How Did We Get Here?

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A great many people in our nation are asking, "How did we get here?" The question is referencing our obvious, deep divisions. We are not just divided politically. Political divisions have been part of our country's DNA from its conception. Religion is also serving as a significant divider, perhaps more so than ever before. But we have always had religious division from the founding of our country. Racial and ethnic divisions are significant in nearly every region of the nation- from New York to California, Maine to Florida, Washington to New Mexico and Texas. Yet we have always had racial and ethnic divisions, even before we became a nation.

The current crisis we are facing in these turbulent times is not any of these issues (or even all of them collectively) by themselves. The crisis is that we no longer believe it is important to engage in civil dialogue about our collective differences. Inflammatory rhetoric has risen to an all time high. Such rhetoric causes deeply emotional responses that often leads to anger, hostility, rage and retaliation. We are attempting to outshout one another without ever taking the time to enter into a mutual conversation of give and take. "Know it alls" have filled elected offices, pulpits, public arenas, and are ruling social media outlets everywhere. We have become a country filled with people who can find answers to satisfy their arguments, stroke their egos and humiliate their enemies, in a matter of minutes. Google and now AI can give you just the right information to sound fully comprehensible and intelligent, without ever engaging in a single moment of study, research and reflection.

Everyone has become an expert without engaging in any sacrifice of resources or time. Ph.D. professionals can be resoundingly "shut down" by anyone with ChatGPT. Without sacrifice to gain knowledge, there is often a misuse of it that can turn into a selfish instrument, harming everyone except the one wielding the instrument. What is especially disheartening is our cavalier disregard for our nation's history. While many ask "how did we get here?", not many are prepared to find the answer. I decided to go to ChatGPT. I typed in "How did the United States get to its present stage of division and hatred, where we are today?" The answer was right and wrong, but very well structured.

ChatGPT responded-

1. Political Polarization
2. Media Fragmentation
3. Culture and Demographic Shifts
4. Economic Inequality
5. Historical Grievances
6. External Influences

None of these six points are inaccurate. However they hardly begin to share "the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God." Political polarization is related to the awful reality of discrimination and bigotry. One cannot just say the country is politically polarized. You have to include how our political system was created to deny part of the country's population their

full and equal civil and human rights. So rooted in the system is this awful bigotry and discrimination, until it is one of the reasons we are so divided today. This goes all the way back to 1776 and before. It was a sin then. It is a sin now.

Media fragmentation is also related to discrimination and bigotry. Historically, media has been a pawn in the hands of the wealthy and privileged. Every non-white resident in the United States was portrayed as less than, or inferior to whites in literally every era and generation. Evidence of such false portrayals continue to this very day. This was nothing less than a sin and it remains sinful today.

Culture and demographics is connected to discrimination and bigotry. The United States is one of the only western nations in the world that discourages multiple languages to be required in public schools. Africans, Indigenous people and others were punished if they attempted to maintain a modicum of the culture handed down to them by their ancestors. As varied as we are as a nation, it is puzzling that nearly half of America frowns upon all things "multiculturalism" or "appreciating and lifting diversity." It was a sin in how our nation so severely mistreated black and brown people. And it is still a sin today.

The wealth gap between average white families and a majority of black and brown families is simply egregious. Racism and bigotry have played key roles in denying economic development for minority families in the United States. In so many ways, our nation has sought to keep masses of its people poor. To deny economic growth is to create a permanent cycle of poverty which often leads to a permanent underclass. A permanent underclass are those persons who will then act and live to mollify the wealthy and work in the "steam rooms" of our society. Why it is a sin for someone to have billions while hundreds of thousands are starving to death!

Historical grievances are a key factor in "how we got here." For all of our nation's positives, for all of our country's brilliant people, for all of our schools, colleges, universities and graduate schools, we have not begun to effectively deal with historical grievances. The racism that led to slavery, Jim Crow, lynching, segregation and more, is as alive as ever. We have found no will to destroy racism (or ethnic hatred, antisemitism, Islamophobia, homophobia and sexism). All of this just festers like open sores. No rooting out the disease, no surgery to excise the sickness to prevent contagion, no diagnosis for healing, has occurred. We talk about our historical grievances as if they will always be with us, creating the same damnable division as in previous generations. It is a sin that this country has done nothing to eradicate its historical grievances!

External influences are often used to play on our nation's historical divisions. Fascist countries run by racists know how to utilize their resources, information technology and social media platforms, to keep us hating on each other.

All of this is how we got here on the day before the 2024 Election. Not just subject matters and issues, but real human beings have put us in this awful quagmire of mess and misery. They have been presidents, senators, congressmen, governors, mayors, policemen. They have been owners of mom and pop stores and ceo's of Fortune 500 companies. They have been pastors

and clergy. They have been doctors and lawyers, generals, colonels, captains and soldiers. They have police officers, firefighters, doctors, surgeons and nurses. Each generation just keeps producing and filling their children with discrimination and bigotry. That is how we got here! And the only way to redirect this downward path we are traveling, is to put an end to teaching children discrimination and bigotry and to begin teaching them the truth, of how we got here.

I sure hope such teaching can begin November 7th.