

From the Heart...

...Lifeskills for Today's Family

By Sharon L. Benedict MS



Is being politely political even possible? Part 2

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, Nov 4, 2016)

As we consider the candidates and platform, why would our nation's moral crisis be such a surprise? It definitely isn't politely political, that's for sure. It sounds like it has all become a global soap opera with secrets and slanders abounding. Who's going to throw the next stone? Maybe we should include ourselves in the mudslinging mix too?

Yes, I know some of you may be irate, saying "I haven't ever said or done what they have done!" Well, my friend, you just may have thought of one or two, or three on more than one occasion. But here's the breaking news! That makes us all part of the moral crisis crowd. We are all flawed, imperfect human beings.

Yet, that doesn't excuse us from asking ourselves, "How am I living my values for my children and those who cross my path?" If we expect our political representatives to hold to a high standard of ethics and morality, shouldn't we first look in the mirror? In the previous article, you were encouraged to do some homework on what you believe and why, matched with our nation's candidates and issues. I hope you did. Once you have done your research, let's take a closer look at the values and voice we hold dear. How do they match up to the candidates and platform?

So, while you reflect on your reflection, here's a summary list of the more distinctive and often polarizing platform issues. Although not inclusive of all, these main

issues have been pulled from the platforms along with a site comparing presidential candidates, <http://presidential-candidates.insidegov.com/> (sources : Project Vote Smart, RealClearPolitics, Federal Election Commission, and OnTheIssues). Where there seemed to be a difference between the platform and these other sources, the platform and candidates' most recent positions were chosen. This definitely was not an easy task, and I apologize for any goofs along the way. And you never know, the candidates may surprise us again and shift their position on any number of issues. And who knows what the news will bring us next. It is all a moving target!

Keep in mind, to gain a more comprehensive perspective on how these issues are supported or opposed, definitely read the platforms' "fine print" (<https://democrats.org/party-platform>, <https://gop.com/the-2016-republican-party-platform/>, <https://www.lp.org/platform/>, <http://www.gp.org/platform>). Although the platforms help us match our values to those of a particular party, the actions of those in office and new candidates on the scene will hopefully align with the party of their choosing and actions over the years. However, we often find those in office vote and behave in a way that actually oppose what their party supports. Yes, sometimes compromise is necessary but also can create confusing signals for anyone who isn't privy to the process. As with us all, regardless, we still have a responsibility to take a stand, hopefully redeem ourselves as we walk out our values each day, and keep our representatives accountable.

You may also be surprised at some of the positions and find yourself twixt and between parties with certain issues you support. That's when your priorities come into play alongside how candidates did or did not support their party's platform. The bottom

line for priorities is “What is most important to you?” Be sure to set priorities on your own values before you begin. Your priorities will help you avoid fence-sitting on other issues that may be important but not at the top of your list.

ISSUE	Democratic Party Platform – Hillary Clinton	Republican Party Platform – Donald Trump	Libertarian Party Platform – Gary Johnson	Green Party Platform – Jill Stein
Abortion Rights	Support	Oppose	Support	Support
American Exceptionalism	Support	Support	Oppose	Oppose
Campaign Finance Reform	Support	Support	Oppose	Support
Crime – Stricter Criminal Sentencing	Oppose	Support	Oppose	Oppose
Drugs – Stricter Drug Laws	Oppose	Oppose	Oppose	Oppose
Energy – Prioritize Green Energy	Support	Oppose	Oppose	Support
Environment – Less Regulation	Oppose	Support	Support	Oppose
Foreign Policy – Avoid Foreign Entanglements	Oppose	Support	Support	Support
Gun Rights	Oppose	Support	Support	Oppose
Immigration Reform	Support	Oppose	Support	Support
Legally Require Hiring Women and Minorities	Support	Oppose	Neutral/No Opinion	Support
Military – Robust Military	Support	Support	Oppose	Oppose
Obamacare	Support	Oppose	Oppose	Support
Public Faith in Schools	Support	Support	Neutral/No Opinion	Oppose
Same-Sex Marriage	Support	Oppose	Support	Support
School Vouchers	Oppose	Support	Support	Oppose
Social Security – Privatize	Oppose	Support	Support	Oppose
Stimulus Policy	Support	Oppose	Oppose	Support
Taxes – Higher Taxes on Wealthy	Support	Oppose	Oppose	Support
Trade – Free Trade	Oppose	Oppose	Support	Oppose

As you review each issue, highlight where you stand based on your priorities.

Mark your top five priorities. At this point, if you don’t have a sample ballot in front of you, get one (sample ballot:

http://www.co.kendall.tx.us/default.aspx?Kendall_County/Elections.Current). Before you officially vote or have any election questions, by all means contact the Texas Secretary of State, Vote Texas, <http://www.votetexas.gov/contact> (1-800-252-8683). You can learn more about your Texas county's voting system prior to voting via <http://www.votetexas.gov/voting/how>. Here is the link to your rights as a Texas voter, http://www.votetexas.gov/?page_id=125, and call 1-800-252-VOTE to report any irregularities.

