



The Power of Music & Entertainment to Transform Culture

No. 68. Battle Hymn of the Republic.

Mrs. JULIA WARD HOWE.

Air: "Glory, Hallelujah."

1. Mine eyes have seen the glo - ry of the com - ing
2. I have seen Him in the watch-fires of a hun - dred
3. He has sound - ed forth the trump - et that shall nev - er
4. In the beau - ty of the lil - ies, Christ was born a -
of the Lord; He is tram - pling out the vint - age where the
cir - cling camps; They have build - ed Him an al - tar in the
call re - treat; He is sift - ing out the hearts of men be -
cross the sea; With a glo - ry in His bos - om that trans -
grapes of wrath are tread - en, and His tate - ful light - ning
eve - ning dews and morn - ing dews, His right - eous sen - tence
fore His judg - ment, and He will mark His soul, to an - swer
fig - ures you and me. As He died to make men ho - ly,
of His ter - ri - ble swift sword, His truth is march - ing on,
by the dim and far - ing lamps, His truth is march - ing on,
Him! be ju - bi - lant, my feet! Our God is march - ing on,
let us die to make men free: While God is march - ing on,
Glo - ry, glo - ry hal - le - lu - jah! Glo - ry, glo - ry hal - le - lu - jah!

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Writers



Kelly John Walker

As Editor-in-Chief, Kelly brings over two decades of professional experience to lead the FreedomTalk.



Madame Publius

Nom de plume of a regular contributor with excellent insights into our Founding Principles.



By Gregory Lyakhov

Gregory is one of the youngest nationally syndicated columnists in the US, covering politics, education, and public policy.



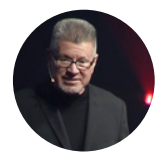
Chloe Castillo

Chloe is a classically trained pianist, media host, and founder of Make Music Right, dedicated to restoring a music culture that promotes artistic excellence and traditional values.



Geno Young

Geno is a 29-year-old Black conservative author from Chicago's South Side and former congressional candidate. Author of *Sex, Drugs, And Illiteracy: The Death of Education In America*, he uses firsthand experience to expose failures in education and advocate for greater accountability in America's classrooms.



Dr. Robert Renteria

Robert Renteria is an internationally recognized author, U.S. Army veteran, and civic leader whose work inspires youth through education, leadership, and overcoming adversity.



Sheriff Mark Lamb

Mark Lamb is a law enforcement leader, author, and constitutional conservative known as "America's Sheriff," recognized nationally for his advocacy on border security, public safety, and constitutional principles.




Alden Sykora

Alden Sykora is a Catholic conservative writer and commentator from Long Island whose early interest in politics led her into advocacy, public discourse, and media. She is entering Hillsdale College as part of the Class of 2030.

Patrons

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A Psalm of Life



By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

What The Heart Of The Young Man Said To The Psalmist.

**Tell me not, in mournful numbers,
Life is but an empty dream!
For the soul is dead that slumbers,
And things are not what they seem.**

**Life is real! Life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal;
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul.**

**Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,
Is our destined end or way;
But to act, that each to-morrow
Find us farther than to-day.**

**Art is long, and Time is fleeting,
And our hearts, though stout and brave,
Still, like muffled drums, are beating
Funeral marches to the grave.**

**In the world's broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of Life,
Be not like dumb, driven cattle!
Be a hero in the strife!**

**Trust no Future, howe'er pleasant!
Let the dead Past bury its dead!
Act,— act in the living Present!
Heart within, and God o'erhead!**

**Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time;**

**Footprints, that perhaps another,
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing, shall take heart again.**

**Let us, then, be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labor and to wait.**

“Without Music, Life is a Mistake”

By Kelly John Walker

The Sublime: A quality of greatness, beauty, or power so overwhelming that it inspires awe, wonder, reverence, even fear.



Music and the arts have played a key role in human culture since prehistoric times. One of the oldest known examples is the Divje Babe Flute, discovered in Slovenia and dated to roughly 43,000–60,000 years ago, made from a cave bear femur with carefully spaced holes. Bird bone flutes found in the Hohle Fels Cave in Germany are about 35,000–40,000 years old. Cave paintings and petroglyphs tell stories through the media of art.

But why has humanity bothered to make music, to create plays and literature, to produce works of art—all of which seem luxuries, rather than necessities in the struggle for survival? For most of human history, just staying alive required most of one’s time be spent in hand-to-mouth hard labor. “Life,” as Sophie Scholl wrote, “is always on the edge of death.” Or, as Westley told Princess Buttercup in *The Princess Bride*, “Life is pain.”

I believe it is because humans are made in the image of God, imbued with a yearning for spiritual fulfillment that transcends the monotony of day-to-day life. Music, art, literature and entertainment are essential to the flourishing of the human spirit. In short, they make this life worth living.

“Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and life to everything,” Plato explained.

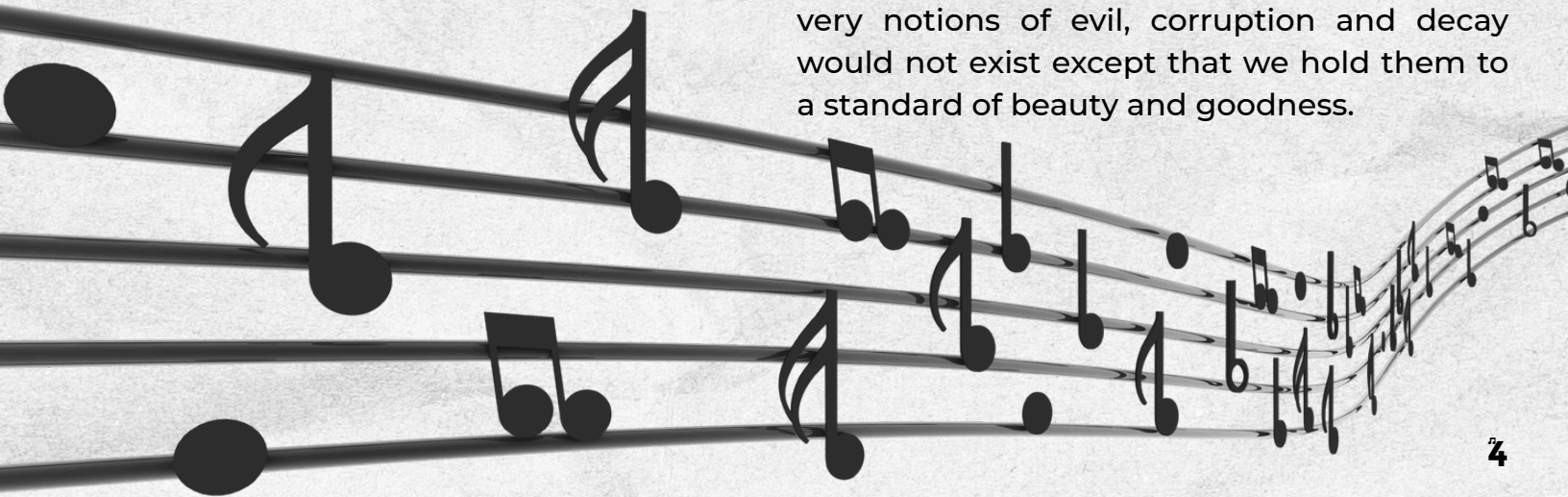
Thomas Hobbes in *Leviathan* (1651) wrote of human life with “no arts; no letters; no society; and—worst of all—continual fear, and danger of violent death” as “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.”

