**A LIBERAL’S VIEW**

**Democrats Know it is a Man-Made Issue**

**By S. Devereaux Sanford**

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At a Town Hall talk on the University of Maryland campus last Friday, President Obama cited a quote from a commencement address President John F. Kennedy gave at American University in 1963. “Our problems are man-made, therefore they can be solved by man,” said Obama, who was there talking about the debates and disputes over America’s debt crisis.

The partial quote from JFK’s speech is a wise and positive reminder of what we sometimes forget, and it is perceptive that Obama used it. In truth, Obama had used that quote previously in a 2009 United Nations climate change speech. However, neither time was it appreciably interpreted with the full meaning, which is just as valid – if not more so – today than it was 40 plus years ago.

Kennedy was talking to the graduating class about peace. He said he chose to “discuss a topic on which ignorance too often abounds and the truth is too rarely perceived–yet it is the most important topic on earth: world peace.”

In the aftermath of another horrific and senseless attack in Norway – which is now being said that the motives for this attack have been influenced by right-wing extremist ideology – we are reminded daily of the lack of world peace today. We have not advanced to a more peaceful society as Kennedy was hoping for then; in fact we are undeniably a more violent global society now.

And for those who in some way believe that the elevated violence is a predictable, sanctified plan of higher order, it is just not so. There is no doomsday looming above us, no great plan to have us all perish. As President Kennedy so eloquently said, it is man-made and we can fix it, if we change our attitude.
In his speech 48 years ago Kennedy said, “*Let us examine our attitude toward peace itself. Too many of us think it is impossible. Too many think it unreal. But that is a dangerous, defeatist belief. It leads to the conclusion that war is inevitable–that mankind is doomed–that we are gripped by forces we cannot control. We need not accept that view. Our problems are man-made–therefore, they can be solved by man. And man can be as big as he wants. No problem of human destiny is beyond human beings. Man’s reason and spirit have often solved the seemingly unsolvable–and we believe they can do it again.”*

President Obama is right to remind us regularly that our problems are man-made, and as Kennedy understood, we can solve the unsolvable, but first we have to believe we can. While I don’t think most governments around the world condone violence, some experts say a global environment of hatred in the political discourse has encouraged violent individuals, especially those who feel they are a minority and have no voice. They have come to believe that violence will get them the peace they are looking for. It can’t.

Most, if not all, religious beliefs share an analogous story that some divine force will intercede in our world, bringing it to an end because we have made such a mess of it. Many seem ready to accept that belief without working to change it. Even non-believers may be forced to worry if any of these doomsday groups choose to take these matters into their own hands. It is a backward way to view religion, which by definition is there to spread love and create peace, not push it away with violence, destroying what we have built.

You may believe that Obama ‘is no President Kennedy.’ You may not want to listen to Obama, but he is right to remind us of the past words and beliefs of a wise Democrat who preceded him. Kennedy believed in peace and he knew that what we create we can either change, or destroy.

If Republicans want to stay ignorant of these facts and not work together to create the financial stability we need to maintain peace, then maybe we are doomed. Personally, I believe the Democrat President standing before me, and I, like Kennedy believe that man’s reason and spirit can solve the seemingly unsolvable. I hope you join me in that belief; there is strength in numbers.

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**Comment** from [**Stephen Frueh PhD**](http://www.marriageconversation.com)
**Time:** July 25, 2011, 2:03 pm

I appreciate the reminder in your article Shannon. I appreciate it because many of us numb ourselves with dramatic news story overload. We simply move on to the next adrenaline hit. To sustain consciousness of our individual accountability for violent behavior in all its forms is a fundamental of democracy. It’s not an ‘out there’ problem. It’s not something a government program can solve. It begins in every single family and it calls for deep awareness of our individual uniqueness and the honoring and accepting of each other that follows that awareness. World peace is really a possibility only when the millions of micro communitys we call familys tune in to healing themselves.
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