For those who already voted and want to change their vote, there are states that actually allow voters to do so. Yet, Texas is not one of them, at least for now. Voting rules in the US are different in each state, according to Articles I and II of the Constitution. If you want to know more, contact your state or local election office to learn more about each state's unique election rules (<https://www.usa.gov/election-office>, <http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/Index.shtml>).

According to Laura Jarrett (CNN, *Want to change your vote? Some states say no problem*. October 31, 2016), "Among the states that do allow voters to change their early ballot after it's been cast are: Wisconsin; Minnesota; Michigan; Pennsylvania; New York; Connecticut; and Mississippi. While the procedures differ among states, most election-related websites run by the states do not make the rules for changing an early or absentee ballot easy to find."

So, you surely have enough to ponder now by November 8 election day and beyond. My hope is this two-part series helped you become more proactive in our nation's wellbeing and future. Whether you have already voted or about to, know you are affirming our most important right and responsibility toward maintaining a nation of

“We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”

Let us all also remember and declare these indelible words: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men [mankind] are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the consent of the governed . . .”

--

Sharon L. Benedict, is a speaker, author, and weaver, and loving it! She is available for speaking engagements, free-lance writing, and will even weave you a one-of-kind creation, just for you. Sharon also welcomes your questions and comments and can be contacted at seekreachachieve@gvtc.com. Visit her website at www.celebratingyourjourney.com.

From the Heart...

...Lifeskills for Today's Family

By Sharon L. Benedict MS



Reflecting on Post-Election Passions, good and bad

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, Nov 11, 2016)

Well, here we are post-election. Are you happy or sad? Elated or enraged? Have you been celebrating in the streets or screaming obscenities? Whichever one describes your current state, I hope we agree on one thing—life does go on. No matter the outcome, where do we go from here?

We still go to work, come home to family, and take care of our daily responsibilities. We even may start to smile again, at least a little. Yet, this time our routines somehow feel different. Could it be we are all wondering how we can more compassionately, directly help the community where we live? I guess the question to ask ourselves is “Where can I channel that fervor and passion in a more positive way?”

Although for some, you may decide to make a major change in your life and family, most of us usually return to the routines we have been used to for so long. Yet, with this historic time in our nation, let us not do a disconnect again like in previous elections. Let's step up and passionately live our values like we don't have tomorrow waiting for us. What is in your heart to do right now? What skills and gifts do you already have that will make a difference in someone's life today?

I know for myself, my heart often yearns to share my story of faith, hope, and love to anyone who wants to hear it. That is why I wrote and published my story years

ago, *In Daddy's Eyes*. That is why I also compiled my life's work as a lifeskills consultant/coach into *Celebrating Your Journey, Lifeskills in Synergy* (all are available on any online bookseller site). With a few more books in the works, my hope and prayer is my writings will help you discover your purpose and path; and make your journey so much smoother along the way. I will also continue writing this byline, God willing, so you will continue to be encouraged and helped in some way. For those who love the way numbers might play a role in our lives, this Friday article is published on the 11th day of the 11th month on the 11th year of my byline! Maybe this time I should be pay more attention to the hints!

Let us all be responsive to the opportunities that present themselves in the months ahead. Give dedicated thought and even prayer to which direction to take. You may discover yourself supporting a person, place, group, or organization that shares your core values and encourages family, home, faith, desire for outreach to humanity.

You may want to extend your values and principles into global human affairs and lessons of history, human justice and compassion in legislation, domestic policy, and international relations. Possibly you are someone who has a passion for science or medicine, seeking truth in our universe and life on earth—to observe and understand the environment and natural world from a scientific and spiritual perspective.

Do you have a desire to support and train business leaders and legal advisors to advance integrity, honesty, and excellence in the work place and our nation's public/private legal system? Do you want to help educate and train young children, teens, and adults to be mature, informed, effective leaders in every field of life? Are you

ready to impart your core values in the arts, entertainment, news, cultural trends, and influence the media to improve the quality of programming?

Does your heart yearn to provide an alternative to state-run welfare programs with effective, compassionate ministries to the underserved, needy and unfortunate? Are you one whose skill and passion is to coordinate and mobilize leaders across society to improve their communities and the world? As you can see, the paths are many. Yet, may you find a place where your heart helps heal lives as well as our nation. And as you find your place, may your own family and community be the first place you look.

--

Sharon L. Benedict, is a speaker, author, and weaver, and loving it! She is available for speaking engagements, free-lance writing, and will even weave you a one-of-kind creation, just for you. Sharon also welcomes your questions and comments and can be contacted at seekreachachieve@gvtc.com. Visit her website at www.celebratingyourjourney.com.

