

MAKING AMERICA WHOLE; THE INTRODUCTION OF A FOUNDATIONAL AND ACTIONABLE COMMUNICATIVE PLAN TO BEGIN THE NATION'S UNIFICATION PROCESS

The What, The Who, The How, and The When

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The best times are becoming the worst times. We live in a world that has the potential to offer everyone who lives here a safe and decent way of life. The advances in technology have opened the door to quantum leaps forward in the fields of medicine, food production, and information dissemination. Even as we move from the grasp of a worldwide pandemic that could have had a crippling effect on the nation, there is still an abundance of resources, entertainment vehicles, social outlets, and employment opportunities.

In comparison to so many underdeveloped nations, the United States still has the potential to provide its citizens with everything we need to be happy, content, and productive. So, why do we see so much discontent and anger in a nation where we should be grateful for all we have?

Without going into a long dissertation about what is missing in our nation, suffice it to say that the division we are experiencing is reaching epidemic levels. As I am writing this article, I received word of two more mass-killings. We cannot look at the anger and violence as some type of temporary situation in our nation that will eventually dissipate, and we will return to normal. It is time to stop tearing at each other. We need to devise and implement an actionable plan to unify this nation, and we need to begin that now. We need to understand that before we can begin making any changes, we need to learn how to communicate with each other in an environment that is warm and safe. We need to be considerate of other people's opinions, and stop considering opposing views as being expressed by people who are our enemies. Our ability to work together in a unified fashion rests on our willingness to understand the fundamentals of sound communication, and to use them to address the issues which we face now, and in the future. Nothing we do will improve until this happens.

The Goals Of The Program

The goals of the plan are to introduce a communication system that can:

- Enhance the presentation of positive, factual, and accurate information, both for individual understanding, and on the national level.
- Help to redefine the way people communicate with each other. This will allow for the presentation of information in a warm, safe, and productive environment.
- Help foster the trust that is necessary to promote the willingness to listen to other points of view, and to discuss information honestly, and respectfully.
- Further develop the communication process into a sustainable, long-term communication program capable of uniting the diverse needs and ideologies of an ever-changing and complex social climate.
- Deliver a continuous educational environment designed to maintain the advances in interpersonal and national communicative unity.

The Plan: What

In any plan designed to do anything, it is always the fundamentals that drive the plan to a successful conclusion. The “What” of our plan is communication. To the point, we must become efficient communicators. We have become a nation hell-bent on having our own positions heard, and acted upon. We view anything and anyone oppositional to our plan as a threat, and that is at the heart of the division. If we are going to make this nation whole, we must:

1. Understand that we, as individuals, can only be in possession of enough information to be part of a greater whole. We never, as individuals, possess enough information to understand the bigger picture. We need the information others can provide, even if it does not support our position.
2. Present our information, but be willing to understand that additional information should be considered, and if possible, included into the plan.
3. Never make any communicative discourse a personal matter. Who delivers the information is only one part of the information process. The validity of the information is necessary to move forward. That can only be determined by warmly discussing the matter further.
4. Realize that party lines do not only apply to politics. We have a tendency to define who is a member of our personal affiliations, and who we can trust, even before they present their information. This must stop. Again, it is factual information that is important, not who delivers it.

5. Understand the difference between information and opinion. Opinions should be based on a thorough investigation of the information. All too often, it is the reverse that rules the discourse as we state our opinions and then futilely attempt to defend them with information that is faulty, incomplete, and emotionally charged. This also, must stop.
6. Social media, blogs, and other personal modes of expression have given way to the extended version of the *fifteen minutes of fame*. All too often, factual information is supplanted by meaningless and emotional retorts that have little to do with information, and more to do with attempts to attract attention to oneself, or to reinforce affiliations. Quality information has nothing to do with ego, and everything to do with facts. If we cannot substantiate it, it should not be expressed. At the very least, it should be expressed as an opinion only, with further investigation necessary.
7. We seem to live in a point counterpoint society. Someone presents information they have researched, and the immediate response seems to be how to discount it. Whereas the process does not necessitate immediate support, we should at least be willing to delve further into the point being expressed, with an honest dedication to expand that information, regardless of whether or not it supports our desires and opinions.
8. Emotions have little if any place in productive communication. The moment we become emotional; is the moment we begin to become less functional with respect to the communicative process. When this happens, we typically compromise the intellectual capacity to discuss the information intelligently. Instead of reacting, we need to ask questions, and help define the information we are receiving. It is always about intellect over emotion when it comes to communication.
9. Anger can become addictive. It infuses the brain with adrenaline, and what initially seems to be a heightened state of functioning. It can be a very difficult process to disconnect from. *We, as individuals, and as one people, must go into our communication settings with others peacefully, with respect, and as our most important goal, to be good communicators, collecting and defining pertinent information, while moving toward productive solutions.*
10. Efficient and respectful communication never begins with an agenda, or a plan to coerce another, or change their minds. Efficient communication has no agenda. It is a simple information exchange designed to enlighten each party, and in the end, to arrive at a solution, **together**.