Even the dour nihilist philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche said that “Without music, life would be a mistake.”

And yet, life is (or can be) inexplicably beautiful and meaningful if one cultivates a rich inner spirit.

As Henry Wadsworth Longfellow asserts in *A Psalm of Life*, perhaps one of the most well-loved poems ever written, “*Tell me not in mournful numbers, Life is but an empty dream! For the soul is dead that slumbers, And things are not what they seem. Life is real! Life is earnest, and the grave is not its goal; Dust thou art, to dust returneth, Was not spoken of the soul.*”

Most of us have a deep sense that this world is a broken place—especially when we witness suffering and evil—yet we hold a longing for a perfect world. This desire is at the root of all religion and philosophy. The very notions of evil, corruption and decay would not exist except that we hold them to a standard of beauty and goodness.



The Numinous: A spiritual experience of awe, mystery, holiness, and the presence of something transcendent beyond oneself.

The Buried Life, by poet Matthew Arnold speaks eloquently for our desire for the sublime: *“There rises an unspeakable desire / After the knowledge of our buried life; A thirst to spend our fire and restless force In tracking out our true, original course; A longing to inquire Into the mystery of this heart which beats So wild, so deep in us—to know Whence our lives come and where they go.”*

Perhaps the greatest purpose of music, dance, poetry, art and theater is to provide an experience of the numinous by expressing the inexpressible, elevating our souls beyond the physical to the realm of spirit and soul.

As C.S. Lewis wrote, “We do not want merely to see beauty, though, God knows, even that is bounty enough. We want something else which can hardly be put into words—to be united with the beauty we see—to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it.”

That is why some songs are not music, some paintings or sculpture are not art, and so on. Songs that celebrate base behavior lead the soul away from the sublime and the beautiful—just the noise made by darkness; art or storytelling that is crass, irreverent, or chaotic is the antithesis of the numinous—a corruption of nature’s beauty.

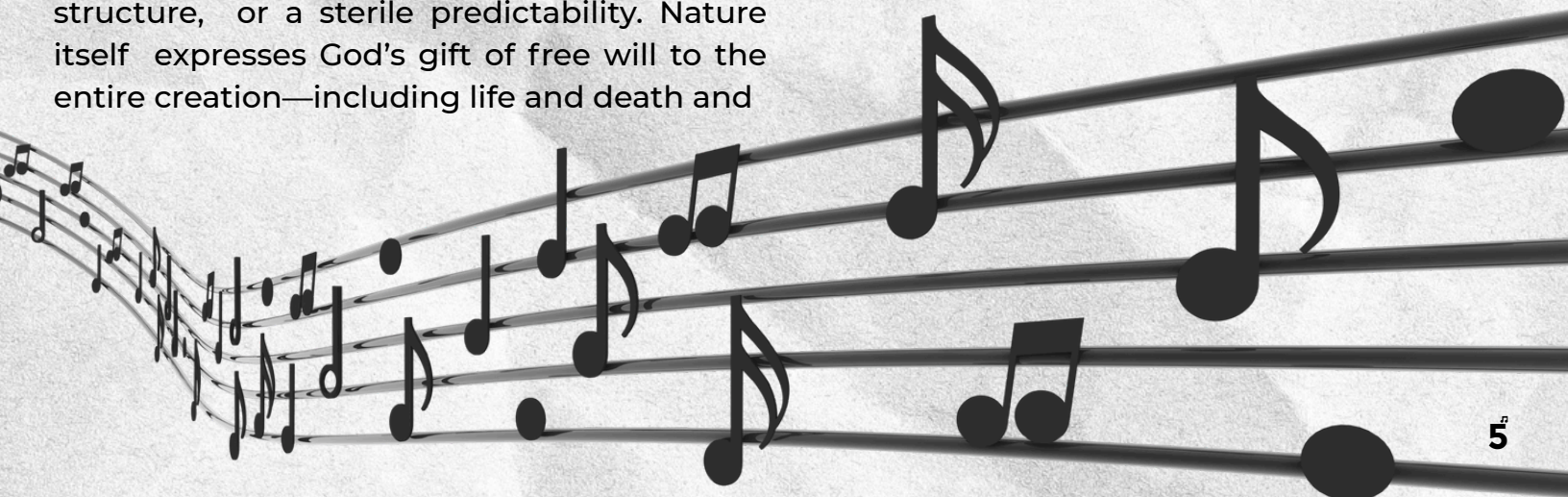
Notice that I do not speak of order, structure, or a sterile predictability. Nature itself expresses God’s gift of free will to the entire creation—including life and death and

the wildness of “nature, red in tooth and claw”—and the result is beautiful, unfettered and free unlike the ordered sterility of an English garden. Nature, taken as a whole, is harmonious, indescribably complex and awe-inspiring.

Nor do I advocate a denial of life’s shadowed side of existence. Some of the greatest works of music, poetry and art express pain, loss, sadness, melancholy. There can be beauty, purpose and meaning in suffering and death, else they would not be part of the human experience.

James Kaywaykla, *Recollections of a Warm Springs Apache*, shared this wisdom: “Grandfather impressed upon me that every struggle, whether won or lost, strengthens us for the next to come. It is not good for people to have an easy life. They become weak and inefficient when they cease to struggle.”

Paul of Tarsis shared this wisdom some 2,000 years ago, and it’s a good gauge of what we should be putting into our souls if we desire wholeness: “whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.”



What a Generation Listens to Eventually Shapes What It Becomes

By Gregory Lyakhov



Perhaps the most influential Christian writer of the 20th century, C.S. Lewis once wrote, “If a thing is free to be good, it is also free to be bad.” Lewis’s words apply to almost every form of influence, but they are especially relevant to music. Music can strengthen culture, inspire discipline, deepen faith, and encourage moral reflection. Music can also normalize destruction when the most repeated messages teach young people to value impulse, materialism, drugs, violence, and public attention.

Rap occupies a different position in youth culture than most genres before it. Rap shapes everything from language to the standards by which many young people measure status. None of that means every rap song is harmful. The genre has produced serious artists whose songs tell meaningful stories and offer legitimate cultural expression. But thoughtful rap does not erase the content that dominates mainstream exposure.

The issue is not what rap can become at its best, but what young listeners hear most often.

Mentions of alcohol appear in about 13% of country songs and roughly 10% of alternative rock songs. Broader hip-hop averages around 12%, while heavy metal sits near 4%. Rap, by contrast, approaches 47%.

Nearly two-thirds of rap songs include drug mentions, compared with roughly 10% across other genres. A young person who primarily listens to rap is exposed to drugs

and alcohol at a much higher rate than a listener who consumes almost any other form of music.

Earlier generations had to seek music through records, radio, concerts, or television. Today, music follows the listener everywhere. It is on phones, in cars, in gyms, on social media, and in the background of ordinary daily life. Exposure is no longer limited to intentional listening. A person does not need to carefully choose a song to absorb its message because algorithms, playlists, short-form videos, and public spaces repeatedly repeat the same cultural signals.

