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Fear Robs Us of Our Humanity

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What’s underneath North Carolina’s controversial law HB2, commonly referred as the “bathroom bill”?

I suspect much of the discourse is dominated by assumptions that embody the worst stereotypes. The seductive nature of this approach is that it falsely endows an individual with a degree of certainty to the point it invalidates any opposition.

I’m always concerned with reactionary legislation because its tentacles invariably reach into the abyss of unintended consequences more rapidly than bills that go through a more prudent process.

Doesn’t the national backlash from a wide variety bear this out? Though it is easy to respond to such opposition as the insidious work of the “liberal agenda,” it is not just liberals who find HB2 appalling. Companies such as Pfizer, Citibank and Bank of America do not routinely dwell in the bastion of liberal orthodoxy but are united in their opposition to HB2.

Contrary to popular opinion, recognizing equality for the LGBT community is not “philosophically” a liberal issue. I know a number of individuals who identify as politically conservative but vehemently opposed HB2. Why?

It is due to the fact that their child, niece, nephew or someone else close to them has “come out.”

For many, HB2 is not a detached form of legislation based on a theoretical position; it is viewed as harmful to those whom individuals know and love.

The human condition is ripe with examples of how the status quo conveniently truncates that which it does not understand so that it can justify its position. I suspect underlining support for HB2 (at least a portion of it) is fear.

One of the hallmarks of identifying fear in the public discourse are the protestations of what it is against more so than what it champions, offering simplistic shibboleths to support its position. Through the use of a heightened decibel level and repetition, it falsely creates the persona of legitimacy.

Once fear enters the lymph nodes of one’s soul, data, no matter how persuasive to the contrary, becomes an unworthy adversary.

Those who are not transgender, or for that matter gay, a different race, different gender or physically challenged cannot effectively place themselves in shoes they never wore. Thus, we are always limited to the parameters of our perspective, which should invoke humility. But fear is undaunted by such realities.

Instead of acknowledging what it does not comprehend, fear, buoyed by representing the status quo, develops a straw person by which it can clothe in fear’s worst assumptions. Specifically regarding HB2, the most popular canard being transgender equates to pedophile.

This is a powerful argument for those operating in fear. But if we allow sanity to briefly enter the discourse, does one really believe the city of Charlotte, which passed the original ordinance that necessitated the North Carolina Legislature to draft HB2, would spend over a year to create a law that would benefit the rights of pedophiles?

Moreover, there is not a scintilla of data that links pedophile behavior with being transgender. But fear is relentless. Before unleashing the erroneous transgender/pedophile correlation, fear ensures that the humanity of transgender brother and sisters remains invisible.

Systematically robbing one of his or her humanity is the first step in the dehumanization process. It would have been impossible to annihilate Native Americans, enslave Africans or set up internment camps for Japanese Americans if one did not first deprive them of their humanity.

Once complete, what would normally be considered counterintuitive (robbing one of their humanity while maintaining one’s own) becomes normative because it is ensconced in a cocoon that is resistant to self-reflection.

In lieu of self-reflection, fear inserts a socially acceptable certainty, which allows individuals to inflict their discomfort onto others.

But one would be hard pressed to point to a time fear made the country better. When have the fear-induced assumptions toward those deemed as “other,” unworthy of mainstream status, been brought to fruition?

Invariably, all that was accomplished was to simply delay the inevitable.

The only disinfectant for fear is courage and curiosity. Rather than supporting HB2 based on erroneous suppositions, why not reach a judicious decision through the less traveled path of courage and curiosity?

The latter propositions open the door to enlightenment because it replaces certainty with humility. One wonders the fate of HB2 if the North Carolina legislature replaced fear and certainty with courage and curiosity.