

Let's Make America Safe Again

Dr. Lon Jones, DO

Published: November 17, 2016

Making America Safe Again does not mean going to martial law or a police state. That's what Duterte is doing in the Philippines and it has translated into killing anyone suspected of drug dealing. There are better ways to make us safe.

An introduction to these ideas is on our Facebook page, America's Favorite Country Doctor and Jerry. Let's start here with why.

We have just completed a presidential election campaign that was largely based on fear: fear of being left behind economically—but not at the rapture; fear of losing our choice to decide our own path by an over controlling government; fear of losing our place in the line, as Arlie Hochschild puts it in *Strangers in Their Own Land*, to realize the American Dream to interlopers like illegal immigrants, other foreigners, blacks and native Americans aided by government programs like affirmative action, and even by endangered *non-humans* species like the brown pelican. Fear is a primal instinct; it largely bypasses the thinking part of the brain and spurs us to action so that we can better survive. We need those instincts, but they are very easy for charismatic leaders and advertising people to abuse. We believe that the American people have been abused by both political parties and that something is needed to counter that fear.

President-elect Trump has said “stop it” to the bullying and abuse that has followed his election. That will likely be as effective from him as it was from Bob Newhart. Trump should be praised for his attempt and his ability to adapt so rapidly, or, alternatively, condemned for his ability to lie so easily. In either case his supporters are not likely to share his chameleon nature as the growth of abuse and bullying since the election demonstrates.

These are the facts that show the need for a safe place, but the real reason for the why is much deeper. We are all adaptive organisms and we adapt in ways that correspond to our perceptions of our environments. If those environments are threatening in any way we adapt in ways that help us to survive better. In most cases these are the midbrain responses of fight, flight, or flee; alternatively, if the threat has a charismatic person who claims to have a solution we can easily join and let him or her take over. This was obviously the case in the post WW I Germany that elected Hitler to solve their problems. The fact that our economy is in no way comparable to that of Weimar Germany offers us lots of hope, but whether history will repeat itself depends mostly on us.

The alternative to these defensive responses requires that we not be threatened. From examples in bacteria, developing children, the ‘Skunk Works’, and nation states, agents that play together in a safe environment, with a level playing field, and lots of strange new ‘toys’ are the creators of the novelty and diversity that is the hallmark of a healthy system as well as the key to boosting an economy that continues in the doldrums.

Fundamentally we need a safe place so that the American experiment of a melting pot of diverse peoples coming here and becoming Americans can continue. Our past is at times neither praiseworthy nor worthy of emulation, but we have led the world in innovation and diversity, and we are by far the healthiest economically. That fact comes directly from our diversity, **and diversity is dependent on safety.**

Likely this way of thinking is new to you. If it is of interest we recommend finding a safe place and reading our book, *The Boids and the Bees*, where these ideas are fleshed out in greater detail.