

Fugue on Inauguration Day

Written by Margaret Evans, Editor



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January 20, 2017 – It's early in the morning on Inauguration Day. I'm at my computer and have just watched a YouTube video of a 12-year-old boy, oozing braggadocio, discussing the fire he set at a protest last night. This clean-cut, apple-cheeked lad is so proud of himself, so completely without shame or fear of reprisal, I can hardly believe my eyes and ears. Not much surprises me anymore, but I am aghast.

Shaking my head, I take my dismay over to my Facebook page, posting:

"Y'all, can we at least agree that when a 12-year-old boy is beaming with pride over the FIRE he set during a Trump protest – saying he did it "because I felt like it . . . because I'm just saying, 'screw our president!'" – that maybe we adults could stand to be more careful about the kind of energy we're putting out there?"

As it turns out, we *can't* agree. Not really. Oh, plenty of people chime in to express similar chagrin, but plenty of others feel compelled to qualify theirs. "I agree, but . . ." (On social media, "I agree, but" is really no agreement at all. It means an argument's about to ensue.) They point out that "Donald Trump started it," or that "rightwing radio has been talking that way for years." Somebody pipes up with this: "When people are oppressed, violence is inevitable." So this well-fed-looking white boy living in the world's most prosperous country gets a pass for his arson – and his exuberance about his arson – because he is oppressed.

My head hurts.

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And not just from pounding it against *other* hard heads, either. There are construction workers hammering on my house. Sawing and drilling, too. We're having some work done, and we're currently in that "it's gonna look much worse before it looks better" stage.

My daughter's home sick from school, which means we don't even have to discuss the "opt-out" voicemail from the Beaufort County School District that everybody's bickering about. (Kids can opt out of watching the inauguration at school with a note from their parents.) Local Trump supporters are having their moment of outrage on social media. I join one discussion thread and try gently reminding these folks that the same policy was enacted when Obama was inaugurated. Nobody responds to my comment. The outrage continues. I slink away.

I've got to get out of this house. Between the TV (my daughter's watching pre-inauguration coverage), the guys with hammers, and the angry people on Facebook . . . it's far too noisy up in here.

So I take my iPhone out for a walk. Maybe I can "write" this column on my voice recorder. Yeah . . . that's the ticket!

Outside, the mild January day immediately begins to work its magic.

(By the way, does anybody know if we're ever having winter again? I tried asking that question on Facebook – wondering if I'd ever get to wear that poncho my mom gave me for Christmas – but my lighthearted query spawned a vitriolic argument about Climate Change. I finally had to delete the thread.)

Camellias are exploding all over the neighborhood, lending their pretty pinks, whites and reds to the greys, browns and evergreens of a Lowcountry "winter." There are cardinals on bare branches – they compete for my attention with those bright blossoms – and a tree full of buzzards that takes my breath away. (Yes, I like buzzards.) We still have a few signs of Matthew around here – piles of tree parts on the roadside – but mostly things are back to normal. Normal feels good.

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My head begins to clear. Mother Nature wraps me in her tender arms, rocks me like a baby, and I can breathe again. As I begin to chat with my iPhone, my thoughts return to the inauguration of Donald J. Trump.

(Incidentally, I just learned that the “J” is for “John.” And now all I can think about is Don John, the evil character – also known as “The Bastard” – from *Much Ado About Nothing*. I can’t believe this hasn’t become a meme in cyberspace. Good thing for Trump people don’t know their Shakespeare . . .)

Anyway, I’m not one of the doomsayers. That’s not my style. I’m naturally drawn to the “bright side” and can usually find one. But I’ve been debilitated and damn near paralyzed by all the negative energy out there. Gotta shake it off. *Will* shake it off . . .

Tomorrow many of my friends – doomsayers, all – will head to DC for the Women’s March. That’s how *they* intend to shake it off, to turn negative energy into positive. I wish them well and I hope it works for them. Alas, I am resigned to struggle alone. Always. Frost wrote, “Something there is that doesn’t love a wall,” and there’s something in me that doesn’t love a march. Women’s marches. Men’s marches. Any marches, really, that separate people into categories. (In this case... women. And people against Trump. And, let’s be honest . . . people against Trump voters.) Splitting into groups feels like building walls to me. I just can’t do it. And yes, I recognize the irony of eschewing a Trump protest ‘cause I don’t like walls.

If they had called it a Humans’ March, I might have considered going. Maybe. I know these women – and the men marching with them – believe that’s what they’re doing. Marching for all humans. I take them at their word. But it wouldn’t feel that way to me. So I can’t go.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” This is a profound teaching that I believe in . . . religiously. I started to say, “as a Christian,” but I’ve come to realize that even calling myself a Christian separates me from others in ways that are often misleading and unhelpful. So I’ve tried to stop talking and writing about things “as a Christian.” Which, of course, doesn’t mean I’m not still a Christian talking and writing about things.

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My deep belief in Paul's words keeps me from demonstrating "as a woman." Others interpret those same words as a reason *to* demonstrate "as a woman." According to them, they are marching *for* civil rights, not *against* Trump and the millions who supported him. I respect them and honor their perspective. You don't have to do what others do – don't have to share their approach – in order to respect them and honor their perspective.

Too many columnists today spend all their time – and column space – analyzing "those other people" through their *own* eyes only, without any regard for how "those other people" see *themselves*
– without bothering to account for who
they
say they are, what
they
say they care about, how
they
explain their motives. I've been guilty of that in the past, but I work very hard these days to resist that temptation. It's intellectually lazy and smacks of a stingy spirit.

It's impossible to be completely objective in this world – we all have our orientations and opinions and partialities – but it's not impossible to be generous. And it gets easier with practice.

"Practice generosity." That's my mantra as I head home through the moss-fringed, pink-blossomy morning, toward the sound of hammers and drills, to watch another presidential inauguration.

Margaret Evans is the editor of Lowcountry Weekly. (Read more of her [Rants & Raves here](#)
[here](#) or visit her blog at www.memargaret.com
[.com](#))