

POLITICS AS USUAL: The Tyranny of the Perpetually Aggrieved

By Alison Collins-Mrakas

A friend was recently recounting to me a hilarious story about an office colleague that drives everyone bonkers.

If I was to describe the person (and I won't!) I think you would recognize her. She's the one person in the office who is so off-the-charts petty that every week there is a staff meeting about some new requirement especially designed to mollify the delicate flower that is Betty Sue.

While the story was funny not least of which because it wasn't my office thank goodness it does illustrate the sad state of affairs within which we all exist. The tyranny of the tiny minority of the ever angry.

We are a civilization awash in the pent up demands of the perpetually aggrieved who loudly demand recourse for the petty slights real or imagined that they feel they've endured.

Raise your hands if you have had to sit through a PTA meeting, a community group meeting, a Council meeting, a Board meeting, a staff meeting wherein someone sucks up all the oxygen in the room as they raise a stink about a minor usually non-existent issue?

There are rarely, if ever, any facts to back up their claim. But, that doesn't matter. Hysterical hyperbole is the hallmark of the false discourse of the perpetually aggrieved whose sense of entitlement knows no bounds.

We all roll our eyes and laugh resignedly to ourselves about the ridiculousness of the claims made by these folks, but we often acquiesce to their demands too at least tacitly by not stating the obvious: that they are unreasonable, irrational, or in some cases just plain nasty. We then accommodate or attempt to placate them just to make them be quiet. But that is a mistake in my humble opinion.

If it's a case that the squeaky wheel gets the oil, what does the whiny wheel get? Its own pony? Will that make it stop complaining? I don't think so. Because once you deal with this week's issue, a new, even more important issue will emerge next week. We will always have those among us whose fragile egos and easily wounded sense of pride emboldens their outsized sense of self-righteousness. That may make them angry, loud, and demanding but it doesn't mean we should pay them any heed.

Much like the toddler who is having a Rumpelstiltskin-like fit in the grocery store because you won't buy him a candy bar, the best approach to dealing with the perpetually aggrieved is to give them a time out. If you give them the candy bar this week, they're going to want two next week.

Do not lend credence to nonsensical claims by responding to the inane pronouncements of the self-important and self-entitled. It does a disservice to us all. To acknowledge is to legitimize. And that is not worthy of anyone's time.

We cannot let rational public discourse be hijacked by the wounded feelings of the gossamer-thin-skinned. I think we can all agree, we have more important things to do.

We have legitimate concerns in our communities, our schools, our workplaces that require our time and energy. We can't have it sapped by the draining experience of dealing with manufactured drama.