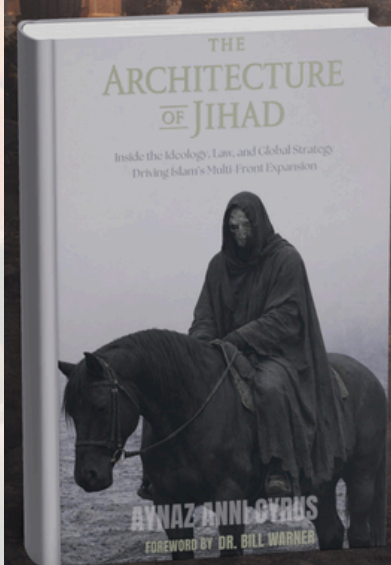
Repetition eventually creates normalization. When the same themes appear constantly, they stop sounding extreme and become part of the expected atmosphere of youth culture. A teenager does not need to consciously adopt every lyric to be influenced by the environment those lyrics create. Over time, language, priorities, and behavior begin to reflect the messages that are heard most often.

Who we become is shaped by the people who influence us and the world we grow up in. When that influence comes from rap, the results should come as no surprise.

Among my generation, the effects are visible in speech, style, and priorities. Money, visibility, and sexual access are often treated as markers of achievement, while discipline, family formation, stability, and long-term purpose receive far less cultural honor.



EVERY TIME YOU CHOOSE
COMFORT OVER TRUTH,
YOU MOVE THE LINE
CLOSER TO YOUR
OWN DOOR.

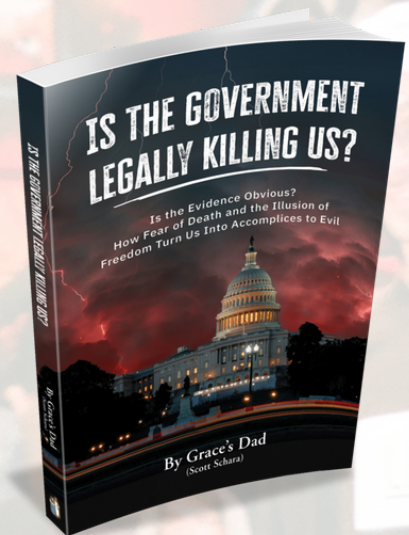


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Earlier rebellious music often challenged institutions through ideas. During the Vietnam era, musicians addressed war, government policy, and social conditions, prompting listeners to reflect on political judgment and moral choices. Today's "rebellious" music often takes a different form. Rather than challenging evil, much of it teaches listeners to romanticize it.

Rap alone did not cause declining marriage rates, falling birth rates, or broader cultural instability. Culture is never shaped by a single force. But music remains one of the strongest forces acting on young people, and rap is among the most dominant forms in that environment.

If cultural outcomes matter, then the influences shaping those outcomes cannot be treated as harmless. Music is not neutral when it becomes the repeated soundtrack to a generation's values.



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Make Music Right

Music has always held immense power over the human heart and mind.

As Confucius observed “If one should desire to

know whether a kingdom is well governed, and if its morals are good or bad, the quality of its music will furnish the answer.” Today, that truth demands urgent attention. The mainstream music industry has been weaponized against American families, youth, and the foundations of a free society. What we listen to shapes us far more deeply than most are willing to admit.

Across the nation, a dominant soundtrack glorifies senseless gang violence, reduces women and relationships to crude transactions, celebrates broken homes, promotes racial grievance and class hatred, mocks faith and patriotism, and normalizes hedonism, victimhood, and woke ideology. This is not harmless entertainment. It is cultural subversion that influences values, behaviors, and ultimately the character of the next generation.

This is not a call for censorship or government intervention. The First Amendment must be fiercely defended, including the right of artists to create and speak freely. The solution lies instead in cultural awakening and personal responsibility. Parents, families, and creators must decide for themselves what enters their homes and hearts, while actively supporting and building superior alternatives. The stakes are high. As John Adams warned, “Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people.

It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”

A citizenry steeped in moral relativism, hedonism, and godlessness through constant musical exposure will lack the character, discernment, and love of liberty needed to sustain a free republic. They will eventually vote for policies that erode their own freedoms.

Former KGB propaganda operative Yuri Bezmenov described this exact strategy: demoralization through culture, with entertainment—especially music—serving as one of its most potent tools. The industry floods airwaves and playlists with content that degrades rather than elevates. It operates as a Trojan horse, bypassing reason through rhythm, repetition, and raw emotion. This infiltration is not accidental; it is by design.

Yet history shows music can also elevate civilizations. Love songs and ballads sustained soldiers in war. Classical masterpieces lifted the soul. Stirring anthems fueled revolution and renewal. The very power now turned against us can and must be reclaimed for restoration.

This urgent reality is exactly why I founded Make Music Right alongside my co-founder, America’s Tenor Christopher Macchio. Too many Americans remain unaware of how profoundly music affects the mind, emotions, and moral development — especially among children and teenagers. Most parents recognize the influence of screen time and social media, yet few fully grasp that the constant soundtrack in the background is shaping values, attitudes, and worldviews just as powerfully, if not more so.

Make Music Right exists to educate Americans on this hidden battle. We aim to shine a light on the cultural forces at work and empower families to make intentional choices. We believe music should uplift the spirit and strengthen character, not tear down the very principles that sustain a free and flourishing society.

The path forward is clear. Support artists who pursue truth and goodness. Teach children discernment. Fill homes with music that stirs the spirit rather than poisons it. Demand better—and create better.

A nation whose soundtrack glorifies violence, division, and godlessness cannot long remain strong, united, or free. The question before every American is this: Will we allow the soul of our nation to be hijacked by cultural subversion? Or will we reject the poison, rediscover ordered beauty, and soundtrack a true cultural renaissance?

Beauty, truth, and virtue still possess the power to renew what subversion has tried to destroy. It is time to rise up, reclaim the music, and reclaim the culture. The greatness of America's heritage, the depth of its faith, and the fire of its liberty await a new generation ready to sing them into the future.

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THE POWER OF MUSIC to Redeem American Culture



"Classically Chloe" Castillo



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Minnesota Leftists, Take Your Hands Off Prince's Legacy

By Geno Young

🔊 **“To whomever it may concern, U must come 2 your senses. There are NO KINGS on this earth...only PRINCES!” -Prince (1993)**

The quote above is how Prince opened every show of his “Act I” and “Act II” tours in 1993, before blasting off into exuberant performances of “My Name Is Prince.” The song, the opening track of his 1992 album *Love Symbol*, features bold and extremely boisterous lyrics about God, righteousness, and sin. Over the course of six and a half minutes, Prince created a dramatic retelling of Genesis 1 in which God created him on the seventh day after hearing him play the guitar. To the untrained ear, the song comes off as haughty, sacrilegious, and certainly not Christian. But upon closer listening, Prince offers a clear testimony as an artist who had reached the top of the world and quickly realized it was all fleeting, self-serving, and lacking in spiritual fulfillment. The song is a warning about indulgence, self-importance, and excess at the expense of one’s soul—a theme he carried throughout his work

following his 1988 spiritual awakening, *Lovesexy*, widely regarded as his unofficial gospel album.

