

The Political Dream

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With the deaths of Richard Nixon and Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis a North American frame of mind has truly had its final nail hammered into its coffin. When John F. Kennedy first became President of the United States, North Americans were still dreamers and optimists. We actually believed in our political leaders. They still held a mystique and power that made us watch in awe and be inspired. They gave us hope. They gave us strength. Then after that fateful day, 30 years ago, in Dallas, Texas we were lost. Each North American born after that day has been raised on the milk of pessimism and despair.

After the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. (three optimists and dreamers of the 60's) a new breed of North American attitude towards politicians was born – the CYNIC. No one person or event symbolized this more than Richard Nixon and the Watergate scandal. It became confirmation of all the negative feelings towards politicians everyone had. Politicians are dishonest, not to be trusted and are imperfect.

Kennedy took our hope away and Nixon slapped us across the face for wishing it would come back. The sixties stripped North Americans of all that was pretty, frivolous, fluffy, light and “nice”. We are now brought up to see how filthy and dirty so much of the human experience is. Topics that were never even discussed in the sixties have become the stuff of talk shows, movies, television, books, magazine covers and school curriculums. We are constantly bombarded with the ugly reality of our society (child pornography, rape, incest, abuse, pollution, sexism, discrimination, racism . . .). People who try to lessen the blow of these problems are balked at. Constantly we are told to face it, take it, and digest it. This is who we are!

It seems even when great historic breakthroughs happen we just don't care. We gave up caring a long time ago. Monumental changes have taken place in recent years (The reunification of Germany, the end of communism in Russia and Eastern Europe, the end of apartheid in South Africa) and we sit back with a blasé and negative attitude that can be basically summed up as “Who cares, it's just going to fall apart anyhow”.

We don't believe in our leaders anymore. We don't see them as people to put up on pedestals. They are far too infallible for that. We look at them, warts and all, and shake our heads in wonder as to why we vote at all for someone just as human as us. It seems as if the blind are leading the blind.

We are now about to come to a close of an entire century. A century filled with dreamers and innovators who have made us who we are today. Yet today in our society the dreamer is shunned and told to face reality. It seems, if you dare to dream, you dare to be mocked. The only way human beings can advance further and onward into the next century is if we once again adopt a belief in hope and optimism. We have to once again try. Try to do it even if it seems hopeless. Try to rise above our imperfections. Try to rejoice in what we have accomplished. Try to hope. Try to believe. Try to dream. Try to fly.