

the FEDERALIST

Let's Reclaim November For Giving Thanks, Not Greed

Life is short, as the Paris attacks have shown. Use it to do something bigger than whining about minor irritations, as November traditionally reminds us.

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One of the first exercises I can remember from elementary school took place in the month of November. Every year, our teachers would ask us to express in some way what we were thankful for ahead of the Thanksgiving holiday.

How different November of 2015 is proving to be. The highlight of this month is groups of adults across the country acting like elementary school students, selfishly demanding more and more concessions from our civil society in exchange for their increased comfort or "safe spaces." More darkly, others rampage about, seeking to destroy civilization to gain power.

At Yale University, one of the most distinguished institutions in our country and an institution old enough to bear witness to the American Revolution itself, some of our nation's most gifted young adults are wasting their energy feigning more fright at the thought of Disney cartoon-inspired Halloween costumes than the best Jason Voorhees or Freddy Krueger imitation could actually inspire in a young child.

At the University of Missouri, a massive taxpayer-funded institution, students and professors (public employees) are engaged in a borderline-militant occupation of campus public spaces in response to, as far as I can surmise, an alleged incident of vandalism of a bathroom with fecal matter, a single incident of drunken boorishness (which come in as many shapes and varieties on American college campuses as there are college mascots and color schemes) with a racial tone, and an alleged incident of verbal harassment that amounts to hearsay so far.

These Issues Don't Merit the Attention

This is not an attempt to write off the seriousness of the described offenses; however, the subsequent response, featuring a quickly infamous video of public employees and university students intimidating members of the press on public property, must draw scrutiny as well.

Should the described offenses be taken so heavily?

The question isn't whether these issues should be taken lightly, but should the described offenses be taken so heavily? Do they warrant the ouster of two-senior university officials, who are charged with upholding the academic integrity of the university and not, as far as I know, scrubbing the toilets and patrolling the streets at night as politically correct vigilantes? Should these incidents draw university police resources away from stopping violent crime (Is the campus rape epidemic over?) and towards cushioning the feelings of 35,000 adults from endless backgrounds and cultures?

Should a Yale faculty member lose his job because his wife told adults not to be offended by little girls emulating (trigger warning) "Mulan"?

As if these two scenes weren't outrageous enough, this week workers in 270 cities have walked out of their jobs, jobs that they took voluntarily, to demand a government-enforced pay raise to \$15 an hour.

We're the 1 Percent, Guys

There's almost too much irony in this situation to begin commenting on it all. One has to wonder how people still believe causing companies to lose money will encourage them to give employees more of it. For some perspective, a \$15 minimum hourly wage would put a full-time worker at \$31,200 per year. Perhaps coincidentally, the Human Progress project of the Cato Institute released information on the same day of the protests that reveals that if you make more than \$32,400 per year, you are in the global 1 percent.

If you make more than \$32,400 per year, you are in the global 1 percent. This means most fast-food workers in the United States, along with the other 3 percent of the workforce working near minimum wage, are likely in the global top 5 percent, if not 2 percent. This brings me back to my original point: be thankful.

We should be spending this month reflecting on how wonderful it is we live in the society we do, even with all its flaws and imperfections. Drunken idiots and vandalism are unfortunate, yet should they drive us into being willing to cast aside the very freedoms that make us so prosperous?

Perhaps out of luck or destiny, I recently watched a documentary produced by Vice about living situations in West African nation of Liberia. The imagery was striking. The slums, the brothels, the drug abuse, the cannibalism, all are within yards of the U.S. embassy and United Nations mission.

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Perhaps the image most applicable to my point was the beach. A long sandy Atlantic Ocean beach sits right outside one of the world's worst slums. Across the vast ocean is the United States, where our beaches are littered with mansions and luxury resorts owned and occupied by people of all races, creeds, and colors. The Liberian beach was littered with trash, needles, and human feces. It was this slum's toilet.

With that, for all the perceived and real injustice that still exists in America, let's stop for just a moment in this tumultuous November and remember that the poorest among us occupy the richest percentiles in the world and human history. Let's celebrate the fact that free speech, not violence and thuggery towards the media and others, allowed Martin Luther King Jr. and his followers to secure the right for students of all creeds and colors to attend, and now be offended, at the school of their choosing.

Perhaps, just for a moment, let us be thankful we have working bathrooms to vandalize, and family members to cherish who have not been gunned down mercilessly while they were going about their everyday lives.