

PASSION FOR vs. PASSION AGAINST

NUMAN M. GHARAIBEH - GLASTONBURY, CT 06033 - USA

EMAIL : n_gharaibeh@yahoo.com

Since psychiatrists and psychologists are involved primarily with the way humans think, feel, and behave, they are often called upon to explain "strange behavior." Explaining "strange," "abnormal," "extraordinary," or even "bizarre" behavior of a single individual is complex enough; explaining the strange, abnormal, extraordinary, or bizarre behaviors of a whole group involve a much greater complexity. In looking at group behavior, psychiatrists and psychologists find common ground with philosophers, sociologists, political scientists, historians, anthropologists, and many others. We can run away from politics but we can't hide. Even the behavior of a single human being is influenced significantly by it.

There have been periods in history in which there was tribalism, religious fervor and communion, and nationalism. All has their advantages and disadvantages. The advantage was mainly in the form of group security and positive evolutionary impact to improve survival of the "in" group, and thwart dangers from the "out" group. The disadvantages were along the line of pride and prejudice getting married in a fatal matrimony. Pride in the "in" group affiliation was understood as prejudice against as the "out" groups by the narrow minded.

Xenophobia and hatred of outsiders was misunderstood as a necessary outcome for pride in one's own identity. The silent majorities were hijacked by the fanatic minorities who were plagued by insecurity and hatred. We somehow forgot that every fellow human has the right to proud of whom they are and what they are as we are entitled to that right. For a long time Arabs have concerned themselves with-even defined themselves by- what they are against, not by what they are for. The silent majority stood helpless to stem the tide of misdirected passions. The passion for one's identity became a passion against another's identity. The White Man's pride in being white translated by some distorted logic into hatred of non-whites. The Black's passion for being black became passion against non-blacks, and so on. The Moslem's pride in being a Moslem became a passion against non-Moslems, the Jew against gentile, Christian against non-Christian, and so on.

Nationalism and ultra nationalism translated into hatred of others from other nationalities. We have seen through the centuries fellow humans subjugating other humans and nations, usurping resources and practically enslaving other humans.

This seems to be the age of the long list of "Anti's" as many as there are races, ethnicities, religions, nationalities, or even tribes in this world. Even tribal fervor has reached the level of madness and mass murder even in the confines of the same nation such as Hutu against Tutsi and vice versa.

We have created Gods and killed fellow humans under their banner, and we continue to do so. We draw lines on maps,

called them borders of nations then we killed fellow humans to worship those lines on the maps.

It seems that our grandiosity has no bounds. We still insist that we are superior to others. We sometimes quote the scriptures to assert that divine privilege.

We even placed monetary value on the lives of fellow humans: some African child's life not worth more than pennies to save and one other rich man's life cost millions to save. The balance sheet of morality is a disgrace to our humanity.

Long ago we-humans-complicity decided that we are much superior specie to all other fellow species of animals and plants combined. We insisted that it is our divine right to use and abuse every living and non living entity on this planet.

Why not? Did not God itself give us that right?

We pride ourselves on the wisdom of the modern human. We boast about how rational we have become through science and technology. As the world marches into the second millennium, one would hope that a new and more complex identity would emerge which could be described as the "international citizen" identity. This identity is not only forged by the tide of globalization in its economic sense, but through the complexity of cultural influences across national, religious, ethnic, and even language boundaries. The international citizen concerns himself or herself with the affairs of the planet or a region of the planet.

We have failed the planet. We have grabbed our "privilege" and made it into a "God-given" right we have. We conveniently forgot the responsibility attached to that privilege. Looking at planet earth with a powerful telescope what would an extraterrestrial intelligent being think? It sees revenge and counter-revenge; we really came a long way since our cave-man ancestors!!

If all the millions-if not billions-of humans who gave their lives through the ages were resurrected today, what would they think? What are we to tell them as to why they gave the ultimate sacrifice for? Are we to tell them, "The world is a better place because of your sacrifices?" Who is to judge that? Are we lying to them?

Was all that death and mayhem to improve upon the lives of a particular group of humans on this earth worth it? Could it have been avoided? We will never know. Can we prevent it in the future? We'll have to see.

The extraterrestrial intelligent being would ask in bewilderment: "Who is the decision makers on this lonely planet?" "Is there a sign of intelligent life?"