From the Heart...

...Lifeskills for Today's Family
By Sharon L. Benedict MS



Reflecting . . . no fears conversation, part 1

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, Nov 18, 2016)

Before I move on to something other than “political” may I linger awhile here? I just feel, like so many others, that maybe we should remain awhile to get our bearings in the weeks and months ahead. We all know this division in our nation won’t go away anytime soon. As with us all, reconciliation takes time and humbling work on both sides.

So, the conversation may continue during this month’s lifeskill, *Reflection*, and possibly next month’s lifeskill, *Celebration*. Hopefully by then, no matter our political camp, we will all have something to be positive about and celebrate together.

Are you wanting to find something positive to read, see, or hear? I know I am. And I don’t mean one side gloating while the other side reels in pain! It seems when the topic is political we somehow believe we are excused from civility and compassion for “the other side” or what some call “the enemy.”

I know one thing for sure, I am exhausted from witnessing people and the press “demonizing” everything and everyone, and for years! Ever notice how the media, whether conservative, liberal, ultra right, or ultra left, keep feeding us those one liners to grab our attention and emotions as we struggle to find even a semblance of common ground to work with? It’s like they are telling us, “Keep fighting and screaming. We love it! Who needs genuine journalism, where I have to verify the facts, report both sides,

and retain an unbiased position, when we have all this!" Unfortunately, we then simply fall in line and do the same, like lemmings.

And let us not forget the social media we check each hour on the hour for the latest lash-out about someone's supposed xenophobic and flawed humanity, bias, and treat it as gospel. We also narrow our conversation when we discover a "friend" who doesn't align with our mantra. We then "unfriend" them with an egregious shutdown.

Ok. I know, enough venting here Sharon! I am probably a perfect example of adding to our current travail. So, where do we go from here? Ever wonder where the word "lemming" came from? Maybe it's time for some of us to do what Larry did in "Leaping Lemmings" book by John Briggs. "Larry is different from the other lemmings. While 'all the other lemmings look alike, sound alike, and act alike,' and will gladly follow their friends to jump off a cliff, Larry is different. Taking the road less traveled, Larry sleds with puffins, plays bongos, and orders pepperoni pizza with extra cheese and hot sauce." Have a puffin or two you want to sled with? Play some music and even order some pizza together?! Have a no-fear conversation with?

You just may be shaking your head "no way!" by now as you read on as I glimpsed a wise gem from a fellow life coach's Facebook post! Kj shared "Just got off the phone with a good friend of mine who is politically savvy and knows the ins and outs of artful and effective debate. Meaning that we may not always agree but we can come to a place of compassion for one another. So I'm going to share a question (or two) that will help each of us engage in conversation with those that may see things a little or a lot differently. What are the things that most concern you about the candidate you voted for? What are the things that you are most hopeful for?"

Now, here is someone not afraid of the conversation! How about you? As with others who have recently posted their responses to KJ, I too have concerns about the candidate I voted for. Yet, when I really thought about those concerns as well as the things I am most hopeful for, I spent a lot of time in silent solitude weighing the impact both my concerns and hopes will have on my own life, family, community, and nation.

For many of us, we often hold our voice to risk any backlash, even to the point of being afraid for life and limb. Somehow over the years we have become so emotionally “offended” by the simple reality that someone actually disagrees. The solution we regrettably embraced is literally either “flight or fight.” What has happened to freedom of speech and open, safe conversation in our precious nation?

Some may say, “My voice doesn’t make any difference” or “I don’t have a voice anymore.” KJ’s sage response was “We should always have a voice in our government. That is the beauty of a democracy. That is how laws are made. We the people don’t lay down our right to voice our concerns and our hopes just because someone took office. If anything we need to hold them and our representatives accountable . . . It is also true that people don’t need to say anything.” How refreshing and what freedom feels like.

Keep in mind here, KJ and I voted for different candidates. She also wanted to hear from those who voted for Trump. KJ said she has “. . . family and friends who voted for Trump in good conscience. They have valid things to say as well. Our discussions have helped me soften my feelings toward him with the hope that he indeed will do more good than harm.” Others who responded in the post shared more specific concerns and hope about Trump’s acceptance speech and 100 day plan. They also expressed greater hope knowing how many “. . . people voted for Trump to make a

point and to instigate change and reform to our political system . . .” And were hopeful reform actually happens and “ . . . serves as a wake-up call to US citizens, government, and media.” They were also more hopeful people across parties will come closer together through this experience.

As the conversation continued about our concerns and hopes, KJ shared “There is much here that I can agree with as well . . . Write on!” And that is what prompted this article and others coming. Read on next article, next week, my reading friends!