In 1993, the “No Kings” line had one purpose: to remind the world that no man on this planet could ever claim the title of “king” on a planet ruled by a sovereign God.

Sadly, 33 years later, on the heels of the 10th anniversary of the icon’s untimely death, the once-iconic show opener became a rallying cry for pasty, purple-haired, leftist “No Kings” protesters in Minnesota who share none of Prince’s values or beliefs. They commandeered the phrase, and even Prince’s likeness, and plastered them across homemade signs used in “No Kings” protests throughout the Twin Cities and beyond.

But the question is, are they recreating perhaps the most mysterious and undefinable artist in music history in their own image? And thus, simplifying his genius



to serve a cynical political agenda. Let's separate fact from fiction. Yes, Prince's music featured some of the most erotic lyrics ever penned, and his fashion was extremely flamboyant. It can be argued that Prince embodied many of the characteristics that define the modern left. In his early days, honestly, throughout most of his career, he was sexually explicit, promiscuous, scantily clad, and at times haughty. Songs like, "Ronnie Talk To Russia," "Money Don't Matter 2 Night," and "Dear Mr. Man" speak about the early '80s nuclear crisis under Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush's economy, and so-called 'climate change' under George W. Bush.

At first glance, these records can be cherry-picked to claim Prince as a left-leaning individual. But on the contrary, some tracks align with tenets of conservatism such as spirituality ("God"—1984), moral discipline ("Days of Wild"—1994), faith ("The Cross"—1987), sexual restraint later in his life ("Future Baby Mama"—2007), skepticism of institutions ("Welcome 2 America"—2010), and an unabashed commitment to independent thought ("Uptown"—1980). At first glance, all of this leaves us with more questions than answers. Was this man simply a walking contradiction, or was he on a higher plane than all of us? Could it be that he possessed a semblance of nuance that is particularly dead today? And finally, can either political side truly claim him? Well, let's allow Prince to speak for himself.

In a 2008 interview with *The New Yorker*, Prince set the record straight. The artist said plainly, "You've got the Republicans, and basically, they want to live according to this...(Pointing to a Bible). But there's the problem of interpretation, and you've got some churches, some people, basically doing things and saying it comes from here, but it doesn't. And then on the opposite end of the spectrum you've got

blue, you've got the Democrats, and they're like, 'You can do whatever you want.' Gay marriage, whatever. But neither of them is right."

On the subject of biblical morality, Prince underwent a spiritual transformation in the late '90s and early 2000s. He removed most of his more explicit material onstage and stopped swearing completely.

When asked in a 2004 interview, he said, "[The Bible] helps you with every aspect of your life. Once you can clean out the cobwebs, so to speak, you can see everything more clearly." That statement alone is antithetical to everything that nine out of ten secular humanist "No Kings" leftists believe.

So that settles it. Sure, Prince rejected, in his view, inconsistent biblical interpretations on the right, but note that he explicitly named and rebuked two key positions widely embraced by the modern left. You cannot claim him, because he was not one of you.

Prince did not belong to a party. He did not operate within ideological boundaries. He challenged both sides when he felt they fell short, and he grounded his worldview not in politics, but in principle—faith, accountability, independence, and truth. So rather than trying to claim him, perhaps the better approach is to learn from him.

At a time when public discourse is defined by division, Prince represented something increasingly rare: a commitment to thinking for oneself, to holding beliefs to a higher standard, and to a vehement refusal of political tribalism. He embodied a form of cultural and moral independence that transcended slogans and resisted simplification.

Take your hands off Prince's legacy. The record industry couldn't put the Purple One into a box 30 years ago, and you certainly can't put him into one today.

If We Break Bread...

By Dr. Robert Renteria



Let me share my perspective and the viewpoints of various others on why we as Republicans are not resonating with the general public, or those with a different ethnicity which is a big reason we are losing our political races year after year after year.

I have lived in Illinois for over 35 years. Let me tell you that the Republican Party here, as well as several other states across America, has a terrible brand and what we must do in order to fix and heal this ugly self-inflicted wound.

I have a saying, "IF WE BREAK BREAD, WE GO RED!"

First of all, we must STOP saying that we are the party for, and of, the people, we are actually have the perception to some of being the party for, and of, the WHITE people. Yes, that's what I said and it's true, and as painful as it sounds we actually have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to turn things around.

Illinois and other states are looking for real leaders who do more than just talk the talk, but who can actually walk the walk and lead!

The Republican Party is not missional or relational, most all are not involved out side of their WHITE sandbox, which seems to be the ignorant comfort zone for some in the party. I have taken a very close and intimate look at the lack of being genuine and reciprocal with the minority communities, specifically over the past three years.

Here in Illinois the Republican candidates and those already in office have a stale ridiculous script that goes something like this. "I am a Christian conservative, married with children, I own my own business, and I am going to save Illinois. I am going to fight for you, can I count on your vote and can you make a donation to my campaign?"

The answer is NO! I have never seen you, I don't know you, my family does not know you, and nobody in my community has ever seen you before. We must water the flowers as they say, we are dying as a party and its all self-inflicted. We are not doing anything to nurture or foster the care and development of the voters in our communities. No holding hands, no flowers, no candy, no going to dinners or movies, why would anyone want to vote for you?

We have to go from making promises on what we are going to do on day one to actually doing the work and community service now, win, lose or draw.

The Republican Party must take the steps necessary to embrace and weave into the wonderful fabric of the Hispanic and Black American communities. We are hard working people, we love our kids and family, we pay taxes and we adore our GOD immensely. We are more conservative than most of the self-proclaimed Republican purists.

We as Republicans must do more than simply say that we love the tacos and that we love the margaritas. That's not enough, it's wrong, tacky and tasteless. If you/we are truly Christian conservatives we MUST take a chapter out of the good book and follow the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, and get out there and start loving on all of God's people.

We must look in the mirror and be honest with ourselves. I am talking about a big idea whose time have come. It's time to accept the fact that we are not an inclusive party, but rather an exclusive party. It's time to turn the page NOW and start a new chapter, and learn how to love one another because that's how the foundation of the world was built. No more only being country club and/or Champagne Republicans, but rather needing to be a Republican Party of all the people.

We must come together regardless of our ages, races, religions or economic backgrounds, but rather come together as one race, the human race, One Nation Under God.

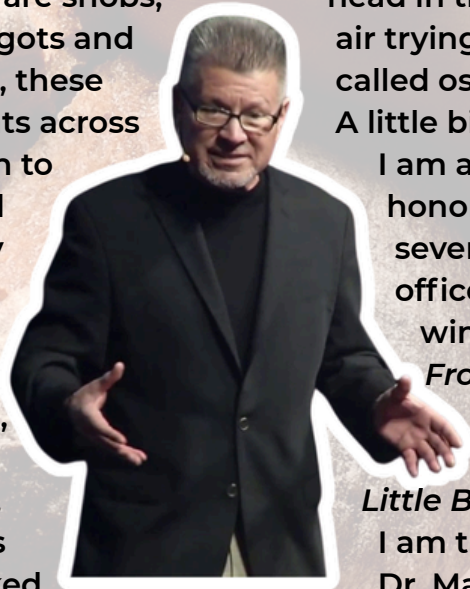
The Republican Party will not, I repeat WILL NOT, win any more local or statewide races in Illinois and various other states if we don't WAKE UP and embrace the fact that we are now the minority in many political districts

We must invest in building relationships and getting involved, being genuine and authentic, sincere, compassionate and truly caring about people. The Republican Party's current reputation unfortunately is that we are snobs, disingenuous, even having some bigots and racists. That is not coming from me, these are the opinions of multiple residents across the state and country. I have spoken to countless Republicans and I can tell you that I have been told personally all that we care about is money, votes and being seen.

