

August 16, 2017

## A Straight Line

What has gotten me most upset over the past few days in the time I've spent chatting with my fellows in the Chatting Class is the temptation towards vigilantism by proxy. I am annoyed by their indications that they want to influence the progress of the law and law enforcement towards a specific sensitivity. They want the President to say something extra hostile to white supremacists, racists, Nazis, neo-confederates and other anti-semitic rabble who have infested the streets of Charlottesville. I don't need him to. I'm not sure that I want him to. So I wrote:

Some people are puzzled that I have no need for Trump to issue comforting platitudes, and that I was never impressed by those of the prior President. Perhaps this video will help you understand my perspective.

Today I have found too many people asking for things they should understand cannot be guaranteed, especially by the system which has put them in the embarrassing position of not being satisfied by political rhetoric, and yet demanding more political rhetoric. Politically correct rhetoric.

Somebody told me that Barack Obama got one million retweets today. Like that's going to help.

I happen to drill into the simple statement by the President that there are bad actors on all sides. That is because I want the President to mete out appropriate punishment according to the law, without regard to the animus of any side against the perpetrators of civil unrest and criminal acts. In other words if anti-Nazi protesters are arrested and charged with assault and Nazis are arrested and charged with assault, they are equally wrong. My expression of this idea has been called 'moral equivalence' and I sense this objection as well as some political partisanship at work. But my rationale comes from a different place, a place relatively devoid of fear.

When I saw the tapes of the [violent rally at Berkeley](#) earlier this year I was fascinated. There is something instinctual within me asking me exactly what I would do if I were in that situation. Because I know if that were my neighborhood, I would have to be there. I certainly would not go there from here, nor would I go to Ferguson or any other place on the map where I don't actually live. But if it came to me, how would I handle it? I ask because it is something of a foregone conclusion. I know myself. I know my instincts. I would fight.

I don't want to. I want to talk myself out of it. I want to rationalize a kind of pacifism. But I know better. I can handle violence, I can dispense violence. I'm stronger than most and I'm better prepared than most. I know that I could make a difference and I feel a strong obligation to protect the innocent. I've done it before, and I'm likely to do it again. I would insert myself in between aggressors and innocents and I would be aggressive towards attackers. It's not my job. It's not my desire, but it is within my capacity.

I don't have the fear that I would be helpless against aggressors. That is because I have studied what I have in the past four years. It has rearranged my sense of responsibility and civic duty. But here's one simple rule that makes even more sense than ever. Don't go to stupid places where stupid people are doing stupid things. That describes Charlottesville and Ferguson and anywhere that people have gone feral out in the streets wanting to clash and burn. I understand what it means to calculate the amount of force necessary to subdue. You don't enter into such decisions lightly. Ever. This is what it feels like to think like I think, as someone with guns and training. And even without fear, one understands that on any day at any moment a simple mistake or oversight in a confrontation can mean the end of your health, even the end of your life. As they say in college, you go big or you go home. That's easy. I'm going home.

There's a [great scene](#) from a corny movie in which Dr. David Banner who is also The Incredible Hulk reveals his secret. In the comic book world, everyone knows that the good doctor is a mild mannered genius who, when angered, becomes a phenomenally indestructible beast. The angrier he gets, the more terrifyingly huge he becomes, and in his rage he is capable of leveling skyscrapers. As the monstrous enemy approaches Banner and his fellow Avengers, Captain America says that it's about time for Banner to get angry. He replies "That's my secret, I'm always angry". The transformation from Banner to Hulk is part of all of us. As Banner reveals that he is always angry we are shocked to know that his Hulk powers were always under his control, that he was never a madman, but that he possesses the explicit knowledge of self that channels his fury into a righteous direction. He's not passive aggressive. He's simply smarter and more powerful than anyone else and he allows the myth to remain. David Banner is heroic.

