



The Problems
of
Separation

essays
& diatribes

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Rebellion by Non-Participation, or why can't the monkey have a knife?

I maintain that there is no such thing as beneficial political non-participation. Political non-participation leads to a society like the U.S.A. Here I'm talking about not voting because it is not compulsory to vote - to participate. This non-participation and its excuse - that one doesn't want to support a system that they don't agree with, is in fact, an act of participation in support of the very system one is attempting not to participate in. There is an old saying, 'that sins of omission carry the same weight as sins of commission'.

If you are fortunate enough to be given an opportunity to vote, then you should vote. The U.S.A, with its non compulsory voting system, is a society of complainers with no true right to complain, a society where a significant part of the population, through non-participation, allow a minority to guide their lives as that active, participatory part of the population sees fit. In nearly 3 centuries of theoretical democracy there is no time when non participation in the democratic process has produced a benefit to the nation as a whole. Yes, it's true, the System is rigged. Yes, the System is unfair and unequitable despite its famous founding documents, and the right to vote, to participate, while guaranteed by its Bill of Rights and Constitution is also not able to be enforced by the very same Bill of Rights and Constitution. This is good and it is noble. The country and its people are not.

This is not to say that there aren't some good and noble people in the USA who choose not to participate .. there are in fact very many, and it's not to say that they are neither good nor noble because of their non-participation ... But, the effect of their non-participation makes it appear that there are many more people in the USA for whom the virtues of goodness and nobility means very little. If these non-participants who are good and noble, chose to participate in the System then perhaps the USA would be a good and noble country. Perhaps it would appear very much worse to the outside world - who knows? How can I say this? I can say this through my knowledge of the political System in the USA and through my knowledge of Democracy as put forth in the Constitution of the USA. I

use this example because the USA was the first country to enshrine Democracy within a constitution and it must live or die as a Democracy through the participation of its people.

What if we wish to change a System - a political System, for instance? Let's say we do, and for arguments sake .. let's say that we live in a Land and this Land has a political System that is imprisoning children on far off islands, let's say that this political System pretends to be a democracy, and therefore is imprisoning these children on far off islands in Our Name and for Our Greater Good. Let's say, that we say we don't like this. Let's say, that we want this not to be so ... That we desire to stop it. That we desire the System of our Land, that pretends to operate in our name, for our good, to actually operate in our name and therefore, for our own collective good. The reason it operates so is because it says it does and it says that we have a right to participate in the process .. therefore, it operates in our name whether we participate or not.

And what if the System of the Land appears not to operate as we believe it should? What is there that we can do about this? Can we change this? This land we live in says that it is a democracy and that therefore everybody in the land can raise their hand and be counted. Not just as a being, but as a weapon of change. Let's say that every hand can hold a knife and, while were at it, let's say that every being has the same right to hold that knife and has the same right of the use of the knife .. regardless of whether their uses of the knife differ in respect to each others use. Let's just say ...

Of course, a knife in the current political climate - where fear is allowed to feed on complacency to the narrow benefit of a minority - is possibly a bad choice of tool to be holding up and waving about, but it is the analogy of choice for my current antagonist. It is a very personal tool, a knife, and I think that its use, metaphorically, is well adapted to the actual thing, the actual weapon, we are attempting to - but not - having a discussion about. My choice of metaphor would be a vote .. but for some reason this is seen as a more dangerous actual tool than a knife. A vote is seen as a much dirtier weapon, a much more dangerous tool in the hands of one not trained in its use, a much more corrupt tool; so I will attempt to make my point by using this knife instead of my more peaceful weapon of a vote. It has been done before of course, Jonathan Swift comes to

mind as a famous thinker and writer who used the same metaphor, of the knife for the vote. It's a pity we don't read some of these old classics anymore because if we did then our judgements of metaphorical powers of persuasion would perhaps have more balance. But we don't .. and we therefore have to cover the same old ground running about with knives in our hands - like in the days of old - instead of votes.

I wonder whether it is because the tool, the weapon called a vote, is seen as an acceptable tool by the System?

I have previously written on the Control Generation*, but I'd not thought about what happens when the members of that generation choose to opt out and not to exercise their power within this control group. This is a fault in my theory, or rather my proposal, and I'm glad its been brought to my attention as it's a very important consideration. I'm not sure that it actually changes my theory but it undoubtedly alters the composition, and therefore the balance, of this Control Generation.