I know several Republicans who walk in parades month after month, year after year.

That is not building a relationship, that's only being seen taking selfies and posting it on social media. I asked various Republicans in leadership roles as to why there are not more minorities in the Republican Party? The answers that I got was "we don't travel the same social circles."

If you are a Republican, and if you are tired of losing political races, I offer myself to you to have a very open and honest conversation, let's sit down and BREAK BREAD together. Let's chat about the various ways we can change the narrative about the Republican Party so we can actually build community, build relationships, be transparent, love our neighbors and be disciples of Christ.



I am a servant leader, NOT a professional politician. I care about people over politics. The public view and popular opinion about most politicians is that they are like dirty diapers, both sides are full of (poop) because they are disingenuous and that they lie. I challenge those of you who want to unite and build a Republican Party who are truly for, and of, the people, please reach out to me. I realize that some readers might find this conversation a little tough to swallow, but it's time we talk about the elephant in the room. For way too many years the Republican Party has had their head in the ground and their butts in the air trying to hide from this issue, which is called ostrich syndrome.

A little bit about Dr. Robert Renteria:

I am a U.S. Army airborne veteran who honorably served our country for over seven years as a non-commissioned officer. I am an international award-winning Latino author of the books *From the Barrio to the Board Room*, the graphic novel *Mi Barrio* and the activity coloring book, *Little Barrio*. (www.fromthebarrio.com).

I am the only Latino to ever win two Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. awards for excellence and Impactfulness In community service. I am both a community and civic leader who has a culturally relevant platform that currently reaches kids in approximately 25 countries around the world. My desire is that we can collaborate and help our Republican Party bring a ground game across America so that together we can lift our kids up so that they too can spread their wings and fly like the angels intended them to.

I sincerely welcome the opportunity to chat with those interested in building the bridges necessary to work with both our Hispanic, and Black American, communities.

Remember this, "IF WE BREAK BREAD, WE GO RED!"

Contact Dr. Renteria for speaking engagements, pricing and availability.

Email: robert@fromthebarrio.net Direct: 312-933-5619 Google: Robert Renteria

"TRY THAT IN A SMALL TOWN!"



The TRUTH behind
the Maury County
Courthouse Lynching

By Kelly John Walker



Freedom
Talk
Think Like a Patriot.

“Ella, I hate this! They are going to mob this boy they brought in...Go and tell the boy to pray, because they’re going to kill him.”

These chilling words take us back to 1927 in Columbia, Tennessee, at the Maury County Courthouse—the setting for the controversial 2023 video for Jason Aldean’s song “Try That in a Small Town.”

The backlash against Aldean’s video reignited another cultural collision between the race-obsessed Left and the free-speech-defending Right. Critics condemned the song as racist vigilantism because the video was filmed at the site where 18-year-old Henry Choate, a black teenager, was lynched by a mob in 1927.

Yet the true story behind Henry Choate’s murder tells a far more complicated story than the modern media narrative.

Without question the lynching was a heinous act that should horrify every decent person. Henry Choate’s murder was evil. But the historical record also reveals something often omitted today: many citizens of Maury County—black and white alike—tried to stop the mob.

Back in 1927, violent mob rule did indeed “try that in a small town,” and many ordinary people resisted it.

According to the *Tennessean*, 16-year-old Sarah Harlan reported that a black man attacked her while she waited for a school bus near Columbia, Tennessee. She said her attacker struck her, attempted to strangle her, and fled after she fought back and claimed her brother was nearby.

Henry Choate, who had reportedly just arrived from out of town to visit family, was soon arrested after authorities claimed he matched the description and had injuries consistent with the girl’s account. Yet Sarah Harlan could not positively identify him.

As rumors spread, a mob formed almost immediately.

Importantly, Sarah’s own mother pleaded with the crowd *not* to lynch Choate because her daughter had not confirmed he was the attacker. According to reports, she begged them to “spare the Negro for trial.”

Sheriff Luther Wiley attempted to hold the mob back, assuring them Choate would receive a trial. Meanwhile, Wiley's wife, terrified by the swelling crowd, hid the jail key and reportedly cried out:

"You all go away! I am not going to see an innocent boy hung!"

But the mob threatened to dynamite the jail if she refused to surrender the key.

Before Choate could even leave his cell, someone struck him in the head with a sledgehammer, killing him. His body was then dragged through the streets and hanged from the Maury County Courthouse.

Several Christian ministers and newspaper editor James Finney attempted to intervene but were repulsed by the mob. Finney later condemned the lynching in the newspaper, writing: "Executions by mobs are murder, nothing more and nothing less."

No one was ever convicted for Choate's murder.

There is no question that the lynching was tied to Southern Democrat Ku Klux Klan culture and racist terror that infected much of America during that era. The KKK used violence, intimidation, and mob tactics to suppress political opponents and maintain racial division. And recent allegations involving the Southern Poverty Law Center funding individuals connected to white supremacist groups, including the KKK, challenge the modern claim that the Democrat and Republican parties simply "switched places."

The historical record shows that mob violence was opposed by many ordinary citizens, black and white standing together in a populist movement at the time, including local officials, ministers, editors, and residents who had grown tired of democrat racial terrorism. The same courthouse that symbolizes racial hatred also stands as a reminder that good people stood together to protect one another. That distinction matters.

The larger point behind Aldean's song is not racial supremacy, but the rejection of mob rule, chaos, violence, and lawlessness. The song's defenders argue that it reflects the belief that communities have a duty to protect order, defend neighbors, and resist destructive chaos—whether that chaos comes from lynch mobs in 1927 or modern riots and political violence today.

Critics viewed Aldean's imagery through the lens of racial history. Supporters viewed it through the lens of community standards and resistance to violent disorder. Both reactions were shaped by the courthouse's tragic history.

But the full story of Henry Choate reminds us that history is rarely as simple as modern political narratives demand.

A violent mob murdered a young black man in Columbia, Tennessee. Yet many people in that same town fought to stop it. Some pleaded for restraint. Some tried to preserve due process. Some publicly condemned the killing afterward despite the danger of doing so.

Those people matter too.

Today, America continues to wrestle with the same underlying danger: mob mentality. Whether driven by racial hatred, political extremism, ideological hysteria, or manipulated outrage, mobs destroy truth, justice, and civilized order alike.

That is why the story behind the Maury County Courthouse still resonates nearly a century later.

The lesson of Henry Choate's death is not merely about race. It is about what happens when fear, fury, and collective hysteria overpower justice and human conscience.

And it is also about the people who, even in dangerous times, still tried to stand against the mob. Most people in this country get along in daily life; most Americans don't care that much about race. It is the echoes of post-civil-war hatred that continues to warp reality.

That's Entertainment!



