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OUR VIEW

# Response to tragedy

Tragedies are coming at us too fast to keep track.

Brussels. Paris. Ankara, twice. San Bernardino. Umpqua Community College. Newtown. Downtown Manhattan.

We all have a human response to such events: Anger. Fear. Sadness. Confusion. A steely resolve to not be intimidated by violence.

But even in times of tragedy, we slip too quickly into political pitfalls that divide us. It pigeonholes our thinking and keeps us from the well-rounded response required to confront a serious, complex problem.

There's nothing wrong with that kind of response.

After all, we feel what we feel, believe what we believe, and we see the world as we see the world. But it's disappointing that political differences impede so quickly on real human emotion and empathy, even before the smoke has cleared and blood has dried.

For this experiment, we'll use the catch-all phrases "liberal" and "conservative," although neither are perfect descriptors.

But take, for instance, the common response to a school shooting.

Liberals are more likely to respond with absolute disbelief that we live in a world where this kind of thing can happen. They want the president to sign a law the next day, instituting tighter gun control or increased mental health funding and facilities.

Conservatives, on the other hand, try to take a deep breath. They believe that laws are not going to stop every psychopath in this world. They understand the inherent inability to stop every bad deed and murderous thought. They blame the perpetrator first and foremost, but also point to underlying issues like a lack of mental health and the decline of societal mores. They certainly don't think gun laws will make any difference.

"Stuff happens," Jeb Bush said about the shooting at Umpqua Community College where nine people died. It was a heartless and insensitive answer, but it is a clear descriptor of one kind of response. Conservatives, in the face of a

tragedy of this kind, are resigned to evil in the world and reminded that it's up to them to defend themselves and their family.

But when the tragedy is international terrorism instead of the domestic kind, the script flips.

Conservatives are more likely to stare in disbelief and want quick action. They want drones in the sky. They want boots on the ground. They refuse to live in a world where someone can blow themselves up and kill innocent people and our government's response is not swift and powerful.

In this situation, liberals are more likely to take the deep breath.

They blame the murderous, hateful perpetrators most of all. But they see those people as the rare outlier, a subset in a world of mostly law-abiding, peaceful people.

They worry about prejudicial response against a race, a religion or a region. They also see a wide web of underlying issues at play: countries where

totalitarianism reigns and education is verboten, as well as a western culture more willing to bomb than build. They preach patience and peace, and try to rein in the kind of government-led warfare that they believe contributes to this hatred and enemy-making.

Both responses in both situations have value. So why can't we incorporate parts of each of them?

It's clear that evil does exist in the world, and combating it requires a multi-pronged approach. It's sad that in the wake of a massacre here in America we cannot even consider policy improvements. And it's just as sad that in the case of terrorism we cannot honestly confront the problem of Muslim extremism when that is the culprit.

These problems — violence and war and mental instability and a desire to destroy and earn celebrity and immortality — are complex and ingrained. In order to confront them, multiple avenues must be explored.

And multiple outlooks on the world can be beneficial, not detrimental, to creating solutions that make do make progress, however slight. It's easy to shrug our shoulders and say "stuff happens," but it does no good.

The response of liberals and conservatives is flipped if the tragedy is perpetrated by a lone gunman, or by a network of terrorists.



OTHER VIEWS

## Explaining Rubio's defeat

**M**IAAMI — One of Marco Rubio's informal circle of advisers was nervously looking at his iPhone early Tuesday evening at Rubio's "Florida primary night celebration" at Florida International University. "The exit polls look brutal," he told me.

He pointed to a question that asked Florida voters how they felt about the federal government — enthusiastic, satisfied, dissatisfied, or angry? Forty-five percent of the voters said they were dissatisfied, while another 40 percent said they were angry.

How could the sitting senator from Florida — the highest-ranking federal official in his state — survive at the polls when 85 percent of his voters are dissatisfied or angry with the federal government he represents?

