

## The Blues

We used to call it “The Blues.” It has been called the “Winter Doldrums” and “Cabin Fever.” I asked a respected colleague with whom I have worked for many years why she thought everyone was walking around with fried egg on their head, a reference to an old Bette Midler routine. Without hesitation she answered: Covid; Politics; Winter. How correct she is!

Covid. The ailment has everyone down. We all know of respected elderly people who have passed away like watching a row of dominos go down in an instant. The fact that someone is elderly or has lived a good long life somehow just does not cut it when a great man or woman, otherwise healthy, suddenly leaves this material world due to a raging disease process. It is almost beside the point as to who is at fault. The terrible truth is that probably no one is at fault, although with retrospect, we all could have done much better. Perhaps the ugliest component of Covid-19 is how it was politicized not only in this country but around the world. We still do not know, in reality, how long the vaccines will protect us for, what mutations will occur and if there will be any side effects. My own insurance company recently sent me a statement that the vaccine was thoroughly tested by the FDA, was approved and is safe. That is not the truth. The FDA, according to the literature given to anyone who gets the vaccine shot, has not approved the vaccine as safe and effective but has only issued an Emergency Authorization. That does not mean that we should become anti-vaxxers, but rather that a healthy dose of the truth hurts no one. As a doctor recently said to me, we are all guinea pigs now, but charges that the vaccine alters the DNA is false. Effecting receptor messenger RNA cannot, as a matter of biology, alter the generic structure. That does not mean that we know all of the unanticipated side effects or risks of a vaccine therapy which has never been utilized previously. Caution is still the best medicine. Masking works not to absolutely prevent spread of the disease, but to reduce risk. Small groups, avoidance of crowds is also risk reduction therapy, not a guarantee of safety. A healthy dose of prudence is likely to diminish a great deal of harm.

Politics. What more can be said or written about that? Politics has become so virulent, that it is no wonder that people vote in such small numbers. Our entire political system is permeated by the corruption of money where unholy amounts of funding make their way to candidates bought and sold like a bag of beans. Even the politician with the greatest integrity cannot help but be influenced by those who write the biggest checks. To some extent, we are selling our politicians and buying them in the marketplace of influence peddlers. Nothing will change in this country until and unless we are willing to embrace campaign finance reform, and probably publicly financed elections. I do not expect to see that kind of transmogrification of politics in my lifetime. Whether it is beneficial to the United States to try to convict an impeached ex-President will be debated for centuries. Likewise, relying upon a Bill of Impeachment which only vaguely touched upon the President’s conduct after the riot started, demonstrates what occurs when there is sloppy lawyering. In reality, if there is an offense for which the President should be convicted, there is little or no evidence that it was in the initiation of the attack on the Capitol, but rather the encouragement of violence especially against the Vice President after the riot was in full swing. The President’s tweets during the near carnage that took

place in Washington, D.C. is the real offense. Nevertheless, it is incumbent upon us to look critically at whether the Constitution should be so contorted by the Senate so as to provide for conviction after an office has been vacated, something that even Alexander Hamilton did not directly address in the Federalist Papers. The two attempts at conviction after the federal office holders were no longer in office, were so unique that they hardly are precedent for the current action against former President Donald Trump. None of this is an apology for Trump's absolutely unacceptable and politically unforgiveable behavior, especially once the riot began. The jury is literally still out on what involvement the ex-President had prior to the initiation of violence on Capitol Hill. Whatever the ultimate findings of the Senate, the United States has sustained a black eye that will not soon depart from our body politic.

So there, you have it, winter, Covid and politics are getting people down. Who can blame us for feeling crabby, cranky, annoyed, frustrated and just a little bit unpleasant? Perhaps the way to deal with such "feelings" is to admit to them, and act the opposite of how we feel. That is probably a lame attempt at Psychology 101, but it sure beats being mean to innocent people who simply happen to be living on the same planetary spaceship hurdling through the dark abode known as the Milky Way.

It was Steve Martin, in one of his iconic movies, who likened life to a rollercoaster. Hopefully, the rollercoaster ride will take us up to new heights in the not-too-distant spring season. Health and happiness to everyone!

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