

Chapter Eighteen — We Need To Be A Nation Unified And United By Our Most Enlightened Common Values And By Our Shared Core Beliefs

We need to be a nation that is unified and united by our common values and our shared beliefs.

We need to be aligned as a nation and as a people around our most enlightened and our most inclusive core beliefs.

The key factors that will bring us together and that will keep us together as an American “Us” need to be our collective and shared beliefs and our joint, collective, and individual commitment to a set of very clear and very enlightened values that we all agree to use to guide our lives.

We need to create a values-based “us” that helps each of us and all of us achieve, succeed, and be included in the American Dream.

To do that well and to continue to succeed in that effort over time, we need to be very clear about what the core beliefs are that bring us together. Generic goodwill, positive shared feelings, and unfocused and vague good intentions will not be sufficient to give us the alignment levels we need at this point in our history to actually be a values-based American “Us.”

We need to have a clear set of core beliefs that are central to our vision of ourselves and to that alignment strategy of becoming an American

“Us.” We need to be united, unified, and aligned by our shared core set of values.

In order to be united by those values, we need to have a clear collective sense of exactly what those core values are.

The following list of values is based on the core values that we use today — both formally and informally — to guide our behaviors and to create our expectations for how we interact with one another in our country today.

The Art of Intergroup Peace book describes that same proposed list of shared values in more detail and explains how we can use those specific values and beliefs to guide our lives and to create alignment in ways that trigger an instinct invoking, credible, and functional sense of “us.”

That book also explains a process that we can use in the future to create additional values that we can add to this core set of beliefs that steer us now.

This penultimate chapter of this book on instinctive behaviors outlines the core values we use today, and describes each of them briefly to help create the context for what a values-based sense of “us” can functionally rely on for its anchor beliefs.

We Need to Be Clear About Our Core Beliefs

There are no surprises on the list below. That is clearly not a new set of values. This list was compiled, not created. We all know and recognize each of these core values because we use them all now in various ways both to guide what we do and to define who we are.

These are the basic beliefs we use today to guide our functional national and local behaviors. Both informally and formally, those beliefs already underlie our most basic and most enlightened value sets and our most positive sets of behaviors for our country today. We use each of them now to create a context for how we function as a country and for how we function in all of the settings that constitute our nation.

American Values — Not Universal Values

The values that are included on this list are not shared across the planet. There are a number of other areas in the world that do have some very similar values, but there are many other parts of the world that do not share those values or live by them in any way.

These are not universal, generic, or even commonly understood and generally accepted human values. They are specific values that explicitly — as an interconnected package — combine to make us an American “Us.”

The sister book to *Primal Pathways* — *The Art of InterGroup Peace* — explains that same set of values and commitments more completely and in more detail and explains how we can use those values to bring us all together as an American “Us.”

Our commitment to democracy clearly serves as the anchor and the baseline belief for the full and enlightened set of interconnected values that we share today.

Democracy

Democracy clearly leads the list of those explicit shared beliefs that aligns us today as an American “Us.”

We need to continue to build our American Us on the foundation of people who believe in Democracy to their very core. We need to be very clear about our support for that belief.

We need to anchor our culture and our nation on democratic processes and on democratic structures and behaviors.

We need to all agree to both believe in and to achieve government by the people, for the people — with our leaders chosen by ballot and not chosen by heredity, by force of arms, or by any of the many undemocratic leader selection processes.

Democracy needs to be a fundamental belief and it needs to be what we do to govern ourselves as a country.

We need to celebrate Democracy, honor its percepts and its practices, and we need to make it work. That commitment needs to continue to be a core and explicit value that we all share.

Our leaders need to be the defenders of Democracy and not a threat to the Democratic process.

Equality

Equality is also a key and fundamental current American belief that we all need to continue to share.

We need people who believe in the equality of us all — people who believe in inclusion, intergroup harmony, and who believe in basic equal rights and fundamentally equal status for all Americans.

No one is exempt from that sense of equality. No one is more equal and no one is less equal than anyone else in our belief system.

We need equality to be a basic and clear way we approach our laws, our behaviors, and our thoughts about who we are and what we can do.

Equal opportunity needs to be a key part of that belief system.

Merit

We also need to be a people anchored on merit — a people who believe that we all should be able to work hard and that we should all benefit from our hard work.

We need to recognize, honor, and support achievement and we need to believe in merit and value our achievers.

Personal Accountability and Sharing

Our core set of beliefs needs to continue to be based on a belief in personal accountability.

We each need to accept primal, individual, and personal accountability for doing the things we need to do to be collectively individually functional and to be personally successful in our own lives.

We each should accept our own responsibility for doing what we need to do in our own lives to succeed and to be a participating member of our society and nation.

