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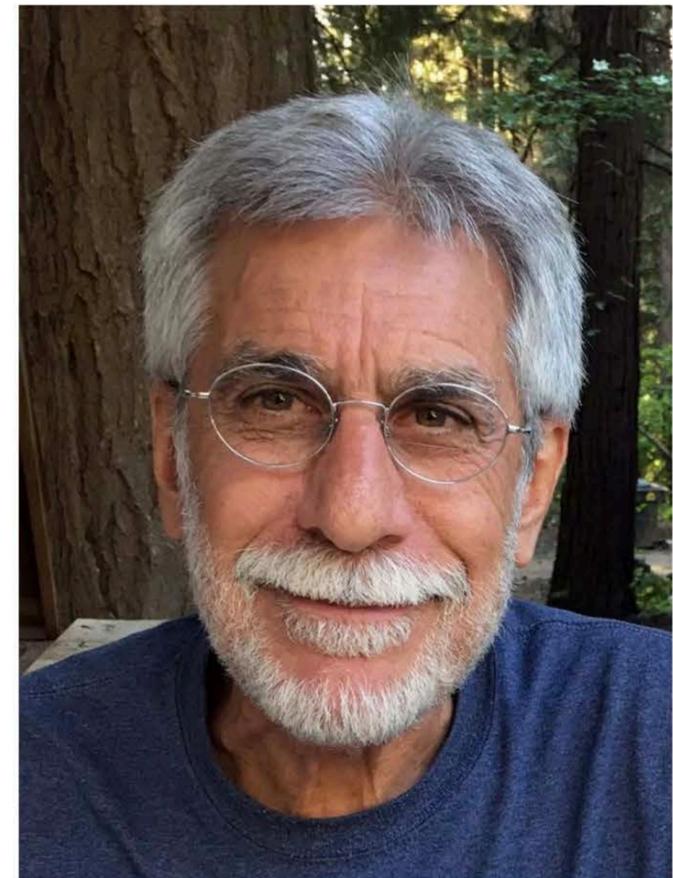
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The following is the opinion and analysis of the writer:

Some days, a great sadness settles over me. A sadness for America and all that Americans have recently lost. The loss of our once-great national dignity, integrity, and respect.

So many people today have decided to replace American values such as kindness and trustworthiness with malevolence, replace diversity with bigotry and xenophobia, replace love with hate, joy with anger, good with evil, beauty with ugliness. So many today seem to embrace the worst inclinations of humankind: racism, intolerance, rage, violence, willful ignorance, misogyny, sexual harassment, and white supremacy.

My sadness also comes from the way our government is now destroying innocent human lives with impunity and without blinking an eye. It demolishes lives of individuals and their families simply because it can, or because of the color of one's skin or the language one grew up speaking. It destroys people and sacred institutions for the sake of political theater. There are now young children, by the hundreds, being held in government detention centers. Our country seems to be forsaking the most noble and cherished attributes of humanity—compassion, empathy, kindness, generosity, honesty, morality — only to replace them with the most contemptible of instincts: greed, lust for power, egotism, hatred, cruelty, vulgarity, abuse.



Richard Brusca

What kind of sickness has settled upon our national soul? So many Americans are turning back the clock of humankind's spiritual and moral evolution. Instead of leaning into our higher selves, we seem to be regressing toward a more primitive level of consciousness. We are no longer a welcoming nation, and the words emblazoned on the Statue of Liberty no longer shine like a beacon to the world: "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door."

How can we respond to this affliction of our national spirit in ways that diminish our great sadness and help America get back on the right track?

The first thing might be to transform our grief into mindful, positive action. Real and lasting change is societal and cultural, not political. To help move our national needle back in the right direction, we must engage socially. Even the simplest of deeds, if done with intent, can make a difference. Be the person you wish all Americans to be. Engage with your highest self to send messages of kindness and human dignity to everyone you encounter, especially to strangers and the less fortunate. Take responsibility to engage publicly with compassion and empathy. Have the courage of your convictions; maybe even take risks. Become an agent of change to counter evil with good. Think of it as a form of resistance.

Support the best in your community by donating or volunteering your time. Helping migrants with their struggles counters the actions of those who would “disappear” them. There are many volunteer opportunities in this regard, e.g., Casa Alitas Migrant Shelter, Tucson Unified Community Immigration Support, Tucson Samaritans, International Rescue Committee, Southern Arizona Immigrant and Refugee Support (SAIRN), Casa de los Niños, Youth on Their Own. Check out the USCIS Guide online. Give a little to help those who are less fortunate (e.g., Old Pueblo Community Services, Eagles Wings of Grace, More than a Bed, Literacy Connects, Make Way for Books, Habitat for Humanity. Look what a handful of Buddhist monks accomplished simply by walking — 2,300 miles from Texas to Washington D.C. — and spreading a message of peace and kindness for humankind. Thousands of people from all over America followed their journey.

Seeking a path toward helping others and supporting the best in your community makes a positive difference for everyone around you, and its effects ripple out in ever-growing circles. It can also fill you with awe and wonder and help replace sadness with joy — in yourself and others. Kindness is contagious.

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