

What Can Be Done



by Carl Nelson

“Convincing someone to change their mind is really the process of convincing someone to change their tribe.” – James Clear

It's remarkable to see a MAGA hat worn in public. It's nearly as remarkable to see a conservative speaking their mind freely in current waters. When I wear my MAGA cap around my community it's always hard to predict who might take a liking to it. But it's not uncommon for me to be treated like a military veteran being “thanked for (my) service.” I can't say I was comfortable initially wearing my MAGA cap about town (and elsewhere) as I ran my errands. I don't look good in a cap, like Tom Selleck. And, of course, I stick out.

But imagine you step into your local coffee shop one morning

and notice that half of the customers are wearing red hats. Afterwards, leaving the coffee shop you notice that near half the people you pass on the sidewalk are wearing red hats. And as you proceed throughout your day, half of the people you encounter are also wearing red caps. What in the world is going on? And then, this phenomenon continues day after day, from then until present time. Wouldn't you think that something significant was occurring – whatever that might be?

What in the world is going on, you might think? When actually, nothing is going on. And isn't it quite alarming, you might consider? When actually, there is nothing alarming about it at all. About half of the populace voted for Trump in the past Presidential election. And given that about 75% of our citizens don't presently like the direction the country is headed, it would not be surprising if many more than 50% vote Republican in the next. In their modest interior opinion, many more than 50% of us now are likely wearing mental red hats, pacing worriedly back and forth across our cerebral carpets, fussing and grumbling, tossing and turning in the early hours, all about how the current government is ruining the country and ruining our lives – specifically. (The installation of this current administration has caused the loss of around 30% of my personal retirement investments, plus the debacle of exploding inflation.)

The surprise within this conjectured tale is that Conservatives are allowing themselves to be seen. The truth of the matter is readily admitted. But in this re-imagining, conservatives are creating a show of themselves (and their strength) by the display of red caps – which remain to be seen day after day, just as their political inclinations remain unchanged day after day. Not necessarily MAGA hats, but red hats – bright red hats the color of passion and vitality and Conservative thought. They could say, DeSantis or whomever.

The point is, that whereas the legacy media might marginalize and refuse to acknowledge us, and social media might censor us

– in our daily lives we are visible all over the place.

In psychoanalytics, an accepted narrative is that the hero of a trial needn't use the sword, if they will simply show the sword at the proper moment. This is a lot like dogs doing mock battle until the hierarchy is established. In political terms this means displaying one's strength and resolve as a means of establishing rule short of waging war. Conservatives ask what they can do to avert a national calamity or impending civil war in the face of a relentless, corrupt and ruthless enemy? An answer is that we must show the enemy our symbolic sword. Each of us could easily don our red hats, wear them daily and wear them everywhere. It's a simple, legal way for the average citizen to have political agency. And when you walk outside with that hat on you'll feel that agency immediately. You might feel a hint of it, in just reading this. I hope so. Embedded in the fear of acting, is the necessity of doing it.

More people are persuaded by the growth of your following than by the cogency of your argument. Few are persuaded by the numerous well composed, insightful articles you have read (or written), nor the life experiences which have molded you – but in a red cap they will get the gist of it, immediately.

The majority of people who are called our 'leaders' (for want of a better term) are actually our followers. These are people who are constantly scanning for crowds congealing or an audience collecting, whose issues are urgent and quickly absorbed so as to climb to the head of the bunch and leverage. If you want to be surer of the cant of your elected leader, make certain they know which side their support is buttered on.

Years ago, I voiced some sentiments at a gathering of my fellow bus drivers which "made some noise," as they used to say in the music business. The politically inclined, who swim through crowded union waters like sharks, immediately appeared

to feed... that is to counsel and assist. It was a revelation. And it all begins with agency.

Put on a red hat and parade it proudly.

What might happen?

I've been wearing my MAGA hat everywhere for about two months. I forget it is on my head and wore it to my weekly lunch date with my long time friend Marty. I know how brittle Progressives can be about their politics, so in an effort to maintain a good friendship, we've tacitly refrained from touching on politics.

I apologized and set my hat beside me on the table.

He looked at it and motioned with his finger.

I turned the cap so the MAGA lettering could not be seen.

This was satisfactory. And we had a good lunch.

At the gym, an older woman thanked me for some time for wearing the cap.

When she was done, I suggested, "You should wear one too!"

She said she would, but it would mess her hair.

I said, chucking, while weighing the notion with my hands: "The end of our way of life as we know it, versus messy hair."

She gave me a crinkled smile and left.

This was probably not the tack to take. I may have been trying for a country too far.