He didn't. Donald Trump beat Rubio 41 to 34 among voters dissatisfied with the federal government and 58 to 17 among voters angry with the government. Rubio won 50 to 25 among those satisfied with the federal government, but that was only 11 percent of the electorate. (The 2 percent who said they were enthusiastic about the federal government was too small to divide between the candidates.)

Nevertheless, at 6 p.m., Team Rubio was still looking for a way to stay in the race. What if he lost by single digits, maybe 5 to 9 percentage points? If that happened, and John Kasich pulled out Ohio, then maybe Rubio could stay in as part of the general #NeverTrump effort.

After all, Rubio had been saying for a couple of days that he would go on to Utah Wednesday, win or lose. He would campaign in the next primary state, and then do some fundraising in California, and then on and on. Of course, he had to say that. But when the votes actually came in Tuesday night, the results were as brutal as the exit polls. Trump won with 45.8 percent to Rubio's 27.0 percent — almost exactly the margin the polls had predicted going into the primary.

A discussion was held. Rubio made the only decision he could, and by 8:15 p.m. he was at the podium, his family by his side, announcing that his campaign was over. "While it is not God's plan that I be president in 2016, or maybe ever," Rubio told a deeply disappointed crowd, "and while today my campaign is suspended, the fact that I've even come this far is evidence of how special America truly is, and all the reason more why we must do all we can to ensure that this nation remains a special place."

The Rubio campaign picked a small venue for such an important event. It was at the FIU Arena, a basketball facility that seats 5,000. But it was held in the rather narrow atrium outside the arena itself. The space couldn't accommodate a very large crowd, but the crowd wasn't very large. It was not, after all, an event for a general audience. John McCain used to joke that when his presidential



BYRON YORK  
Comment

campaign was on the skids, his audience dwindled to paid staff and blood relatives. The Rubio crowd wasn't that different.

Anybody there, including Rubio himself, might well have thought back to the sky-high hopes after his well-received campaign launch at Miami's Freedom Tower last April and ask: What happened?

But people weren't really in the mood for analysis. Several mentioned the brief phase of Rubio's campaign in which he turned into an insult comic targeting Trump. Everybody was disappointed in that. Or maybe it was the zillions of dollars in negative ads dropped on his head by his so-called friend Jeb Bush. But on a sad night, nobody wanted to dig too deeply.

Many were more likely to blame the voters — they're just too angry — than Rubio. Indeed, that might become the accepted pro-Rubio explanation of his loss; the country, in the middle of a temper tantrum, just wasn't in the mood for a fellow as sunny as Marco Rubio.

Certainly they didn't blame Rubio for his disastrous foray into comprehensive immigration reform. But the fact is, the Gang of Eight tarred nearly everything Rubio did afterward. First, much of the Republican base disapproved of the bill's basic provisions.

Second, Rubio's tortured efforts to distance himself from his own work looked like a massive flip-flop.

Third, many Republicans suspected Rubio of doing Democratic Sen. Chuck Schumer's bidding, which is about the worst thing that can happen to a GOP senator.

Fourth, Rubio's defense of the bill sometimes boiled down to accusing rival candidates of being as bad as he was, which wasn't much of a defense.

And fifth, on the issue front, especially on economic policy, some voters who were especially concerned about jobs saw Rubio as an advocate for bringing more foreign workers to the U.S. at the expense of Americans already here. It was the problem that kept on giving.

In the end, Rubio told the crowd that he lost because he ran a hopeful and optimistic campaign in a year in which angry, pessimistic voters just weren't interested in hope and optimism.

Rubio is 44 years old. In the past, the Republican Party has been kind to losing candidates who give running for president a second try. And Rubio has plenty of time to give it another go. As I was leaving the FIU Arena, a man I had briefly chatted with earlier tapped me on the arm. He motioned to the big Rubio campaign bus and said simply, "He'll be back."

Byron York is chief political correspondent for The Washington Examiner.

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Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board of Publisher Kathryn Brown, Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, and Opinion Page Editor Tim Trainor. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

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