

WILL OUR CULTURE WAR BECOME A CIVIL WAR?

On October 23, the Georgetown Institute of Politics and Public Service Battleground Civility Poll revealed that two-thirds of Americans believe the U.S. is on the edge of civil war. This was true across the board: sex, age, race, geography, ideology—it did not matter. But why has our culture become so uncivil that it engulfs our national political discourse?

The social fabric began to tear in the 1960s, the decade that celebrated radical individualism. In the 1970s, Christopher Lasch, a man of the left, recounted our maladies in his book, *The Culture of Narcissism*. There are many reasons why we have become more coarse, more self-absorbed, and more uncivil. Those who craft our culture, especially the pop culture, have played a major role.

Music, dance, theater, art, TV, movies—as well as dress, language, manners, and etiquette—have all gone south. We are now at street level.

It is so ironic to note that now, after trashing civility for a half century, our cultural elites are horrified by the outcome. What else would they expect? Yes, our president is crude. So are his enemies. Big surprise. Having nurtured incivility for decades, the harvest is now upon us.

The *New York Times* is constantly decrying the incivility that marks the nation's capital. Yet it calls for more incivility. For example, there is a column in the October 29 edition of the *Times* by Jennifer Weiner cheering the incivility that greeted Trump at a recent World Series game. "If booing is incivility," she says, "bring it on."

Weiner blames Republicans and conservatives for the problem. They need to be more like her side. "For them, cruelty is the point. For us, kindness matters. When they go low, we go high."

Was it "kindness" that *New York Times* columnist David Leonhardt was promoting when he recently called on Americans to "take to the streets" over Trump's policies? He used as a model the Women's Marches on Washington. Did he mean the 2017 one that was sponsored by anti-Catholic organizations? Or the

2019 one that was sponsored by anti-Semites?

Three days after Leonhardt's op-ed, his colleague, Michelle Goldberg, expressed her dismay at Americans for not "taking to the streets en masse." Her idea of "kindness" was evident when she was in college: she beckoned pro-abortion students to storm a pro-life exhibit and kick the crosses down. She screamed, "do your part and spit at [pro-lifers]. Kick them in the head."

Recently the *Washington Post* did a news story on left-wing activists and their ideological kin. These extremists predict more people will take to the streets of Washington, tying up traffic. Will they show their "kindness" by getting violent? You bet. Sociology professor Dana Fisher says, "the natural progression is to get more confrontational and, sometimes, to get more violent."

Antifa is a group of urban terrorists who wear masks while they assault innocent persons. The left loves them. In April, CNN's Chris Cuomo praised them for their "good cause" (he did not explain why anarchy is a "good cause"). In May, CNN did a show on Antifa that also heralded their "good cause." In June, journalist Andy Ngo was the recipient of Antifa's "kindness" when they beat him so mercilessly that they almost killed him. Incivility was not generated by conservatives in Hollywood or New York City. The left has worked hard to morally debase our society. Now that many who are not in their ranks have adopted their stylebook, if not their support for violence, it's a little too late to cry foul.