The heroic is timeless, there is an arrow of dedication and effort in that direction. Some just look that way, some walk that way, some run. I'm a late jogger who quickly tires. But I am on the path. So I'm particularly vulnerable. I might make a stupid sacrifice. But I know why the existence of white supremacists, Nazis and other violators of the peace don't concern me to the point at which I am demanding that words from the bully pulpit calm my nerves. I recognize my brothers on that path. I know those employed in law enforcement and sworn to duty are ready to make the proper decision. They too are always angry at bad actors, and they too need no words of reassurance.

But the most important thing about those who are sworn to protect and serve is that they understand on the daily how important it is to serve consistently. For them, a violation of the law is a violation of the law without regard to person. They are a key element in our justice system because they do not have the privilege of arresting people for evil thoughts. They don't have the need to hear specific denunciations of impassioned righteous citizens standing up for what they believe in. They don't need flags. They themselves are Banners. Now look at the picture. Here's my caption. "Whatever dude. Just don't cross the line."

I don't expect everybody to have the self-possession of peace officers, but I do expect them to hold off on thinking about changing the law. There is nothing in our system that is ill-prepared to handle the conflicts of the meatheads in Charlottesville. I question the sensibleness of those who set off to travel to that stupid place on that stupid day, and those who are calling for magic words. And I seek to confront, with this essay, the instinct to go tribal and ask for extraordinary law. Heroes aren't triggered.

The problem with today's multiculturalism is that it is different than pluralism. Pluralism is the proper ethos for America, multiculturalism is not. The difference can be explained simply by assuming Americans can be divided into two tribes:

### Ideological Tribe A

We believe that America is at its best when its mainstream is maintained *without regard* to race, creed, color, sexual preference, etc..

### Ideological Tribe B

We believe that America is at its best when its mainstream is maintained *with special regard* to race, creed, color, sexual preference, etc..

Some might think that the presence of Nazis makes this a different kind of situation, that there is something that requires special regard for the violators of protected classes. That is the kind of distinction that is best resolved by the deliberations of judges and juries. In the streets, there is simply law and lawlessness. Cross the line and you are arrested. You might expect that the character of the counter demonstrations to matter. Let me say that it does, but let me also say, and this is important, that when I claim to be Sheepdog, that this is a tribal association. If I have any claim to the warrior mystique or the heroic path or the ways of the wise, all of that is tribal. So maybe I'm Ideological Tribe A, but I'm also in that Sheepdog tribe.

### All of those tribal associations must remain subordinate to the rule of law.

The more we tinker with the rule of law from our tribal perspectives, the less applicable that rule of law becomes. When it becomes easy to defy the rule of law, when it becomes easy to mock police officer's dedication and service. So yes, when my Jewish friend says nothing is going to stop him from traveling to that stupid place to confront those stupid Nazis, I respect his tribe. I respect his motivation. But I don't respect his demand for the President to speak in defense of his tribe and specifically against another tribe. That's not how the rule of law is maintained.



The rule of law does not have multicultural and tribal voodoo words sprinkled in with it. A moment's consideration reveals that is precisely what certain partisan Americans are screaming about now, the allegation that the President doesn't want to alienate white nationalists.

That of course is a call to come up with a special policy in the law to presume the guilt of white nationalists and to jump the gun accordingly when they are found in stupid places doing stupid things. Pre-emption. Predisposition. Precrime. The existence of a Nazi, they say, is like a man holding a sword above the head of another. Simply arrest him before he swings it. The existence of a swastika is hate speech which should be taken as incitement to a violent act. This is the blurring of the line that I cannot tolerate, not because Nazis don't deserve it, not because nobody deserves it, but because we cannot provide a system smart enough and consistent enough to have that standard as law.

You are going to have to step out of your house and put on your suit of armor and be prepared to clash in the streets, representing your tribe in defiance of the rule of law if you want to punch Nazis. With contempt for police officers, sheepdogs, and the rule of law, you are going to have to descend to the level of Nazis who stand in contempt of American society. When America's disgust with Nazis is not sufficient for you, get out of line and go bust some heads. Do it. Cross the line.