What does it matter if the Control Generation is no longer representative of all the People of the Land? To the System of the Land it is irrelevant. The Control Generation still wields all the power within the land .. it's just that now, the Control Generation has a a narrower base - there are less people participating in it. Perhaps the only great change is that it no longer has a true right to be called a generation. Now it would more correctly be called a Control Group. In the System of the Land, its power remains. It is still the power that effects change. Even if 70% of the people of the land choose to opt out, the Control Group is still the effective power. I have taken the figure of 70% at random and it is perhaps extreme but im hoping that, in it's extremity, it will aid in my theoretical example ... Because it is a plea for help and it is a plea for peace and for change through the vote .. and not through the knife.

Of course, back in the days of old the last thing that the Control Group would want would be to have 70% of the People of the Land outside the Control Group running about waving knives in their hands. It's what happened - to use some recent historys - in the American Colonies in the 1770s, France in 1789, The Spanish Colonial Empire in the early 1800s and Apartheid South Africa in 1985, as

I said, to name a few ... There are more recent examples. And it's true to say that in almost all these cases the initial hope and goals of change were eventually beaten back by reaction, by reaction and by fear and by complacency. That is another point, not part of this essay though many will use it as an excuse to cloud my point. My point of course being that; if your Land gives you the opportunity to vote then you should exercise that weapon of power.

Yes, reaction and fear are strong forces, and in almost all of our democracies it is supported by the System of the Land put into place by the initial rebellion, against non-participation, of those with no better way - no opening - to exercise their real power, than by the running about waving knives. The Systems of the Land have used their cleverness in law, in tricks, to prevent the new Systems of the Land being overrun by exactly that which produced the System of the Land that likes to be called Democracy.

There are many things that non-participation can have a great effect upon - one could not participate in the drinking of coke, not participate in the using of banks, not participate in driving cars, burning wood, eating strawberries or going to the beach or church etc. All of these bring change. But, a System of the Land doesn't care if you don't participate, whether it allows you to or not - it holds Power - it holds your guns and your gold, and it holds the power to enforce what it deems to be the Laws of the Land, because the System makes those laws - right or wrong, good or bad - and it makes them, yes, sometimes with tricks, with only those who choose to participate. The laws the System of the Land makes are made by participants for non-participants.

A System of the Land holds the power to coerce - to force. It could make you use banks, for instance, it could make you drink coke or go to church .. if the System really chooses to, It can imprison little children on far off islands.

A System of the Land can punish you. And if it's a System that professes to do things in your name - a system that we like to think of as democratic ... Then, it can do these things in your name, on your behalf .. for your own good, as they say. Whether you like it or not!

A System of the Land that acts in your name, in theory, should also give you a

power in the decisions enacted by this System - it gives you theoretical power in participation. It does not care if you do not participate ... It will act in your name regardless.

When a System has been set up in your name, when it purports to do things, not only in your name, but in your best interests, and when it says to you that you have the right to alter these things that it is doing - admittedly with all the deceit, obfuscation and inequities of those who manage the System for you .. all the human greed and petty self interest inherent and obviously observable on show - then your participation in the alteration of, in the changing of the System should be seen as a duty. If you are told, if you believe that you have a right .. then you have a duty.

Don't let the System tell you that you can't change anything on your own, by yourself. It's true that when there is only one knife waving about in the air the System doesn't need to take much notice. But one knife waving about in the air may cause other hands to start waving theirs - and when there are enough hands waving, the System will take notice. It has no choice.

And if it doesn't? If it doesn't then it will be apparent to all that the System is not behaving like it says it is - like it says it should. And when it's overwhelmingly apparent that the System is not behaving as it says it should, as it must, that it is not acting acceptably in your interests, that it is taking your name in vain ... Then you have a moral right to ditch the system. It's a duty.

Ah, another dirty word, duty - like honour, old fashioned and presumed too fluid for the modern, neoliberal age. It exists however, just like truth regardless of how one wishes to manipulate the ideal, and when you expect it from others then perhaps you owe it to them too.

What other way are you going to alter the system .. do more than just wave your knives?

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* See Essay, The Control Generation