The Plan: Who **

An endeavor of this magnitude will require sound leadership. Though information presents the fundamentals that will drive the program forward, the program can only be as efficient as those who will be delivering it to the people. In most leadership situations, either those people are elected, or we select people based upon either notoriety, some type of past performance, or their desire to lead.

Whereas those qualities are not without merit, it is more important that the people selected to lead the program, to be members of the initial *focus group* (to be renamed at a later date) are doing so for the right reasons, and do have the qualities that are necessary to initiate it, develop it, and deliver it. The goal is to change the way the nation communicates, which will lead to or more productive, respectful communication, and in the long run, a more unified approach to human interaction.

When we talk about a plan to bring the American people together, we are talking about communicative unity. By this I mean the presentation of information to the people by a group of qualified individuals. These individuals will be tasked with the responsibility of presenting information for discussion in a healthy and cohesive environment. Presently, Americans receive information about any topic from a variety of different sources. The subject matter is often presented without enough facts, and often with personal agendas. If the goal is national unity, then the information being presented must contain all the facts available, without agendas, shock value, or any form of coercion, and with no intent to mislead.

So, the selection of those individuals tasked with a responsibility of presenting such a vital communication program demands people who possess *honest communication skills, always directed at addressing the bigger picture, in a warm, safe, and productive environment, whose sole purpose is honest, and cohesive information dissemination.*

This group will operate without a leader. Leadership often is a directive enterprise, which sets the pace for the endeavor, and may influence the direction of the group. This focus group is not designed to lead the public in any direction, only to help enhance safe and warm communication, and help people learn to communicate with respect, dignity, and enhanced productivity. The individuals who will represent this group, will possess skills and personal qualities designed specifically for an enhanced understanding of information gathering and interpretation, and communication skills. Specifically, they will need to possess the following:

- They must possess emotional stability.
- They must love and respect all others, and they must treat them with dignity, honor, and respect.
- They must possess good analytic, conceptual, and deductive reasoning skills.
- They must have a dedicated and unconditional commitment to serve others without payback or notoriety of any kind.
- They must possess ability to learn and process information efficiently.
- They will need to question and explore topics in greater depth.
- They will have a need to bring enhanced understanding to the world.
- They must have the ability and the desire to relate a broad range of ideas and information.
- They will need foresight, and the ability to understand the bigger picture.
- They should possess an inborn sensitivity and awareness of life.
- They must be humble and willing to acquiesce to others' thoughts and ideals, when necessary.
- They must be willing to put the needs of the group, and the nation, above their own.
- They must understand that personal agendas have no place here, and biases need to be discarded.
- They must understand that they are not advocates for any particular social or political entity.
- They must work well as members of a group, and be willing to address the information others present seriously, and without criticism.

- They must be committed to arriving at conclusions as a group, and only following and efficient presentation and understanding of the information related to any issue. These conclusions relate only helping others communicate warmly, and more efficiently.
- They should be people who enthusiastically search for differences of opinion and new information, and are willing to incorporate both into their own intellectual framework, regardless of how they feel about that information.
- They should be willing to maximize the gifts of humility and altruism, always working toward the greater good, without drawing any attention to themselves.
- They should have a demonstrated track record of honesty, and a commitment to truth. They should demand both from themselves, and the other members of the focus group.
- Lastly, they should be loving people who put others in needs before their own, and are willing to sacrifice their time, and most importantly, their own opinions for the good of others.

Focus Group Selection Process

The most important part of the program is to efficiently select focus group members that can possess the aforementioned attributes. It will be important to shy away from personnel decisions based on prior humane works. The most efficient way to select the group members that will deliver the communicative exercises is by ensuring that members do possess the necessary skills and personal qualities to function in this capacity. The above list will serve as the initial selection guide.

A selection group will be necessary. The only prerequisites for inclusion in the selection group is the ability to prioritize the personal attributes and skills that are necessary for group members, and select people who possess them.

