

# The best is yet to come

There was a slight breeze as I walked down the ramp of the clubhouse — green fees paid, a few new tees in my pocket, and a scorecard in my hand. The red and white flag on the No. 9 green waved as if to say hello, and my eyes scanned the horizon hoping there were others taking advantage of the mild, spring morning.

As I sauntered toward the cart shed, I thought about the hundreds of times I had walked out of clubhouses during my life. I thought about golf shoes, putting greens, my favorite rain gear, and the smell of freshly mowed greens. Today, I was returning to something that had once defined me in hopes that it could find a place in my full and busy life once again.

The lock on the shed door popped open with the turn of the small key. I slid it off the metal latch and smiled to myself as I grabbed the handle. It was the kind of smile that appears when I'm not sure what lies ahead, but I'm brave enough to find out. It was the smile, I'm proud to say, that has appeared frequently over the past several months with a new job, a new focus, and new opportunities.

With a soft push, light filled the small, dark space and the top of my golf bag came into view. I hadn't touched my clubs for years and wasn't sure if I'd even remember how to hold onto them with the right amount of strength or confidence that once came without a second thought. Chuckling to myself, I thought about how

the confidence in one's ability to do something changes when they haven't put what they know into practice, or when circumstances and choices haven't allowed for that "thing" they once loved to be a part of their life. The spaces and places that had filled my days for nearly half my life were left behind years ago. Now I had found myself strapping my trusty blue bag filled with 12 of my favorite friends to the back of the golf cart, hoping they knew how excited I was to get them out of the dark and into the light.

The first tee was empty. I looked at the scorecard to check the yardage and was thankful for the long, straight hole in front of me. The tee markers pointed straight ahead, and the driver in my hand seemed to sigh with pleasure as my fingers wrapped around the grip. I pushed up on my toes, and then settled back into my heels as I took a few easy swings, feeling myself relax as the club head brushed softly across the grass in a back-and-forth motion. The fluid motion was still there, even without the practice, and as I kept my head still, staring down at the ball on the ground in front of me, I knew the few hours I had cut away for myself were going to be just what my clubs and I both needed.

An hour and a half later, the fairway of the ninth hole had three balls sitting in various places near the 150-yard marker. For as long as I could remember, my 5 iron had always been my "go-to" club at 150 yards out, and today was no different. The first shot

came up just a bit short, but would lend itself to a short chip and one putt. The second shot was off the back side and seemed to be ready to go home before I was, and the third one was the best. It popped off the face of the club and soared toward the middle of the green. I watched it carefully as I held my follow through, hoping the one tee left in my pocket would have to repair the ball mark it had the potential of leaving. It was the shot that begged me to come back for more.

Nine holes might not seem like much of a challenge, and 40-plus strokes may not seem like much either, but that time on the course in the town I call home was everything I needed it to be and then some. It had been the quietest place I had been in months, maybe even years. I heard meadowlarks chirp, I watched some deer graze in the rough, and my gaze was not focused on myself, but instead on everything that was in front of me and a small, white ball. Thankfully, I hadn't forgotten how to swing, how to keep my composure when the shot didn't go where I wanted it to, and how to see that with a bit of practice, I can still play a decent round of golf.

If you're like me and haven't made time for something that brings you joy and offers a chance to be quietly present in this one life you have to live, then make a change. Step out on a limb, pick up that thing you've forgot you were good at, and show yourself that you don't have to be the best at something to enjoy it to the fullest.



**LINDSAY MURDOCK**  
FROM SUN UP TO SUN DOWN

Thank you, Echo Hills Golf Course, for giving me a place to continue to grow, a place to connect with the beauty of home, and a place where I remembered to look forward — because honestly, I believe that the best is yet to come.

*Lindsay Murdock lives in Echo and teaches in Hermiston.*

# The racial reckoning comes

When I was a boy I was taught a certain story about America. This was the land of opportunity. Immigrants came to this land and found an open field and a fair chance to pursue their dreams. In this story Benjamin Franklin could be held up as the quintessential American — the young hustler, who through his ingenuity and dogged self-improvement created new businesses and communities, a new sort of person and a new sort of country.