Last year I wrote an article making the argument that “We’ve become so addicted to our entertainment that we’ve completely bought into the fable of Lilith. As such, Lilithian falsehoods have now spilled over into reality to the point where Western civilization has become nothing more than a hotbed of confusion and lies.”^[1] The fable of Lilith, I explained, basically teaches “that women are the same as men and vice versa.”^[2]

Those familiar with the scriptures understand that “God is not the author of confusion, but of peace.”^[3] The author of confusion is “Satan, which deceiveth the whole world”^[4] and he has been using entertainment to confuse us about the differences between men and women, strength and weakness, right and wrong, and morality and immorality. Too many of us hold these entertainment celebrities in such high esteem that it pushes the boundaries of idolatry.

We are so mesmerized by their status and their apparel that we’ve become blind to the rot metastasizing behind their facade. A recent example of this was revealed in the raid of five cruise ships in San Diego where 28 crew members were arrested in a US child exploitation sting.

Among those arrested were Disney Cruise Line workers.^[5] One commentator, noted that, although Disney issued a statement of zero tolerance, “the pattern here is impossible to ignore.”^[6]

Much of what goes on in Hollywood entertainment echoes the practices found in the ancient worship of Baal: Public sex acts and idol worship with the participants donning elaborate costumes. Without a doubt, these practices are mirrored in our Hollywood movies and celebrities.^[7]

Unfortunately, entertainment has expanded far outside the borders of Hollywood. We’ve grown accustomed to things like “pride parades,” “drag shows,” “drag queen story time” and so forth. One of the more disturbing events for this entertainment genre is scheduled to take place next month. According to one writer, “In June 2026, a massive four-day festival called ‘Pride Land’ is scheduled to take place in the Judean Desert near the Dead Sea.”^[8]

The Jerusalem Post explains that, “Pride Land is not just another festival...it’s the biggest thing we’ve done here.”^[9] The festival “intends to transform the middle of the Judean Desert into a colorful pride city” complete with “hotels, beach complexes, parties, and a central performance arena all operating around the clock.”^[10] According to its organizers, the festival will also include “family-friendly areas with children’s activities.”^[11] What a relief, right? “Pride Land” will have family-friendly children’s activities all the while operating under the auspices of a new and improved Sodom and Gomorrah.

Whether intentional or not, the situs of “Pride Land” is the Dead Sea—the region where the biblical cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were completely destroyed by God.^[12] In a bit of an ironic twist, the promoters also say that “This is not just a pride event; it also aims to highlight the Dead Sea region as a permanent destination for LGBT tourists, emphasizing that Pride in Israel extends beyond the key hub of Tel Aviv.”^[13]

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Given the history of that region, one would expect that this kind of promotion is clearly tempting fate. Surely, even rational thinking, non-believers can recognize the recklessness of such promotions. Still, anything can be sold to the public as long as it's promoted as exciting, fun, and family friendly.

For what it's worth, my recommendation is, to anyone who still possesses a sense of morality, that it's time to ditch Lilith and Baal and pay more attention to our families. There are always plenty of things to do with them that don't require elaborate costuming and public sex acts, while broadcasting confusing messages to our children.

I myself prefer family game nights, hiking, cookouts, work parties—oh, and attending Church as well. To me, as MGM so famously put it: "That's Entertainment!"

Madame Publius

¹ Lilith.

² Id.

³ 1 Cor. 14:33

⁴ Rev. 12:9

⁵ <https://www.foxnews.com/us/disney-workers-busted-child-porn-sting-hauled-off-ships-deportation>

⁶ <https://x.com/i/status/2052434427762868528>

⁷ <https://churchandfamily.life.com/resources/60ca74f123fa965169a9c944>

⁸ <https://harbingersdaily.com/days-of-101-largest-ever-middle-east-pride-festival-to-be-held-in-the-same-location-as-sodom-and-gomorrah/>

⁹ <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-893319>

¹⁰ Id.

¹¹ Id.

¹² Gen. 19.

¹³ <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-893319>

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Sometimes You Eat the Bear, and Sometimes the Bear Eats You

Excerpt from Mark Lamb's book, *American Sheriff*

Reprinted from our [May, 2022 Issue](#)



Anny years ago, when I was a teenager working the summer in Panama, I was dealing with something that had not worked out in my favor, and my dad imparted one of his best gifts of knowledge to me. As I told him about how things weren't working out for me, he said with a sense of certainty that things would work out in the end, "You know, Mark, sometimes you eat the bear, and sometimes the bear eats you." He passed away years later from complications of diabetes, but that is one of the many gems of wisdom he imparted to me. My dad was a farm/dairy kid, and he had many funny and true sayings; this is one that really stuck with me and helped me get through many good times and tough times.

The truth of the matter is that there are those beautiful times in our life where it does seem like every putt drops: we get the job, the promotion, the hard work pays off, and we are really eating that bear. When we are blessed with these times, it's important to be grateful and appreciate the blessings. I remember a few years into my law enforcement career I was in one of those bear-eating times. I was on a good squad, getting plenty of overtime, the kids were doing well, we purchased a new house, and there were many more blessings. Be careful because when you are constantly eating the bear, it is easy to get fat and happy and content. As humans, we have an innate desire to keep hunting and pushing ourselves to be better.

Just as true as there are those good times where we are eating the bear, it is also true that there are the dark times, the times where things are not flowing, nothing is working, a black cloud seems to hang around, and you are definitely feeling like the one being eaten. I remember a few years ago watching the movie *The Revenant*. Great movie, by the way. The movie is based on the true-life events of the mountain man and trapper, Hugh Glass, played by the actor Leonardo DiCaprio. In the movie there is a graphic scene where Leonardo DiCaprio's character is being viciously attacked by a huge angry bear. His character can sense something is coming but just can't quite see it until it's too late. Before he knows it, the bear is on him and attacking him. It's honestly painful to watch. The sound of breaking bones, the screams of pain as the bear rips his back and body with its huge paws and claws as the bear tears him to shreds. Then the bear stops, sniffs him, licks him and walks away. It's a moment of relief. And then just when you think the attack is over, the bear comes charging back. Just before the bear reaches Leonardo DiCaprio, he manages to shoot the bear, only angering it more. The

bear goes back to thrashing, tossing, biting, crushing and ripping him to pieces in what seems like a very personal attack. In the end the bear appears to have taken the life out of the man, but in a twist of fate, the shot he was able to get off between the attacks and the defensive knife wounds he delivered during the attack enabled him to kill the bear. Both the bear and the man rolled down the side of the hill and came to rest at the bottom with the huge and heavy dead bear lying on the nearly dead man.

The title of this movie is spot-on, the definition of *The Revenant* is: one who has returned, as if from the dead.

This movie scene, as graphic as it was, has so many parallels to life. Sometimes we can sense those hard times or attacks coming, but all too often they sneak up on us. In the movie, even if he had seen the bear attack coming, would he have been able to stop it? Not likely. Life's "bear attacks" or challenges usually catch us off guard. Every now and then we see them coming, but we still can't stop them. We can make those bear attacks of life come more often with a series of bad decisions, but you can also do everything right and still suffer the bear attacks of life. Those bear attacks of life can be vicious and brutal and seem like they will never end. I can only imagine that in the real-life attack of Hugh Glass, the bear attack must have felt like an eternity. I speak as a survivor of many of life's "bear" attacks that, as bad as some of them are, I can assure you they won't last forever.

