

POLITICS AS USUAL: Xenophobia

By Alison Collins-Mrakas

Xenophobia. ?An intense or irrational dislike or fear of people from other countries.?

Or, in the case of one presidential wannabe, a pathetic race-baiting practice of pandering to baser-instincts.

Judging by international reaction to recent statements by Presidential ?candidate? Donald Trump (even writing that sentence is ridiculous. Donald Trump. Presidential Candidate. Good Lord.), I believe that he has finally gone too far.

I think his antics ceased being funny a long time ago, but now his pronouncements have gone from comical to dangerous. First, it was the offensive statement that Mexicans are criminals and should be shipped back to where they belong. Now he's advocating shutting the borders to ALL Muslims: Refugees, immigrants, tourists, even Muslim American citizens.

If you are Muslim you can't get in to the United States. It is, quite simply, repellant.

What's worse than what he is saying is that I don't even believe he believes the statements he's making. I think he says them for shock value. For headline grabbing. And he doesn't give a rat's patootie the consequences. How better to ensure he remains front and centre in every bloody political discussion than to say something so outrageous as to force every respectable talking head on the planet to ?debate? what he means??

What's truly scary is his poll numbers go up ? up! ? every time he makes an incendiary statement. His appeal is unfathomable.

Yes, people are scared. I am scared. I had hoped to go to New York over the holidays. I admit I cancelled that plan after the massacre in Paris. Is that rational? Maybe. Maybe not. But it is symptomatic of a larger issue facing all democratic nations: what to do about terrorism. How can we protect ourselves without becoming racist bigots?

There is no denying that a certain portion ? a very small portion ? of people who call themselves Muslim espouse a radical belief system that is grossly at odds with the secular, democratic belief system of most ?western? countries. Their dangerous, apocalyptic ideology is a real and imminent threat to our way of life. I don't take issue with folks who point that out. It is true. It is a fact that they want to destroy us and our way of life as multiple terrorist attacks can well attest.

But I do take issue with the supposition that ALL Muslim people want to do harm to every western, every G20 nation, every non-Islamic state on the planet. It is offensive in the extreme to blame 1.5 billion people for the actions of a few thousand.

But we've done this before. Demonized the ?other? out of fear. Our Canadian government ? fearful of Chinese immigration in the late 1800s - issued a ?head tax? on every Chinese person that sought to enter Canada. Canada also interned thousands of Ukrainians following the First World War because they were classified as ?enemy aliens? within. FDR interned Japanese Americans after the bombing of Pearl Harbour. So did Canada. They also interned thousands of Italians and Germans during the same period, for the same reason. The fact that they had been here for decades, if not generations, made no difference.

These are shameful events from our history. We are supposed to learn from them, not repeat them.

We would do well to remember the words of Martin Niemoller:

First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out?

Because I was not a Socialist.

Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out?

Because I was not a Trade Unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and

I did not speak out?

Because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me?and there was no one left to speak for me