With regards to Ferguson [I wrote](#):

Ferguson burning is a good thing.

They say that good fences make good neighbors. I say that anger and frustration are just like farts in the wind. Nothing political really matters until people are ready to burn things down. It makes for good dividing lines. The Ferguson mob is a lynch mob, there's no question about that. If they could get their hands on The Man, they would stone him. That's good news. It has clarity. It shows that people actually have the courage of their convictions, they are putting their money where their mouths are. We, at long last, have a proper mob.

Go ahead and join a proper mob. If Antifa is your mob, represent. Just don't expect support from citizens who desire the rule of law. If Occupy is your mob, get out there son. Show 'em what you're made of. But understand with clarity that you have decided to abandon your faith in democratic processes and institutions. Of course they are not perfect. Of course they need maintenance and reform. Don't pretend that your chants and fists and flags are instruments of democracy and law.

Charlottesville has a bunch of tribes attempting to overthrow the authority of the courts now deliberating a lawsuit on the proper location of certain Civil War statues, a gift of artifacts of history. I hardly compare but, I consider my blog a gift of historical artifacts. Look at the picture again. My website now hosts a confederate flag, plain as day. Do I get scrubbed? I'm going to take a chance and see if Facebook can handle this kind of free speech. Maybe it can, maybe it can't. We'll see.

In conclusion, I recognize all sorts of American tribes. Ideological tribes. All of which participate in our system of elections and are subordinate to the rule of law. That law should make no exceptions and be no respecter of persons or tribes. I oppose the idea that the Executive Branch make any exceptions or call out specific partisan enemies for any reason, that it treats all Americans equally with respect to their standing or what stupidity they profess or enact in public. They are either law upholders or law breakers. There is no social justice, there is society and all its tribes and the American justice system which stands in place for those who break the law. It's a simple and straight line. Know which side you're on and stop trying to bend it. Yeah yeah yeah I've heard your arguments before. Whatever dude. Just don't cross the line.

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## Obligatory Seriousness on White Nationalists, Antifa & Charlottesville

So I figure that when we end the last term of Donald we will enter the seventh inning stretch of the Culture Wars. The game is not nearly over, shit hasn't gotten real enough yet. It will only come when there are enough burned buildings and dead bodies to stop the blathering in its tracks.

I've been thinking about the hug. Men in Los Angeles, particularly straight black men (since such things have to be said) essentially starting grasping each other after the Riots. It was an evolution in dap that was created by the fact of the Riots over the beating of Rodney King, and the failure of a jury to crucify the four officers complicit in that beating. It was only after the buildings were burned to the ground, after Korean storekeepers hardened up their defenses to the level of lethality, after 64 people were dead, after similar riots in cities all over the country were over and people were picking up fragments of their lives from the ashes. It was only after all that when people responded with tenderness and a new kind of civility arose. It was only after the election of Riordan as mayor of Los Angeles that calmer heads prevailed. It was only after people lost fingers that they stopped pointing fingers and demanded healing. It was only then that these black men in Los Angeles started acknowledging their own humanity in a new and purposeful way. It was the peace that war demanded. And now American men hug that way on the regular.

Our identity politics have been ratcheting up the stakes of the continuing Culture Wars but they haven't reached a crescendo. The failures of the multiple intersectional third wave theoretical tentacles on the appropriate pronouns for pet groups, while crumbling to its foundations, have not yet lost their grip on the popular imaginations of the Chatting Class. So 'racism', 'sexism', 'homophobia' and various other accusations have not lost their cachet despite actual progress against these very real sins. That a lone wackjob like Dylan Roof can kill nine in Charleston and not set off so much acrimony as the gang of neo-confederates in Charlottesville tells us something very important. We have political groups of Americans who wish to see the destruction of other political groups of Americans. As I say, there hasn't been enough violence to satiate that bloodlust.