We need to be a culture of personal accountability.

We also need a culture of accountability that says the people in this country who will need help will get help when that help is needed. We

believe in hard work and individual accountability — and we also believe that when anyone falls on bad times, we will be and are collectively supportive of one another.

Being collectively accountable is a key part of our personal accountability values and beliefs and it helps define us to ourselves as an American “Us.”

We each earn the right to be cared for by each caring for others when we can help others in their time of need. We need to take pride in our personal accountability for our own lives and we need to accept our role as an accountable member of a society that helps people who need help when that help is needed.

Freedom

We need to continue to believe strongly in freedom.

We strongly believe in freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and we believe in freedom for our politics and for our political, ideological, and philosophical thought processes.

We believe in freedom of choices for the key elements of our lives — freedom to choose what we study and what we teach, and freedom to

determine our own aspirations for our own careers and avocations and for our own life paths.

We need to honor, respect, support, and defend freedom for each of us in order to guarantee freedom for all of us.

Inclusion

We need to continue to very deliberately and intentionally be a culture of inclusion — a culture that deliberately reaches out to make sure that all of our citizens have the chance to be included in the American Dream.

We need laws, rules, and behavioral expectations about fairness and opportunity that give us all a chance to be part of the new inclusive us... to be individually and collectively part of the American Dream.

We need to continue to believe in the American Dream and we need now to make sure that the American Dream is inclusive for us all.

We Hate Discrimination

As a basic set of core beliefs, we hate and oppose discrimination, bigotry, and bias.

We need to reflect those beliefs with our actions, our behaviors, and even our laws.

We need laws that outlaw intergroup discrimination and we need laws that ban deliberately and intentionally racist and sexist behaviors.

Neither racism nor sexism should be part of the culture and the behaviors that define and guide our American Us.

Absolutely rejecting racism and misogyny needs to be a core belief. We need values, laws, regulations and mutual cultural and behavioral expectations that outlaw sexism and racism and we need to believe and collectively teach and demonstrate that those are evil, un-American beliefs, values, and practices.

Religious Freedom

Religious Freedom has been a core belief from our earliest days and it needs to continue to be a core belief. It is extremely important for us to continue to honor, respect, and protect religious freedom.

We each need to be able to find our own pathway to our own beliefs — without people from other beliefs or without people in our governments imposing their choices and their religious or anti-religious doctrines and practices on anyone other than themselves.

We need to respect religion, protect the freedom of religion, honor religion, and not impose or restrict religion.

Innovation and Creativity

Innovation should also continue to be an anchor our core culture. To prosper, to thrive, and to be safe as a nation, we need to be able to continuously improve in what we achieve and do.

We need a culture for America that continues to celebrate innovation, enables and supports creativity, and brings together our diverse peoples and our diverse thinkers in ways that both honor and respect our diversity and that create innovative and interactive creativity levels that generate true synergy and enable true collaboration between all of our diverse components.

“Yankee Ingenuity” was a key, clear, and functionally important part of our collective culture as a nation in our earliest years. We need to continue to have the advantages that result from our ingenuity and from our collective and individual achievements.

Law Based Society

We have been, from our first days as a nation, a law-based society.

Laws are extremely important to us today as a tool for building and sustaining the American “us.” We need to be a society based on laws, not a

society based on the rule of men or a society based on any other levels of individual authority.

We need to be a society based on the rule of law — with clear and just laws that are all enforced equally.

No one should be above the law and no one should be below the law and no one should be unfairly damaged or negatively affected by the law.

Justice

Justice is another foundational belief that we need to continue into the future.

Justice needs to be true justice — with justice enforced equally and clearly for all of us who are part of the American Us.

Our commitment to justice for all should be unquestioned, functional, absolute, and real.

Honesty, Character, Truthfulness

Honesty, character, truthfulness, and keeping commitments should also continue to be key parts of our shared universal value package.

We need to reaffirm our commitment to that basic founding set of expectations.

We need to be a culture that takes pride in keeping our word — not a culture that accepts, tolerates, or ever encourages and rewards untruths.

We need to have telling the truth be an expectation and a consistent behavior that we agree to and practice as both individuals and groups.

We need intergroup trust across all groups and intergroup trust is most likely to happen when we have intergroup truth.

Opportunity

Opportunity has always been key to the American Dream. We need to continue to believe in opportunity, to support opportunity, and we need to create opportunity.

We need equal opportunity for all of our people.

We need an inclusive economic and societal functionality that is based on creating equal opportunity for all of us in key areas — and we need an economic and societal functionality that is based on everyone doing their fair share, so that, overall, everyone is able to benefit from the work they do.

Human Dignity

Human dignity needs also to continue to be a key part of the American Us.

