

CRIBB<S>NOTE

Sometimes it's hard to make sense of things that simply don't make sense. A few years ago, my wife, Kana, and I used to have long discussions about human behavior and events that seemed to have no basis in rational reality. Kana is a very loving person who seeks to find good in everything and everybody. When people acted badly, she tried to look for something that caused them to go astray.

On the other hand, I took a more clinical approach to the situation. Maybe, that's "cynical" rather than clinical. Too many years as a news reporter perhaps caused me to see things as they appeared. I was less apt to look behind the scenes for clues into why a person did something really out of line. You can imagine how some of our conversations went:

Kana: "There's a reason why the person did....."

Art: "He did it because he wanted to...."

Kana: "But, there must have been some rational"

Art: "You can't make sense out of a senseless situation..."

We would go on trying to see each other's point of view until we were more apart than when the conversation began. Over the years we have come to appreciate our very different and separate perspectives about stuff that happens.

This week I found myself again at a loss trying to make sense of the lies told to the American people by the President. An opportunity has been extended to re-evaluate our nation's relationship with the government and people of Iran. Instead of accepting an olive branch, the President insisted on perpetuating scandals. Even the international community says this is a moment to bring nations closer together. But, here in the United States, we are encouraged to be more fearful and observe the Iranians as suspicious foes. It just doesn't make sense. Worse, it is extremely dangerous. I wish I had the insight, patience, and ability of Kana to expect and explore a rational possibility behind what appears to be irrational behavior.

Even as new reports are released about the errors of the recent past that led us to war against the people of Iraq (so far, we have not offered any apology or sought to reverse our course of flawed actions), there is a stubborn determination to press on in a direction that puts our future at great risk. Blind ambition and an apparent refusal to break with the past may cause us to suffer great shame and embarrassment. Our reputation and credibility are so severely damaged; we are losing any hope of being a mediating presence in the world.

These are terrible days when wars on multiple fronts rage and diplomatic solutions have taken a back seat. These are times when many of us do not feel the direct impact of our policies on other nations. We do not realize the warnings of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. 40 years ago ring very true for us today. To paraphrase him, Dr. King would say to us, "The bombs that are dropped in Iraq and Afghanistan are exploding on the streets of America."

As we anticipate the celebration of Christ's birth, we must take note of what is happening in our name in our time. It is wrong. It is sinful. It is up to us to turn our country on a new course that honors human life and respects the laws of this nation and the international community. We have lost our way. We are being led without a compass by a leader who has no compassion.

We must dare to hope for change. Mahatmas Gandhi encouraged his followers to "be the change you wish to see in the world." This is our charge right now. A change is needed and we must be what we hope for the world. We can begin with conversations about peace, justice, and good behavior. We can assess our resources and determine how to pull together to make the changes these times require. I believe we can do this with God's grace. Will you dare to hope?