This scene also teaches us never to give up. Had Leonardo DiCaprio's character given up after the first attack, he may not have survived at all. Instead, he reached for his gun and prepared himself for a second attack. So, this time when the bear came back at him, he was ready. It still didn't save him from a second attack, but it did save his life. In life people will give up when they are attacked by life's many challenges, but the ones who truly succeed in life are the ones don't give up and who prepare themselves for the next attack. The more times we are attacked in life, the more we know that we can survive. We are stronger and more prepared for what life brings us the next time. You have to keep fighting during these attacks of life.

One thing that life's attacks are sure to bring are wounds and scars. Not to spoil the movie for you if you haven't seen it, but in the movie and in real life, Hugh Glass survives the awful bear attack. Barely holding on to life, men attended to him in the rough terrain for nearly five days before they finally decided he probably wasn't going to make it and their best chance of survival was to leave Hugh behind. Little did they know his fight for life was intense, and he did not die. Maybe it was driven by revenge on those

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Life does the same to us. Some of life's attacks are minor, and sometimes we feel like we barely survive, but what is for sure is those attacks leave scars. Whether physical or emotional, those scars are permanent and part of our lives. Over time some scars heal to where you can hardly see them, but the scars are still there. I run into people all the time who are ashamed of the scars that life has given them. I'm here to tell you that those scars are to be worn with honor! They are proof you survived the attack. I have a shirt that I love to wear from a local company here in Arizona. It's a black shirt with only one word in bold red writing: SCARS. The whole idea behind the shirt is to say that we all have them, and it's okay to display them and wear them proudly.

I have survived *all* of life's attacks. When I speak to different groups about life and overcoming challenges, I say to them, “The fact that you are here today says that you have a 100 percent survival rate of life's trials and attacks.” We are never the same, but if we have the right attitude, we are better because of those trials and attacks.

A few years before I became a police officer, I was going through one of those times where the bear eats you. I owned a paintball store and paintball field in Payson, Utah. For a year and a half, the business did pretty well, and

we were excited about the future. Slowly we started to see a decline in business and could see it was because of the rise in the online paintball business and sales. Then came the kiss of death for my little business, which came in the form of the opening of the Walmart in that little town of Payson. Overnight our sales dropped substantially, and we were no longer able to compete, forcing me to close the doors of my business. The perception I had of failing at my business put me in a major funk. My wife and I decided to make a move back to Arizona and start again. The bear of life had done a number on me. I was in my early thirties with five small children, ranging in age from seven years old to a recently born baby, and I felt like a complete failure. I was coming to terms with the fact that the only way out financially was to declare bankruptcy. We also had no money and no place to stay, so I asked my recently divorced mother if we could stay with her in her three-bedroom condo.

I came back first and started working on a new business with a cousin. It wasn't a good time, and I think I hit my all-time low one Sunday. I was feeling pretty sorry for myself about my recent failures and my inability to support my family. I was separated from my wife and kids, and it was taking its toll on me. On that Sunday morning I remember I had gotten ready for church and was downstairs waiting for my mom. When I went to sit down, I ripped my pants. It seemed like a small thing, but it was the straw that broke the camel's back. I told my mom to go to church without me, and I sat down in the chair and sulked. I had hit my all-time low. It was on that day that I realized it was my attitude that was compounding life's attack on me. I realized I needed to change my attitude, and I did it that day.

Immediately I started to see the circumstances in my life begin to change. I started to see the opportunities life was trying to give me. I started eating the bear. I could only eat one bite at a time, but I started eating. Instead of complaining about having my wife and my five kids in two of the three rooms of my mom's three-bedroom condo, I started counting my blessings for having a roof over my head and a chance to reduce our expenses while we recouped and built our lives and business. It's crazy because there were no major life-changing things that happened, I just changed my attitude and perception. I decided to not be a victim of life's attacks. It truly was a defining moment when I made a conscious decision not to let the attacks bring me down, but to use those attacks as fuel and proof that better times were coming.

I now know that sometimes life is good and sometimes it's hard, sometimes you eat the bear and sometimes the bear eats you. It's important that your mind is right so that you enjoy the good times in life and you weather the attacks. You must also know that when the bear is eating you, that's when you are truly being changed for the better. You just have to survive it and keep crawling and stumbling.

On my path to becoming sheriff and over the last several years as sheriff, I have been through a lot. I have been through some personal, family and work things that were major attacks and life experiences. The bear of life has definitely feasted on me. My wife and I have asked ourselves many times in the last few years, “Are we going survive this?” We've been through experiences that I wouldn't wish on my worst enemies. But guess what—I'm still here, so we have a 100 percent survival rate. We also have the SCARS to prove what we've been through and we wear them with honor.

These last few years have had us feasting on the bear of life too. We have met so many great people and have had some *amazing* experiences that most likely we would never have been able to experience. All of these experiences have allowed me to become a better sheriff with a clearer view and a better understanding of the crazy things that come along with this job.

Learning to surrender the outcome and understanding that there is a give and take, a yin and yang, a good and bad, an up and down, and ebb and flow to life will help you realize that it's all just experiences. The great poet Rudyard Kipling has a poem called "If", and in that poem he has a line where he says, "If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster and treat those two imposters just the same." This is truth! Life is full of triumph and disaster, and they are both imposters. You might be saying, "How can that be, Sheriff?" First off, neither triumph nor disaster are permanent. You can win today, but tomorrow is a new day. You can lose today, and tomorrow is a new day. Consistent triumph can make us complacent and soft. Consistent disaster can make us hungry and seek change. How many times have you heard an athlete or a fighter say they learned more from a loss? It's the truth, life's lessons can be found in triumph, but the truest and most life-changing lessons are in the disasters or the losses.

When I was running for sheriff the first time, I was a major underdog. People would say, "I can't believe you're running for sheriff", and I would say, "What's the worst that can happen? I win, right?" That is the truth. Triumph requires more and more. Some people think that once you make it to the top of the hill or when you achieve a major life goal, everything will be okay. I'm here to tell you that's not the case. You're only as good as your last win. You have to keep striving for new goals and pushing yourself higher. There are days when being the sheriff is hard, and I think of the saying that triumph is an imposter. I've also had some disasters that because I saw them as imposters, I was able to see the opportunity and turn them into good. I've also seen how quickly people will forget the good things you've accomplished and how quickly they forget the disastrous things that happen as well.