** As we proceed, it will become evident that professionals beyond the scope of the focus group will be necessary. Marketing and public relations, writers, IT professionals, and people with expertise in many other areas will be essential in delivering the program.

The Plan: How

It is important to keep in mind that the function of this group is not to weigh in on social issues, and other matters affecting the nation. It is only to teach others how to communicate, so we may become a nation which is more skillful, and willing to communicate more efficiently. This is the process that will be necessary for the nation to continue to address difficult issues, and work through them in a respectful and unified fashion. Though each member may have their own opinions about any relevant content, the presentation of the information must be unbiased so as to facilitate an efficient learning process.

With the members of the group selected, the process should commence with meetings to discuss how numbers 1 through 10 in the **What** section can be organized into a functional program. The list should be further defined, prioritized, and the methodology for delivery formulated. More steps may be added, if necessary. It is important to keep in mind that *this is an educational program designed to teach people how to communicate with warmth, and an enhanced intellectual capacity, in an environment that is safe and supportive, with the willingness to explore information honestly, and respectfully.* Learning to communicate in a warm safe and honest environment since the stage for the solutions that are necessary now, and will be necessary in the future.

The next step in the process is for the group to compile a list of the relevant topics that will be included as part of the educational program for the people of the nation. Examples include: warm communication, listening skills, reducing emotional reactions, communicating without agendas, making information more important than personal opinions, etc. Upon completion of this list, the group will endeavor to devise educational lectures, and other components of learning which will be used in the delivery process.

When this function is completed, the method of delivery to the people will need to be discussed. Some of the delivery methods, all designed to provide education with regard to a particular topic, may include:

- ✓ Classroom-like instructions delivered via social media, Zoom/Skype, and other internet platforms.
- ✓ Social media pages that are updated daily
- ✓ Regular televised meetings
- ✓ Regular news releases
- ✓ Coverage in magazines and other periodicals
- ✓ Videos that can exemplify how to use the skills that are being taught
- ✓ Videos, pamphlets, and other learning devices that may be incorporated into classroom instruction, beginning in the early years of the educational process, and continuing through university instruction.

It will be imperative that the group presents as warm, cohesive, and focused in their delivery of the educational process. Additionally, each member of the group will need to make their own personal commitment that in their public lives, they are not straying from the goals of the program. There is always a danger of emotional expression, and the presentation of ideas which may directly, or inadvertently polarize others. Group members will need to make a decision regarding whether their opinions are more important than delivering and maintaining a program with a goal of national unity. This is not a program without personal sacrifice.

The formulation and eventual delivery of such a large program will require funding. In order to ensure that the agendas of others does not find its way into the group, donations will be accepted, anonymously. These will be arranged through a third party, who has no affiliation with the group. Donations will not be solicited, rather, an open-ended general request for donations on a national level will be more appropriate. It's important to keep in mind that even though no unethical, coercive, or illegal behavior may occur, the appearance, or at the very least, that possibility, is unacceptable.

The Plan: When

The first order of business is to decide who will represent the *selection committee*. These individuals will be tasked with selecting individuals who meet the criterion set forth in the **Who** section. This step should commence as soon as possible. Following selection and acceptance by those members, the first organizational meeting should be scheduled immediately to begin to discuss how

the program will proceed. Delivery of the initial phases of program can occur within six months of the initial focus group selection process.

Closing Remarks

Consider the introduction of this plan to have two functions. First, it is an honest attempt to put forth the *beginnings of a plan that, with additional development, we can begin the communicative process necessary to help unify our nation*. It, however, is also your first test. It asks you to put quick opinions, emotional reactions, and that knee jerk reaction to say something cannot work on your intellectual backburner. Stretch past yourself on this one. Review it, and ask yourself how it might work, and what you can do to help ensure its success. Remember, it's not about you. It's about all of us. That's where unity, and the big picture live.

One last point: no plan or program is perfect. Neither is this one. As stated in the title, It presents nothing more than the introduction of a foundational and actionable communicative plan to begin the unification process. It represents nothing more than the first step of devising and implementing a communication system which can begin to unify a nation. A fundamental function of a unified society is to build upon the efforts of others, always instigating further positive thought and action in a dynamic society. Think about this plan with that in mind.

If after reading the plan, you feel it to be more important to criticize it than to attempt to understand, and then attempt to work with it, then, as a member of our society, it is incumbent upon you to introduce something better. As I've stated previously, it is easier to criticize and to divide. It always has been.

This nation was not built on can't. Its power rose from the willingness to work together, and become great. Before we become great, however, we must become whole.