In a way, we are fortunate to have Antifa and Alt-Right to enact these fantasies. Call it the boneheads vs the skinheads. So far we, we meaning Left and Right, remain willing to send them into ritual combat as non-official proxies for the never ending stream of invective that is our contemporary political dialog. We are in that same perverse way, fortunate to have a President whose oratorial vacuity allows all sides to interpret whatever they wish to project as emanating from his bully pulpit. Americans are not actually having to deal with leadership in anyway resembling a responsible republic. So the wars between ourselves against ourselves continues. And it shall continue as the Congress, the Executive and the Press continue to fail to lead and America stumbles into a triple witching hour when all three fail simultaneously. Charlottesville is just a test. Our good fortune will soon run out and real riots will begin, but we now benefit by watching all the ingredients. Time will provide us another OJ Simpson or another Timothy McVeigh or another James Damore or another Matthew Shepard. Somebody whose fate will align the political opposition like Alt-Right and Antifa into a perfect storm. America will rage. Then America will hug. But first we must suffer the fire next time.

What strikes me as particularly notable about this latest non-event in Charlottesville all due respect to mere three deaths in Virginia, a number that MS-13 would consider a weak showing, is the actual symbol at the heart of the matter; the fate of a statue. You see there's still a lawsuit. And while lawsuits are generally the respectable and civilized way to resolve disputes, nobody is really talking about that lawsuit. The focus of our finger-pointing is the animus of the non-official proxies and what pronouncements we in the Chatting Class are demanding of their putative leaders. The legal process and the legal solutions for violence and rioting and municipal statuary are not what we really care about. We demand that the right people make the right sounds. We demand rhetorical satisfaction, ultimately a pledge of fealty. We are demanding satisfaction for something with great historical import and mythological power to validate our claims of sovereignty.

**The King used to be called democracy, due process and rule of law. But we don't really want that right now. We want the so-called King to bend the knee.**

For myself, I didn't pay attention to the Taliban in Afghanistan until they started blowing up statues. When you decide to blow up statues, when you are offended by symbols, when you burn flags, books and buildings, you are expressing a desire to exterminate. That's what's going on here. A desire to rewrite history and to undo any claims that Others might make that stand in



the way of your full dignity. It used to be that Americans, all of us, aspired to one national identity. But we've gone radically and multiculturally autonomous and self-serving. We've abused pluralism into a perversion of itself. The warm fires of the melting pot have gone damp and we have been served cold kale salad and told that's as integrated as we're going to get. Pick out the fruits and nuts you don't like. It's your salad, we are told. Common purpose is epistemologically impossible. Or at least faith in it has declined abysmally. That's what it means when you are compelled to rename, reclaim, resist, reinterpret. It's only one step from remove.

What I hear in the back and forth is a call for others to imagine their ox being butchered. The interwebz are full of madlib scenarios of offense. "What if it were a statue of (insert inviolable icon here)?" We only offer sympathetic imagination of the Others when they are incited to rage beyond reason. Isn't what the screening of movies like 'Detroit' are all about? Of course it is. All of our dramas are about pushing people to the limits of tolerance. We are encouraged to all be inglorious bastards. Today is national punch a Nazi day. One step closer to the edge and we're about to break.

American institutions of the humanities and mainstream mass communications are broken, but we people are not. The longer we pay attention to those broken institutions, the more we fail to see our own humanity both in ourselves and in the so-called 'Others'. I have lost my faith in the ability of these old mainstays of society to be repaired or reformed, although I am confident about our basic humanity and the evolution and growth of new institutions. A new kind of hug is coming, but it will take a while. It will come after the fire. We have already created our Alts and armed these outcasts with the imprimatur to fight for 'our' version of America. I'm telling you now that they have been dignified by our callous disregard for our common purpose and they will clash and that clash will not be contained.

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