not instruments of conflict and intergroup destruction.

In our worst-case situations, the religious leaders in a setting very intentionally and persuasively call for negative us/them behaviors and

negative us/them thought processes that can involve and include leading their people into intergroup damage and intergroup destruction.

Most Religious Conflict Happens At A Tribal Level

In most other countries that currently have internal conflicts, the conflicts that define and damage those countries have been primarily tribal. In the vast majority of settings where religion is a factor in the conflict, the religious alignments that exist in those settings are also — at their core — actually extremely tribal.

The Shiite and the Sunnis who fight in so many settings are separated into tribes who actually do inter-tribal battle in each setting. Those tribes who kill each other as tribes add a veneer of religious conflict that clearly exacerbates the intensity of the tribal conflicts.

The religious alignments for each of the tribes tend to be the stated cause of those conflicts — but the functional reality is that the actual parties at war in each of those settings are the tribes.

We haven't had to face that same set of divisive intertribal or religious alignments in this country. We don't have any locked in religious overlaps with our racism or with our ethnic prejudice issues and stress points.

We don't have as much internal alignments in our overall beliefs as we might like — but we don't have a sense or a reality in this country that our religions and their leaders line up with our tribes or with our ethnic groups in ways that serve to inflame or exacerbate our current intergroup alignments and conflicts.

We need to continue to avoid having that kind of alignment between our internally conflicted groups and our religious beliefs. In the other parts of the world where that clear alignment between creed and tribe exists, damage is being done on both counts and Peace can be extremely hard to create.

The Art of InterGroup Peace book outlines eight key ways that groups of people can create alignment with one another — ranging from a ceasefire at one end of the continuum to melding the groups at the other end.

When the groups in conflict have different religious allegiances, the most likely approaches that can work to achieve Peace tend to be in the middle of that continuum.

Truces can be a highly desirable goal when the differences between the groups have religious alignments.

Each of those dysfunctional alignments in each of those settings can exacerbate the sense of us and each of those shared religion/tribe alignments each of those settings can trigger a clear sense of them.

Both of those triggers can set up multiple levels of us/them instinctive reactions in the people they affect.

People with a set of highly activated religious and tribal us/them alignments in some areas of the world are bombing each other daily. Those people feel entirely justified in sending their exploding bombs into the homes, hearts, and heads of the people in their setting who have a different belief system than they do.

That is deeply instinctive and primal destructive behavior, and it can be directly triggered by deeply held differences in belief system, religion, or even religious sect.

We Do Not Want Extensions Of Those Issues Into The U.S.

Today

Those problems and those issues that are happening today in those countries based on instinctive behavior packages are relevant to the United States because we don't want to have those levels of anger and dysfunctional behaviors extended to our country from those countries.

We saw evidence of what that could look like when the people who flew the airplanes into the World Trade Center said that they were doing it because of those alignments in all of those settings.

We saw similar extensions of some of those problems relative to the Boston Marathon Bombing. Those bombers were clearly an extension of the distant inter-religion conflicts to our soil and our people.

The people who lead some of the groups with close religious affiliation are trying to get members of their group to do additional damage to us in other settings in our country.

Those calls to arms for believers in those religious alliances have the potential to damage us at multiple levels. The damage will tend to be incident-based, but it can be very real and people can and will suffer as a result.

We can't afford to have those same kinds of hatreds and angers triggered by either our political alignments or by our religious alignments in this country.

As noted earlier, we do have some intense ideological and political debates that are triggering instinctive behaviors in this country, but we are not currently at very high risk in this country from those passions and those

emotions being triggered in their most extreme ways by religious differences here.

We do have some religious differences, but those differences don't tend to trigger the worst set of us/them instincts and behaviors in this country.

We do have some prejudice, bigotry, and highly negative intergroup negative behaviors, but we have had only a very few people strapping bombs to their body to kill other people in this country based on their race, ethnicity, political alignment, or religious belief.

Some of our political rhetoric, however, is increasingly tending to take on the rhetoric of those instinctive us/them differentiations. That set of instinctive emotions and belief systems can trigger some very dysfunctional political and economic behaviors in our country if we don't take steps to bring people into a state of understanding on those issues.

An increasing percentage of the political rhetoric in this country is branding the people who have different political views in a setting as being malevolent and evil rather than just being misguided or simply being wrong.

It creates a very different political environment when one side perceives the other side to be deliberately, fundamentally, and intentionally

evil rather than just being politically wrong. Wrong and evil generate very different instinctive emotions and reactions in people.

We Need to Separate Political Differences From a Sense of Evil

We need to get more people in our American political settings to be able to be personally grounded in the mutual beliefs we all share rather than being divided at a very visceral level by the areas where we disagree.

We also all need to recognize that having a different political belief isn't evidence of malevolence or proof of deliberate evil in other people.

The sad truth is — doing very negative things feels very “right” to people when those instincts are strongly activated. We need to recognize that to be true and we need leaders who can defuse those issues and who can get us on political paths that are less influenced and less defined by primal and political differentiators on the part of too many people and that are more based on achieving an overall good result for all Americans.

We Have Anger in Place at a Number of Levels

We do have a very long history of us/them behavior.

We need to move into a clear and well-articulated recognition at this point that our history as a country has been heavily influenced by the frequent and negative activation of those instinctive behaviors.

We need to recognize that some groups of people in this country currently hold deep-seated levels of anger that are directly based on many of those historic negative and discriminatory behaviors. That anger is being reinforced for many people by various behaviors that are continuing to happen today in a number of settings.

The people who feel that anger are also being reinforced for many Americans by our sheer personal instinctive reactions to being individually perceived as us and them in various ways in various settings in this country today.

For us to make progress as a nation, we need to recognize those issues and we need to deal with each of them directly and clearly.

As we look back into our history — and as we look back at some of our historical sins — it is clear that we can't ask people whose people have been damaged to simply forgive the people who did the damage. That level of forgiveness is impossible.

Slavery Is Unforgivable

Forgiveness for slavery, for example, is impossible. Jim Crow laws are also unforgiveable. Lynchings are unforgiveable.

Forgiveness is neither an option nor a need or a response to those historic sins.

We need to clearly and explicitly condemn those historic and evil behaviors and we need to clearly condemn and reject the people who acted in those evil ways for doing what they clearly did.

We also need to recognize that we have made huge progress as a nation in multiple areas. We need to understand and celebrate the fact that we have been very wisely and skillfully embedding much of that progress and major portions of that enlightenment very directly into our laws, our cultures, and our behavioral expectations.

We Need To Build On The Progress We Are Making

We have different beliefs and we have different behaviors in many areas. We need to build on the progress we have made where it exists and we need to create real progress where it doesn't exist.

We need to codify more of our enlightenment, and we need to clearly condemn our past sins. We need to build a future based on that foundation.

That is the next chapter of this book.

