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## OPINION

**You Can Change Your Political Point of View**

by Jeff Davidson

I came into this world as a Democrat. My parents were Democrats, and so I became one, as well. I was quite young at the time of Kennedy's presidency, but I recall that I was "for" Kennedy over Nixon, although I had zero grasp of the issues. Likewise, I was "for" Johnson over Goldwater and "for" Humphrey over Nixon in 1968.

**THOUGHT CREEPS IN**

In 1972, I felt that the liberalism of McGovern was more like socialism and was too much for the country to bear, and so I was "for" Nixon. In 1976, I mistakenly believed the Carter had a better way than Washington insider-type politicians. It proved not to be the case, but who could know at the time?

As late as 1980, I still felt that Carter was a better choice over Reagan. In the years since, I've learned of the devastation that Carter caused in terms of financial markets, inflation, and foreign policy.

I'll spare you my voting record since then. My point is that one can change one's political views based on learning, experience, talking to others, and then forming one's own conclusions.

**DOGMATIC DULLARDS**

When I hear someone say that they are liberal, or conservative, I shudder. Liberal about all things, at all times? Conservative on every issue? To me, someone who identifies himself or herself as being on one side of the political spectrum or the other is not doing much deep thinking on individual issues.

As a registered independent, I have never identified closely with Democrats or Republicans. In recent years, while Republicans have let me down on numerous occasions, and many of their leaders seem to be weak-willed, I wince at what rank-and-file Democratic politicians believe, espouse, and do.

I have liberal friends in North Carolina, in my native state of Connecticut, and throughout the country. They are wonderful people, who, for some reason, seem to be swept up in a fury of shortsighted thinking. Yes, there are some positions Republicans take that seem to be out of line with reality. However, based on my personal study, Democratic platforms or policy increasingly are civilization destroying. Here are two of the endless current examples:

1) You cannot have unsecured borders and then offer enormous benefits to all who arrive while ignoring the rights and concerns of the nation's 324 million citizens.

2) The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office indicates that U.S. debt is irrevocably headed to 103 percent of gross domestic product. This is a level last endured 70 years ago, following World War II, and essentially represents a catastrophic fiscal crisis waiting to happen – you can only hold back the tidal wave for so long. When the dam breaks it will dramatically and highly adversely impact every man, woman, and child in America, and then instantaneously virtually everyone throughout the world.

**8,500 HOURS AND COUNTING**

My sister is a Northeast liberal, although happily she approaches issues on a one-by-one basis. On occasion, she accuses me of being far right, although I am squarely centrist. On one email exchange, she asked me if I "pay attention to the issues." I crafted a reply that I felt answered the question.

Because I am financially well-off, I've been able to devote 60 to 90 minutes daily to reading and studying politics, sociology, psychology, foreign relations, and world history. I have been to 65 countries including United Arab Emirates, Oman, India, and Venezuela, and frequently talk to foreigners here and abroad. I traveled in the Soviet Union, China, Poland, and East Germany when they were bastions of communism. I have been to third world nations and walked

neighborhoods most people would prefer to avoid.

As opposed to feelings and emotions, I prefer to find relevant, corroborated facts and figures. I also rely on first person observations, and the observations and experiences of others. I am willing to change my opinion if somebody presents a good case. At times, I have made 180-degree shifts as situations emerged and new facts became available.

Over the span of the last 18 years, the accumulated time I have devoted – more than 8500 hours – would make me a full professor at any major university were I to apply myself in such a manner, and with a lot less bias than many of today's professors. I can think of numerous political talk hosts who would never have me (a mere layperson) as a guest if they knew how accurately and adroitly I could vanquish their suppositions.

**GREATER OBJECTIVITY**

Actions do speak louder than words, so I strive to separate politicians and their personalities from their viewpoints and their actions. I avoid making ad hominem attacks where possible, relying instead on what a particular leader advocates, or has done, versus elements of his or her background, personality, or upbringing. I do not allow a politician's appearance to co-opt my assessment of his or her effectiveness.

As active citizens, each of us has the ability to be more objective than we've been in the past. Each of us has the ability to step beyond our upbringing and the early indoctrination that we didn't know was occurring, and come to conclusions, as adults, that we formulate based on the rational processes we can muster.

Each of us can step away from the dogma that pervades both the left and the right. Each of us can think in ways that represent something new for us.

Alas, often we don't do original thinking at all. Instead, we reassemble recurring thoughts that we've had for years or decades, give them a slight twist, and presume that we've done some in-depth or original thinking. In such cases, we have not.

An original thought is wonderful. The more original thoughts that we derive from observation, experience, learning, data, talking to others, and reading the opinions of learned others, the more rounded our views and our lives can be.

**ORIGINAL THINKING**

Liberal or conservative, Democrat, Republican, Independent, Libertarian, or Green, if you've read thus far, I applaud you. Most people likely quit a while ago.

For the sake of the United States, for our own well being, and for those who follow us, each of us needs to do more original thinking than we've likely done in a long time. Each of us needs to have the strength to change our point of view when matters behoove us to do so because of the new conclusions we've drawn.

Box: People tend to develop a "narrative" about how the world operates, and then fit, find, or contort the facts that support their narrative, rather being open to other possibilities that could prompt them to alter or possibly reject the existing narrative for a new one. The process is called selective attention, selective perception, and selective recall.

The new narrative might not be superior to the old one and could be just as limiting. The lesson for us all: don't fixate on any one narrative. Constantly evolve as to how you view and interpret the world.

*Jeff Davidson of Raleigh is a regular contributor to Chatham County Line. He is "The Work-Life Balance Expert®", the premier thought leader on work-life balance issues. Jeff is the author of 65 books, among them Breathing Space, Dial it Down, Live it Up, Simpler Living, 60 Second Innovator, and 60 Second Organizer. Visit www.BreathingSpace.com*



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