

## « TRIBALISM »



Birds, monkeys, fish and other animals form groups and bond with each other for protection, survival, and reproduction. Hairless apes are tribal for those reasons too but we are tribal for a number of less natural reasons, such as nationality, class, gender, sexual preference, race, politics and religion. Insiders are those who look, act and believe as we do. Outsiders are those who don't look, act and believe as we do. There are good, bad and ugly consequences of our tribal, them-versus-us approach to life.

### **Good**

Everyone benefits when tribalism is based on kinship, a united love of what everyone has in common. Birds of a feather flock together. Why? Because you are more likely to survive in a group than by yourself. There's safety in numbers. Natural selection favored those who cooperated with others. In that sense, we can say that evolution established a genetic basis for right and wrong, good and bad, success and failure. If you're attacked by a lion, your buddy's spear might save your life. If someone from another tribe is trying to steal your sheep, your tribe will help you stop the thief. If you're running low on tomatoes or coffee or toilet paper, you can trade (not steal) something you have for something someone in your tribe has.

Everyone benefits when tribalism is based on a united love of their country. In World War II, for example, patriotism brought people of diverse cultural and religious "tribes" together to stop the German invasion. Love of country trumped love of tribe. If Earth were attacked by aliens from another planet, the nations of the world would come together to blow the ugly, green little critters off our planet. Love of Earth would trump love of country and tribe.

### **Bad**

Everyone loses when tribalism is based on partisanship, a sectarian love for US and schismatic hatred for THEM. In World War II Hitler twisted patriotism (love of country) and ethnic pride (love of the Arian race) into nationalism

(Deutschland Uber Alles!), racism (Arians the Master Race!) and genocide (hatred of Jews).

Now, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, partisan politics have created the same tribal and divisive effects here in America. The divisiveness isn't the result of differing religious beliefs. It's the result of conservative and liberal people treating their political identity as if it's a religious identity. The political, THEM versus US divide, is now more like the sectarian, schismatic divides that have historically separated religious sects such as Sunni from Shia or Protestant from Catholic. People see the other side as an existential threat; they're not just wrong—they're evil.

The first Americans were a mix of ethnic, cultural and religious groups. Each tended to identify more strongly with their "tribe" than as Americans. The Constitution helped to unite this diverse mix of people and cultures into a nation bound by common beliefs and principles. Today's partisanship has turned Americans against one another and the principles in our founding document. The result has polarized political identity into mutually exclusive positions where any attempt to compromise their position for the greater good of all concerned is apostasy. Both sides use their animosity toward, and their competition with, the other side to violate the law, disrupt civilized behavior, thwart common sense and destroy our American way of life.

Anarchy isn't just around the corner—it's already arrived and is reeking havoc with the everyday life of people trying to keep a roof over their heads and beans on their tables. Presidents use executive powers to initiate dictator-like regulations that violate the Constitution, common sense and individual rights. Special interest groups initiate riots and fund the elimination of law enforcement personnel. Deep state bureaucrats violate the laws that ensure fair elections. Politicians foster gerrymandering. District attorneys let criminals go free without fines or jail time. Laws are passed that make it okay to steal anything as long as it's not more than \$1,000. Senators say it's okay to steal things if you really need it.

### **Ugly**

Tribalism can distort and polarize the difference between people. Misogyny, prejudice against women, is a distortion of the difference between men and women. The word is coined from misos, the Greek word for hatred, and gune, the Greek word for woman. History is replete with the tendency for some men and some cultures to treat women as chattel because those men and those cultures believe that women are physically and mentally inferior to men. Treating women as chattel, a thing rather than a person, almost always results

in physical and sexual abuse, psychological suffering and a much lower economic and social status than men. Women in the United States, for example, weren't allowed to vote until the early 20th century. Women leave Pakistan, Iraq and other Arab countries and abandon the Islamic religion because they have become frightened and disgusted with violence and prejudice against women.

Misogyny is the mindset of an arrogant, sexist savage. The opposite is the mindset of a civilized human being who takes a mature, realistic position between those male-female extremes because s/he understands that very few things are a binary black or white, good or bad, this or that... life is frequently AND, not OR.