This was a unifying national story. When it dominated, politics was over which party could offer the most opportunity.

But that story has been challenged over the years, most compellingly by the people we used to call multiculturalists. The Ben Franklin story, they point out, doesn't include the Native American or African-American experience; it doesn't take into account the ways America has not really offered a fair chance to many of its people.

The multicultural story gradually began to rival the Ben Franklin story, especially in schools. Over the past two years it has almost entirely eclipsed it in many parts of our society.

I realized this while reading my friend and colleague Eric Liu's new book, "Become America." Eric's organization Citizen University hosts regular gatherings called "Civic Saturdays."

These look like church or synagogue services, but the object of veneration is America. How can we tell our story? How can we be good citizens? What rituals embody our civic creed?



DAVID BROOKS  
COMMENT

Eric gives sermons in the middle of these sessions, and the book is a collection of sermons delivered between November 2016 and August 2018 — nearly the first two years of the Trump era. The collection is like a penetrating time-lapse movie of the American mind over that period.

Eric is an enlightened Seattle progressive but with a reconciling, loving temperament. His hero is Abraham Lincoln and his goal is to heal a divided nation. In the early sermons, just after Donald Trump's victory, Eric is torn — he wants to empathize with Trump voters but also to judge them harshly. But, overall, the emphasis is on humbly understanding global populism.

Then come Charlottesville, the outrages at the southern border. As the months go by, Eric's attention turns more to race. Trump is no longer seen as a historic aberration, but the embodiment of white supremacy that has always been near the core of the American experience. He is the modern-day John Calhoun, just as mass incarceration is the modern-day Jim Crow.

Eric is not alone in his shift in emphasis. As Zach Goldberg points out

in Tablet, over the past several years there has been a sharp shift in opinion, especially among white progressives, on all subjects racial. For most of the latter half of the 20th century, for example, about 10% of white liberals supported increased immigration; now it's 50%. As Goldberg writes, African-Americans are actually less progressive on these issues than white liberals.

Both Trumpists and their opponents have also de-emphasized the Ben Franklin narrative and embraced narratives that put race at the center. Trump's narrative is: We real Americans (white) have to protect our culture from the alien (brown) who would weaken it.

The opposing narrative is something like this: America began with a crime — stealing the land from Native Americans. It continued with an atrocity, slavery. The American story is the conflict between oppressors who seek to preserve white supremacy and people who seek to move beyond it. The essential American struggle is to confront the national sin, have a racial reckoning and then seek reconciliation.

"A religion provides a moral framework for choice and an ethical standard for action," Eric writes. Both these narratives have taken on the qualities of a civic religion.

As many writers have noted, in the progressive account, racism has the exact same structure as John Calvin's

conception of original sin. It is a corrupting group inheritance, a shared guilt that pervades everything — it is in the structures of our society and the invisible crannies of our minds.

I don't know about you, but I walk into this next chapter of American life with a sense of hopefulness and yet great fear. America needs to have a moment of racial reconciliation. History has thrown this task upon us.

But we Americans are not at our best when we launch off on holy wars. Once you start assigning guilt to groups, rather than to individuals, bad, illiberal things are likely to happen. There's a lot of over-generalized group accusation in both these narratives.

I'm haunted by that sentence in Lincoln's second inaugural: "And the war came." Nobody wanted it, but it came. Eric's great contribution is to show how to mix conviction on racial matters with humility and gentleness. Moreover, he is always pushing toward an American creed that moves beyond both the white monoculture and the fracturing multiculturalism. He is always pushing toward a national story large enough to contain all the hybrid voices.

Somewhere in America a young artist is writing that story, that new vision that will serve as a beacon to draw us all onward.

*David Brooks is a columnist for the New York Times.*

# Trump destroys American greatness from within

It's hard to work up much sympathy for the hollowed-out husk of a human being that is Mitch McConnell, or Lindsey Graham for that matter. This country is a harder, colder, more mean-spirited place because these senators would rather bootlick a bully than stand for the principles they once espoused.

