

September 10, 2012

This is Jill Duffy, with Community Comment

RNC-DNC
Observations

Watching cable television, reading the newspapers and editorials the past two weeks has been in turns, interesting, nauseating, intriguing, frustrating and exciting. For it's national Republican and Democratic convention time.

Whether you're a Republican or Democrat – critics and commentators of both parties eagerly watch and pounce, rendering overly simplistic retorts and statements that tend to be misleading and often dismissive of the opposing view. Sure it works greats to feed fodder to your respective party members and to assert various partisan talking points – but generally that's all there is. Points.

And our collective responses are similar to preparation of a Superbowl playoff. We choose our teams, gather our friends and family, don the colors, pick our players and armchair quarterback with each play. We whoop, yell, laugh, and our blood pressures increases. We cheer for our team and make derisive comments about the opponents.

But there's a problem. It's not a game and if anything, increasingly we are losing our collective ability to engage in civil discourse about the issues and challenges that eventually affect each and every one of us, our families, friends and neighbors. We are so busy demonizing party affiliation that we lose sight our shared commonalities.

Watching interactions on social media such as Facebook is like watching a microcosm of our world and relationships with our friends, family, and co-workers interspersed. In our real lives we often have a wide diversity of people with various life stories, beliefs, and experiences with whom we interact and appreciate – but we don't often 'unfriend' someone because of party affiliation. Yet, this happens, and increasingly, I hear more and more people saying they won't be talking to some friend or family member because they disagree politically.

So as I listen to the Republican and Democratic conventions, I hear impassioned speakers, examples of overcoming adversity and achieving accomplishments, grave concern of the path that American may choose – I hear the vestiges of that which binds us, but it's quickly followed by a demonization of the opposing party rather than an honest and necessary, albeit difficult, discussion of issues and solutions.

So here's my abbreviated list of what I believe I have in common with my Republican, Libertarian and Decline to State friends. I believe we should all have the opportunity to pursue our dreams. I believe in the ability of the individual to pull their own bootstraps, and recognize that our boots don't all look alike, nor does everyone have straps that are firmly affixed. I believe we must have the infrastructure and education to support American jobs and strong commerce. I believe we have a social and moral obligation to those who have served and fought on our behalf. I believe we must lower the deficit, and like the Social Security crisis of 1983, it will take true willingness to compromise and develop a solid and bipartisan plan.

But perhaps more importantly, I believe members of our two primary parties should be capable of conversing and working constructively for the solutions that face the American people.

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