--

Sharon L. Benedict, is a speaker, author, and weaver, and loving it! She is available for speaking engagements, free-lance writing, and will even weave you a one-of-kind creation, just for you. Sharon also welcomes your questions and comments and can be contacted at seekreachachieve@gvtc.com. Visit her website at www.celebratingyourjourney.com.

From the Heart...

...Lifeskills for Today's Family
By Sharon L. Benedict MS



Reflecting . . . no fears conversation, part 2

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, Nov 25, 2016)

Are you finding glimmers of hope for our nation yet? I know it's only been 19 days since this historic and, some may say, horrific election and season. I guess it all depends on where you are looking and what camp you are in.

For some they may still be cycling through the same media sources that continue to repeat their unending angst and position, while others continue to gloat over whatever floats their boat and "sticks it" to the so-called enemy! Anyone out there want to finally not be so exhausted from the harangue hanging on every media one-liner? Well, I have some thoughts and ideas here. May they sound like some possibilities for you.

Yes, I revisited my Facebook page the other day actually looking for a glimmer without much success. It seems, particularly with one friend who is a staff member for one of our Texas Congressmen, there was only one or two who could find a way to have a civil, respectful conversation thread about something Speaker Ryan did or didn't do in the past that broke all trust for the future for those entering the conversation. I felt really sorry for the "friend" who tried so hard to offer some facts and genuine, open questions.

So, I put aside Facebook for another day when all media exploded with opinion pieces about Vice President-elect Mike Pence attending the Broadway musical "Hamilton" at the Richard Rodgers Theatre in New York on December 18. I will attempt to summarize what I glean from the barrage being inflicted on us all. I actually have come away with a glimmer of hope for us. First, we all know what Trump tweeted regarding the demand for an apology and that a concert should be a safe place to attend and not be put on the spot. I know I wouldn't want to be.

Yet, let's put this in perspective with the current climate in our nation and the fact that Pence is our VP-elect. No matter where Pence will go, the media will follow. Where is the positive in all this? First, from what I read I felt the cast was respectful even if the audience wasn't. Second, as Pence was leaving, he stopped to listen. Thirdly, although Trump (ideally as with us all) is allowed freedom of opinion (just look at your own Facebook or Tweeter page), Pence's response created a win/win for all.

Pence genuinely listened, was respectful, and waited for an appropriate time and means later to respond to both Trump's opinion and his own. According to Eric Bradner, CNN Politics (November 20, 2016), Pence responded "My daughter and I and her cousins really enjoyed the show. 'Hamilton' is just an incredible production, incredibly talented people. It was a real joy to be there." In addition, he added "When we arrived we heard a few boos, and we heard some cheers, . . . I nudged my kids and reminded them that is what freedom sounds like."

He then said on Fox News Sunday, "I did hear what was said from the stage. I can tell you I wasn't offended by what was said. I will leave to others whether that was the appropriate venue to say it" What was the message from the cast? Basically,

quoted according to CNN Politics, "Vice President-elect Pence, we welcome you, and we truly thank you for joining us here at "Hamilton American Musical," we really do. We, sir -- we are the diverse America who are alarmed and anxious that your new administration will not protect us, our planet, our children, our parents, or defend us and uphold our inalienable rights . . . We truly hope that this show has inspired you to uphold our American values and to work on behalf of all of us . . ."

From Fox News Sunday, Pence also said he wants to address the center of the message given by the cast and knows ". . . this is a very disappointing time for people that did not see their candidate win in this national election, . . . I know this is a very anxious time for some people. I just want to reassure people what President-elect Donald Trump said on election night -- he absolutely meant from the bottom of his heart"

I believe we have just witnessed an open, respectful conversation, albeit not at the same moment or location (which probably wouldn't have been an appropriate venue at either the time or location). We witnessed a beginning at the top level of our nation. How about us in both camps start giving it a try too? Yes, it is a guarantee we will disagree on any number of things, with hopeful respect. We are all very passionate about what and who we believe is right for our nation. Yet, we can surely find areas where we can agree and have common ground to work together, right? Let's find out.

With the next several articles in December, I just may pick a few topics that are part of what may be coming our way. In what kind of package they come will depend on how our representatives and each of us conduct the conversation here at home and across the nation. Let us find a way to bring some reprieve from the seemingly

unending harm being done by the press and, yes, us people. These two months, November and December, give us a rare and timely opportunity to give thanks for our families, our community, and our nation. My hope is we all will be able to celebrate and say to each other, "That is what freedom looks like."

--

Sharon L. Benedict, is a speaker, author, and weaver, and loving it! She is available for speaking engagements, free-lance writing, and will even weave you a one-of-kind creation, just for you. Sharon also welcomes your questions and comments and can be contacted at seekreachachieve@gvtc.com. Visit her website at www.celebratingyourjourney.com.