

PLEASE DON'T PRINT THIS

(it might upset someone)

I like movies--some more than others, some less and some not at all. A short while ago the movie "Network" came to mind. You remember "Network." It's one of two things that happened in 1976 that I remember. There was a scene in the film where the anchorman, played by Peter Finch, on the air, said: "I want you to go to your windows, stick your heads out and yell at the top of your voices, 'I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take it anymore.'" I like that.

He voiced the frustration and the anger of his audience. Throughout the city, the country and even the world, there were thousands and millions of people who had been pooped on from the beginning of their lives. They had universally turned the other cheek and they felt obligated to do so time after time--day in and day out. In order to maintain some degree of sanity they formulated an array of cop-outs; it's just one of those things, they didn't mean any harm, I won't lower myself to their level, they didn't know what they were doing, you can't fight fire with fire, chalk it up to ignorance, you can't fight city hall, I've got a wife and family, and the list of excuses and reasons for accepting all the poop goes on and on and on.

Later in the film, when he repeated the command, the network was in phone contact with several of the major media markets of the nation. "They're yelling in Atlanta. They're yelling in Chicago. They're yelling in L.A." They were yelling all over the place.

Not by design, they had lucked upon something with which a national audience could identify. I imagine that each individual who stuck his head out and yelled, "I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take it anymore," found relief in discovering that they were not alone in their disgust and their feeling of powerlessness. Discovering that shared experience--especially of torment and degradation--made them realize that it was not just them making a big deal of things which others did not even recognize.

It is the shared experience which brings into much clearer focus one's own reality. Yeah, I like the movies. When I was a kid, I

saw Erroll Flynn play Robin Hood. What a movie. Bows and arrows, sword fights, jumping from trees, swinging on vines, fighting the evil prince John and more action than you could shake a spear or a lance at.

Just to refresh your memory, England had been taken over by the Normans and the Saxons, especially in the absence of King Richard the Lion Hearted, were being abused by the evil prince and the Sheriff of Nottingham. Those Saxons, who were flogged, had their eyes gouged out, women raped, their products taken with no pay, forbidden to hunt in Sherwood Forest, taxed to death, and all sorts of other atrocious acts, did not realize how widespread that treatment was until they attended their first mass meeting at Gallows Oaks with Robin.

Those hundred or so men compared notes and found that they were not alone in their predicament. They discovered that others had been flogged, killed, robbed, humiliated and the rest. They also discovered that while, individually, they were not enough to stand up to the Sheriff's men, if they stood together, as the men of Sherwood Forest, they could make the Sheriff and the Prince either stop what they were doing to the Saxons or the Saxons would stop them themselves.

I remember those scenes as though they were engraved in my memory. Perhaps it was the youngster in me but I could smell the campfire, the venison, and the hog. I could taste the wine. I could feel the pounding in my chest and even the flaring of my own nostrils. There were speeches, roars of laughter, shouting, clamoring, stomping, shouting, fainting spells. For a people who had been beaten into submission, it was as though a dam had burst and years of repressed emotions cascaded out like the roaring rumbling of a raging tidal wave. It could be contained.

Some of the most important lessons that I've ever learned I learned sitting there in the balcony of the Grand Theater of my hometown. How many of you also learned that a sustained, organized effort can topple even an evil prince? Did you not also see that revolution,



Professor Fitzgerald is director of ethnic studies at University of Nevada-Las Vegas

by Professor Roosevelt Fitzgerald

however small, long or localized, is rarely quiet and/or tidy? Sure you did. The more oppressed you've been the more clearly you saw and continue to see that.

Why do I write of such things? I'm going to blame it on George. GEORGE KNAPP. I read with great interest his article in the SUN on the 19th. It was all about the death of Charles Bush. Right off the top, the title of his piece caught my eye: "Courts, not howling mobs, deliver justice." This was followed by a subtitle: "Outrage over man's death seems hollow."

Before reading any further, I had to look away and reflect on what I had read up to that point. In both title and subtitle, he let us know the extent of his objectivity. In describing those of the community who are upset and disappointed, though not surprised, at the outcome of the coroner's jury, as a howling mob, is very revealing and disturbing. The subtitle compounded the problem by saying that the citizens' concern is insincere. Listen to other words and phrases used: bellowing, bantering, lynch mob mentality, hand-wringing, speech-making, and dramatic posturing and self-serving. Geez.

Of Rev. Jesse Scott he said: "But the simple fact remains that Jesse Scott wasn't in Charles Bush's apartment on the night that Bush died." Well, it's a good thing, Bush was there and look what happened. It could've been Rev. Scott, or you or me. Whoever was in that room was going to die. An amateur might kill someone accidentally. A pro knows when killing is going on. I teach. I know when learning is taking place and when it is not. Movies. Remember when David Niven said that "a gentleman never

accidentally insults anyone?" 'Nuf said.

Back to George. Perhaps he's forgotten that the Boston Massacre, one of the first steps leading up to the American Revolution was precipitated by what some refer to as a howling mob. Dickens Tells us about the howling mob of the French Revolution. Tolstoy does the same with the Russian. Revolts ain't pretty and no

one stands on ceremony. Etiquette has a role in society. I like good manners and all. Why I even read "Dear Abby" every day. I do not always find the letters interesting or her responses of value. However, from time to time, jackpot. Just the other day she wrote that "Quiet acceptance contributes to abuse." It's just too bad that when we think of abuse we limit ourselves to child, spouse, elderly, animal and sexual abuse. There is such a thing as racial abuse and we've been taking it and being quiet about it for a long time. George ought to know that. By the way, I call him George and not Mr. Knapp because he is among the many who like to call us by our first names. He calls Rev. Jackson, "Jesse." If nothing else, there is at

least one thing that William Lloyd Garrison, the abolitionist of the early 19th century, wrote that I like. Here it is. "I am aware that many object to the severity of my language, but is there not cause for severity? I will be as harsh as truth, and as uncompromising as justice. On this subject, I do not wish to think, or speak, or write with moderation. No! No! Tell a man whose house is on fire, to give a moderate alarm; tell him to moderately rescue his wife from the hands of the ravisher; tell the mother to gradually extricate her babe from the fire into which it has fallen; -- but urge me not to use moderation in a cause like the present. I am in earnest-- I will not equivocate--I will not excuse--I will not retreat a single inch--AND I WILL BE HEARD."

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