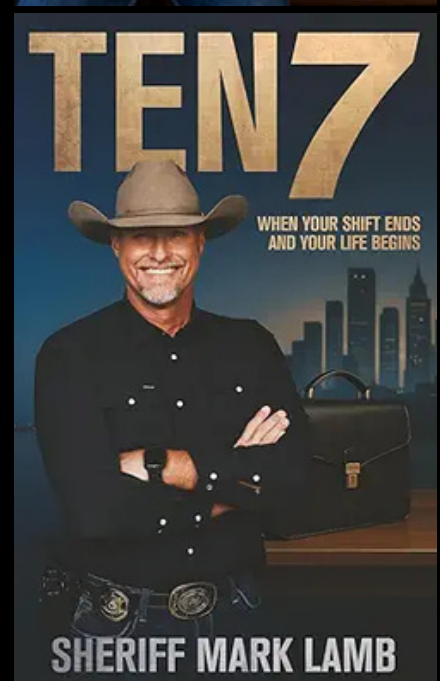
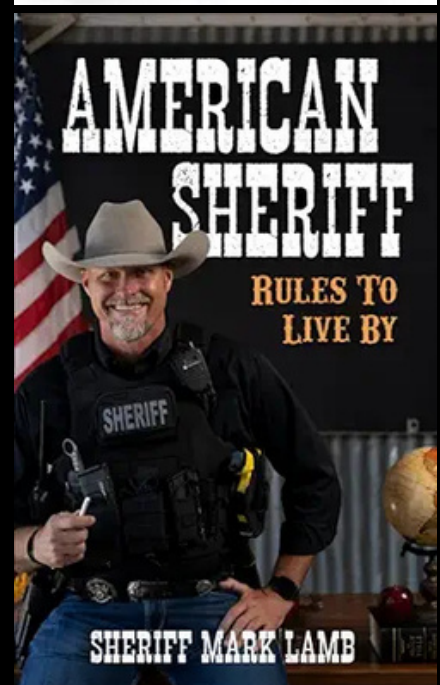
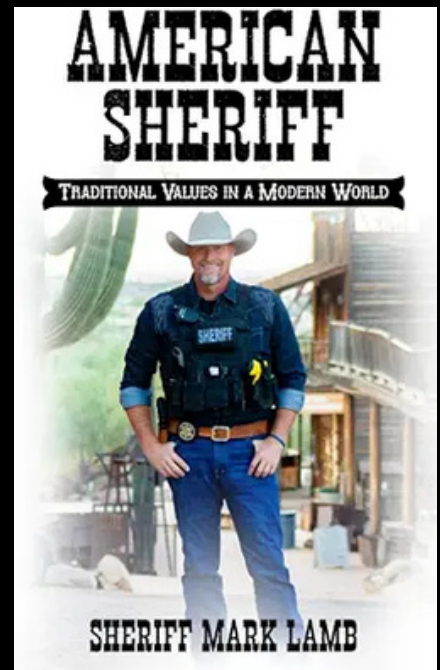
Just like Triumph and Disaster are both imposters, eating the bear and having the bear eat you are also imposters. This is life! It's all just experiences we learn from and we grow from.

So just like my dad told me over thirty years ago, I'm now telling you, and I hope it helps carry you through the good and bad times of life: "Sometimes you eat the bear, and sometimes the bear eats you."

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The Abhorrence of Abstraction



By Alden Sykora





I may be the only one who feels the need to “prepare” myself for a visit to New York City, at least in my definition of the word. I find the bustling streets exhilarating and the unpredictability of urban society fascinating, so I never prepare myself in terms of interpersonal interactions and observations. Though it undoubtedly lies at the intermediate level, my command of the subway and street systems is not what I bother to prepare myself for either. 1, 2, 3, Lexington, Park, Madison, even streets run east, odd streets run west, and no local in their right mind ever refers to the 1-line as the “red train.” Though on my most recent excursion, which centered around the Metropolitan Museum of Art, I found myself equipping my mind for some installations’ beauty, while girding my will for the filth of others. Specifically, the filth of the abstract art installation.

I have never liked abstract art. Even before I discovered my fascination for politics, people, and the life of the mind as a whole, the amalgamations that emerged from the mid-century movement always paled in comparison to the beauty I saw in other types of art and parts of society. I relentlessly tore into the works of Picasso, Pollock, and various other masters of amalgamation around those who would throw both calls of approval and cries of dissent my way. I did not care who heard my opinion, and this fact still remains.

I was never wrong in my declamations against abstract art. My main reason for disdaining it was simply that it was ugly, and as beings who are (ideally) capable of rational thought, that argument should be enough to convince others. We all come with the ability to gauge whether the strokes on a canvas are of the Beautiful or not. This is why we can all widely agree that the scent of a dandelion field is a far more enjoyable experience than the stench of decaying remains, and why we should instinctively smile at a painting of a vast seascape and scowl at a block of hairy Swiss cheese.

Yet the latter of the two scenarios is no longer true. Both the seascape and the taxidermied cheese have a place in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and because of this, both are presumably met with the same level of awe.

In a world free from the bonds of sin and death, my elementary reasoning would suffice. One is beautiful, and one is not, and since it is a work’s beauty that should qualify or disqualify it for a place in our society, one piece should make the cut, and the other should cease to enter the public eye. However, in order to make such sweeping judgments, society has convinced itself that our most fundamental instincts are not to be trusted.

If one, even against a crowd of billions, claims that a piece of art is beautiful, it must be so! We would not want to risk hurting feelings for the sake of upholding societal order. In order to make defensible decisions, we need standards and definitions, and cannot subject valuable expressions of human creativity and thought to the whims of our desires. This way of thinking has been both a symptom and a cause of a solemn fact:

the boundaries humans once built and the standards humans once observed have, over time, eroded. The intellect that created such a rigid system eventually succumbed to the passions it sought to guard against.

So what is beauty? The true answer to this question has never changed. Socrates wisely pointed out in *Phaedo*: “All beautiful things are beautiful by the Beautiful,” not by our fickle opinions. The “beauty” humans have allowed to pervade society is the beauty that supposedly exists in a hairy block of fake cheese or androgynous figures whose positions, intentions, and motivations are unclear.

This “beauty” turns metaphysical standards into social constructs, but real beauty is not a social construct. It is a transcendental value that humans attempt to imitate in our own creations. Beauty is God Himself, therefore beautiful art must only be art that glorifies God and honors His creation.

The first work of beautiful art, other than Creation itself, is Adam’s naming of the animals that God had brought to him. In Genesis 2, God’s invitation to Adam to name the animals is also God’s invitation to all of us to be swept away by the curious splendor of His creation and glorify what He has gifted us with.

Abstract art does the complete opposite. If a piece in this style does not directly attack, it at least dismisses the glory and necessity of absolutes and goodness in our world.

The duality of the sexes is blended, erased, or derided in Picasso’s abstract paintings that struggle to resemble men and women. Pollock’s Number paintings are void of visual order and hail skill over beauty. Diego Rivera’s cubist works ignore the nuances and simple pleasures of the natural landscape.

Abstract art characterizes our lack of gratitude for the world we live in, and it acts as a silent cry for help from our souls that naturally long to venerate the Creator of it all.

American author and journalist Tom Wolfe published the book *The Painted Word* in 1975. Though I have yet to fully immerse myself in its pages, one line from the prologue speaks especially to this issue: “These days, without a theory to go with it, I can’t see a painting.”

While I agree largely with Wolfe’s premises, I do not pledge full allegiance to his arguments, for I believe the perversion of abstract art lies more in its very nature than in hierarchical control, so I offer one small edit to his former statement:

“These days, without a good, true, and beautiful theory to go with it, I can’t see a painting.”

The issue lies not in the fact that an artist creates a painting with preexisting axioms, but that he paints it with the right axioms—axioms constructed not by art critics, but by the Ultimate Critic. This is what abstract art will always fall short of accomplishing, as such axioms are simply outside the art’s nature. I would change my mind if I ever encountered a beautiful piece of abstract art, but beauty is not abstract. I am afraid I must admit to total close-mindedness on this topic.



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