

The circle of life entwines us all

He was not a politician, but Black Elk, revered holy man of the Lakota Sioux nation (1886-1950), made an observation of life that politicians and political pundits should contemplate. *"You have noticed that everything an Indian does is in a circle, and that is because the Power of the World always works in circles, and everything tries to be round."*

If the "power of the world" works in circles, why do we keep trying to break the circle into left and right?

If you extend your left hand out from the left side of your body and, at the same time, extend your right hand out from the right side of your body something interesting happens. You can't see both hands at the same time when they are fully extended.

To my knowledge, no sane person has ever drawn the conclusion from this phenomena that our hands are not related. That the interests or needs of each hand must be separate from the other or separate from the body that connects them.

Yet, in the world of politics we see a growing form of societal schizophrenia, where people take a hardened position to the left or to the right and then set out to berate and condemn the other as if there is no connection between them. Political pundits, with this form of extreme left/right right/left positioning, make it sound like they are talking about two different planets — not the

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one nation to which we all belong.

Individuality and variations in points of view are cherished gifts that were essential in the shaping of our nation and are essential in maintaining it. Civilized debate about issues is important and serves a useful purpose. But it is easy to get lost in the debate, to take a right/left position and forget the purpose. At the end of the day, we want our families to be healthy, happy and have a meaningful life. I believe our founding fathers called it life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

To fulfill those needs, we *all* need a good place to live, good communities, good jobs, a healthy environment free from pollution, good schools, good friends, good government and, as the last few years have illustrated, good relations with others throughout the world.

The problem with this left/right polarization in the United States is many have come to feel or believe we are not connected; that those on the other side, are not a part of us. Or, worse yet, that they may be bad, evil, unpatriotic or some similar inflammatory label. If we can't see the connections between us, our fellow Americans, how can we possibly see any connection to people in other countries?

There is only the whole of us, the whole of humanity — that family to which we all belong. We have more in common than we have differences. The future depends on stopping the insanity of extreme positions and embracing our common humanity.

Black Elk continued, "The life of a man is a circle from childhood to childhood, and so it is in everything where power moves. Our teepees were round like the nests of birds, and these were always set in a circle, the nation's hoop, a nest of many nests, where the Great Spirit meant for us to hatch our children."

Let's go back to our left and right hands fully extended out from our bodies. If we were to draw them together in front of us as if we were embracing or hugging someone, we would see that this illusion of separateness disappears. Our left and right hands when joined together form a circle in which we can see the interconnectedness of both hands and body. There is no left or right, there is only the oneness of us all, "our nation's hoop, a nest of many nests."

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