The core of our belief system needs to be a respect for the basic human dignity that is inherent in each of us.

We have had this value since our earliest days, but we initially extended it fully only to a subset of our people. Now, we need to extend full support for human dignity to every one of us.

We need to collectively respect that dignity. We need to insist that our basic rights should all be protected and we need to ensure that the protections we create for our rights and for our human dignity will be effectively supported and appropriately enforced.

Unenforced laws and unsupported beliefs too often fail to achieve their intended objective.

We need to enforce the laws that protect people's individual freedom individual liberty, and individual dignity.

As noted earlier in this book, we need to create the right levels of behavior for each of those key beliefs — and we need to implement and support that functional reality of equal rights and full opportunity with a combination of belief systems, laws, and cultural expectations that help make those goals a reality for people.

Mutual Winning As Our Shared Goal

We all need to be deeply committed to be an America where everyone wins by having all of the values that are listed in this chapter for each of us extended and available to all of us — with equal opportunity for all people from all components of our country.

We need to be clear, for the first time in our history, that our goal now is for us all to win.

We need to move away from win/lose expectations and we need to move very far from lose/lose expectations and we need to support creating win/win outcomes for all of us who are part of the American “Us.”

Having all parties win needs to be a core belief for all of us. Win/win needs to be our commitment, our strategy, and our goal.

That is not entirely a new belief for us because we have had it before in a more limited approach — with win/win only extended to people who were included in the majority group for our country.

We need now to extend that belief to all groups.

We will need to overcome some of our more negative and divisive instinctive us/them thinking to achieve that goal. We need to learn to be both accepting and pleased when groups other than our own primal groups do well economically, politically, and functionally.

Win/win values need to be constructed to create a situation and a reality for each setting that includes all of us so that we all can all benefit and so that we can all win.

When people in any setting sit down together to agree on creating win/win outcomes for all groups in that setting and then do the problem solving and the planning together that is necessary for those outcomes to happen, then all groups in each setting become explicit allies for one another and people from all groups become team members together in the interest of intergroup Peace.

Extending that context and commitment to all of us can and will create positive approaches and realities that will bring us together in important ways.

Collective Beliefs and Enlightened Behaviors Give Us Focus

And Direction

There are no surprises on that list.

The values listed above are not a new set of values. They represent the best of the values we have used in various ways since we were founded as a country. We use those values in our most positive behaviors and our most beneficial interactions now.

But we generally do not think of them now as an explicit, focused, and interconnected package of core beliefs that we have all committed to as members of the American Us.

We do need to use this list — to help us be clear about what beliefs anchor us as a values-based “American Us.”

We can’t create sufficient belief-based unity as a people by using a more generic, vague, and non-specific positive commitment to American ideals that has no specific component parts and that does not hold together as either a package or as clear commitments.

Being very specific about what we believe in at this point in our history is an important thing to do.

We need to reinforce and explicitly articulate our collective belief in a clear list of shared values at this point in our history so we can use those values and those expectations to guide us collectively into our future as a nation at Peace with itself.

We do need our society to be guided by clear values in ways that we can all trust and depend on so that we can all live by and commit directly and explicitly to use a clear set of basic beliefs that can guide our interactions as both individuals and groups.

Ideally, we can simply choose to use those core beliefs — based very directly on the core beliefs we already have accepted as a country — to guide our interactions with one another and to guide how we will govern ourselves as a country.

We Can Be Aligned Or Divided

We have two basic sets of choices.

We can either be a people anchored and aligned through our shared beliefs, or we will be a people divided by race, ethnicity, culture, religious belief, or by other easy to use and emotionally seductive primal categories of intergroup division.

The temptations to tribalize and to become just another tribalized nation at war with itself are great. Those dysfunctional behaviors have a high likelihood of prevailing in any intergroup settings and defining both our thought processes and our behaviors if we allow ourselves to go down the seductive and slippery slope to negative intergroup instinctive interactions that inherently exists in those settings.

Because we, as a highly diverse nation, cannot functionally and logistically be united as a people at this point in our history by our ethnicity, our race, or by any of the various culture-based intergroup categories that we

can create in any way that will create functional safety and Peace for all of America, we need to be united by the only alignment factor that can rise above, transcend, and overshadow all of those more basic and primal categories of division.

We need to be united by our beliefs.

We can, in fact, collectively rise to the level of truly enlightened behavior when we are united by our enlightened beliefs. We can functionally achieve the most idealistic, ethical, and morally humane levels of intergroup and interpersonal interactions as a people that we aspire to achieve. But that will only happen if we are sincerely, morally, and ethically united by our enlightened values and brought together as a people by a clear set of enlightened beliefs.

Let's choose that path and that strategy for alignment and let's choose that path now.