



On the Arena and Trench Warfare

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With Friday's swearing in of Donald Trump as the 45th President of the United States followed by the millions of people protesting that occurrence with marches across the U.S. and the world, I am reminded of Theodore Roosevelt's famous passage about the man in the arena. The last forty-eight hours have vividly illustrated the truth of that powerful statement.

For my friends on the Right, I hope you drank deeply in President Trump's inaugural address that skewered the world's Establishment and focused on the forgotten men and women on Main Street America. In the last three weeks, we've watched as the Right took control of more federal, state, and local offices than any time since the 1920s. As much as our opponents want to focus on President Trump's flaws, our victory in November was far broader and deeper than one man--don't forget that.

I also hope you reacted to yesterday's marches in the confident silence that comes with victory and the respect those marchers have rarely extended to you but which they nonetheless deserve for actively participating in our democracy. Though often far cruder than anything President Trump has said and certainly done, those marchers are exercising their First Amendment rights, which all of us hold dear and should celebrate. Imagine all of the women, minorities, and political opponents in places like Saudi Arabia, China, Russia, and North Korea who never get to march.

For my friends on the Left, I know yesterday was just the beginning of the beginning, as your anger and bitterness from defeat will take years to overcome. I do have to wonder how many people who attended a march failed to show up on November 8 and vote, especially all of those Hollywood and entertainment elite who seemed to dominate the stages and headlines. As a bit of PR advice, at your next gathering, I'd strongly suggest you ditch Madonna, Ashley Judd, and other glitterati and the violent elements who burn cars and smash store windows, all they do with their venom is further alienate you from Main Street Americans who you will need in 2020 to win.

As you exercise your right to oppose, I'd respectfully ask you to stop the immature and mean attacks on Melania and Baron Trump--they deserve the same "safe space" that other First Ladies and minor children of presidents have been given. Over the last eight years, I've watched with disgust as far-right crazies and racists have attacked Michelle Obama and gleefully invaded Malia's and Sasha's privacy (as their opposites did to the Bush girls). I shamed those people

when given the chance. I hope your political courage doesn't stop at opposing President Trump, but extends to shaming your allies who engage in such unnecessary attacks.

As I sat last night waiting to pick up the girls from a movie with their friends, I must admit the single thought about the last two days that I kept coming back to is the utter distance between the Right and the Left in America and what that means for the future of our country. I don't think I know a single person who attended a march. I don't believe any of my neighbors went either. Many of the marchers likely can say the same thing about not knowing anyone who voted for President Trump.

America has always had two political parties with odds and ends tucked elsewhere, but I'm not sure we've ever had two Americas that rarely interact with and often vilify each other. Beginning with the 1987 "borking" of Judge Robert Bork when President Ronald Reagan nominated him for the U.S. Supreme Court, it seems to me that with each passing year our politics has gotten courser and that we sort ourselves more and more into our partisan tribes at war. It doesn't just permeate the adult world, it seeps into our schools, as I hear every day from my kids the latest verbal tirades from the lunch tables and classrooms, including twelve-year-olds being called racists simply because they supported President Trump.

From the Right's constant attack on the Clintons to the Left's relentless assault on President George W. Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney to the Right's ceaseless bombardment of President Barack Obama to the Left's first battle against President Trump, this trench warfare is leading us down a path with no winners. When will we have our "Christmas Truce" like the soldiers in World War I had in 1914 when they came out of their trenches, joined arms, and sang songs about what they all shared in common? Their fight lasted another three years leaving a desolate landscape and millions dead.

How much longer will our civic war go on? Rome fell because it rotted from within making it an easy prey for the barbarian tribes from the east. Is that the fate of America? For my children and their progeny, I hope not.