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The Times They ARE a-Changing!

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The Times They ARE a-Changing!

By Roy Lenfest
UCF Forum columnist
Wednesday, September 2, 2020

But we still seem to be in a war of life-threatening tensions.



(Photo by Alex Motoc on Unsplash)

Perhaps Bob Dylan said it best in his 1964 protest song, 'The Times They Are a-Changin''. If you don't believe it, let me say the secret to the future IS in the past.

With all the current upheaval of racial, political, sexual and anti-violence values, I find that it is all somehow familiar, with some noteworthy differences.

I am all for positive change, just as I was in the '60s and '70s, and still am. I have seen enough of history in 60+ years to see it repeating itself again.

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Young people and old alike are speaking out and marching against what they feel — and I agree — are the many social injustices that have been placed on the people of color in this country. Many are also calling for an end to violence of all sorts against anyone, regardless of color or sexual identity. Others are calling for the elimination of guns and police funding, while others are calling for non-violence and the increase of funding for training police officers and public officials. Much attention is being given to women's suffrage and the 100th anniversary of women getting the right to vote.

Many readers may not know much about the '60s and '70s. Many others are either clueless or have forgotten about Vietnam and how that war changed this country. The current war on COVID-19 and the suppression of minorities in this country, hearkens back to that earlier time. I see so many similarities of then to now with only the perspectives or subjects being different, that it is quite remarkable.

Back then, younger people of all colors protested against the war and what they felt was the racial injustice of the high number of blacks getting drafted without the opportunity to get a college deferment or run to Canada to avoid the draft, like many of their young white counterparts who were burning flags and draft cards. While many of that time were calling for peace, drugs and free love, others were protesting and marching for and against their desired political candidates. Many people were totally against that war and were at war with those who supported it.

Those were turbulent times and many marches that started out peacefully ended up violent. Angry people resorted to violence, looting and burning entire city blocks of their own neighborhoods to demonstrate their dissatisfaction with their lot in this great country.

An awful difference between that time — the Vietnam era — and this, is that everyone was upset with the terrible loss of officially more than 47,434 American troops due to direct combat, and an additional 10,786 deaths in that theater of war that were not battle-related. That is a total of 58,220, all dead over a period of roughly 11 years of armed conflict in Vietnam, with lots of rebellion, strife and fear here at home. In these COVID times, however, there doesn't seem to be many marching against the needless deaths of more than 185,000 and counting. That is more than three times the number of people who died during the Vietnam War, and this in only a few months of 2020!

What I do see is too many people purposely not wearing face coverings to uncaringly demonstrate their right to personal freedom while risking everyone around them.

Back in the '60s and '70s, no one seemed comfortable with any of the politicians unless they mirrored their own opinions. Presidents changed, but many voters felt like they were voting against the lesser of two evils and a lot felt that whoever was elected, the best they could hope for was that the newly elected would at least maintain the country and not let it slide any further downhill.

Given recent political climes and the opposites campaigning for the vote in this coming election, I would say that we are still in a war of death, dying and life-threatening tensions, whether it is with COVID-19 or the tug of war of politics.

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