Surely, they know the price of their vassalage. To serve Donald Trump is to lose all self-respect. You lie for him. You cover for him. You hate for him. John Boehner, the former House speaker, has more honor as a mercenary for marijuana than the elected Republicans shoveling dirt over the grave of the Constitution.

But Americans should care about a more lasting and damaging corrosion — the destabilizing of venerable institutions. It's one thing to corrupt a politician, the natural osmosis of the species. It's quite another to debase the foundations of a great democracy.

It started on Day 2, when the hapless liar, newly subsidized by taxpayers, tried to conscript the National Park Service into the fantasy that his crowd was the largest ever.

The beloved Park Service survived the encounter with the devil, barely. But now the keepers of our national story are facing an authoritarian president who wants

to dominate the Independence Day celebration on the National Mall. He would politicize what has long been a nonpartisan family affair, setting up "the angriest July 4 ever," as Eleanor Holmes Norton, the District of Columbia delegate in the House, put it.



TIMOTHY EGAN  
COMMENT

After the inauguration debacle, Trump moved on to bigger targets — the judiciary, the military, the press, and the professional class of bureaucrats who have made the United States a model for competence and incorruptibility in the Civil Service.

With William Barr, Trump now has an attorney general who doesn't care how much lasting damage he does to truth, justice and the American way. His mandate as the nation's top prosecutor is to carry out Trump's private vendettas.

Next week, the House will vote on whether to hold Barr in contempt for defying the constitutional role of oversight by the legislative branch. Get used to it. Barr is marshaling the enormous legal muscle of the people's Justice Department as a political hit squad. He'll use the law, which he ignores when it suits him, to try to imprison public servants who launched an early investigation of Russian attempts to subvert a U.S. election.

No matter that an earlier presidential quibbling, failed Kansas gubernatorial candidate Kris Kobach, could find no

evidence of another of Trump's fictions, millions of illegal voters. Barr's job is to muddy the origins of the Russian investigation enough to frame career public servants as traitors.

Normally, the courts would be bulwarks against the barbarians. And indeed, many judges have stood up to some of Trump's most outlandish and illegal behavior. But the Trump effect, turning everything he touches to a cheap commodity, is to denigrate the legal arbitrators as "Obama judges" or "Mexican" judges. You're with him or against him.

This is dangerous stuff. And it gets worse. The most disgusting of the recent corruptions is the attempt to make the military another extension of presidential vanity. The White House wanted to "minimize the visibility" of the USS John S. McCain while Trump was in Japan. So, a family name synonymous with sacrifice on behalf of country was covered up so that President Bone Spurs would not be offended. Kim Jong Un has to be jealous.

Following this desecration, the acting defense secretary, Patrick Shanahan, said the military "will not be politicized." Sorry. That ship has sailed.

You would think that matters of the soul would be harder for the soulless occupant of the White House to tarnish. After a round of golf last Sunday, a disheveled-looking Trump abruptly showed up at a church in Virginia. The White House said Trump wanted parish-

ioners to pray for victims of a recent mass shooting. Instead, they were asked to pray for Trump. The pastor later said he had been blindsided.

The same cannot be said for the man who oversees the Census Bureau, Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross. He's trying to use a mandate of the Constitution, the decennial census, to shore up power in the Electoral College and Congress for the aging white men of Trump's base.

Any day now, the Supreme Court will rule on Ross' effort to insert, into the census form that goes out to every household, a citizenship question, something that hasn't been asked since 1950. It could mean that about 6.5 million people would go uncounted — citizens and noncitizens.

This is a blatant abuse of power and of an otherwise benign government agency, affecting not just the number of representatives or electoral votes each state gets, but also the fate of numerous cities dependent on federal billions in mostly blue America.

We've had a census every decade since 1790, after the colonies threw off a king and created a governing document establishing an independent judiciary, a legislative branch that writes the rules of the land, and asserting that no man is above the law. To the present occupant of the White House, it's only a piece of paper.

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